

The Regulative Principle of Worship and Christmas, Appendix A An Historical Examination of the Church's Opposition to Christmas

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The Holy Spirit upbraids the Jew with their holy-days. "Your Sabbaths, and new moons, and ceremonies," says He, "My soul hateth." By us, to whom Sabbaths [i.e., the Jewish sabbaths] are strange, and the new moons and festivals formerly beloved by God, the Saturnalia [i.e., Yule] and New-year's and Midwinter's festivals and Matronalia are frequented—presents come and go—New-year's gifts—games join their noise—banquets join their din! Oh, better fidelity of the nations to their own sect, which claims no solemnity of the Christians for itself! Not the Lord's day, not Pentecost, even if they had known them, would they have shared with us; for they would fear lest they should seem to be Christians. We are not apprehensive lest we seem to be heathens! If any indulgence is to be granted to the flesh, you have it. I will not say your own days, but more too; for to the heathens each festive day occurs but once annually: you have a festive day every eighth day [i.e., the Lord's day].—**Tertullian, *De Idololatria* (2nd century)**.

We have always accounted as an unspeakable abomination before God, all those inventions of men, viz. the feasts and the vigils of saints, the water they call holy, the abstaining from flesh upon certain days, and similar things; but especially the mass.—**Waldenses, *First Confession* (1120)**.

One should abolish all festivals, retaining only the Lord's day.... My reason is this: with our present abuses of drinking, gambling, idling, and all manner of sin, we vex God more on holy days than on others. And the matter is just reversed; we have made holy days unholy, and working days holy, and do no service, but great dishonour, to God and His saints **with** all our holy days.—**Martin Luther (German Reformer), *Address to the German Nobility* (1520)**.

We ought to cease from all work on the Lord's day, as persons zealous for God's glory, and be kind to our servants; and on that day we ought to devote ourselves to the worship of God.... There is no certain determination of time for any Christian fast, and it cannot be found in Scripture that God has either commanded or appointed any particular days.—**Waldenses, *Second Confession* (1532)**.

Those who observe the Romish festivals or fasts shall only be reprimanded, unless [i.e., if] they remain obstinately rebellious.—**Register of the Company of Pastors (Geneva, 1546)**.

Abrogation of Festivals. On Sunday 16 November 1550, after the election of the lieutenant in the general Council, an edict was also announced respecting the abrogation of all the festivals, with the exception of Sundays, which God had ordained.—**Register of the Company of Pastors (Geneva, 1550)**.

By the contrary doctrine, we understand whatsoever men, by laws, councils, or constitutions have imposed upon the consciences of men, without the expressed commandment of God's Word; such as the vows of chastity, forswearing of marriage, binding of men and

women to several disguised apparels, to the superstitious observation of fasting days, difference of meat [food] for conscience' sake, prayer for the dead; and keeping of holy days of certain saints commanded by man, such as be all those that the Papists have invented, as the feasts (as they term them) of Apostles, Martyrs, Virgins, of Christmas, Circumcision, Epiphany, Purification, and other fond feasts of our Lady. Which things, because in God's Scriptures they neither have commandment nor assurance, we judge them utterly to be abolished from the realm; affirming farther, that the obstinate maintainers and teachers of such abominations ought not to escape the punishment of the Civil magistrate.—**Church of Scotland, (*First Book of Discipline* (1560)).**

This one thing, however, we can scarcely refrain from mentioning, with regard to what is written in the 24th chapter of the aforesaid Confession [Second Helvetic] concerning the “festival of our Lord's nativity, circumcision, passion, resurrection, ascension, and sending the Holy Ghost upon his disciples,” that these festivals at the present time obtain no place among us; for we dare not religiously celebrate any other feast-day than what the divine oracles have prescribed.—**The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland** [subscribed by John Knox, John Craig, James Melville, and a host of others], *Letter to the Very Eminent Servant of Christ, Master Theodore Beza, the Most Learned and Vigilant Pastor of the Genevan Church* (1566).

That all days that heretofore have been kept holy, besides the Sabbath days, such as Yule [Christ-mass] day, Saint's days, and such others, may be abolished, and a civil penalty against the keepers thereof by ceremonies, banqueting, fasting, and such other vanities.—**General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, *Articles to be Presented to my Lord Regent's Grace* (1575).**

[W]e abhor and detest all contrary religion and doctrine; but chiefly all kind of Papistry in general and particular heads, even as they are now damned and confuted by the Word of God and Kirk of Scotland. But, in special, we detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist upon the Scriptures of God, upon the Kirk, the civil magistrate, and consciences of men;... [his] dedicating of kirks, altars, days;...—**John Craig** [subscribed by the king and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1580; renewed in 1581, 1590 and 1638], *The National Covenant: or, the Confession of Faith* (1580).

The Kirk of Geneva, keeps Pasche and Yule, what have they for them? They have no institution [from Scripture].—**King James VI** (James I, of King James Bible fame), *Address to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (1590).

If Paul condemns the Galatians for observing the feasts which God himself instituted, and that for his own honour only, and not for the honour of any creature: the Papists are much more laid open to condemnation, which press observations of feasts of men's devising, and to the honour of men.—**Thomas Cartwright** (Nonconformist minister, England), *The Confutation of the Rhemists' Translation, Glosses and Annotations* (1618).

On the day called Christmas Day, the Governor called them out to work as was used. But the most of this new company excused themselves and said it went against their consciences to work on that day. So the Governor told them that if they made it a matter of conscience, he

would spare them till they were better informed; so he led away the rest and left them. But when they came home at noon from their work, he found them in the street at play, openly; some pitching the bar, and some at stool-ball and such like sports. So he went to them and took away their implements and told them that was against his conscience, that they should play and others work. If they made the keeping of it a matter of devotion, let them keep their houses; but there should be no gaming or reveling in the streets. Since which time nothing hath been attempted that way, at least openly.—**William Bradford** (governor, Plymouth colony), *Of Plymouth Plantation* (1621).

Opposed to the ordinance of the Lord's Day are all feast days ordained by men when they are considered holy days like the Lord's Day.—**William Ames** (Nonconformist minister, exiled to the Netherlands; professor of theology at Franeker), *The Marrow of Theology* (1623).

The PASTOR thinketh it no Judaism nor superstition, but a moral duty to observe the Sabbath.... Beside the Sabbath he can admit no ordinary holidays appointed by man, whether in respect of any mystery, or of difference of one day from another, as being warranted by mere tradition, against the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, but accounteth the solemn fasts and humiliations unto which the Lord calleth, to be extraordinary sabbaths, warranted by God himself. The PRELATE, by his doctrine, practice, example, and neglect of discipline, declareth that he hath no such reverend estimation of the Sabbath. He doteth so upon the observation of Pasche, Yule, and festival days appointed by men, that he preferreth them to the Sabbath, and hath turned to nothing our solemn fasts and blessed humiliations.—**David Calderwood** (minister and theologian, Church of Scotland), *The Pastor and the Prelate* (1628).

Concerning ceremonial festivals, of man's making, our practice cannot be objected: because we observe none. We take occasion of hearing, and praying, upon any day, when occasion is offered. We say (with Hospinian, *de Orig. Fest. Christ*, cap. 2.), *Not the day, but the Word of God, &c. puts us in mind of the nativity, resurrection, and ascension of Christ....* For we do not fear...lest *all the Churches of God will condemn us herein*. Those that consent with Geneva, nor those of Scotland;... no nor any that follow Bucer's judgment (in Matt. 12), *I would to God that every Holy-day whatsoever beside the Lord's Day, were abolished. That zeal which brought them first in, was without all warrant of the Word, and merely followed corrupt reason, forsooth to drive out the Holy days of the Pagans, as one nail drives out another. Those Holy-days, have been so tainted with superstition that I wonder we tremble not at their very names.* See the place, Oecolampadius (in Isa. 1:4), thinketh that no wise Christian will condemn us. *I never heard wise man yet, who did not judge that a great part at least of other feasts besides the Lord's Day should be abolished.*—**William Ames** (Nonconformist minister, exiled to the Netherlands; professor of theology at Franeker), *A Fresh Suit Against Human Ceremonies in God's Worship* (1633).

By communicating with idolaters in their rites and ceremonies, we ourselves become guilty of idolatry. Even as Ahaz (2 Kgs. 16:10) was an idolater...that he took the pattern of an altar from idolaters. Forasmuch then, as kneeling before the consecrated bread, the sign of the cross, surplice, festival days, bishopping, bowing to the altar, administration of the sacraments in private places, &c. are the wares of Rome, the baggage of Babylon, the trinkets of the Whore, the badges of Popery, the ensigns of Christ's enemies, and the very trophies of Antichrist: we cannot

conform, communicate, and symbolize with the idolatrous Papists, in the use of the same, without making ourselves idolaters by participation. Shall the chaste Spouse of Christ take upon her the ornaments of the Whore?—**George Gillespie** (Westminster divine), *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies* (1637).

[H]ow can it be denied, that many corruptions, contrary to the purity and liberty of the Gospel, were they never so innocent in themselves, have accompanied these *Novations*, such as the superstitious observing of *Days*, feriatio and cessation from work, on those days, *Feasting-guising*, &c.—**Alexander Henderson** (Westminster divine) and **David Dickson** (professor of theology, Church of Scotland), *The Answers of Some Brethren of the Ministrie, to the Replies of the Ministers and Professours of Divinitie in Aberdeene: Concerning the Late Covenant* (1638).

Festival days are an entrenching upon God's prerogative: for *none can appoint an holy day, but he who hath made the days*, and hath all power in his own hand, which is clear; first, from the denomination of them in both Testaments; in the old they are called the solemn feasts of Jehovah [Lev. 23:1; Ex. 32:5], not only because they were to be kept to Jehovah, but also because they were of his appointing; and so in the New Testament, as we read but of one [holy-day] for the self-same reasons, it is called *The Lord's Day* [Rev. 1:10].—**John Bernard** (Nonconformist minister, England), *The Anatomy of the Service Book* (1641).

This day is the day which is commonly called *The Feast of Christ's Nativity*, or *Christmas day*: A day that hath been heretofore much abused to *superstition* and *prophaneness*. It is not easy to reckon whether the superstition hath been greater, or the prophaneness. I have known some that have preferred *Christmas day* before the *Lord's Day*, and have cried down the *Lord's Day*, and cried up *Christmas day*. I have known those that would be sure to receive the sacrament upon Christmas day, though they did not receive it all the year after. This and much more was the superstition of the day. And the prophaneness was as great. Old Father *Latimer* saith in one of his sermons, That the Devil had more service in the twelve Christmas holy days (as they were called) than God had all the year after.... There are some that though they did not play at cards all the year long, yet they must play at Christmas; thereby, it seems, to keep in memory the birth of Christ. This and much more hath been the profanation of this feast. And truly I think that the superstition and profanation of this day is so rooted into it, as that there is no way to reform it but by dealing with it as *Hezekiah* did with the brazen serpent. This year God by a *Providence* hath buried this feast in a fast, and I hope it will never rise again. You have set out (Right Honourable [House of Lords]) a strict order for the keeping of it, and you are here this day to observe your own order, and I hope you will do it strictly. The necessity of the times are great. Never more need of prayer and fasting. The Lord give us grace to be humbled in this day of humiliation for all our own, and *England's* sins; and especially for the old superstition, and profanation of this feast: always remembering upon such days as these, Isa. 22:12-14.—**Edmund Calamy** (Westminster divine), *An Indictment Against England Because of her Selfe-Murdering Divisions* (1645).

Festival days, vulgarly called holy-days, having no warrant in the Word of God, are not to be continued.—**Westminster Assembly**, *Directory for Publick Worship* (1645).

The General Assembly taking to their consideration the manifold abuses, profanity, and superstitions, committed on Yule-day [Christ-mass] and some other superstitious days following, have unanimously concluded and hereby ordains, that whatsoever person or persons hereafter shall be found guilty in keeping of the foresaid superstitious days, shall be proceeded against by Kirk censures, and shall make their public repentance therefore in the face of the congregation where the offence is committed. And that the presbyteries and provincial synods take particular notice how ministers try and censure delinquents of this kind, within the several parishes.—**General Assembly, Church of Scotland, Act for Censuring Observers of Yule-day, and other Superstitious days (1645).**

Lascivious carousings, drunkenness, harlotry, come from observing of holy days.... [Y]our [i.e., the prelates'] ceremonies that break the sixth commandment, shall find no room in the fifth commandment. Cause the fifth commandment [to] speak thus, if you can: "Notwithstanding that crossing, kneeling, surplice, human holy days occasion the soul murder of him for whom Christ died, yet we the Prelates command the practice of the foresaid ceremonies as good and expedient for edification, for our commandment maketh the murdering of our brethren, to be obedience to the fifth commandment." But if Prelates may command that which would otherwise, without, or before the commandment, spiritual murdering and scandalizing our brother, they may command also, that which would be otherwise without, or before their command, adultery against the seventh, and theft against the eighth, and perjury and lying against the ninth commandment, and concupiscence against the tenth; for the fifth commandment hath the precedency before the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth commandments, no less than before the sixth, which forbiddeth the killing of our brother's soul.... What do our Doctors [the prelates] clatter and fable to us of a right of justice, that mortal rulers have to command in things indifferent, from which the destruction of souls doth arise? For these commandments of rulers: *kneel religiously before bread, the vicegerent image of Christ crucified; keep human holy days; cross the air with your thumb above a baptized infant's face*, at best, are but positive commandments, not warranted by God's word. But shall they be more obligatory by a supposed band of justice that Prelates have over us to command, such toy's then this divine law of God and Nature, *Rom. 14. For indifferent days, meats, surplice, destroy not him for whom Christ died?....* We see not how the ceremonies are left free to conscience, because they are alterable by the Church, for [because] the reason of kneeling to bread, of human [holy] days, of surplice, is moral, not national [i.e., they are ecclesiastical, and therefore moral, not civil, and therefore national].—**Samuel Rutherford** (Westminster divine), *The Divine Right of Church Government and Excommunication (1646).*

[U]surping Prelacy under its shadow, did in the secret and holy judgment of God, change the Glory of God and of our Lord Jesus into the Similitude and Image of the Roman Beast, turning the Power of Godliness unto Formality, his faithful Ministers into corrupt Hirelings, the Power and Life of Preaching into Flattery and Vanity, the Substance of Religion into empty and ridiculous Ceremonies, the Beauty and Purity of the Ordinances into Superstitious Inventions of Kneeling, Crossing, Holy days and the like.—**James Stirling** (minister, Church of Scotland), *Naphtali, or the Wrestlings of the Church of Scotland for the Kingdom of Christ (1667).*

1. That there can be no solemn setting apart of any day to any creature; thus Saints' days are unlawful. For the Sabbath, or Day of *Rest*, is to the Lord, and to none other, it being a

peculiar piece of worship to him who hath divided time betwixt his worship and our work....2. No man can institute any day, even to the true God, as a part of worship, so as to bind the consciences to it, or to equal it with this day [the Lord's day]. That is a part of God's royal prerogative, and a thing peculiar to him to sanctify and bless a day. 3. Even those days which are pretended to be set apart to and for God, and yet not as part of worship, cannot be imposed in a constant and ordinary way (as Anniversary days and feasts are) because by an ordinary rule God hath given to man six days for work, except in extraordinary cases he shall please to call for some part of them again.—**James Durham** (minister, Church of Scotland), *The Law Unsealed* (1675).

Dec. 25. Friday. Carts come to Town and Shops open as is usual. Some somehow observe the day [Christ-mass]; but are vexed I believe that the Body of the People profane it, and blessed be God no Authority yet to compell them to keep it.—**Samuel Sewall** (judge, chief magistrate of Boston), journal entry in *The Heart of the Puritan* (1685).

It is not a work but a word makes one day more holy than another. There is no day of the week, but some eminent work of God has been done therein; but it does not therefore follow that every day must be kept as a Sabbath. The Lord Christ has appointed the first day of the week to be perpetually observed in remembrance of his resurrection and redemption. If more days than that had been needful, he would have appointed more. It is a deep reflection on the wisdom of Christ, to say, *He has not appointed days enough for his own honour, but he must be beholding to men for their additions.* The Old Waldenses witnessed against the observing of any holidays, besides that which God in his Word hath instituted. Calvin, Luther, Danaeus, Bucer, Farel, Viret, and other great Reformers, have wished that the observation of all holidays, except the Lord's Day, were abolished. A Popish writer complains that the Puritans in England were of the same mind. So was John Huss and Jerome of Prague long ago. And the Belgic Churches in their Synod, *Anno* 1578. The Apostle condemns the observation of Jewish festivals in these days of the New Testament, Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16. Much less may Christians state other days in their room. The Gospel has put an end to the difference of days as well as of meats. And neither the Pope nor the Church can make some days holy above others, no more than they can make the use of some meats to be lawful or unlawful, both of which are expressly contrary to the Scripture, Rom. 14:5,6. All stated holidays of man's inventing, are breaches of the Second and of the Fourth Commandment. A stated religious festival is a part of instituted worship. Therefore it is not in the power of men, but God only, to make a day holy.—**Increase Mather** (Nonconformist minister, New England), *Testimony Against Prophane Customs* (1687).

Q. Is there any other day holy besides this day [i.e., the Lord's day]?

A. No day but this is holy by institution of the Lord; yet days of humiliation and thanksgiving may be lawfully set apart by men on a call of providence; but popish holidays are not warrantable, nor to be observed; Gal. 4:10. Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.—**John Flavel** (Nonconformist minister, Dartmouth, England), *An Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism* (1692).

Q. 3. May not the Popish holy-days be observed?

A. The Popish holy-days ought not to be observed, because they are not appointed in the Word; and, by the same reason, no other holy-days may be kept, whatsoever pretence there be of

devotion towards God, when there is no precept or example for such practice in the holy scripture.—**Thomas Vincent** (Nonconformist minister, London), *An Explicatory Catechism: or, An Explanation of the Assembly's Catechism* (1708).

Instead of Endeavours to *extirpate Superstition and Heresie*, as we are bound by the same Articles of the *Solemn League*, and by the “National Covenant to Detaste [*sic*] all Superstition and Heresie without or against the Word of God, and Doctrine of this Reformed Kirk; according to the Scripture...*Gal.* 4:10. Ye observe Days, and Months, and Times, and Years.... *Col.* 2:23, Which things have indeed a shew of Wisdom in Will-worship, and Humility, and neglecting of the Body, not in any Honour to the satisfying of the Flesh. *Tit.* 3:10. A Man that is an Heretick, after the first and second Admonition, reject. Yet in the darkness of the times of Persecution, many Dregs of Popish Superstition were observed, many *Omens* and *Freets* too much looked to; Popish Festival days, as *Pasche*, *Yule*, *Fastings* even, &c. have been kept by many....”—**John M'Millan, of Balmaghie, et al.**, *The National Covenant, and Solemn League and Covenant, With the Acknowledgement of Sins and Engagement to Duties: As they were Renewed at Douglass, July 24th, 1712, With Accommodation to the Present Times* (1712).

I do reckon the civil imposition of the Yule vacance not only unreasonable, but an occasional inlet into the religious observation of the holy days, since this is certainly the *prima ratio legis*, but very burdensome and expensive to lieges. I hear endeavours will be used to alter the law.—**Robert Wodrow** (minister and Scottish church historian), *Letter to Mr. John Williamson* (1713).

The restoring of the Yule vacance, abolished at the Revolution, as it carries in it a studied reflection upon the Reformation then attained unto, so it is most senseless and superstitious in itself, an occasion of much debauchery, and a great prejudice to the lieges, by stopping the courts of justice; and it is most evident, that this and sundry other things were hatched and promoted by ill-affected persons or Jacobites, sent from among ourselves, for no other reason but merely out of wantonness, to kick at our constitution, at the Revolution, and at the glorious reign of King William our deliverer.—**Robert Wylie** (minister, Church of Scotland) et al., *Memorial of Grievances to be Presented to the King* (1714).

1. We think God has appointed one certain day in the week, for the thankful remembrance of those mercies, which he has in common bestowed upon us. Upon that therefore, as often as it returns, all Christians are bound to employ themselves in meditating upon God's works of creation and redemption, in praising God, and in other religious exercises. Hence we judge it needless for men, by their authority, to appoint other days of the same nature; and desire them, who usurp such a power, to produce the commission they have for it.

2. It seems probable to us, that God would not have us observe these yearly Holidays; because we meet with nothing in his word, whereby we can fix the times of the year, when those things happened, which our Adversaries pretend are the occasion of them.—**James Pierce** (Nonconformist minister, Exon, England), *A Vindication of the Dissenters* (1718).

Albeit there be an Act of Assembly 1645. Sess. ult. *Ordering all the Observers of superstitious Days, particularly Yule, &c.—to be proceeded against by Kirk-Censure—the Guilty to make publick Repentance for the same—before the Congregation where the Offence is*

committed—Presbyteries—and Synods, to take particular Notice how Ministers—censure Delinquents of this Kind, within the several Parishes, &c. Yet this seems to be gone into Desuetude, seeing, not only *Masters of Schools* and *Colleges* are accessory to this *superstitious Prophanity*—by granting Liberty or Vacancy to their Scholars at such Times; for which, by Virtue of this *Act*, they ought to be summoned before the Assembly, and censured according to their Trespass. But even the *Elders of this Church* [the author means the Revolution Church—the Church of Scotland], in many Places, are guilty of *observing Yule*, and such as are ordinarily *Communicants*, with Numbers of others in closs Communion with this Church, and yet never one of these censured, but connived at. And what if I should say, too *many Ministers* homologate this sinful Custom? Whereby, through Ministers Unfaithfulness, a young up-rising Generation are left in Ignorance about the Sinfulness of that, and other superstitious Days, &c. too, too much in Fashion in our declining Days.—**Andrew Clarkson** (acting as clerk and compiler for the United Societies, i.e., the Covenanters), *Plain Reasons for Presbyterians Dissenting from the Revolution-Church in Scotland* (1731).

Dissenters...reject the consecrating churches, chapels, cathedrals, priests, garments, altars, liturgies, singing service, litanies, bowings, crossings, cringings, holy days, fasts, feasts, vigils, because not one word of any of them is contained in our only rule of faith.—**Thomas DeLaune** (English Nonconformist Baptist), *A Plea for the Non-Conformists* (1733).

[I]nstead of making progress in a work of reformation, we came in a short time to fall under the weight of some *new* and very heavy *grievances*: As for instance.... Countenance is also given to a superstitious observation of *holy-days*, by the *vacation* of our most considerable civil courts, in the *latter end* of *December*.—**Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Fisher** (founding ministers of the Secession [Associate Presbyterian Church]), *A Testimony to the Doctrine, Worship, Government and Discipline of the Church of Scotland* (1734).

Q. Hath God appointed any other set times to be kept holy to the Lord, besides the sabbath?

A. None but the Jewish festivals or ceremonial sabbaths, which being only shadows of things to come, they expired with Christ's coming; but the command for the weekly sabbath being moral, it continues still in force, Col. 2:16,17; Gal. 4:9-11; 1 Cor. 16:1,2.

Q. Are we bound to keep the holy-days observed by others, such as days for Christ's birth, passion and ascension; days dedicated to angels, as Michaelmas; to the virgin Mary, as Candlemas; besides many others dedicated to the apostles and other saints?

A. Though it be pretended that these days serve to promote piety and devotion, yet we have no warrant from God to observe any of them; nay, it appears to be unlawful to do it: for 1st, God doth quarrel men for using any device of their own for promoting his service or worship, without having his command or warrant for it, as in Deut. 12:32; Isa. 1:12; Jer. 7:30. 2ndly, the apostle Paul doth expressly condemn the Galatians for observing such holy days, Gal. 4:10,11. 3dly, It is a disparaging of the Lord's day which God hath appointed, and a usurping of his legislative power, for men to set days of their appointing on a level with his day, as the institutors do, by hindering people to labor thereupon. 4thly, It is an idolatrous practice to consecrate days to the honor of saints and angels, for commemorating their acts, and publishing their praise; such honor and worship being due to God alone.

Q. Were not these days appointed by the ancient church, and authorized by great and holy men?

A. It was will-worship in them, seeing they had no power to institute holy-days: for, 1st, Under the law, when ceremonies and festivals were in use, the church appointed none of them, but God himself. 2dly, We read nothing of the apostles appointing or observing such holy-days; not a word of their consecrating a day for Christ's birth, his passion, or ascension; nor a day to Stephen the proto-martyr, nor to James, whom Herod killed with the sword. We read of the apostles observing the Lord's day, and keeping it holy, but not of any other. 3dly, These other days are left unrecorded, and uncertain, and so are concealed like the body of Moses, that men might not be tempted to abuse them to superstition. 4thly, These days have not the divine blessing upon them; for they are the occasions of much looseness and immorality. 5thly, Though the observing of these days had been indifferent or lawful at first, yet the defiling of them with superstition and intemperance should make all forbear them.—**John Willison** (minister, Church of Scotland), *An Example of Plain Catechising, Upon the Assembly's Shorter Catechism* (1737).

Q. May the church appoint holy days, to remember Christ's birth, death, temptation, ascension, &c.?

A. No; as God hath abolished the Jewish holy days of his own appointment, so he hath given no warrant to the church to appoint any: but hath commanded us to labour six days, except when Providence calls us to humiliation or thanksgiving; and expressly forbids us to observe holy days of men's appointment, Col. 2:16; Gal. 4:10,11.

Q. What is the difference between a fast day and a holy day?

A. The day of a fast is changeable, and esteemed no better in itself than another day; but a holy day is fixed to a certain time of the week, year, or moon, and reckoned better in itself.—**John Brown, of Haddington** (minister and professor, Associate [Presbyterian] Burgher Synod), *An Essay Towards an Easy, Plain, Practical, and Extensive Explication of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism* (1758).

Not to insist further in enumerating particulars, the presbytery finally testify [*sic*] against church and state, for their negligence to suppress impiety, vice, and superstitious observance of holy days, &c. The civil powers herein acting directly contrary to the nature and perverting the very ends of the magistrate's office, which is to be *custos et vindex utriusque tabulae*; the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath on him that doeth evil. Transgressors of the first table of the law may now sin openly with impunity; and, while the religious observation of the sabbath is not regarded, the superstitious observation of holy days, even in *Scotland*, is so much authorized, that on some of them the most considerable courts of justice are discharged to sit.—**The Reformed Presbytery (Covenanters), Act, Declaration, and Testimony, for the Whole of our Covenanted Reformation, as Attained to, and Established in Britain and Ireland, Particularly Betwixt the Years 1638 and 1649, Inclusive. As, Also, Against all the Steps of Defection from Said Reformation, Whether in Former or Latter Times, Since the Overthrow of that Glorious Work, Down to this Present Day** (1761).

Q. Is there any warrant for anniversary, or stated holidays, now, under the New Testament?

A. No: these under the Old, being abrogated by the death and resurrection of Christ, there is neither precept nor example in scripture, for any of the yearly holidays observed by Papists, and others: on the contrary, all such days are condemned in bulk, Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16, 17.

Q. What crimes doth the observation of them import?

A. The observation of them imports no less than an impeachment of the institutions of God, concerning his worship, as if they were imperfect; and an encroachment upon the liberty wherewith Christ hath made his church and people free, Col. 3:20.—**James Fisher** (minister, Associate [Presbyterian] Burgher Synod), *Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism Explained* (1765).

The *public worship* of God is grievously corrupted, in *England and Ireland*,—by a multitude of superstitious inventions.... A great many devised holidays, saints days, fasts and festivals, are likewise observed; with peculiar offices for the same.—**Adam Gib** (minister, Associate [Presbyterian] Anti-Burgher), *The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession Testimony, Vol. 2* (1774).

Men cannot, without sin, appoint any *holy days*. (1.) God has marked the weekly sabbath with peculiar honour, in his command and word. But, if men appoint holy days, they detract from its honour; and wherever holy days of men's appointment are much observed, God's weekly sabbath is much profaned, Ex. 20:8; Ezek. 43:8. (2.) God never could have abolished his own ceremonial holy days, in order that men might appoint others of their own invention, in their room, Col. 2:16-23; Gal. 4:10,11. (3.) God alone can bless holy days, and render them effectual to promote holy purposes; and we have no hint in his word, that he will bless any appointed by men, Ex. 20:11. (4.) By permitting, if not requiring us, to labour *six days* of the week in our worldly employments, this commandment excludes all holy days of men's appointment; Ex. 20:8,9. If it *permit* six days for our worldly labour, we ought to stand fast in that liberty with which Christ hath made us free, Gal. 5:1; 1 Cor. 7:23; Matt. 15:9. If it *require* them, we ought to obey God rather than men, Acts 4:19; 5:29.—Days of occasional fasting and thanksgiving are generally marked out by the providence of God: and the observation of them does not suppose any holiness in the day itself, Joel 1:14; 2:15; Acts 13:2; 14:23; Matt. 9:15.—**John Brown, of Haddington** (minister and professor, Associate [Presbyterian] Burgher Synod), *A Compendious View of Natural and Revealed Religion* (1796).

We therefore condemn the following *errors*, and testify against all who maintain them: 1. "That any part of time is appointed in divine revelation, or may be appointed by the church, to be kept holy, in its weekly, monthly, or annual returns, except the first day of the week, which is the Christian Sabbath."—**Reformed Presbyterian Church in America (Covenanters), Reformation Principles Exhibited** (1806).

That the Lord's day is the only day appointed by God to be kept holy, though he allows us to set days apart, on proper occasions, for fasting and thanksgiving. Those days which, by men now under the New Testament are called festival or holy days, have no warrant from the word, and are superstitious. Ex. 20:8; Matt. 9:14, 15; 28:20; Col. 2:20-23; Matt. 15:7-9.—**Reformed Dissenting Presbytery, An Act, Declaration and Testimony, of the Reformed Dissenting Presbyterian Church, in North America** (1808).

It is our duty to attend faithfully and industriously to that secular business which is incumbent on us, during the six last days of the week, and not to institute or observe sabbaths of human invention; that we may be prepared for the sanctification of the Lord's sabbath. "*Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work.*" Gal. 4:10, 11. "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed labour upon you in vain."—**Ezra Stiles Ely** (pastor, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.), *A Synopsis of Didactic Theology* (1822).

[The Waldenses] contemn all approved ecclesiastical customs which they do not read of in the gospel, such as the observance of Candlemas, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and the feast of Easter.—**William Sime**, *History of the Waldenses* (1827).

Under the old dispensation, there were a number of days appointed for ceremonial observances. The Jews kept thirty-five in the year, but of these some fell on the Sabbath. While the Mosaic economy lasted, and while they remained in Palestine, these were to be observed; but at the death of Christ they passed away. Hence the apostle says to the primitive Christians, "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath day" (Col. 2:16), or the Jewish Sabbath, on the seventh day of the week, which was now merged in the first. This shews how little they understand the liberty of the gospel, who prescribe for the observance of Christians, a variety of holy days, which are unauthorized in Scripture, and are found in experience to be lost in idleness, or abused in folly. Such days, originating in secular policy, or superstitious excitement, may be marked by names and rites solemn and imposing; yet, wanting the sanction of Jehovah, and the animating breath of heaven, they are soon disregarded as empty forms, hated as encumbrances on public industry, and welcomed only by those whose situation makes them wish for a season and a pretext for amusement and dissipation.—**Henry Belfrage** (minister, Associate [Presbyterian] Burgher Synod), *A Practical Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism* (1834).

[M]en have no right to institute holidays, which return as regularly at certain intervals as the Sabbath does in the beginning of the week. This is an assumption of authority which God has not delegated to them. Holidays are an encroachment upon the time of which he has made a free gift to men for their worldly affairs....—**John Dick** (minister, United Associate Congregation; professor, United Secession Theological Seminary), *Lectures on Theology* (1835).

We believe that the Scriptures not only do not warrant the observance of such days [i.e., "holy" days], but that they positively discountenance it. Let any one impartially weigh Colossians 2:16, and also, Galatians 4:9-11; and then say whether these passages do not evidently indicate, that the inspired Apostle disapproved of the observance of such days.—**Samuel Miller** (professor, Princeton Theological Seminary, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.), *Presbyterianism: The Truly Primitive and Apostolic Constitution of the Church of Christ* (1836).

[W]e testify against the celebration of Christmas, or other festivals of the Papal or Episcopal church.—**Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland**, *Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland: Historical and Doctrinal* (1837).

From what has been said, we may infer that this passage of Scripture gives no countenance to religious festivals, or holidays of human appointment, especially under the New Testament. Feasts appear to have been connected with sacrifices from the most ancient times; but the observance of them was not brought under any fixed rules until the establishment of the Mosaic law. Religious festivals formed a noted and splendid part of the ritual of that law; but they were only designed to be temporary; and having served their end in commemorating certain great events connected with the Jewish commonwealth, and in typifying certain mysteries now clearly revealed by the gospel, they ceased, and, along with other figures, vanished away. To retain these, or to return them after the promulgation of the Christian law, or to imitate them by instituting festivals of a similar kind, is to doat on shadows—to choose weak and beggarly elements—to bring ourselves under a yoke of bondage which the Jews were unable to bear, and interpretatively to fall from grace and the truth of the gospel. “Ye observe days and months, and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.” “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come.” Shall we suppose that Christ and his apostles, in abrogating those days which God himself had appointed to be observed, without instituting others in their room, intended that either churches or individuals should be allowed to substitute whatever they pleased in their room? Yet the Christian church soon degenerated so far as to bring herself under a severer bondage than that from which Christ had redeemed her, and instituted a greater number of festivals than were observed under the Mosaic law, or even among pagans.

To seek a warrant for days of religious commemoration under the gospel from the Jewish festivals, is not only to overlook the distinction between the old and new dispensations, but to forget that the Jews were never allowed to institute such memorials for themselves, but simply to keep those which infinite Wisdom had expressly and by name set apart and sanctified. The prohibitory sanction is equally strict under both Testaments: “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.”

There are times when God calls, on the one hand, to religious fasting, or, on the other, to thanksgiving and religious joy; and it is our duty to comply with these calls, and to set apart time for the respective exercises. But this is quite a different thing from recurrent or anniversary holidays. In the former case the day is chosen for the duty, in the latter the duty is performed for the day; in the former case there is no holiness on the day but what arises from the service which is performed on it, and when the same day afterwards recurs, it is as common as any other day; in the latter case the day is set apart on all following times, and may not be employed for common or secular purposes. Stated and recurring festivals countenance the false principle, that some days have a peculiar sanctity, either inherent or impressed by the works which occurred on them; they proceed on an undue assumption of human authority; interfere with the free use of that time which the Creator hath granted to man; detract from the honour due to the day of sacred rest which he hath appointed; lead to impositions over conscience; have been the fruitful source of superstition and idolatry; and have been productive of the worst effects upon morals, in every age, and among every people, barbarous and civilized, pagan and Christian, popish and protestant, among whom they have been observed. On these grounds they were rejected from the beginning, among other corruptions of antichrist, by the reformed church of Scotland, which allowed no stated religious days but the Christian Sabbath.—**Thomas M’Crie** (minister, Associate Anti-Burgher/Constitutional Associate Presbytery; author and church historian), *Lectures on the Book of Esther* (1838).

It is notorious, that wherever other days than the Sabbath are religiously observed, there that holy day is less strictly observed than its nature demands—less strictly than it is generally observed by those who regard it as the only *set* time which God has commanded to be kept holy. It is also notorious, that holy days, as they are called, are times at which every species of vice and disorder is more flagrantly and more generally indulged in, than at any other time; so that these days are really and highly injurious to civil society, as well as an encroachment on the prerogative of God.—**Ashbel Green** (minister, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.), *Lectures on the Shorter Catechism* (1841).

Stated festival-days, commonly called *holy-days*, have no warrant in the Word of God; but a day may be set apart, by competent authority, for fasting or thanksgiving when extraordinary dispensations of Providence administer cause for them. When judgments are threatened or inflicted, or when some special blessing is to be sought and obtained, fasting is eminently seasonable.—**Robert Shaw** (minister, Free Church of Scotland), *An Exposition of the Confession of Faith* (1845).

Is it innocent and allowable to observe the Passover, (or Easter), the Pentecost, or the Nativity of our Saviour, (Christmas)...? Ans. No; Not even when the observance is left optional with the people; because, (1.) The Passover and the Pentecost are, by the introduction of the new dispensation, laid aside, as typical observances. (2.) The observance of them was partly in accommodation to the early Jewish believers, partly to please pagans with outward parade of worship, in compensation for the loss of their heathen observances, and partly by a declining church, that wished to substitute outward worship for that which is spiritual. (3.) There is no need of them in order to promote religion. The observance of them is will-worship, and will tend to the decline of religion. (4.) Christmas, or the Nativity, is unauthorized. The time is utterly unknown, being left in impenetrable darkness by the Holy Spirit in the divine records; and no doubt this was done because the knowledge of it was unnecessary, and in order to repress will-worship. In a word, while fast-days are appointed on account of the duty to be performed, in set days, or periodical days, the duty is observed on account of the day; and therefore the day must be of divine appointment, or it is sinful.—**Abraham Anderson** (minister and professor, Associate Presbyterian Church), *Lectures on Theology* (1851).

Under the Jewish economy there were other set times and modes of worship, which were abolished when the Christian economy was introduced. Since then no *holidays* (holy days) but the Sabbath, are of divine authority or obligation....—**James R. Boyd** (minister, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.), *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* (1854).

To those who believe in this form of regimen [keeping the Sabbath as a holy day of rest] it forms “the golden hours” of time; and finding no command nor fair deduction from Scripture warranting them to keep any other day, whether (in honor of the Saxon goddess Eostre, that is, the Prelatic) “Easter,” “the Holy Innocents,” or of “St. Michael and all the angels,” they believe that “festival days, vulgarly called *holidays*, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be observed.”—**Alexander Blaikie** (minister, Associate Reformed Church), *The Philosophy of Sectarianism* (1854).

No human power can make it unlawful for men to pursue their industrial avocations during the six secular days. The New Testament plainly discourages the attempt to fill up the calendar with holidays, Gal. 4:9-11; Col. 2:16-23. Even days of fasting or thanksgiving are not holy days; but they are a part of secular time voluntarily devoted to God's service. And if we are to perform these things at all, we must take some time for them. Yet none but God can sanctify a day so as to make it holy. The attempt to do this was one of the sins of Jeroboam, 1 Kings 12:33.—**William S. Plumer** (professor, Columbia Theological Seminary, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.), *The Law of God, As Contained in the Ten Commandments* (1864).

In keeping the last day of the week as a day of religious observance, the Jews, by the very act, expressed their religious acknowledgment of God, who had appointed it, and did an act of worship to Him as its author, in the character of one Creator who made the heavens and the earth. In keeping the first day of the week now, Christians, by the very act, recognise Christ as the author of it, and do homage to Him as the one Redeemer, who on that day rose from the dead, and secured the salvation of His people.... And who does not see, that upon the very same principle the observance of holidays appointed by the Church, as ordinary and stated parts of Divine worship, is an expression of religious homage to man, who is the author of the appointment,—an unlawful acknowledgment of human or ecclesiastical authority in an act of worship. In keeping, after a religious sort, a day that has no authority but man's, we are paying a religious homage to that authority; we are bowing down, in the very act of our observance of the days as part of worship, not to Christ, who has not appointed it, but to the Church, which has. We are keeping the season holy, not to God, but to man.—**James Bannerman** (professor, New College, Free Church of Scotland), *The Church of Christ* (1869).

Festival days, vulgarly called holy days, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be observed.—**Synod of the Associate Reformed Church in North America**, *The Constitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Church in North America* (1874).

The [Dutch] Reformed churches had been in the habit of keeping Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide [Pentecost] as days of religious worship. The synod [Provincial Synod of Dordrecht, 1574] enjoined the churches to do this no longer, but to be satisfied with Sundays for divine service.—**Maurice G. Hansen** (historian, Reformed Church in America), *The Reformed Church in the Netherlands* (1884).

To take the ground that the church has a discretionary power to appoint other holy days and other symbolical rites is to concede to Rome the legitimacy of her five superfluous sacraments and all her self-devised paraphernalia of sacred festivals. There is no middle ground. Either we are bound by the Lord's appointments in his Word, or human discretion is logically entitled to the full-blown license of Rome.—**John L. Girardeau** (professor, Columbia Theological Seminary, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.), *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (1888).

The Protestant Church is fast returning to the heathen ceremonies of the Church of Rome, vieing with her in the observance of "Easter Sunday," etc. By means of Christmas trees, Santa Claus is becoming a greater reality and the object of more affection to children than the Saviour

himself.—**Reformed Presbyterian Church (Covenanter), *Minutes of the General Meeting (1889)***.

That Christians did observe sacred days in the apostle's time these writers [i.e., those who deny the divine sanction and authority of the Lord's day] admit, and also that the usage was approved. But they say it was not founded on any divine authority; the apostle had just repealed all that. Then on whose authority? That of the uninspired church. Their view, then, is that the apostle, sweeping away all Sabbaths and Lord's days, invites Christians to ascend to his lofty and devoted experience, which had no use for a set Sabbath because all his days were consecrated. But as it was found that this did not suit the actual Christian state of most Christians, human authority was allowed, and even encouraged, to appoint Sundays, Easters and Whitsuntides for them. The objections are: first, that this countenances 'will-worship,' or the intrusion of man's inventions into God's service; second, it is an implied insult to Paul's inspiration, assuming that he made a practical blunder, which the church synods, wiser than his inspiration, had to mend by a human expedient; and third, we have here a practical confession that, after all, the average New Testament Christian does need a stated holy day, and therefore the ground of the Sabbath command is perpetual and moral.—**Robert L. Dabney** (professor, Union Theological Seminary, Virginia; Theological School at Austin, Texas; University of Texas; Presbyterian Church in the U.S.), "The Christian Sabbath," in *Discussions, Vol. 1* (1890).

[T]hose who quote those portions of Scripture in opposition to the idea of a divine obligation on Christians to observe the Sabbath are found for the most part, in one section of the Church, and as members or dignitaries therein they are very far from being consistent. Their reasoning on behalf of their theory and their practice are diametrically opposed. If the Apostle Paul were permitted to revisit earth, we might imagine him addressing them somewhat after the following manner:—'Ye men of a half-reformed Church, ye observe days and times. Ye have a whole calendar of so-called saints' days. Ye observe a Holy Thursday and a Good Friday. Ye have a time called Easter, and a season called Lent, about which some of you make no small stir. Ye have a day regarded especially holy, named Christmas, observed at a manifestly wrong season of the year, and notoriously grafted on an old Pagan festival. And all this while many of you refuse to acknowledge the continued obligation of the Fourth Commandment. I am afraid of you, lest the instruction contained in my epistle, as well as in other parts of Scripture, has been bestowed upon you in vain.'—**Robert Nevin** (minister, Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland and editor of the *Covenanter Magazine* in Ireland), *Misunderstood Scriptures* (1893).

Q. 49. What are some of the festival seasons of the Church of Rome?

A. They are very numerous; among them the following are the most prominent:—Christmas, Lady Day, Lent, Easter, and the Feast of the Assumption.

Q. 50. What is the meaning of Christmas?

A. It is a festival held on the 25th of December, in honour of the birth of Christ. On this day three Masses are performed: one at midnight, one at daybreak, and one in the morning.

Q. 51. When was this festival introduced?

A. The spurious decretals attributed its institution to Telesphorus, Bishop of Rome, in the first half of the second century; but the Fathers of the first three centuries make no mention of it.

Q. 52. What is its most probable origin?

A. That it was not Christian is manifest from the fact that the day on which the feast is observed could not have been the day of Christ's birth, inasmuch as from December to February is the cold and rainy season in Palestine, when the shepherds could not have been "keeping watch over their flocks by night." The festival is to be traced partly to the tendency in the fourth century to multiply such seasons, and, by introducing a festival for each period in Christ's life, to complete "the Christian year," and partly to the growing tendency in the church to conciliate the heathen by adopting their religious customs.

Q. 53. Are there any features in the Christmas festival that point to a Pagan origin?

A. There are several: the name, the time of its observance, and the ceremonies associated with it.

Q. 54. Explain these features in detail.

A. The name "Yule Day," given to Christmas, is Pagan. According to some the word Yule is derived from hvel, a wheel, and was meant to designate the Pagan sun feast in commemoration of the turn of the sun and the lengthening of the day. According to others it was the Chaldee name for "infant," and was meant to designate the feast in honour of the birth of the son of the Babylonian Queen of Heaven. The time indicates a Pagan origin, for it was at the time of the winter solstice that the Pagan festival just referred to was celebrated. The ceremonies of the "Drunken festival" of Babylon have their counterpart in the wassail bowl and the revels that in all Popish countries have been characteristic of Christmas.

Q. 55. Is this festival warranted in Scripture?

A. No. The Scriptures are silent regarding the day and month of Christ's birth, and it is admitted by the best writers that the precise day cannot now be ascertained from any source. Christ commanded His disciples to commemorate His *death*, but He gave no command concerning His *birth*.—**John M'Donald** (minister, Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland; member, Scottish Reformation Society), *Romanism Analysed in the Light of Scripture, Reason, and History* (1894).

There is a ritualism against which George Gillespie delivered a destructive blow by his work on "English-Popish Ceremonies Obtruded on the (Reformed) Church of Scotland"—the ritualism of saints' days and holy days—and in which he described these and other ceremonies as the "twigs and spriggs of Popish superstition." These and other similar rites and ceremonies have been repudiated by the Presbyterianism of this northern kingdom without a dissentient voice for the last 300 years.... If a number of ministers in Presbyterian charges where no ritualism exists were to resolve to ritualise and Romanise their congregations, could they adopt better measures than those in operation by ritualists? Their plan of campaign would be marked by the following stages at considerable intervals:—adverse comments on the simplicity of the worship observed;... introduction of saints' days and holy days, including Ash Wednesday, Maunday Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday;... Would they not be toying all this time with the trinkets of Babylon?—**Dr. James Kerr** (pastor, Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland), "The Scriptural Doctrines Violated by Ritualism," in *Romanism and Ritualism in Great Britain and Ireland* (1895).

[Things forbidden by the fourth commandment]: The erection and regular observance of other holy days. Had God seen their regular recurrence was desirable they would have been appointed. Their use has been spiritually damaging. They often become centers of ceremonialism

and sensual worship.—**J. A. Grier**, (professor, Allegheny Theological Seminary, United Presbyterian Church), *Synoptical Lectures on Theological Subjects* (1896).

There is no warrant in Scripture for the observance of Christmas and Easter as holy days, rather the contrary (see Gal. 4:9-11; Col. 2:16-21), and such observance is contrary to the principles of the Reformed Faith, conducive to will worship, and not in harmony with the simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.—**General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States** (Southern Presbyterians), *Deliverance on Christmas and Easter* (1899).

Q. 7. Is it not a daring intrusion upon the prerogative of God to appoint as a stated religious festival any other day or season, such as Christmas or Easter?

A. It is an impeachment of the wisdom of God and an assertion of our right and ability to improve on his plans.—**James Harper** (professor, Xenia Theological Seminary, United Presbyterian Church), *An Exposition in the Form of Question and Answer of the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism* (1905).

The observance of Holy days had been rejected at the Reformation, and the people of Scotland desired no change [as mandated by the Perth Articles passed in 1618].... An Order in June 1619 commanded universal obedience to the Articles.... So strong was the opposition that little impression was made by such proceedings.... The general result was that only a small minority, and these chiefly official persons, kneeled at Communion or observed Easter or Christmas; even this was due simply out of deference to the king's wishes.—**Sheriff Orr, Alexander Henderson: Churchman and Statesman** (1919).

Festival days, commonly called holy-days, having no warrant in the Word, are not to be observed.—**Associate Reformed Presbyterian Synod, Constitution of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church** (1937).

In former times the Reformed Presbyterian Church was solidly opposed to the religious observance of Christmas, Easter and other special days of the same kind.... [W]e should realize that we Covenanters, in opposing the observance of Easter and other "holy" days, are only holding to the original principle which was once held by *all* Presbyterians everywhere. It is not the Covenanters that have changed.... [T]he apostle Paul regards this observance of days as *a bad tendency*: "I am afraid of (for) you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."... Paul wondered what was wrong with their religious knowledge and experience, that they should have become so zealous for the observance of days.—**J. G. Vos** (minister, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America), "The Observance of Days" in *Blue Banner Faith and Life* (1947).

Here I am alone in the library and apparently everyone has gone from Machen Hall until Friday morning. Now it is 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday. You may think this dismal. Well, I love it. It is a delightful change from the usual stir. I have had two good days in the Library. Monday was taken up with committee meetings, forenoon and afternoon. I hope to be here all day tomorrow. I have not even accepted a dinner engagement for what they call 'Christmas.' I hate the whole business.—**John Murray** (professor, Westminster Seminary, Orthodox Presbyterian Church), "Letter to Valerie Knowlton, Dec. 24, 1958," in *Collected Writings, Vol. 3* (1958).

What was originally the conviction of the churches in regard to the holy days?

The Reformers such as Calvin, Farel, Viret, Bucer and John Knox were opposed to observing the holy days.

2. *What were their motives for this?*

- a. That they were not divine but human institutions.
- b. That they brushed aside the importance of Sunday.
- c. That they gave occasion to licentious and heathen festivities.

3. *What then did they prefer in regard to preaching the facts of Christ's birth, death, etc.?*

That it be done on regular Sundays. On the Sunday before Christmas the Christmas story was preached, etc.

4. *How is it then that the ecclesiastical synods still made provision for the observance of the holy days?*

a. They did so as a concession to the Authorities, which clung tenaciously to the holy days as vacation days for the people.

b. The churches permitted the ministers to preach on these holy days in order to change a useless and unprofitable idleness into a holy and profitable exercise.—**K. DeGier** (minister, Netherlands Reformed Church, the Hague; teacher, Theological School at Rotterdam), *Explanation of the Church Order of Dordt (1968)*.

It is just this attitude of indifference to the Constitution that has brought us to the state we are in in the P.C.U.S. Whereas, earlier, as is reflected in the 1899 deliverance about Christmas and Easter, there was meticulous concern for staying with the standards, and the strict interpretation of Scripture on even such a matter as these two days. Now there is a complete reversal to the point of adopting the liturgical calendar of past tradition, without any Biblical basis.—**Morton Smith** (professor, Greenville Theological Seminary, Presbyterian Church in America), *How Is the Gold Become Dim (1973)*.

Holy days. The Free Presbyterian Church rejects the modern custom becoming so prevalent in the Church of Scotland, of observing Christmas and Easter. It regards the observance of these days as symptomatic of the trend in the Church of Scotland towards closer relations with Episcopacy. At the time of the Reformation in Scotland all these festivals were cast out of the Church as things that were not only unnecessary but unscriptural.—**Committee appointed by the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church, History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. 1893-1970 (ca. 1974)**.

Recently denominations that never had calendars before were induced by the National Council of Churches to adopt the practice.... How can such non-biblical forms of worship be defended? The Puritan principle, that is, the Biblical command, is that in worship we should neither add to nor subtract from the divine requirements.... [Professor] James Benjamin Green, *Studies in the Holy Spirit* (Revell, 1936), has urged Christians to celebrate Pentecost: "There are three great days in the Christian year: Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday, and we are not true to our faith when we allow Whitsunday to fall into the background.... It has ranked with Christmas and Easter. The three together are the three throned days of the Christian year."

It is amazing that a professor in a Presbyterian seminary should be so Romish and anti-Reformed. Scripture gives us our rules for worship, and, to repeat, from them we should not subtract, nor to them should we add. We should turn neither to the left nor to the right. Now,

Scripture does not authorize us to celebrate Pentecost. The same is true of Christmas. It began as a drunken orgy and continues so today in office parties. The Puritans even made its celebration a civil offense. And yet an argument for celebrating Pentecost was, “Don’t all Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter?” No, they do not. My father’s family and church never celebrated Christmas, nor did the two Blanchard administrations in Wheaton College. But what about Easter? Surely we must celebrate Easter, shouldn’t we? Yes indeed, we should, as the Scripture commands, not just once a year in the spring, but fifty-two times a year.—**Gordon H. Clark** (professor, Covenant College, Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod), *The Holy Spirit* (1993).

Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter are Romish sacred days. By this we mean that they have their source in Roman Catholic tradition, rather than in Scripture.... [T]here have been times in the history of the Reformed churches when the truth on the subject of sacred days received reverent attention. Already, before John Calvin arrived in Geneva at the time of the great Reformation, the observance of Romish sacred days had been discontinued there. This had been done under the leadership of Guillaume Farel and Peter Viret. But Calvin was in hearty agreement. It is well known that when these traditional days came along on the calendar, Calvin did not pay the slightest attention to them. He just went right on with his exposition of whatever book of the Bible he happened to be expounding. The Reformers, Knox and Zwingli, agreed with Calvin. So did the entire Reformed church of Scotland and Holland. At the Synod of Dort in 1574 it was agreed that the weekly Sabbath alone should be observed, and that the observance of all other days should be discouraged. This faithful Biblical practice was later compromised. But that does not change the fact that the Reformed churches originally stood for the biblical principle. The original stand of the Reformed churches was Scriptural. That is the important thing.—**G. I. Williamson** (minister, Orthodox Presbyterian Church), *On the Observance of Sacred Days* (n.d.).

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