

ARTICLE II.

THE FESTIVALS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH COMPARED WITH
THOSE OF OTHER ANCIENT FORMS OF RELIGION.

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JUSTLY to exhibit this comparison it will be necessary first to take a cursory view of those festivals which were instituted in the ancient church and have continued, with greater or less variations, until the present time. These resolve themselves into three grand divisions, in each of which there is one great festival bearing a peculiar relation to the other of the same class, as their common centre. These great festivals are Christmas, Easter and Whitsunday. Of these the first two relate to the scenes of Christ's humiliation on earth; the last to his glorious exaltation and power as displayed in the shedding forth of the Holy Spirit. Each of these feasts is preceded by preparatory rites, and followed by corresponding festivities. So that from the first of December to the Sunday of whitsuntide these successive solemnities form a connected representation of the leading events in the life of our Lord from his incarnation to his triumphant ascension. He became flesh and dwelt among us, subject to all the infirmities of our nature; he suffered and died; and arose in glorious power whereby he is able to provide for all his followers to the end of the world. These are the great truths in our Lord's history which this series of festivals commemorates. They remind us, both of the deepest humiliation and the highest exaltation of the Son of God, and represent the highest display of divine grace to man. The cycle of Christian festivals throughout illustrates historical truths of the deepest interest, and exhibits the relations of the Christian world to the great Head of the church. In both these respects they are well suited to exert a happy moral influence upon those who observe them.

Christmas commemorates the birth of Christ; God himself becoming man. This great event indeed is represented by two so-

¹ Translated from the treatise of Dr. Karl Ullmann of Heidelberg entitled, "Vergleichende Zusammenstellung des christlichen Festcyclus mit den Vorchristlichen Festen." Re-printed from the third edition of Creuzer's *Symbolik*, 1843.

lemnities; the *birth* of Jesus on the twenty-fifth of December, when this Divine Being entered on his earthly existence, and became subject to all the infirmities of human nature; and the day of his *baptism* on the sixth of January, when he first manifested himself as Christ, the promised Messiah. On this occasion his divine power and glory were publicly revealed; and, for this reason, the day is styled Epiphany, the manifestation.

For this day some preparation is necessary. The advent is accordingly celebrated four successive sabbaths previous by singing, prayer, and religious instruction. Just as the whole economy of grace, as manifested in the history of the Jews and taught by all the prophets, from Enoch to John the Baptist that stern preacher of repentance, was only preparatory to the coming of our Lord, so these festive days preceding Christmas are preparatory to a suitable celebration of his advent. They are designed to call to mind the promises to the fathers, and to excite an earnest expectation and longing for the fulfilment of the same.

The observance of the birth of Christ as a religious festival began in the fourth century in the church of Rome, and subsequently in the eastern church, on the twenty-fifth of December. By this solemnity it was proclaimed how the eternal Word became flesh; and how, by becoming man, he made it possible for man himself to become like God himself. But in addition to this union between God and man, Jesus, by being born of a woman, exhibited also the tenderest of all human relations, that of parent and child. Christmas therefore is a festive celebration expressive of the happiness of the human family, and of the purest relations of domestic life. All this the ancient church recognized in its instructions on this occasion, and ancient usage has established this significant import of the day.

The infancy of Jesus is also peculiarly honored by the festivals which are observed in immediate connection with this day. Since the fourth century it has been customary to celebrate, on the twenty-sixth of December, the death of Stephen the first martyr, as standing nearest the manger of the infant Saviour. The *death* of the martyr was, according to the phraseology of the ancient church, his birth-day. This connects itself immediately with the birth of Christ who gave him strength and grace for that scene of suffering in which he yielded up his spirit and fell asleep. But the soul of the holy martyr was not lost in death; it was only born to a new and nobler state. Hence the familiar saying of the

fathers: *Heri natus est Christus in terris, ut hodie Stephanus nasceretur in coelis.*

Next followed the memorial of John, the beloved disciple, which naturally connected itself with that of the birth of Christ. He especially taught us that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He was also a martyr; not indeed like Stephen, but in a spiritual sense. For it was the custom of the church to reckon all martyrs who fearlessly stood up as witnesses for the truth, not counting their own lives dear unto them, though they may at length have died a natural death.

As these days commemorate those who testified their love for Christ, the one, by a long life of undeviating fidelity, and the other, by a heroic death, so another commemorates those who, in tender, unconscious childhood, yielded up their lives for the preservation of the infant Saviour. The twenty-eighth of December, Innocents' day, was set apart in memory of the innocent children who suffered death by the jealous cruelty of Herod. Thus these martyr-feasts are connected with that of the birth of Christ. This connection illustrates the deep earnestness with which the ancient church regarded the death of Christ.

But the solemnities of this occasion may also be viewed in a more cheerful light. They present a delightful emblem of a holy family, of which the holy child Jesus is the principal object of interest. In this family John the beloved disciple was also included, having been recognized, after the death of Jesus, as the son of Mary. At the manger appeared also wise men from the east, with costly gifts, doing homage to him. Angels too, in songs from heaven, announced his advent. Thus all that is endearing in female worth, and maternal tenderness, in friendship, truth and childish innocence, combined with the profound reverence of the wise men, does but exalt the more the memory of that great day, on which was born our Saviour and our heavenly king who is Christ the Lord.

Between the day of the birth of Christ and of his manifestation, there is another which commemorates an important event of his life,—his circumcision. *Festum circumcisionis et nominis Jesu.* The later fathers of the church connected with the observance of this day the festivities of the new year's day, by which means it was dishonored by many wanton and extravagant rites adopted from heathen nations. Jesus not only let himself down to all the infirmities of our nature, but was made under the Law, and sub-

mitted to all its conditions, that by fulfilling all righteousness he might magnify that law and make it honorable.

The feast of epiphany concluded the solemnities connected with that of the birth of Christ. This is an ancient oriental festival; and may have been established, through the influence of the Gnostics, as early as the second century. It was originally observed in memory of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist; at which time he first appeared as the Messiah, the promised deliverer of his people, and was solemnly announced, as the Son of God, by a voice from heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him in the form of a dove. But the import of this feast was modified considerably in the western church. At first it was consecrated to the memory of his public manifestation. Then, not attaching so much importance to his baptism, this church observed epiphany as commemorative of his public recognition as king of nations and Saviour of the world. This point of time they recognized in the worship of the wise men, whom they regarded as the representatives of the whole gentile world. These eastern sages were regarded, in the middle ages, as kings bearing the names of Caspur, Melchior and Balthasar. Thus, by means of many fictions and works of art, the festival became known as the day of the three kings. But in the eastern church it has uniformly been observed as a memorial of the baptism of Jesus.

In the sixth century the feast of purification or of the presentation of Christ in the temple was added to these which are connected with Christmas. The time of holding this feast, styled Candlemas, from the number of lights which were borne in procession on the occasion, was necessarily determined by that of Christmas on the twenty-fifth of December.

The solemnities of Easter stand in close connection with those of Christmas. Of the historical origin of this feast there can be no doubt. With essential variations, it sprang from the passover, the great festival of the Jews, to which it retains many striking analogies. It is the most ancient and the most significant of all the festivals of the Christian church. It commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This momentous event, so important in the scheme of grace, is signalized, both by this great annual festival, and by the weekly observance of the Lord's day.

Easter week comprises the most important events connected with the mission of Christ on earth, and the most striking evi-

dence of God's amazing grace to man. It is based entirely on those historical facts in the life of Christ which characterize him as the Saviour of mankind,—his sufferings, death, and resurrection. The deepest sorrows here blend themselves with the most glorious triumphs.

This great festive season is preceded by a preparatory fast of forty days, the carnival, *caro vale!*

The solemnities immediately connected with Easter begin with Palm-sunday; commemorative of our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, when the enthusiastic multitude strewed palms in the way before him. The tragedy begins with a triumphal procession; unnatural, indeed, and inconsistent, because merely an earthly triumph; and oh! how unlike that of the eternal king on his entry into the city of the New Jerusalem above. The shouts of the tumultuous assembly and their loud hosannas are soon to be exchanged, by the malice of the priests, for their maledictions and phrenzied exclamations of rage. And yet the blessed Saviour, meekly submissive to his Father's will, calmly proceeds in full consciousness of all this to meet his certain death.

First of all he institutes the Lord's supper, expressive of the grace of God, and the fellowship of saints. The memory of this transaction is perpetuated by Maunday Thursday, *dies mysteriorum*, *dies natalis*—*calicis*, *dies viridum*, etc. In many churches this is connected with the washing of feet, in imitation of a similar act of our Lord. It is intended to represent the mutual love and reciprocal offices of kindness which Christians ought to exhibit one towards another.

Then follows that day of awful suffering, and of amazing grace, when Jesus died upon the cross for the sins of the world,—Good Friday. It is expressive of the surpassing love of Christ in dying for the salvation of man. But the benevolent ends of this sacrifice were accomplished by mysterious sufferings. All was darkness and gloom. The sun itself was shrouded in darkness. All nature, in sympathy with the sufferings of the great Deliverer, gave signs of woe. How much deeper then the sorrow with which the heart of man should be touched on this occasion. Hence the expressive silence and sadness with which the day is solemnized.

Saturday following was named the Great, or Holy Sabbath. On this day the Lord lay in his grave, and rested from the great work of redemption, as also on the night following. This night was also observed with peculiar solemnity, that sacred night of all nights. The church assembled in silent sadness, and passed

its mournful vigils in watching, in prayer, and in torch-light processions. In connection with this solemnity the ancient church was accustomed to foreshadow, by peculiar rites, the second coming of the Son of man.

But when the morning dawned, oh, what a morning! It was announced with the triumphant exclamation, *The Lord is risen!* yes, verily the Lord is risen indeed was the universal response. Easter now is fully come. Easter, that day of joy, of salvation, that royal, triumphant day; that day of light, of life and of salvation, that feast of feasts. Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. The ancient dispensation has passed away; and the new now begins. For this reason the ancient church began the new year with this day. In like manner the Christian sabbath, the resurrection day, is not, like the Jewish, the conclusion of the seven days, but the beginning of a new week.

The conclusion of Easter was Whitsunday, *Dominica in albis, dies neophytorum*, etc. On this day the neophytes, candidates for church membership, were received into full communion by appropriate solemnities, after which they laid aside the white garments with which they had been clad, and in which they appeared in public on this occasion.

The cycle of Whitsunday commemorates the complete manifestation and exaltation of Jesus Christ. His earthly course is completed; he lives indeed still, but only as our risen Lord. As with the Jews the interval between the passover and pentecost was holy time, so also with Christians, the seven weeks between Easter and Whitsunday were religiously observed. It was the favorite time for solemnizing the rite of baptism. As a symbolical representation of the resurrection of Christ, all were accustomed, during this interval, to stand in prayer. The Acts of the Apostles were read and expounded, because this book particularly treats of his resurrection. None fasted during this season. Business was, as much as possible, suspended, and the time devoted to festivity as a prolonged thanksgiving. In a word, the whole was a joyous Sunday, a religious holiday, a prolonged echo of the acclamations of the resurrection morning.

The last of all these days relating to our Lord's mission on earth was the Ascension, when the life of Jesus, which began in the manger ended in the glories of heaven. Then he went up on high to take his promised place at the right hand of the Fa-

ther; where, in the fulness of divine majesty, he reigns, Lord of heaven and earth.

The first act of his grace as the exalted Saviour, was the shedding forth of his Spirit on the day of pentecost. This is the significant, typical import of the day. It is the true pentecost of the church. It is the celebration of the continued working of his power in his church, by the Holy Ghost, and of the arming of his apostles with spiritual gifts for the promulgation of his gospel.

On the first of May the western church kept, not improperly, the day of all the apostles; for it was the day when they all assembled to celebrate the triumph of their Lord over the grave, and to be enlightened respecting their destiny and their duty. But at a later period this day was restricted and observed as sacred to the memory of Philip and James.

The octave of Whitsunday was, in the ancient Greek church, a feast in memory of all the holy martyrs. But in the western church it became, in the middle ages, with reference to the doctrine of the trinity, Trinity sunday. This concludes the cycle of Whitsunday; and is, of consequence, the termination of the whole round of solemnities comprising the three great cycles of festivals in the church. By the Ascension the eye of the mind was raised towards heaven; by the gift of the Spirit, on the day of pentecost, it was illuminated from on high; and now, on this day, it is turned to contemplate the greatest, the most profound of all the mysteries of heaven, the trinity of the adorable God-head.

In the interval between Christmas and Whitsunday many sacred days were interspersed, devoted to the virgin and the apostles; such as the visitation, the ascension, the birth and the conception of the virgin; and the days of Peter and Paul, of Bartholomew, of Simon and Judas, not Iscariot, and of Andrew. But it is sufficient for our purpose to designate particularly three great feasts which occur within this term of time. These are John the Baptist's day, June 24; All Saints, Nov. 1, and All Souls, Nov. 2. Nor must the feast of all the angels be forgotten. This occurred on the twenty-ninth of Sept. So that throughout the whole year there was no considerable interval of time without some religious solemnity. The whole circle of the year was crowded with days which were set apart in memory of some event more or less interesting and important to the church.

Relation of the Festivals of the Church to the Seasons of the Year.

We have hitherto treated only of historical events connected with the festivals of the church. These, beyond doubt, were the principal occasion of the institution of these holidays. Though established at different and somewhat distant intervals of time, they are presumed to have been based on the historical facts of the gospels even though this relation may not be distinctly apparent with respect to some particular festival. But these festive occasions have also a certain relation to the seasons of the year. In general they are so arranged that nature herself seems to harmonize with these manifestations of a higher spiritual life. The course of the seasons corresponds with that of these occasions, giving new interest and importance to them. They are not indeed the principal occasion of these ordinances of the church; neither on the other hand, is the harmony between them altogether accidental. It has a deeper and more intimate relation.

The nativity occurs just at the time of the winter solstice. The days are then the shortest; the sun, sinking to its lowest point in the heavens, sends forth a faint and feeble ray; and all nature seems touched with decay and death. But from this point begin the symptoms of returning life. The sun, ascending in its course, renews its strength. As if beginning itself a new life, it gives certain promise that it will again renew the whole face of nature. Just at this time the church celebrates the birth of Christ, that sun of righteousness, arising with healing in his wings.¹ Christ came in a wintry season of the moral world when all spiritual life seemed dead. But as in the natural, so in the moral world, it was only an apparent death. He arose, giving joyful evidence that the beams of truth and of love, proceeding from him, would quicken the dead to newness of life, and overspread with verdure the realms of death.

¹ This coincidence is noted by many ancient writers, particularly by Christian poets, as Aurelius Prudentius in that familiar passage:

Quid est, quod arctum circulum
Sol jam recurrens deserit?
Christusne terris nascitur,
Qui lucis anget tramitem?—*Hymn 11.*

There is a passage of similar import in Paulinus of Nola, Poematt. 118. And similar assertions of the fathers which Jablonski has collected.—Opus, T. III. p. 355 seq. ed. Te Water.

Easter occurs in the spring. It is therefore commemorative alike of a natural and a moral resurrection. As the seed sown, that was lost in the earth, now sends forth its germ under the sun's reviving rays, so man, dead in sin, puts away the corruptions of the flesh, and lives anew under the quickening influences of the Sun of Righteousness. Such are the interesting analogies between Easter and the season of the year to which it is assigned. It commemorates at once the springing of the year both in a natural and a moral sense.¹

The analogies of Whitsunday to nature are not so striking, but the comparison does not fail even here. This festival celebrates the highest exercise of power by our exalted Lord. Author of a new and spiritual creation he manifests himself to the church in his highest glory. So also in nature. That which at the nativity was only the object of hope and of desire, which at Easter was in budding promise, appears now in the strength and beauty of maturer growth, and ripening for the harvest. Whitsunday occurs while the corn in different latitudes, is yet in the ear, or in the midst of harvest. It was the commencement of the spiritual harvest of the apostles, who were themselves the first fruits of the Spirit, the beginning of that great harvest which was to be gathered from among all people upon the face of the whole earth.

Relation of the Festivals of the Christian church to those of the Jews.

Several of the festivals of the church evidently have a direct *historical* reference to those of the Jews; while both have a common relation to the spiritual and physical nature of man. Of the analogy between Easter and Whitsunday and corresponding

¹ This analogy has not escaped the notice of the ancient fathers of the church. Gregory Nazianzen in his oration upon spring, and the martyr Mamos on Easter Octave, says: *νὸν ἔαρ κοσμικὸν, ἔαρ πνευματικὸν, ἔαρ ψυχαῖς, ἔαρ σώμασιν, ἔαρ ὀρώμενον, ἔαρ ὑόρατον.* The same thought is more clearly expressed in a hymn of Venantius Honorius on the Resurrection of Christ:

Salve festa dies, toto venerabilis ævo,
 Qua Deus infernum vicit et astra tenet,
 Ecce renascentis testatur gratia mundi,
 Omnia cum Domino dona rediisse suo.
 Namque triumphanti post tristia tartara Christo,
 Undique fronde nemus, gramina flore favent,
 Legibus inferni oppressis super astra meantem
 Laudant rite Deum lux, polus, arva, fretum.
 Qui crucifixus erat, Deus ecce per omnia regnat,
 Danique creatori cuncta creata precem.

Jewish festivals there can be no doubt. And the same has been affirmed, though without sufficient reason, of Christmas by comparing it with the feast of purification.

Like the Christian festivals the three great feasts of the Jews have reference, both to the seasons of the year, and to important historical facts. The Passover relates chiefly to history; the pentecost, to the season; and the feast of tabernacles, equally to both. The origin of the passover is indicated in its name, and is familiar to all. It commemorates the fact that Jehovah, when he slew the first-born of Egypt, passed over the dwellings of the Jews and saved all their first-born alive. It celebrates also the deliverance of the people from Egyptian bondage. By this great event they became again an independent people. The nation was born again on that day. It was therefore the birth day of the children of Israel.¹ It is particularly worthy of notice that the bringing of the first fruits of the harvest was connected with the celebration of this festival after the arrival of the people in the promised land, which indicates its reference to the season of the year. It was a national thanksgiving for the blessings of the year; and only as such is it observed by modern Jews, forgetful of its historical associations.

The Pentecost, on the contrary, related originally to the season of the year. It was a festive celebration of the conclusion of harvest, by the offering of new bread and meal, and occurred fifty days after bringing the first sheaves in the second day of the passover; hence the name pentecost, from *πεντηκοστή*. The festivities of the occasion were limited to one day; but the entire interval between the passover and the pentecost was regarded as a sacred season. Though originally a feast of the seasons, it has also an historical interest with reference to the giving of the law on Sinai. Of this indeed neither the Old Testament nor Philo give any intimation; but it is recognized by the fathers, particularly by Augustin.² This historical reference however appears to have had its origin, not in the Christian church, but in Jewish tradition. The other festivals relate to some historical fact; and especially it is worthy of notice that the gift of the Spirit on the day of pentecost was attended with the exhibition of fire like the giving of the law on Sinai. To these considerations may be

¹ "Israel's Geburts- und Lebensfest."—Bähr, *Symb. des Mos.* II. 628.

² "Occiditur ovis, celebratur pascha, et, interpositis quinquaginta diebus, datur lex, ad timorem scripta digito Dei.—Epist. 55. § 16. See also *Contra Faustum*, 32. 12.

added the evidence of the rabbins, especially of Maimonides.¹ This rabbinical testimony is indeed of later date, but it may with much greater probability be referred to Jewish tradition than to an unfounded conjecture of the fathers.

The feast of tabernacles, celebrated by dwelling in booths, and by more numerous and larger offerings than any other, clearly has, like the passover, a twofold relation, to historical truth and to the season of the year. The historical reference is indicated both by the name and by the significant act of dwelling in booths, to the manner of life of the Israelites in the wilderness. The Israelites, dwelling in their settled habitations in the promised land, kept this day in joyful remembrance of the guidance of Jehovah, which brought them in safety through their pilgrimage to this promised possession. It was also a festival of thanks in honor of the vintage and the gathering in of the fruits; and was therefore called the feast of the *ingathering*.² In both respects it served to unite the people to the Lord, their guide, their protector and their provident benefactor. The sensual gratifications connected with the occasion gave place to higher and more refined enjoyments, and each found in the other a natural foundation and expression. This was also the conclusion of the series of great festivals, and as the crowning festival was styled the feast of feasts, the greatest of all feasts. The circumstance that it was a feast of thank-offerings for the fruits of the year, and celebrated, it may be, with excessive demonstrations of joy, led Plutarch to regard it as a bacchanalian festival, as might be very natural and grateful to a pagan. But this theory is justly rejected by a late writer on the festivals of the Jews.³

In all these festivals, admitting the truth of what has been said respecting the historical reference of the pentecost, we notice a twofold relation; the remembrance of great deliverances wrought of old for Israel, and a thankful recognition of divine goodness in the continued providence of God and the annual bounties of the year. They address themselves both to the sensual and spiritual nature of man, and harmonize, both in form and spirit, with the theocracy of the Old Testament.

¹ In the Tract, More neboch. l. 41. In the more ancient book, Cosri, by R. Jehudi Hallevi, pentecost is styled *memoria datæ legis*, p. 163, ed. Buxtorf. Comp. Buxtorf, Synag. c. 20. p. 438. According to Pesach. F. 68. 2, it was in memory of the giving of the law on Sinai.

² Exodus 23: 16. 34: 22.

³ Quæst. Sympos. Lib. 4. p. 671, 746. Wyttenbach George. *Die Jud. Feste*, p. 276.

The transfer of the first two Jewish feasts to that of Easter and Whitsunday is very apparent. Easter in the Christian church is a feast of deliverance in a sense infinitely surpassing that of the passover. It is not merely the deliverance of a nation from the power of their oppressor, but the triumph of a world over the power of death and the grave. It is deliverance from sin, and restoration to a new and heavenly life. It is not the offering of the paschal lamb, but one infinitely surpassing that made for the sins of the world; not the first fruits of the earth, which are of no account in the sight of God, but the first fruits of them that sleep in the earth. It is the Prince of Light, once dead; now coming forth in the greatness and glory of his power to renew the earth and reap an immeasurably precious harvest. Easter is also a festival in honor of spring; the springing, not of the natural, but of the moral world. The verdure which here quickens and thrives is to flourish in immortal vigor.

The Jewish and the Christian pentecost have also similar relations. The one celebrates the promulgation of the law; the other, the first remarkable communication of the Spirit for the spread of the gospel; the one, the letter of the law engraven on stone for the institution of a visible theocracy; the other, the new law of the Spirit, inscribed on the heart to establish the invisible kingdom of God; the one, a harvest-festival in the kingdom of nature; the other, in the kingdom of grace; the one ends the harvest as a joyful conclusion of the festive season of the seven weeks of harvest; the other begins the spiritual harvest with the thousands converted by Peter on this occasion. The interval between the passover and the pentecost was esteemed sacred in the Jewish church; and in the Christian, the same is religiously observed.

The feast of tabernacles has not indeed the same clear analogies to any Christian festival, but it has many points of resemblance to the Christmas holidays, both in its import and its mode of celebration. "It was a season of universal joy; all was hilarity; everything wore a holiday appearance; the varied green of the ten thousand branches of different trees; the picturesque ceremony of the water-libation, the general illumination, the sacred solemnities in and before the temple; the feast, the dance, the sacred song; the full harmony of the choral music; the bright joy that shone in every countenance, and the gratitude at harvest-home that swelled every bosom—all conspired to make these days a season of pure, deep and lively joy, which in all its ele-

ments finds no parallel among the observances of men."¹ The analogy between all this and the festivities of the christmas holidays is sufficiently obvious. Still it must be acknowledged that the observance of christmas as the nativity of Christ is ascribable rather to pagan than to Jewish influence in the Christian church.

The analogies which have been traced between Jewish and Christian festivals to say nothing of others, would not have been specified had they not been adduced by distinguished fathers and teachers in the church; manifestly indicating that the connection between the feasts of the Jews and of Christians was formerly better understood than at present.

Analogy between the festivals of the Christian church and of Pagan nations.

Inasmuch as the Christian festivals, like the Jewish from which they were in a measure derived, have a certain reference to the seasons of the year, we might naturally expect in these festivals some analogy between them and pagan festivals, which were evidently based on the seasons. Still the difference between the festivals of pagans and Jews was great, and between the former and those of the Christians it must of necessity be much greater. Ancient paganism was the religion of nature. Its festive seasons in honor of its gods must be expected to harmonize with nature in the changes of the seasons, now reviving the face of the earth, now pouring forth from her full horn the blessings of the year, and now again overspreading with decay and death the gay scenes of her own creation. Paganism contemplates the sun, the moon, the stars, and the varying seasons as they roll, exciting hope, inspiring joy, and bringing sorrow in endless succession; and but dimly descries, in the imagery of nature, the moral lessons which she conveys. Christianity, on the contrary, as a spiritual religion more intent on moral relations than on the natural order of events, contemplates, not so much the vicissitudes of nature in the revolutions of the seasons as the providence displayed in their endless roll. When in her festivals and her fasts she commemorates scenes of joy or of sorrow, these are not such as come in the ordinary course of nature, but from a higher source. The festivals of the church, however, have still a reference, though remote and secondary, to scenes in nature, and

¹ The above extract is inserted in place of original remarks more brief but of a similar import by the author.

were derived in some degree by tradition from other systems of religion. It seems proper therefore to trace the mutual relations between these and the pagan festivals of antiquity by noticing their coincidences in chronological order and a few of their most striking resemblances. These analogies have been drawn out at length by the learned,¹ so that we may with more propriety restrict ourselves to a limited comparison.

January, the portal of the year, was named from the god Janus. The first day of the month was sacred to him and to Juno; and though not a festival, was joyously celebrated by giving presents styled the *januæ* and the *strenæ*.² The second of January commemorated the return of Isis from Phœnicia, by the use of cakes made in the likeness of a hippopotamus bound in chains. The custom of giving new year's presents remains with manifold modifications until the present day. The first of January was also a triumphal feast in honor of the conquest of Jupiter over Briareus, or of the sun over winter; the festival of the return of the sun towards the summer solstice.

January sixth, the day assigned by the Greek church to the baptism and epiphany of Jesus, was, in Egypt the festival of Osiris returned, or found again.³ In this we may notice a pagan feast which was evidently transferred to the Christian church, and remains in part to this day. In the time of Chrysostom it was customary, on the night before epiphany, to draw water in a vessel and keep it as holy water. The consecration of holy water on this occasion is one of the imposing solemnities of the Greek church. The Armenians celebrate epiphany especially by the baptism of a cross, by immersion, and the Abyssinian Christians religiously bathe on this occasion and receive the benediction of their priests; which travellers have understood to be a renewal of baptismal vows.

February was the month for purification, when all impurity, physical and moral, political and religious was supposed to be put away. Juno Februæ was the goddess of purity; the meaning of februare being to cleanse, to purify. Such was the import

¹ Hospinian, De Festis Judæorum et Ethnicorum, and De Festis Christianorum Tiguri. 1592. Hamberger, Rituum quos Romana ecclesia a majoribus suis gentilibus in sua sacra transtulit, enarratio, Götting. 1751. Von Hammer, in den Wiener Jahrbh. 1818. B. 3. p. 149. Bähr, Symbol. des Moses. 2. B. 545—565.

² *Strenæ* vocantur quæ datur die religioso, omnis boni gratia.—Test. s. h. v. p. 343.

³ The connection between these two festivals is ably discussed by Jablonski, Diss. I. II. tom. III. p. 317—375, ed. Te Water.

of the month not only among the Romans, but also with the Egyptians and Persians. The latter are accustomed to prepare for themselves talismen to protect them against wild beasts, and the tutelary divinity for this month is Sapandomad, the pure and the purifier. They have also at this time a feast by torch-light processions as well as of purification, both of which are united in the Christian festival of the purification or candlemas, celebrated on the second of this month of purification, and by torch-light processions.

On the thirteenth of February the Romans celebrated the *Faunalia*, appropriately a pastoral feast and also a funeral festival, *Manibus parentatur*. During this month it was customary to put away whatever had become old; the remains of the dead which were impure were entombed anew. The family of Brutus and Cato began their funeral solemnities in December, about the time of All-souls in the Christian church.

The *luperci*, also a pastoral festival, occurred on the fifteenth of this month. This was attended with phrenzied excesses. With only a small covering upon the loins, the people ran like madmen through the streets, striking all whom they might meet with thongs of goat-skins. All distinctions of rank were disregarded, and all badges of office laid aside.

On the twentieth of February the Romans held a family festival when parents invited all their near relatives to a feast, analogous to the love-feast of the church.

March was sacred to Mars, the spouse of Venus, and the impersonation of the powers of nature. It was the opening of spring, universally celebrated as a festive occasion. There is the strongest reason to believe that the Egyptians celebrated this festival at *Papremis* with dramatic representations by the priests.

At Rome was observed on the fifteenth of March the feast of *Anna Porsenna*, which was the Roman feast of tabernacles. It was both a vernal and a political festival, commemorative of the secession of the plebeians. On this occasion the people gave themselves up to festivity and rejoicing, building for themselves booths on the Tiber and *Numicius*, eating and drinking. After the death of Caesar, on the Ides of March, it became associated with sorrowful recollections and was named the *paricidium*.

The feast of *Isis* was held at the beginning of March as a naval festival, while it also had a reference to spring. The Indians kept an inconsiderable feast to *Durea*, the god of nature. In

Greece and Rome were celebrated festivals to the god of wine, the dionysia, liberalia or bacchanalia.

Palm Sunday, which usually occurs in this month though of different import, corresponds with the festivals celebrated by the Indians and Athenians by bearing of branches of palms in procession. The former have also a festival in which they cover the forehead with ashes as with us on Ash Wednesday.

The festivals of this month are in honor of the reviving influence of spring, the resurrection of nature, the Easter of natural religion. The Persians celebrate at the time of the vernal equinox a great festival to Neurus, and at the autumnal equinox another to Ormuzd; the one, in honor of the earliest springing of the year; the other, of the full maturity of harvest. The northern nations also celebrated the opening of the year by a similar festival in March and April. The name itself of Easter was doubtless derived from a feast kept by the Germans in honor of the goddess of nature and of light, Ostur, Eastr, Eastre, allied perhaps to Astarte, whom the Anglo-Saxons, from whom the Germans descended, before their conversion however to Christianity.¹

April is sacred to Venus the favorite of Mars, when the festivities of spring, begun in March, were continued. Such were the Thargelia at Athens, and subsequently the Demetrian and Eleusinian mysteries. In Rome were celebrated mysteries of Ceres, the feast of Magna Mater and the Palilia. On this festival which commemorated also the founding of Rome, among other rites significant of pastoral life, the people were accustomed to make fires of stubble and straw and in succession to leap through it as is customary on St. John's day. This custom also prevails among many people.

But the most imposing of these festivals in Rome were the Floralia, from the twenty-eighth of April to the third of May, celebrated in honor of spring and the blossoms of spring. These days were the Saturnalia of spring, and passed in wilder extrav-

¹ Apud nos (Anglos) Aprilis Eosturmonath, qui nunc pascalis mensis interpretatur, quondam a dea illorum quae Eostre vocabatur et cui in illo festa, celebrant, nomen habuit, Beda, De Ratione Temporum, c. 13. tom. II. p. 81.

With him also agrees Grimm, Deutsche Mythologie, p. 180—182, who refers to this as an illustration of the transfer of heathen representations over to Christianity. Compare Münschausen in Gräter's Bragan, VI. 21, and 88. Ideler's Chronol. I. 516. Augusti Denkwürdigkeiten, vol. 2. p. 221—224.

agance than the Lupercalia. The people universally gave themselves up to frantic joy. Every house was crowned with blossoms, the streets were strewed with roses, and every person indulged in frolic and merriment with all whom he met. Connected with these festivities were also mimic dances of a wanton, licentious character. In all which we have a type of the Roman carnival and of other festivals of the church.

In May occurred several feasts relating to demonology and the shades of the dead, such as the feast of the lares and lemures, with which also that of Summanus was connected and also those semi-annual festivals, the compitalia and larentalia. On these days the regions of the dead were supposed to stand open and all places to be haunted by the shades of the dead. The remains of this popular superstition may be seen in Germany where a vast assembly of evil spirits is supposed to hold on the night of the first of August their assembly.

In June the Romans were accustomed to hold festivals in honor of Vesta, as a personification of the principle of fire in the natural and in the moral world.¹ It was the festival of the holy fire. The Persians had at this time their festival of baptism by water and by the Spirit. On the twenty-fourth of this month the Christian church celebrates the birth of John the Baptist which perpetuates in *St. John's fire*, this ancient rite. The solemnity was assigned to this day with reference to the nativity of Christ; the one, being in the summer solstice; the other, in the winter. In him arose the sun of the New Testament, as in John set that of the Old Testament. In nativitate Christi dies, crescit, in Johannis nativitate decrescit. Profectum plane facit dies quum mundi Salvator oritur; defectum patitur, quum ultimus prophetarum generatur.²

Autumn has of course its harvest festivals. But it had also its sad as well as joyful solemnities. The Magi observed in the latter part of October a funeral feast by setting forth food for the souls of departed heroes. In the beginning of November the Egyptians commemorated the death of Osiris. In Rome the compitalia occurred. In the church the corresponding festival of All-souls is observed on the second of November.

About the middle of December occurred again a Roman carnival, the Saturnalia, when all was hilarity and joy. All distinctions of rank were forgotten, and slaves became, for the time,

¹ Nec tu aliud Vestam quam vivam intellige flammam. Ovid Fastor. VI. 291.

² Augustin, Sermo 12 in Natal. Dom.

freemen. Expensive entertainments were prepared for them at which they were served by their masters, and every child expected a present, as now at Christmas. The joy of the occasion was brightened by loosening the bonds of the criminal and allowing the prisoner to go free.

The twenty-fifth of December was memorable as the birth-day of Mithras; *dies natalis solis invicti*. The sun, that invincible conqueror, was then born anew. To this day the fathers of the church designedly assigned the observance of the nativity of Christ, the sun of righteousness, so that we can see the analogy between Christmas and the birth-day of Mithras and between the epiphany, Jan. 6, and the epiphany of Osiris, and also between this and the feast of the sun among the Greeks. At the time of the winter solstice the feast of the Egyptian Minerva, *Neith*, was probably held at Saïs. This divinity was honored as the dark invisible cause of all things, especially of light. The festival was celebrated by splendid illuminations, and was denominated, *λυξο-ξαια*. So that in almost all nations festivals were celebrated at each solstice by bonfires and illuminations which are perpetuated in the display of lights on Christmas eve, on St. John's day and in the illuminations of the Juel festivals of the Goths.

Remarks.

For a just view of the results of the foregoing inquiry, it will be necessary to take into consideration the design to be answered by religious festivals generally, and the character of these in different religions.

Religious festivals are peculiar to all forms of religion. They are the natural expression of a religious principle within, not the device of a priesthood nor of the founders of different forms of religion. They have their origin both in the nature of man and of religion itself. Religion is a revelation of God; made, not equally at all times and in any place, but on special occasions; which favored seasons of the manifestation of the divine Being religiously held in remembrance, become festive seasons for the cultivation of the religious spirit of man. Even pantheism, which worships the god of nature as uniformly manifested in every thing, has its special seasons for the honor of its universal divinity. Man is, naturally, variable in his religious feelings as in every emotion. He needs opportunities and occasions in which to collect his wandering thoughts, to stir up his spirit and kindle

anew the dying flame of devotion within. This necessity in man is the natural occasion of religious festivals.

But as men are known by their gods, so their religion is manifested by their festivals; between which there is a remarkable analogy and connection, as well as a manifest difference and progression. The difference results chiefly from the diversity of objects which are the subjects of these festive honors. In paganism it is nature deified. In Judaism, it is the god of nature; a national God, bestowing blessings on his peculiar people by the bounties of his providence, and by the special guidance of his people. In Christianity it is the Father of the whole human family, embracing all in his boundless benevolence, and revealed as the Holy One, the moral governor of the universe, revealed in the gospel of his Son, and proclaimed in the church established by him. The festivals of the heathen are essentially feasts of nature. Whatever historical interest they may have is subordinate or mystical. The remarkable diversity in them is ascribable to diversity of climate and an endless variety in the relations of life. They are not strictly national feasts, resulting not from the peculiar social relations of any people, but yearly festivals which have their origin in the peculiarities of the seasons and climate of certain countries. They are local and natural rather than national.

The feasts of the Jews, on the other hand, comprehend both natural and *moral* relations. From their peculiar theocracy their history is inseparably connected with their festivals, and whatever reference these may have to the seasons, it is designed to direct the mind to the God of nature who directs its endless round and is seen in their continual change. But the moral design of these festivals is especially to perpetuate a sense of the divine interposition in selecting them from the nations of the earth as a peculiar people. The feasts of the Jews accordingly are exclusively national festivals, the object of which was to excite and sustain a national and peculiar spirit among the people.

The festivals of the Christian church are purely historical. But the great events to which they relate are the most momentous that in the history of the world have ever occurred. They strike deeper into the heart and spread wider in their relations than any other scenes which have been exhibited on the theatre of this earth. They tell of the love of God. They tell of his amazing scheme of grace, to bless and save all mankind, so that all of every people and kindred and tongue have a common interest in the great events which are commemorated in the festivals of the

Christian church. They are accordingly neither local nor national, but universal. In a word, it results immediately from the nature of the different forms of religion that pagan festivals are local and national; the Jewish, strictly national; while those of the Christian church are purely moral and religious, and universal in their adaptation to man. From this characteristic difference in the nature of these festivals results a corresponding variety in the mode of celebrating them. The festivals of pagan nations are celebrated by symbols, representing the powers of nature, or in rites which represent the changes to which the world is subject in heaven and earth. They call into action natural desires and fears, which, without due restraint, lead to wild excesses. As the exhibitions of the sensual nature of man, these passions, knowing not the restraints of any divine law, may lead to any excess of riot and bacchanalian revelry.

The Jewish festivals, on the contrary, were all prescribed by law, and are themselves only a part of the national institutions of the great Lawgiver of the Jews. They are essential for the appropriate manifestation of the piety of an Israelite. They are part of a very earnest and simple faith which excludes the deities of natural religion. They have a partial relation to the laws of nature sufficient to give scope to the passions of the human heart, but these are held in check by the higher principles of a spiritual law. The moral influence of these feasts was good in bringing the people to repentance and reconciliation with God.

Christian festivals are not the result of any law, natural or divine; but of the free spirit of Christianity. They are the natural expression of a pious heart, which, though ever in grateful communion with our Lord, seizes upon those great events in his life which most forcibly illustrate the grace of God in Jesus Christ, as occasions for more refreshing communications of his Spirit. Their appropriate rites are accordingly extremely simple, consisting in singing, in prayer and the reading and exposition of the Scriptures. The joy and sorrow connected with them are purely spiritual; the one, sweetly elevating the soul to God, the other, gently subduing it into godly contrition before Him.

Now by taking into view these characteristic distinctions, in connection with the undeniable fact that much pertaining both to pagan and Jewish festivals has been transferred to those of the Christian church, we may perceive the analogy and connection between them. The latter are assigned to different seasons of the year in close conformity with the first. These analogies

may indeed have been accidental ; it is also true that two great festivals, Easter and Whitsunday, are established on historical events of which paganism knows nothing. But we must not forget that both of these have their prototype in Jewish festivals which have a distinct reference to the seasons of the year, and which, without deifying the powers of nature, seek to improve them as the means of leading the heart to nature's God. So that there is a general connection pervading all these forms of religion that unites even those Christian festivals with those of paganism and Judaism. To these also other Christian festivals have an analogy yet more striking ; such as Christmas, St. John's day, all-souls, all-saints, the apostles' day and that of the Virgin Mary. The analogies of Christmas and St. John's day, which occur in the summer and winter solstices, to the festivals of other forms of religion are particularly striking. Christmas is assigned to this period without the least historical evidence. It is indeed possible, but not at all probable, that the birth of Jesus occurred on the twenty-fifth of December. The traditions of antiquity were exceedingly discordant on this subject, and it was not until the fifth century that the Romish church decided upon the observance of this day. But the probable reasons for appointing this day in commemoration of the Saviour's birth have been already intimated.

May not the fathers of the church be presumed also to have had some reference to the festive seasons of the heathen in establishing the cycle of Christian festivals ? or were they led by their own reflections to establish them with reference to the seasons of the year ? The contrast between these and those of idolatrous nations which occurred at the same time would be the more striking, and influential in gaining converts to the Christian faith. And if the course of nature were made to illustrate the significance of a feast of the church, even though it carried the mind far beyond the limits of the natural world, the impression made by the festival would only be strengthened by the analogy. Certain it is that the ancient writers often insisted in their discourses on these analogies. Christianity rejected not the teachings of nature but sought to sanctify and give them a proper direction, by raising higher her voice of wisdom. Neither does she sunder the thread of history, but presses into the service of Christ the lessons which are drawn from the records of the past. Not indeed that the order of religious festivals was arranged with primary reference, either to any harmony, or to any contrast of them with the course

of the seasons. The life of Jesus and the great events connected with the spread of his religion were the prevailing considerations in the institution of these festivals. But it is equally certain that the relations of Jewish and pagan festivals to the analogies of nature had also an important influence in establishing that harmony which subsists between those sacred festivals in the church and the changes of the year in the revolutions of the seasons.

"These as they change are but the varied God—
Mysterious round! what skill, what force divine,
Deep felt in these appear!"

ARTICLE III.

THE SANSKRIT LANGUAGE IN ITS RELATION TO COMPARATIVE PHILOLOGY.

By B. J. Wallace, Professor of the Greek and Latin Languages in Delaware College, Newark, Del.

COMPARATIVE Philology is a recent science. The name, no doubt, is taken from Comparative Anatomy in which a system is evolved by a careful examination of the relative structures and functions of animals. This comparison of languages had never been instituted, except casually, until the present century. Von Humboldt, Bopp, Grimm (and more recently Burnouf, Lassen and others) are here the great names. By bringing laboriously together the languages with the history and character of the nations of Middle and Western Asia, Northern Africa and Europe, they have developed the most brilliant results, the central and more valuable languages of the world classifying themselves into two great families, called respectively the Shemitish and the Indo-European. From these labors and as a foundation by others, a complete revolution has been nearly accomplished in philosophical grammar, lexicography, and the methods of classical study. Memory, instead of reigning supreme, and holding firmly immense masses of heterogeneous facts, now sits at the feet of her brother Reason. Grammar, from being one of the most uninteresting of studies, is becoming delightful. The foundations are laid in human nature, and the philosophical gramma-