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AN ESSAY
ON
Feast Days and Fast Days
IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH,
CONTAINING
A REVIEW OF BISHOP DOANE'S PAMPHLET.

PRACTICE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH—ORIGIN OF RITES, &c.

It appears that the earliest professors of the Christian faith were disposed conscientiously to abstain from public religious ceremonies, and were more than content to be even destitute of temples, altars, priests, and sacred pomp or show. They received in its literal and broadest meaning the precept of our Saviour, that his disciples should worship God in Spirit and in truth; and they thought that they had discovered in the overthrow of the Jewish polity and the destruction of the temple, an intimation of the Divine will that religious worship should be no longer limited by time and place. The Jewish Christians, indeed, continued to evince an attachment to places, times, and seasons; but the early Gentile converts regarded temples and altars as remnants or incidents of heathen superstition,—an opinion which is strongly developed, for example, in the Apologies of Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Tertullian, and even in the writings of Origen (*contra Celsum*, lib. viii.)

In course of time, however, when Christianity was protected, and even adopted, by the state, and opportunity was thus given of establishing public forms and ceremonies of worship without fear of danger, and when it seemed expedient to recommend it to the favor of half-converted pagans by outward pomp and circumstance, it was thought to be at once safe and seasonable to increase the number of sacred solemnities, both ordinary and extraordinary, to restore many parts of the Jewish ritual, and even to incorporate into the system of Christian worship various rites and ceremonies from the customs of the declining pagan superstition.—*Coleman's Antiquities*, p. 443.

MAN'S FEASTS AND FASTS

IN

GOD'S CHURCH.

A NEW-YEAR'S GIFT;

BEING A REVIEW OF

"THE RECTOR'S CHRISTMAS OFFERING."

BY

A PRESBYTERIAN.

"Ye observe days and weeks and times and years."—*Gal. iv. 10.*

"Who hath required this at your hand?"—*Isaiah i. 12.*

Burlington:

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This pamphlet is in reply to Bishop Doane's "Christmas Offering," which contains an exposition of what are called the "*holy days of the Church*." The views contained in the "Offering" are considered very erroneous, not only in their departure from Scripture, but in their practical influence.

"A Presbyterian," in the exercise of his inalienable liberty, and with the purpose of vindicating the Sabbath from its unnatural connection with human ordinances, demands a candid hearing. His object is to show that these days are of human appointment, are associated from their early history with superstitious and unscriptural observances, and present no authoritative or reasonable claim upon the attention of christians.

If "a Presbyterian" is in error, he asks somebody to demonstrate it. All that is aimed at is the truth, through a full and free discussion.

Burlington, N. J., January 5, 1842.

N. B. The references to *Bingham's Antiquities* are to his chapters on Feasts and Fasts, under the particular subject discussed.—Almost all the quotations from "the fathers" are taken from Bingham—a standard work of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

MAN'S FEASTS AND FASTS.

"*The holy days of the Church!*" Surely these are the **SABBATH** days! God says in His commandments, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." It is very clear, therefore, that the Sabbath days of the year are truly "the holy days of the Church."

However, on reading a late pamphlet a title beyond its title, I soon found that there were *other* holy days besides God's. I read about the "holy day" of the circumcision, of the epiphany, of the conversion of St. Paul, of the purification of the Virgin Mary, of St. Matthias, &c. &c., and so on to the end of the calendar. And when I got through, I counted with my fingers, and (unless I counted wrong,) I found, to my astonishment, twenty-eight festivals and nearly one hundred fasts—all holy days of the Church. The thought entered my mind, that one hundred and twenty are a good many, in addition to God's fifty-two Sabbaths! Man has doubled the work of his Creator!

The Bishop of New Jersey commences his Exposition of "the holy days of the Church," in his usual, polished style: "We read in the book of Genesis, that God made the lights of the firmament 'for Signs and for Seasons and for Days and Years;' and as we measure the coming and going of Spring and Summer, Autumn and Winter, by the rise and fall of these bright signs, so the Church has marked the calendar of her seasons, by the coming and going of Festivals and Holy days." What! Festivals and holy days translated to the skies, in the place of the sun of righteousness! Is there not great danger that a hundred and twenty new planets will derange the regularity of the old plan? If a church so much depends upon *festivals* for light and heat, its year will be likely to have a very long winter and a variable summer. How much better to exalt the glorious **SABBATH-DAY** as the central luminary of the

ecclesiastical year! It shines upon the Church with the steady rays of the ascended Lord of glory, and bears the same relation to man's feasts and fasts that the sun does to comets and candles.

The Bishop, in classifying these regulators of spiritual times and seasons, remarks that "there are three kinds or sets of days. *One* set brings before us the life and death of our blessed Saviour, such as Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, &c. A *second* set brings the *great truths of the Faith* to our minds, such as Trinity, All Saints (!) St. Michael and All Angels (!) A *third* set brings before us in order the Apostles and Saints of the Church."—I object to this classification. It does not do justice to the subject. It jumbles up feasts and fasts, contrary to the order of the prayer book; and moreover is not only uncanonical but untheological and unphilosophical. For example, the second set is said to "bring the *great truths of the faith* to our minds"—one of which, the doctrine of the Trinity, is indeed great;—but whoever heard that three-quarters of a system of theology embraced the doctrine of All Saints, St. Michael and All Angels! The fact is that the "first set of days" brings to view "the great truths of the faith"—the peculiarities of the Gospel—much more than the second.

I humbly recommend the following classification as considerably superior. First, divide the holy days into feasts and fasts. There is more difference between these two than is commonly imagined. The *feasts* are properly arranged under six divisions.

- I. *Feast in honor of the GODHEAD.* 1 Trinity.
- II. *Feasts in honor of CHRIST.* 1 Easter. 2 Whitsunday. 3 Ascension. 4 Epiphany. 5 Christmas. 6 Circumcision.
- III. *Feasts in honor of ANGELS.* 1 St. Michael and All Angels.
- IV. *Feasts in honor of the VIRGIN MARY.* 1 Annunciation. 2 Purification.
- V. *Feasts in honor of the APOSTLES.* 1 Conversion of St. Paul. 2 St. Matthias. 3 St. Philip and St. James. 4 St. Peter. 5 St. James. 6 St. Bartholomew. 7 St. Matthew. 8 St. Simon and St. Jude. 9 St. Andrew. 10 St. Thomas. 11 St. John.
- VI. *Feasts in honor of OTHER SAINTS AND MARTYRS.* 1 St. John the Baptist. 2 St. Mark. 3 St. Luke. 4 St. Barnabas. 5 St. Stephen. 6 Innocents. 7 All Saints.

In addition to these feasts, there are about a hundred fasts, which are very well classified in the Prayer book!

I proceed to make some remarks upon each of the divisions of the festivals, premising that inasmuch as *fast* implies great temperance, or abstinence, in the use of food, we might suppose that a *feast* means some joyful occasion for animal, as well as spiritual indulgence. This is the true meaning of the word; and the church sometimes carried it out to the very letter. The Corinthian Christians, even in Paul's time, were given to carousals on holy days; and history affords melancholy proof, especially after festivals were very much multiplied, of the low indulgences which usually characterised the observance of many of them. This was not the design of those who originated them; but it was the natural result of *human innovation leading on human depravity to greater depravity*. Some of the feasts, however, were kept in a strictly religious manner, as seasons of spiritual rejoicing.

I. **FEAST IN HONOR OF THE GODHEAD.** In regard to the Feast for *the Trinity*, it was not observed till many centuries after the death of Christ. Bishop Hobart remarks, "this festival, in commemoration of the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity, is comparatively of modern date."¹ Comparatively of modern date! Here then we have one feast at least, which was not of apostolic institution! Wheatley² says, It does not seem to have been generally in vogue until 1305, when it was made an established feast by Benedict XIII. Now as the Roman Catholics had full possession of ecclesiastical power at this time, the *associations* of this festival are very far from being of an edifying nature.

It is also to be noticed that, as this festival was not generally celebrated till 1305, the church must have been badly off for "great truths of the faith," during fourteen centuries; the remaining truths being reduced to "all Saints and all Angels." It so happens that the church in the dark ages really cared for little else but saints and angels!

II. The next "set of days" embraces **FEASTS IN HONOR OF CHRIST**. The first two festivals introduced into the Church were

¹ *Festivals and Fasts*, p. 113.

² p. 257. See also Bingham.

Easter and Whitsunday, corresponding to the Jewish Passover and Pentecost. The Jewish Christians were always striving to ingraft Judaism upon Christianity, the early traces of which we find in the epistle to the Galatians, &c. See particularly Galatians, iv. 10, 11, and Colossians, ii. 16—23. As the Jews commenced their ceremonial operations during the lives of the Apostles, it is not to be wondered at that they persevered afterwards.

1. **EASTER.** This festival was formerly, and still is, called Passover or Pascha.—Pascha properly includes the fast before Easter, and the festival which succeeded. Bishop Hobart, in speaking of the fast, says “this fast, like other Christian observances, is of Jewish origin.”¹ In this opinion, a learned father in our own Church fully concurs: “the festival of Easter was introduced in the second century, in place of the Passover, and in accommodation to the same Jewish prejudice, which had said even during the Apostolic age, ‘*except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*’ Hence it was generally called *Pascha* or *Pasch*, in conformity with the name of the Jewish festival, whose place it took.”²

Easter commemorates the resurrection. A long controversy, connected with the time of keeping Easter, arose between the Asiatic and Western Christians in the middle of the second century. The former claimed tradition from John and Philip as authority for observing it at the time of the Jewish Passover (or on the fourteenth day after the new moon); whilst the latter claimed Peter and Paul for celebrating it on Sunday. As to Apostolic authority, the parties stood two and two; but a Roman Pontiff, in the spirit of his illustrious successors, gave the casting vote by excommunicating the whole Eastern Church. Finally, the council of Nice, A. D. 325, decided against the more Jewish Asiatics. *Pierce* remarks, “it is not probable, the Apostles who in delivering the Christian religion to the world so perfectly agreed with one another, should in this particular so exceedingly differ.”³ The Easter controversy also teaches em-

¹ Festivals and fasts, p. 143.

² Dr. Miller on Presbyterianism, p. 75.

³ *Pierce's Vindication*, pt III, ch. XI.

phatically the vanity of relying upon tradition, in regard to institutions unnoticed in the Bible. It is possible that Easter, which had been more or less celebrated in particular Churches for some years, began to assume the rank of a general festival about the time the two Churches began to quarrel about it.

Easter was a great day in the ancient Church. *Gregory Nazianzen* calls it "Queen of days;" "festival of festivals," "the Lord's day of joy." It was formerly celebrated during a whole week.

The night before Easter was observed with great solemnity. "The vigils were continued till cock-crowing, the hour when the Lord is supposed to have arisen. At this instant, the stillness of these nocturnal vigils was suddenly interrupted by the joyful exclamation, the Lord is risen! the Lord is risen! the Lord is risen indeed!" In connection with devotional exercises, this illustrious day was observed by deeds of charity and mercy—by granting liberty to the captive, freedom to the slave, and pardon to criminals. Charities were dispensed to the needy. Courts of justice were suspended during the festival week, &c. Christians went to Church every day, not simply to hear written prayers, but to hear preaching. Says *Chrysostom*, "seven days ye hear preaching."²

As to the name of Easter, its origin is curious. A great Pagan festival was formerly celebrated in Great Britain, in the month of *Eoster*, (April,) so called from the Pagan goddess in whose honor the festival was instituted. When Christianity was introduced into Britain, the Jewish *Pascha* took the name of the Heathenish *Eoster*, and appropriated its rejoicings to itself. In addition, therefore, to Jewish origin, the alliance between Heathenism and Christianity, indicated by the easy transfer of names, throws over this festival the gloom of a fast.

Easter, in our latter times, seems to have lost both its civil and religious celebrity! It is not observed as it was in "primitive times!" Would it not be as well to give it up altogether, and celebrate the resurrection *every Lord's day*, as the Apostles did? This is the way Presbyterians also do. We keep Easter fifty-two times a year!

¹ *Coleman's Antiquities*, p. 438.

² *Bingham's Antiquities*.

2. WHITSUNDAY is a feast in commemoration of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which Christ had promised to his disciples. This feast corresponds to the Jewish feast of Pentecost; and like Pascha, was introduced in accommodation to Jewish prejudices. Pascha and Pentecost were the two earliest festivals in the Church. They were also the two great seasons (to which Epiphany was afterwards added in the Greek Church) for administering baptism. Whitsuntide was probably more devoted to baptism than Easter, inasmuch as it commemorates the influences of the Spirit. On this Sunday (the last day of Pentecost) the catechumens appeared for the last time in their *white* robes; and hence the name of the "feast."

The question naturally arises, why has this very ancient robing practice fallen into disuse? Why celebrate *White* Sunday, and yet have no *white* robes?

At a later and more corrupt period of the Church, one of the ceremonies of Whitsuntide, was to "throw down fire from the arches above, to denote the cloven tongues on the day of Pentecost. Flowers of various hues were scattered, in token of the various tongues and gifts of the Spirit; and doves were let loose to flutter about the Church, as the emblem of the Spirit's presence."¹

Tertullian and other fathers, inform us that the whole period between Easter and Whitsuntide was "one continued festival of fifty days."²

3. ASCENSION—Was established in the fourth century as one of the great festivals; the Pentecostal holy days in this century commencing with Ascension and ending with Whitsuntide. The two events of the Ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit, were commemorated together. "The same is true of the Jewish Pentecost, which included the feasts of first fruits and of the promulgation of the law. Indeed this festival bears [a very close analogy to that of the Jews; and evidently is little else than a modification of it."³ As the event which Ascension commemorates, was known to have taken place forty days after Easter, it is possible that many Churches, especially Jewish, may have celebrated it as soon as Easter itself.

¹ Coleman, p. 440.

² Bingham's Antiquities.

³ Coleman, p. 139.

It may therefore have been partially observed in the second and third centuries, although it did not become a prominent and distinct festival till the fourth. *Augustine*, A. D. 410, mentions Ascension as then well known.

4. EPIPHANY. Ancient authors are not agreed as to the precise object in the commemoration of this festival, or as to the time of its institution. It was not established in the Calendar till the fourth century.

Lord King remarks, "There is yet another feast called by us Epiphany, wherein there is a commemoration of Christ's baptism, which I find to have been peculiarly solemnized by the Basilidian heretics. For thus *Clemens Alexandrinus* reports it to be a particular custom of theirs "to keep as a festival the day of Christ's baptism."¹ *Jerome*, *Chrysostom*, the two *Gregories*, and the Greek writers in general, maintained that the day is in commemoration of the Lord's baptism. *Chrysostom* says "in this solemnity, in memory of our Saviour's baptism, by which he sanctified the nature of water, they were used at midnight to carry home water from the Church, and lay it up where it would remain as fresh and incorrupt for one, two or three years, as if it were immediately drawn out of any fountain."²

Augustine thinks the Epiphany commemorates the miracles of the star, the baptism, the turning of water into wine, and the feeding of the five thousand. Other writers also speak of the Epiphany, as containing an incidental commemoration of the star. Hence many maintain that the Epiphany was the Christmas of the Eastern Church. If it was, it was a very different Christmas from that afterwards instituted; for it is certain that the earlier writers, above quoted, hardly ever mention the star; but regard the Epiphany as the great season for baptism, in memory of the baptism of Christ. *Clemens Alexandrinus*, among the earliest who mentions Epiphany, censures those who were beginning to seek too anxiously the time of

¹ "Primitive Church, by Lord King," p. 272. The first American Edition of this able work has just been published by the Methodists. This book was the means of breaking down the High-Church prejudices of John Wesley. It is commended to all who are similarly affected. It was written by an Episcopalian.

² Bingham's Antiquities.

the Saviour's birth, because his entrance upon his ministry at his baptism was the most important event of the two. For the same reason, even after Christmas was introduced, Epiphany remained the great day in the Greek Church.

Pope Leo, A. D. 450, is the first to insist, contrary to all the fathers, that Epiphany only commemorates the appearance of the Star; and that, not in reference to Christ's birth (as had been formerly thought) but in reference to his manifestation to the Gentiles.

Hence the origin of the festival of the Epiphany; which in its *present form*, was not established until a little before the time of *Leo*, when Christmas also was introduced. Epiphany, therefore, had at first a very suspicious connection with heretics, was celebrated as the day of Christ's baptism in the Eastern Church, whilst others, as *Augustine*, thought it commemorated a variety of events, until finally it was put into the Calendar with a new and special designation. Does all this look as if it was of apostolic institution?

5. CHRISTMAS. This festival was not generally introduced till the fourth century; and its claims to antiquity are inferior to those of the Epiphany.

The Apostles did not know any thing about this festival, or they surely would have mentioned it. *Dr. Cave* tries hard to find the "first footsteps of it" at the close of the second century, A. D. 192, but its form was at that time too shadowy to leave any impressions. *Bingham*, in his "Antiquities," demonstrates that *Cave* was mistaken. *Coleman*, in his able work, gives his authorities for "confidently affirming that in the third century and in the first half of the fourth century, the Church were not agreed, either in regard to the time, or reasons for observing this festival; and that the Eastern and Western Churches differed totally in their manner of celebrating it."¹

The first writer, who refers to the day of the Nativity, is *Clemens Alexandrinus*, about A. D. 200. He says "there are some who *over curiously* assign not only the year, but also the *day* of our Saviour's nativity, which they say was on the 25th of Pacon" (20th of May). He goes on to mention the various days which different persons had assigned; thus giving us clear evidence that nothing

¹*Coleman*, p. 434.

was known about it, and that the subject at that time was just beginning to attract some attention.¹ *Origen*, about A. D. 230, says that "four festivals were observed in his time, the Lord's day, Saturday, Easter and Pentecost." He makes no mention of Christmas. *Gregory Nazianzen*, A. D. 380, who writes *one hundred and fifty years* after *Origen*, assumes a different language, as if Christmas had been established some time during this long interval. He calls the Nativity "the metropolis or mother of all festivals"—"the most venerable and tremendous of all festivals"; and adds "from this festival, both the Epiphany, and the holy Paschal feast, and the Ascension and Pentecost took their original." With a positiveness not unusual either in those days or these, he talks more largely about antiquity than the fathers, who lived before him; and unfortunately contradicts all history in placing Christmas antecedently to Pascha and Pentecost, the two earliest festivals.

Chrysostom, A. D. 386, agrees with *Gregory* in affirming that the day was "of great antiquity and of long continuance, being famous and renowned in the Church from the beginning, far and wide, from Thrace as far as Spain." And yet he adds that "ten years were not yet past since we were informed of this day in Syria." This shows that what was so famous in one part of the Apostolic Church was unknown in the other. The learned *Scaliger* remarks, "*Chrysostom* himself tells us in that oration, the custom of keeping that day was brought to Constantinople by the Romans, but ten years before; and that it had been used to be kept for some years by the Romans, of whom those in Constantinople learnt it. *All these things show the novelty of the religious observation of that day.* Among the Romans, who began it, I find none more ancient than *Ambrose*, (A. D. 380,) that assign the Nativity to the 25th of December."

Augustine, perhaps the most celebrated writer of antiquity, mentions that in his day (A. D. 410,) there were only four holy days, viz: "Passover, Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost;" to all of which he ascribes great antiquity, but says not a word about Christmas. What adds to the value of *Augustine's* testimony is, that he

¹ *Bingham's Antiquities.*

mentions "the tradition that Christ was born on the eighth of the kalends of January; (December 25th;) and also that "he recommends a suitable *remembrance* of the day, though he does not honor it as a solemn festival."¹

From this and other testimony, I deduce the following conclusions in regard to Christmas.

(1.) *For the first two centuries, no proof exists that the Nativity was observed as one of the festivals of the Church.*

Bingham does not mention a single writer, within this period, whose words he quotes to prove so high an antiquity.

(2.) *The only way to reconcile the testimony of the fathers* is to suppose that Christmas began to be thought of in some Churches in the days of *Clemens*, A. D. 210; that it however had made no progress where *Origen* lived, who does not mention it, A. D. 230; that between this period and A. D. 380, it had extensively spread over Europe, as *Chrysostom* and *Gregory* affirm; but that it was unknown in Asia, according to *Chrysostom*, until A. D. 376; and was not yet observed in Africa even in A. D. 410, according to *Augustine*. It is incredible that five such celebrated men should write as they did, if Christmas had been a primitive and universally observed institution.

(3.) The *new arrangements* in regard to both Christmas and Epiphany in the *fourth century* intimate that *this period was the earliest date of their observance, as general festivals*, in both Churches. It has been seen that Christmas was not observed in Asia till A. D. 376, when it was generally introduced into those Churches. Now if Epiphany, as some writers maintain, had been previously the Christmas of the Eastern Church, then a very great change took place in the East not only by diverting Epiphany from its original purposes, but by the introduction of an entirely new festival.—Moreover in the West, Epiphany was commemorated in a way that it never had been before, namely, as the manifestation of Christ *to the Gentiles*. For those, who (in order to give the Nativity a general and early commemoration) maintain that Epiphany formerly commemorated the Nativity in the East, are obliged to rest their opin-

¹ Coleman, p. 434.

ion entirely upon the allusion to the *star*. If they are correct, therefore, in that opinion, they cannot escape the conclusion that Western Epiphany became an entirely different thing from Eastern Epiphany, by its making the star refer, not to the Nativity, but to the Gentiles. The first writer who maintains that the star refers exclusively to the Gentiles, is Pope Leo, A. D. 450, who has eight sermons upon it, and whose object probably was to "magnify" the Western, or *Gentile*, Church.

It appears to me that in the fourth century, the Eastern and Western Churches agreed to settle their differing usages by taking each other's festival, and making for the first time mutual and definite arrangements in regard to both. This accounts for the change of object which took place in the celebration of Epiphany—for the mention by all subsequent writers of December 25th¹ as the day of Nativity—and for the general observance of both festivals by both branches of the Church. Previous to this time, I cannot find that Epiphany was much known in the Western Church. *Coleman* says that Julian celebrates it at Vienna for the first time, A. D. 360. These new arrangements, therefore, strengthen the opinion that Christmas was not a general festival till the fourth century.

(4). The introduction of Christmas through the Roman, or Western church, took place about the time when saint's days began to be observed, and *probably had its origin in these festivals*. *Coleman* says, "Christmas was not observed as a sacred religious festival until the fourth century, when it became customary to observe *saint's days*; among which this was the most sacred."² The other festivals in honor of the Saviour only commemorated some of the events of his life. It was natural that these should lead on to a festival, which should bring him before the mind more personally and in closer union with human sympathies. Hence even in our own

¹ December 25th was finally fixed as the day of the Nativity, partly perhaps to bring it at a different season of the year from the Spring, when 40 or 50 days, or more, were taken up with festivals and fasts about the time of Easter—and partly to accommodate it to the time of the Saturnalia, a Pagan festival, whose place it took.

"The Nativity" was the old name of the festival. Christmas is the name of Papists. (*Christ's mass*.)

² Antiquities, p. 426

day, Christmas appeals to our hearts more enthusiastically than Easter or Pentecost, or any of the festivals. In those ancient times, when Christians began to reverence saints and martyrs, and when the heathen still worshipped their gods, nothing is more natural than to suppose that the Nativity, which represented God in human form, should be introduced and become a festival of abounding popularity.

(5.) My last remark about Christmas, is that the disagreement among the fathers about the *day* of the Nativity, is a *demonstration against the Apostolic, or even early, institution of the festival*. Clemens Alexandrinus, A. D. 200, specifies a number of different days which were thought to be the day of the Nativity, viz: January 10th, March 25th, April 18th, 20th, 24th, May 20th.¹ Bishop Doane remarks that "the determination of this holy festival to the day on which the world agrees to celebrate it, must be allowed to be an arbitrary decision."² But is not this admission fatal to the Apostolic origin of the festival? Can it be supposed that the Apostles did not know the day of the nativity? Or did they appoint it on the right day, and the Church afterwards forget it? Or did the Church appoint the festival, when it was *too late to recover the day*? This last is my theory.

The earlier Christians knew no more about Christmas than the Apostles did, or than the Presbyterians now do.

One word as to the manner of observing Christmas.

Mosheim, a celebrated German historian, remarks that "from the first institution of this festival, many of the western nations seem to have transferred to it many of the follies, which prevailed in the pagan festivals at the same season; such as *adorning fantastically their churches*, mingling puppet-shows and dramas with worship, universal feasting and *merry-making*, christmas visits and salutations, presents and jocularities, revelry and drunkenness. Christmas holidays have borne so close a resemblance, whenever they have been observed, to the Roman Saturnalia, as to afford strong presumption of an unhappy alliance between them from the first."

¹ *Lord King* wisely says "it seems improbable that they should celebrate Christ's nativity, when they disagreed about the month and day when Christ was born. p. 270.

² *Keble's Christian Year*.

A few persons, more pious than merry-makers, have probably always observed Christmas with suitable, devotional feelings.

Gregory Nazianzen remonstrates against the heathenish customs at festivals, in a manner that shows the tendency of the times. "Let us NOT crowd our doors with GARLANDS, nor exercise ourselves with dances;—let us not adorn our streets—nor indulge in rioting and drunkenness, which lead to chambering and wantonness; let us not set up lofty canopies or tables, providing delicacies;—neither let any of us strive to out-do one another in luxury or intemperance; but let us leave these things to THE HEATHEN," &c.

If any thing more was wanting to lower the claims of Christmas as a festival, it would be the fact that it was not generally observed until the fourth century; a century in which the most absurd ideas began to prevail, such as exorcism, administering the communion to infants, celibacy, saint worship, the use of images, PRELACY, monkery, pilgrimages, holy water, and other unscriptural observances. It is hardly fair to expect Churches, whose only standard is the Bible, to follow the practices of that corrupt age!

6. THE CIRCUMCISION. This is the last of the festivals in honor of Christ; and not only last, but least. There is no mention of it for the first five centuries. *Bingham*, who treats of all the early festivals, says not one word about this. It is very certain, therefore, that it is unapostolic. Some writers mention the feast of the circumcision in the sixth century, A. D. 572; but its observance was prohibited by the sixth general council, at Constantinople, A. D. 680; and although St. Bernard had sermons upon it, A. D. 1140, it is not found in the council's catalogue of festivals till the 13th century, when its resumption took place under the most regular Popish auspices.

I have thus far examined the festivals in honor of Christ; and find that Easter and Whitsuntide, or Passover and Pentecost, (including, perhaps, Ascension) were of "Jewish origin," subsequent to the Apostolic age; whilst Epiphany and Christmas were introduced in the third or fourth century, and the Circumcision in the thirteenth. In other words, their histories show that the first two, if not the third, originated with Jews, the fourth with Greeks, the fifth with the ancient Romans, and the sixth with Papists—an origin sufficiently humble to justify Presbyterians in rejecting one and all!

III. Festivals in honor of ANGELS! The heavenly host must not be forgotten by the Calendar. Therefore it sets apart *one* day for ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

What! Angels too? Yes; the "decline and fall" in the dignity of the Church festivals, is now becoming more obvious. The Papists tell many curious fables about the guardianship of Angels, and discourse largely about the homage to be paid to them. It is true that the Bible does not encourage the idea of these angelic "holy days." But their origin dates from a period in which the Bible was very little esteemed, either as a rule of faith or practice.

The worship of Angels began to prevail in the fourth and fifth centuries. At first they were adored "obliquely,"¹ rather than "directly;" but human nature could not long withstand the superstitions of an ignorant age. "Ambrose, A. D. 385, is the first who seems to recommend such a worship; and after this time, we find many marks of adoration paid to Angels, though much fewer than to the Saints." The cause of this deficiency probably was that the worship of Angels gave less scope to superstition.

In regard to this feast for St. Michael and All Angels, *Pierce* remarks, "since many learned and pious men have thought *Michael* to be no other than *Christ, the Angel of the Covenant*, let it be considered with what prudence he is joined to ordinary angels."²—*Bishop Doane*, in endeavoring to make the best of this feast, says "we are taught there was once a great battle, in which the holy angels of God overcame the devil and his angels, and cast them *out of Heaven*." Now almost all commentators interpret the figurative language of the Apocalypse as fulfilled on *earth* and not in Heaven. It were to be wished that the festival had an origin in Heaven, and not on earth, but alas! it was established in the seventh century in the midst of Popish corruptions and abominations. Pope Boniface III. A. D. 606 dedicated a church to St. Michael. Hence this festival was formerly called "The dedication of St. Michael." It is still called in the English Calendar Michaelmas Day.

¹ All departures from truth are at first "oblique." For example, witness the "obliquity" of the *Oxford Tract men*, whom Bishop Boardman has abundantly shown to have swerved from the Apostolic faith. They are now very "direct" Papists. I presume no more calls will be made for *proof*.

² *Pierce*, p. 230.

³ *Milman's Christianity*, p. 503 and 4.

IV. The next "set of days" belongs to festivals in honor of the VIRGIN MARY.

This seems like exploring the dark regions of Popery. It is remarkable that the earlier fathers, as *Tertullian*, A. D. 210, use expressions with regard to the Virgin altogether inconsistent with the reverence of later ages. But so far in the opposite extreme had the Church gone in doctrinal views, even in the fourth and fifth centuries, that some of the fathers then allude to the *ubiquity*, or omnipresence of the Virgin, and of the Saints. "In *theory*, this worship was always a different and inferior kind of worship, but the feelings; especially impassioned devotion—know no logic; they pause not; it would chill them to death if they were to pause for these fine and subtle distinctions. The gentle ascent by which admiration, reverence, gratitude and love, swelled up to awe, to veneration, to worship, both as regards the feelings of the individual and the general sentiment, was imperceptible."¹ Nevertheless, it became real; and Mary soon received the worship due to God alone.

1. THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY was an early festival in the Church, probably of the fourth or fifth century, when Saints began to receive peculiar homage, and Mary in particular. Before this time, Mary does not appear to have been exalted above other mortals. The annunciation (popularly called *Lady Day*,) was in the fifth century the beginning of the ecclesiastical year in the Eastern Churches; their year corresponding to the Jewish year, which began in the latter part of March. This feast was honored by canonical notice in the council of Toledo, A. D. 656.

2. The feast of THE PURIFICATION OF ST. MARY, THE VIRGIN, was established in the sixth century, during the reign of Justinian, A. D. 542. The annual time of its observance was the same as that of the Pagan festival, called *Lupercalia*. The feast of the purification is sometimes called *Candlemas*, because many candles were then lighted, "as had been done on the *Lupercalia*, the festival of the ravishment of *Proserpine*, whom her mother *Ceres* searched for with candles."²

The Roman Catholics say that *Candlemas* derives its name from the circumstance that, at this feast, mass is said over all the candles,

¹ Milman's *Christianity*, p. 503-4.

² Mosheim, I. p. 491.

which are to be piously used during the year!—First, the candles are borrowed from a Heathen festival; and then popish mass sanctifies them to a godly use! In the Episcopal Church, *Candlemas* is celebrated without either *candles* or *mass*; which is certainly a very great improvement, although a departure from “primitive usage.” Another improvement is the omission of the feasts of the Conception and Assumption, (and others,) which were observed in honor of the Virgin as early as the seventh century. This modern purification of the Calendar is much to be commended; but it might have been carried a good deal further, especially if “searched for with candles.”

Honors paid to the Virgin increased regularly in number and importance, until the religion of the Romish Church is now very much a system of Virgin idolatry. How thankful should we be for the Reformation, which brought back to us our SAVIOUR and our SABBATH!

V. The next “set of days brings in order THE APOSTLES.”

In Bishop Doane’s classification, “the Apostles *and other saints*” are thrown together in anti-ecclesiastical confusion. I think that the Apostles, being the source of the EPISCOPATE, ought to be kept separate and distinct from all others. So thought the ancient Church, when it instituted a feast, called “the Apostles’ feast.” “The Churches, however, were not agreed either in regard to the day, or to the persons, who should be honored by it. At one time Peter’s and Paul’s day is celebrated; at another time, that of Philip and James; then the twelve collectively. Separate festivals were in time prescribed to all.”¹ But it took some time to do it. The Council of Mayence, A. D. 813, mentions only two days in honor of the Apostles; one for St. Peter and St. Paul,² and another for St. Andrew. Since that time, however, a separate day has been assigned to each Apostle, except that St. Philip, an *Evangelist*, divides his honors with St. James, an *Apostle*, (!) on the first of May; and that St. Simon and St. Jude are in the same straits on the 28th of October.

¹ Coleman, 442.

²The present festival of “the Conversion of St. Paul” bears date only from the twelfth or thirteenth century. Strange that the Papists of those dark ages should have thought so much of Paul as to give him an ecclesiastical feast.

It ought to be remarked, that so important is the office of Apostle, that the Church has a festival in honor of some one¹ of them in every month of the year, except March. Perhaps if Judas had not turned out badly, that would have been his month.

VI. The last set of feast days is in honor of OTHER SAINTS AND MARTYRS.

1. Among these, the first is the festival of **ST. JOHN, THE BAPTIST**. This is one of the early festivals of the Church, and was observed in the fourth century, A. D. 393; although it was not till A. D. 506 that it was enrolled by the Council of Agde among the greater feasts. Heathenish rites were early mixed up with it. "The feast of St. John and the dancing round a tree set up, were usages among the Romans, Germans and northern nations."²

2 & 3. **ST. LUKE** and **ST. MARK** have also festivals in commemoration of their services and martyrdom; but these festivals were not observed till the 12th or 13th centuries,³ when they were slipped into the calendar by some Pope.

4. **ST. BARNABAS** has a festival—of recent origin—but its precise date I have not been able to ascertain; not having at my command the proper Popish books to which to refer.

5. So has **ST. STEPHEN** a festival, which bears date from the third or fourth century. It is mentioned by *Gregory Nyssen*, A. D. 385. After the pretended discovery of Stephen's relics, his festival was changed to January 6th; but afterwards changed to December 26th. I imagine that, after "a merry Christmas," the mind is not always in a favorable mood to appreciate **MARTYRDOM**.

6. There is also the festival of **THE INNOCENTS**—the innocent lit-

¹ Lord King, speaking of the primitive festivals, says, "there were none observed to the honor of the Virgin Mary, nor of the holy Apostles and Evangelists; and, which may be a little observable, it is very seldom, if ever, that the ancients give the title of saints to those holy persons, but simply style them Peter, Paul, John, &c.; not St. Peter, St. Paul, or St. John." page 273.

Much less did "the ancients" think of dating their communications on "St. Peter's day," &c. By the by, if the Saints' days are to be used for epistolary purposes, it is far better to take the former calendar of the Church of England, (the Popish) which has a saint, or patron, for every day in the year. In this respect, it is ten times better than the present Protestant Episcopal one!

² Mosheim I. p. 491.

³ Dr. Nichols.

the children murdered by Herod. This festival is sometimes called *Childermass*. It formerly occurred at Epiphany.¹

The three festivals of St. Stephen, St. John, and Saint Innocents, are on the three days immediately succeeding Christmas. Wheatley, in his book on the Common Prayer, remarks, "as there are three kinds of martyrdom, the first both in will and deed, which is the highest; the second in will, but not in deed; and the third in deed, but not in will; so the Church commemorates these martyrs in the same order."² Well. Perhaps that is as good an account as can be given!

Some one else conjectures "that martyrdom, love and innocence are first to be magnified, as wherein Christ is most to be honored."

7. The only remaining feast in honor of saints is that of ALL SAINTS. This includes all the non-enumerated.

Nothing shows more strikingly the deteriorating tendency of man's institutions, when thoughtlessly incorporated with those of God, than the history of the festivals in honor of saints and martyrs. They are supposed to have originated in the martyrdom of Polycarp, A. D. 168; and as martyrdoms increased with the Pagan persecutions, the honors paid to those who suffered in the cause of Christ increased with the feelings of veneration and awe, which their heroism inspired. At first, the ceremonies around the graves of the departed saints were of the most solemn and religious character. Each Church met to commemorate the anniversaries of its own local martyrs; commencing on the night preceding, which was always kept as a *vigil*, after the manner of that preceding the Lord's day, in psalmody, hymns and prayers. On these occasions, "the Acts, or Passions" of the martyrs were read, eulogies pronounced upon them, the sacrament administered, and entertainments given by the rich to the poor.

Chrysostom, dissuading his congregation from running to the dia-

¹ Bingham.

² Wheatley, in order to make his case, says, "St. Stephen first, who suffered death both in will and deed; St. John the Evangelist next, who suffered martyrdom in will, but not in deed, being miraculously delivered out of a cauldron of burning oil, into which he was put in Rome; the innocents last, who suffered in deed but not will, not being sensible for what they suffered." p. 223.

bolical entertainments given at Daphne, one of the suburbs of Antioch, tells them "if they desired a corporeal as well as a spiritual table, they might as soon as the assembly was done, recreate and refresh their bodies under a vine or fig-tree near the monument of the Martyr."¹ But these anniversaries, when the persecutions had ceased, soon became the occasions of the most outrageous scandal. *Augustine*, in attempting to defend them, is obliged to admit "I know there are many who superstitiously worship graves and pictures: I know many that drink luxuriously and excessively over the dead, and when they make a feast over the deceased, bury themselves over those that lie buried in the graves." In short, these entertainments were attended with revelings and dancings and all "excess of riot"; and so large was the concourse of people, that the graves of the more eminent saints became extensive marts and trading places. Several councils having in vain attempted to regulate these carnal festivals, they were finally prohibited at the second council of Orleans, A. D. 533.

It was impossible, however, to restrain the homage which had been kindled for the martyrs. As the festivals had degenerated to the degradation of those of the Pagans, so the religion of the age seems to have become a sort of polytheistical Christianity. "Shameful as it may appear, it is beyond all doubt that the worship of Saints and Martyrs was modelled by degrees, into conformity with the worship which the Pagans had in former times paid to their Gods."² Each city, and almost each individual, began to have his tutelar saint; (as in Italy, to this day;) and some beatified being hovered over and hallowed particular spots. A writer well remarks, "men passed from rational respect to the remains of the dead, the communion of hallowed thought and emotion, which might connect the departed Saint to his brethren in the flesh, to the superstitious veneration of relics, and the deification of mortal men, by so *easy a transition* that they never discovered the precise point at which they transgressed the unmarked and unwatched boundary."³ In the "Book of Homilies," the following testimony to the multiplication of the saints occurs. "*Terrentius Varro* sheweth that there were

¹ Bingham. ² Mosheim, I. p. 312. ³ Milman's Christianity, p. 503.

three hundred Jupiters in his time, and no fewer Venuses and Dian-
as; we had no fewer Christophers, Ladies, Mary Magdalens, and
other Saints. *Ænomaus* and *Hesiodus* show that in their time,
there were thirty thousand gods;—I think we had no fewer Saints,
to whom we gave the honor due to God.”

Such being the reverence paid to the spirits of the departed, their
relics soon came in for a share of honor. Miracles were said to
have been wrought at their graves. Their bones were also dug up
and carried to and fro for working wonders; and a disgraceful
traffic was carried on in fictitious relics, even as early as the fourth
and fifth centuries. It came to pass, as a matter of course, that
Churches were erected over the graves of eminent Saints, and called
by their names;¹ and in short, the most impious homage was ren-
dered to sinful mortals.

“The feast of ALL SAINTS was instituted² in the seventh century,
when the wide-spread worship of Saints and Martyrs was a terrific
proof of the ignorance, superstition, and irreligion of the age.
“About the year A. D. 610, the Pantheon, or temple dedicated to
all the gods, was, at the desire of Boniface IV., Bishop of Rome,
taken from the Pagans by Phocas, the Emperor, and dedicated to
the honor of All Martyrs. Hence came the original of All Saints.”³
An original by no means calculated to inspire Christian devotion—
at any rate in a Church, so truly Apostolic as the Presbyterian!

Let us now turn for a few minutes to the FASTS of the Church.

Like the festivals, these also were of human institution. No
“set of days” are enjoined in the New Testament for fasting; nor
is fasting itself enjoined by positive precept. Our Saviour fasted,
and His Apostles; and so do Christians generally, from time to
time. Our Lord, however, did not keep the Jewish fasts, which had
been superadded after the captivity, to the laws of Moses, and which
the Pharisees regarded with such scrupulous formality.⁴ Nor has

¹ The remnants of this custom are still visible in some Churches, where the
names of Saints are used to designate them; as St. George, St. Anne, St. Mar-
ry, St. Stephen, &c.

² When first instituted, it was kept on what is now called Trinity Sunday.
The Calendar, unlike the Bible, has *changes*. The Calendar was made by man.

³ Wheatley, p. 271. Mosheim I. 529.

⁴ Matt. ix. 14-18; and xi. 18-19. Mark ii. 15-22. Luke v. 33-39.

He thought such public stated occasions of fasting useful under His dispensation; or He would have rendered their observance obligatory by express command. The early Christians voluntarily fasted on various occasions; particularly on Wednesday and Friday of each week. Fasting was naturally practised a great deal in those early days of trial, persecution and martyrdom, when the people of God were in jeopardy every hour.

It is astonishing, however, to trace the history of human fasts, and to observe how soon they were desecrated by the rise of asceticism and monkery. With a downward propensity, characteristic of human innovation, these stated fasts in a few years led the way to that "sublime selfishness," which, forgetting the true spirit of Christianity, retired to the seclusion of cells and deserts to inflict self-torture and mourn over bodily lacerations. The claims of this kind of life to superior sanctity, soon led to the establishment of monasteries and convents, to the celibacy of the clergy, and to all the evils of that system of delusion and wickedness, which now goes by the name of Popery. But it is impossible to pursue this subject any further now.¹

Suffice it to say that, after a time, fasting ceased to be a voluntary exercise in the Church. At the council of Orleans, A. D. 538, it was decreed that "any one, who neglected to observe the stated times of abstinence, should be treated as an offender against the laws of the Church." Thus fasts, as well as feasts, were enforced by the authority of councils; and Christians, as *Augustine* says, even in his day, were "more overburdened by ceremonies than even the ancient Jews had been."

I. The fast of *LENT*, (or Spring,) was early in vogue. "This fast," says Bishop Hobart, "probably like other Christian observances, is of *Jewish* origin." Wheatly, in his book on common prayer, says "as to its original, the present Lord Bishop of Bath

¹ See Taylor's "*Ancient Christianity*," a most able work, exposing the tendencies of the Oxford Tract heretics. These men seem to be in favor of the general characteristics of Popery. They speak quite bashfully about "celibacy," which is one of the mysteries to be unfolded by degrees. Their writings, as well as their pupils, are very lenient towards celibacy. Hence, Taylor, in exposing their errors, dwells upon this part of their general system.

and Wells, in his learned discourse concerning Lent, has showed by very probable arguments, that the *Christian Lent* took its rise from the *Jewish* preparation to their yearly expiation.¹ This fast at first continued forty hours, corresponding to Friday and Saturday before Easter, and comprising the period during which our Saviour laid in the grave. Soon the number of days was increased. In the fifth and sixth centuries, they were extended to thirty-six days; and finally four more were added by Gregory the Great, A. D. 580, to complete the forty. Thus Lent not only had a *Jewish origin*, but also a *Jewish finish*—the last by the hand of a Papist!

Lent begins with *Ash-Wednesday*—a day so called on account of the custom of clothing the penitents in sackcloth, and covering their heads with *ashes*. So say *Tertullian, Ambrose* and *Cyprian*. This severe way of beginning Lent is now dispensed with; but the Calendar has such a love of antiquity that, although it gives up the thing, it holds on to the name. Why not give that up too?

The day preceding Good Friday (called *Maundy Thursday*) is also a special fast day in the church. It is called *Maundy* from the first word of the service, “mandatum,” in reference to the *command* of Christ to his disciples to wash one another’s feet. This is a great day among the Roman Catholics. Even the Pope washes the feet of some poor person; but this office does not have much effect on his humility, for on this same day he yearly excommunicates all heretics,—Episcopalians, Presbyterians and all! The holy oils, for baptism, extreme unction, the consecration of *bishops*, chalices, &c. are also now set apart in a “most *awful* ceremony.” *Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Basil, &c.*, write about these oils; but still it is not known that any of the modern High Churchmen yet use them. I dare say they will, by and by.

II. GOOD FRIDAY. This fast is the last day but one of Lent, and is the Friday before Easter. It commemorates the crucifixion of the Redeemer; was of early origin; and passed from a voluntary to a commanded institution in the progress of ecclesiastical innovation. It derives its name from the great “GOOD” which comes to mankind from the death of Christ. The whole of this week (called Passion

¹ Wheatley, p. 231.

week) was formerly kept with extraordinary strictness. Good Friday (or Passion day) was the great fast day of the year. On this day the doxologies were omitted; none bowed the knee in prayer, because thus the Jews reviled Jesus, Matt. xxvii. 29; the sacramental elements were not consecrated; the altars were divested of their ornaments," &c. &c.¹

The Saturday succeeding Good Friday was formerly called "the Great Sabbath," on account of its peculiar sanctity.

III. ALL OTHER FRIDAYS are also ordained fast-days. When they begin to be generally observed in our day it will be time enough to acknowledge the wisdom of their institution.²

"The ancients" observed both *Wednesdays* and *Fridays* as fast days; because, says *Augustine*, "on the fourth day of the week the Jews took counsel to kill our Lord, and on the sixth day he suffered." *Bingham* in his *Antiquities* abundantly shows that BOTH DAYS were kept with EQUAL solemnity in the early ages of the Church. Is it so now? If not, why? oh ye lovers of antiquity!

IV. EMBER-DAYS are another "set" of fast days;—so called probably from the bread baked on *embers*, which the penitents ate. These days occur four times in the year, on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after the first Sunday in Lent, Whitsuntide, September 14th (formerly the feast of the Cross), and December 13th (formerly the feast of St. Lucy.) Ordination, in later years, was usually conferred, during these days, on those who were candidates for "the high and dangerous office of Holy Orders." *Bingham*, however, in his *Antiquities*, demonstrates that "for several ages there were no certain times for ordination, but the Church ordained as the necessity of affairs required." "Ember days" were first called "the fasts of the four seasons." *Pope Leo*, A. D. 445, says "the ecclesiastical fasts are so distributed throughout the whole year that there is a law of abstinence affixed to all the four seasons." These days having been observed with great variations, they were finally arranged in their present order by the council of Placentia, A. D. 1095.

¹ Coleman, p. 438.

² The weekly fast (although "all Fridays" are "holy days" in the Calendar) is not kept by "morning" or "evening service," in St. Mary's Church, Burlington. Reason unknown. I believe the *festivals* are all observed.

Their observance is of merely human authority, and that not of primitive times. The authority, however, being merely human, it matters little whether it be earlier or later.

V. **ROGATION DAYS.** These are the three days, preceding Ascension, and are so called from the prayers, or *rogations* (in Greek, *litanies*) offered on the occasion. *Bingham* shows that it was "a new thing" to appoint this fast in the midst of the Pentecostal festivals! But its origin was owing to a local emergency. The Bishop of Vienna, A. D. 463, set apart these three days for fasting and prayer, during a season of public calamity; there having been a series of earthquakes and storms, during one of which the great Church took fire. By the decree of the council of Orleans, A. D. 511, these days were introduced into the ecclesiastical year. Thus a local and temporary appointment was gradually converted into a perpetual ordinance of the Church.

The origin of *rogation days* will serve to explain the introduction of almost all these fasts and festivals, of human ordination. Commencing with small beginnings, they gradually spread with the increasing love of outward ceremony and formality, until councils took them under their fostering care, and behold—what a Calendar of feasts and fasts we have!

In regard to the general *manner* of fasting, the earlier Christians abstained from food till 3 o'clock; and in Lent till 6 o'clock; also during the latter fast, they did not commonly eat meat, but herbs, bread, &c.—Among Papists, fasting is carried even to Pharisaical formality. They attach great merit to abstinence, and practice much strictness supererogatory. In the Church of England, flesh is prohibited on fast days by act of Parliament;¹ and the reason given is "for the increase of Cattle, and for the encouragement of Fishery and Navigation."—The practice in the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, in general, is not over strict. As that Church is not established by law in this country, the public statutes cannot be consulted to obtain information. But it is believed that their Churches are not opened regularly on fast days; and that the weekly fast is hardly observed at all.

¹ In second and third of King Edward VI. c. 19.

It ought to be remarked, that formerly VIGILS, or night *watchings*, preceded many of the festivals and fasts. It was the custom to pass a great part of the night before certain holy days in devotional exercises and fasting. But these occasions were soon so much devoted to vice and irregularity, that they were prohibited. *Mosheim* says "it is well known what opportunities of sinning were offered to the licentious by the Vigils of Easter and Whitsuntide."¹ *Wheatly* also remarks that "these night meetings came to be so far abused, that no care could prevent several disorders and irregularities."² Human ceremonies always introduce mischief.

The history of these holy days (which has now been given) is the strongest argument against their observance, which can be presented to a pious and reflecting mind. From the first, they have been in close alliance with formality and superstition. They sprang up in the most barren periods of the Church, until finally, in the rank manure of Popery, they flourished "like a green bay tree."

It is perhaps known to all, that the Popish Church observes, to this day, every one of the festivals and fasts on the Episcopal Calendar. The Papists are such lovers of holy days, that *they* think one hundred and twenty too few; and accordingly swell out their list, until every day in the year is overshadowed by the wings of some patron saint. Does this multiplication of ceremonies tend to increase the piety of the Church? On the contrary, there is every reason to apprehend that the Christian graces are injured by the claims of external rites. Scriptural religion is not apt to prosper, in connection with unscriptural observances.

In order to show a little further the shallow pretensions of these "holy days," let us examine BISHOP DOANE'S REASONS for observing

¹ Mosheim, p. 324

² Wheatley, p. 204. A note is added in Wheatly by the American Editor, "*The observance of Vigils is not retained in the American Church.*" Now it so happened that I was informed by a member of St. Mary's Church that "there was to be service to-night (Dec. 31st), it being the vigil of the feast of the Circumcision"! Sure enough, the bell rang for meeting, although "vigils are not retained in the American Church;" and although it is uncanonical to have a vigil before a feast occurring during the Christmas festivals! See Wheatley, p. 204.

them—which days, he says, are “days of religion and times for worshipping God.”

(1.) The first reason the Rector gives is, “*the Church orders it.*” But does *God* order it? That is the important question. The *say so* of tradition is not the standard for men, who have the Bible in their hands. The Church, in the early ages, ordered ten thousand follies, as it grew more and more corrupt; and these “holy days” had their origin, universally, in ecclesiastical innovation. We cannot consent to acknowledge such authority. Our faith is not in man, but in God alone.

It is a fundamental principle of revealed religion, that God prescribes His own worship. Our Saviour said to the Pharisees, (who were great advocates for ceremonies and for tradition,) “in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines *the commandments of men.*”¹ The Apostle Paul, with the emphasis of his Master, says to the Colossians, “why are ye *subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men?*”² It is a wise remark, that “when men’s inventions are tacked to God’s institutions, and imposed accordingly; this is mere human religion.—The commandments of men are properly conversant about the things of men; but God will have his own work done by his own rules, and accepts not that which he doth not himself appoint.”³ Unless the Rector appeals to the Bible, it is in vain that he cries, “the Church!” “Tradition!” We go farther than that; yea, beyond the Church and above tradition, to *God’s own perfect revelation.* The Bible, without the Church, is a perfect book; but the Church, without the Bible, is nothing at all.⁴

(2.) The next reason is, “*every year brings the whole faith before our eyes.*” The first reason appeals to faith, this to sight!

The revolutions of the calendar, turned by a human crank, may indeed bring a panorama of feasts and fasts before the eyes. But this pageantry (*pagantry*) of Saints and Angels on a level with Jesus Christ, has most too much of the formal and Popish about it.

¹ Matt. xv. 9. ² See Col. ii. 20, 22. ³ Henry’s Com’s. Matt. xv. 9.

⁴ If we give up the Bible, we land in Popery. High Churchism would not long be even *via media*.

The year ecclesiastic is a very imaginative and poetical idea;¹ but I have not yet seen its superior practical effects. Christians, who pray, read their Bibles and go to Church on God's holy Sabbath-day, have the faith brought before them oftener than once a year; and moreover, the faith, the whole faith, and *nothing but the faith*.

(3.) These days are "*in affectionate memory of the Apostles and Martyrs of Christ*." But cannot the Apostles and Martyrs be "affectionately remembered," without having festivals in their honor? Because Christ is affectionately remembered by divine worship on the Sabbath, is that any reason why Peter, Paul, Mary, Michael, the Innocents, &c., should be honored in a similar way. I think the best way of honoring the Apostles is to embrace their doctrine, and follow their example.

(4.) These festivals show that "*God lays claim to the week-days as well as Sundays*." Yes, but surely not in festival-keeping! We are indeed to worship God on every day; but God does not claim week-days in the same sense that He does Sundays. He says "six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the *Seventh-day* is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." He no where says "the first of January, which is the feast of the circumcision, is the day of the Lord thy God." Nor does He claim a single one of all the festivals or fasts! That is very remarkable, considering that He is the Head of the Church.

(5.) "*Holy men are brought into a steadfast habit of keeping holy the Lord's day*." If men are holy, they will keep holy, the Lord's day, at any rate. We all know a great many holy men, who do so without keeping the festivals of man's appointment.—Besides, these human holy days interfere with the *peculiar* solemnities of the Sabbath. Witness, for example, the Sabbath profanations in

¹A member of the Roman Catholic Church thus poetically mentions the pretty flower called the Snowdrop, in connection with his ceremonial observances. "Mindful of the pious festivals which our Church prescribes, I have sought to make the charming objects of floral nature the time-pieces of my religious calendar. Thus I can light the taper to our Virgin Mother on the blowing of the Snowdrop, which opens its floweret at the time of Candlemas." Very pretty!

Popish countries, where these saint's days are so well kept! One of their chief mischiefs is the disrepute into which they bring the Sabbath.

(6.) "Because going to Church on a week-day is not a matter of course and custom, as on Sunday; and so it puts a man more on trial whether he will do it by free choice." That is, a festival applies the screws! Now, as there are over one hundred and twenty holy days in the year, "a man" must be pretty well tested from the feast of circumcision (January 1st,) to Innocent's day, (December 28th.) But after all, I should think it much better to "train up a child in the way he should go," than to wait until he is "a man," and then put him on so hard a trial! If he is to be thus tested, these days will be to him any thing but festivals.

(7.) Because "these services are rare blessings." Not so rare either! One hundred and twenty days are more than a third part of the week-days of a whole year. They may be blessings or not, according to the piety felt or sought. The opinion of people generally is against their blessedness; if we may judge from the small number that attend them.

(8.) "Because to go in the evening of these festivals" (fasts too, I trust,) "is a most blessed end to a day's labor." "And there is a calm and stillness about the Church-yard in the evening, which every body must feel most refreshing after a weary day!" So there is to be service "in the evening" hereafter; and people are to be tested both by day and by night! Well, why not keep vespers as well as matins and vigils? The Church-yard's stillness—though a quaint motive—is perhaps a good enough one to keep a human festival! Many may be attracted by the "calm and stillness," unless it be a cold, wintry night. If it be a fine summer's evening, some will think of Gray's beautiful lines,

"Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy ticklings lull the distant folds."

(9.) "Because it is time to pray, not only for ourselves, but for our parish and brethren." This is a most important and laudable

object. But then too much prayer for parish and brethren will lose sight of Peter, and Michael, and Thomas, and Mary; and thus their "affectionate remembrance" will be impaired. We must not "rob Peter to pay" Parish.

(10.) "*And lastly, because it is high time for us to stand more watchfully on our guard.*" Among other things, we should stand more watchfully on our guard against these outward ceremonial observances; or they will greatly interfere with spiritual prosperity. Let us watch against the ordinances of man, and strive to observe the solemnities of God's sanctuary, according to the method of divine appointment. *Thus* shall we be found in the ways of the **APOSTLES**; and living as they lived, may die as they died;—in the hope of translation to a world, where human tradition shall not enter, and where worship is offered to God alone—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

I have thus examined the Bishop's ten reasons; and although they are almost equal in number to the Apostles, I have found nothing else apostolic about them. No proof whatever is even attempted from Scripture. This looks as if there was very little *Bible* in these ceremonies. It is not necessary to notice the subject any further at present.

I will conclude with the remark, that it is very strange that those who lay as much stress upon *divine right*, as Bishop Doane does, should so readily put up with institutions so *thoroughly human* as

MAN'S FEASTS AND FASTS IN GOD'S CHURCH.

Here endeth the first Lesson.

PRESBYTERIAN HOLY DAYS.

THE APOSTOLIC CALENDAR FOR 1842.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

"The Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
JANUARY,	2	9	16	23	30
FEBRUARY,	6	13	20	27	
MARCH,	6	13	20	27	
APRIL,	3	10	17	24	
MAY,	1	8	15	22	29
JUNE,	5	12	19	26	
JULY,	3	10	17	24	31
AUGUST,	7	14	21	28	
SEPTEMBER,	4	11	18	25	
OCTOBER,	2	9	16	23	30
NOVEMBER,	6	13	20	27	
DECEMBER,	4	11	18	25	

"The Sabbath day" — "the first day of the week" — "the Lord's day."

"Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God."

POSTSCRIPT.

Just as this cover was going to press, I came across Bishop Doane's "Consecration Sermon, at Leeds," which is a characteristically clever performance.

(1.) To show the estimate he places on the religion of other denominations of Christians, I quote the following words, which the Bishop has appropriated as a preface to his sermon :

"Let others then make their boast of their new-devised inventions, and aim at heaven by a private and untried way. We must stand upon the old and well-worn way, by which our forefathers, by which the primitive fathers of the Church, the Apostles, and all true Christians have finished their course, and attained to eternal glory. And this way the English Church has disclosed, and clearly displayed to us. If in all things we follow this, turning aside neither to the right hand nor to the left, we shall proceed right onward to the celestial paradise. The end of others is a question which concerns not us: let them look to it themselves."

In the course of the sermon, the Bishop, lifting up his eyes to Heaven, makes the following prayer: (p. 10.)

"Divine and Holy Spirit, who hast promised thy instruction to the meek, chastise our spirits into meekness."

Now every one must admit, after reading the above preface, that there was great occasion for such a prayer. But the only question is, does it appear to have been answered?

(2) I expect it is much easier to transmit "the authority of the Episcopate" than its "grace;" (p. 22.) and its *name* than either.

(3) That those who pretend to be the successors of the Apostles, (p. 19.) may embrace several notions at variance with Apostolic practice and Apostolic writings (which came from God) it has been the object of the foregoing pages to prove.

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