

**THE ORIGIN OF THE FASTS AND  
FESTIVALS OF THE CHURCH,  
ARRANGED ACCORDING TO  
THE CALENDAR**

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The Origin of the Fasts and Festivals of the Church, Arranged According to the Calendar by  
Various

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**VARIOUS**

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THE ORIGIN  
OF THE  
**FASTS AND FESTIVALS**  
OF THE CHURCH,

Arranged according to the Calendar ;

COMPRISING  
EXPLANATIONS OF THE NAMES OF THE MONTHS,  
WITH  
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE PERSONS,  
AND  
HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF THE EVENTS  
ON WHICH THE FESTIVALS ARE FOUNDED.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,  
A SKETCH OF THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF ALMANACKS,  
AND EXPLANATIONS OF THEIR  
CHRONOLOGICAL AND ASTRONOMICAL TERMS.

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## PREFACE.

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THE want of a work like the present has long been so evident, that no apology can be necessary for its publication; as the information it contains is of that kind which all persons are expected to possess, and are anxious to acquire, but which few know where to obtain. It will be found not only to give Biographical Sketches of the Persons, and Historical Accounts of the Events, upon which the Fasts and Festivals are founded, forming a complete elucidation of the Prayer-Book Calendar; but it presents a Sketch of the Origin and Nature of Almanacks in general, an Explanation of their Chronological Terms, and a Concise Description of various particulars contained in the Astronomical Department of these useful publications; so that it may be called a Companion to every Almanack. The whole is compiled from the best sources of Biography, Ecclesiastical History, and Antiquity, the authorities for which are to be found at the foot of each page as they occur.

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THE ORIGIN  
OF THE  
FASTS AND FESTIVALS.

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The Feasts and Fasts of Obligations are distinguished from the Saints' Days and Holidays of the Church of Rome, by the former being printed in CAPITALS, and the latter in *Italics*.

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JANUARY.

JANUARY, the name of the first month in the year, according to the computation now used in the West. The word is derived from the Latin *Januarius*, a name given it by the Romans, from *Janus*, one of their deities, to whom they attributed two faces, because on the one side the first of January looked towards the new year, and on the other towards the old. On the 20th of this month the sun enters *Aquarius*.

1st.—CIRCUMCISION. This day is kept as a festival to commemorate the Circumcision of our Lord Jesus Christ. This rite was first enjoined Abraham by God, and afterwards repeated to Moses. It was to be per-

formed on male children the eighth day after their birth. Agreeably to this divine precept our Saviour was circumcised at the appointed time (Luke ii. 21). It seems probable that this festival was not instituted later than the sixth century. It was revived at the publication of our English Liturgy, and first observed on January 1, 1550.

On this day, which is called *New-Year's Day*, presents, called new-year's gifts, are sent to friends and acquaintances. The custom was probably adopted from the Saturnalia, which were feasts instituted in honour of Saturn, and kept at Rome on December 17, or the 16th of the Calends of January. They continued about a week, during which there were frequent and luxurious feastings amongst friends, and presents were sent mutually. But as the heathens imagined the sending presents at this season was lucky, and an omen of the success of the following year; and as some Christians appear to have entertained the same notion, several holy men, and some General Councils, forbade any such custom, because the observance of it, from any such design and view, was superstitious and sinful. The practice itself, however, is innocent, if not praiseworthy. Accordingly, Bourne says, "If I send a new-year's gift to my friend, it shall be a token of my friendship; if to my benefactor, a token of my gratitude; if to the poor, which at this time must never be forgot, it shall be to make their hearts sing for joy, and give praise and adoration to the Giver of all good gifts" (Popular Antiquities, pp. 206, 207).

6th.—EPIPHANY (the *Twelfth Day* after Christmas), is a Greek word, signifying "an appearance of light; a manifestation." And this day is kept as a

festival to celebrate the manifestation of our Saviour Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. It has a particular reference to the Wise Men of the East, who were directed in a supernatural manner, by a star, to leave their own country, and come into Judea, to inquire after our Saviour, and pay him homage. Herod, the king, directed them to Bethlehem; and upon their leaving Jerusalem, the same star which they saw in the east went before them, and at last stood over where the young child was. The house being thus pointed out, they went in, fell down, and worshipped him, and opening their treasures, presented unto him gold and frankincense and myrrh. Many Christians spend the evening of this day in a manner very different from the original design of the festival. The rites vary in different places, but the design of them all is much the same, namely, to do honour to the eastern sages, who are supposed to have been kings. The manner of drawing king and queen on this day is given in Brand's edition of Bourne's Popular Antiquities, from a letter in the Universal Magazine for 1774. "I went," says the author, "to a friend's house in the country to partake of some of those innocent pleasures that constitute a merry Christmas. I did not return till I had been present at drawing king and queen, and eaten a slice of the twelfth cake made by the hands of my good friend's consort. After tea yesterday, a noble cake was produced, and two bowls containing the fortunate chances for the different sexes. Our host filled up the tickets; the whole company, except the king and queen, were to be ministers of state, maids of honour, &c. Our kind host and hostess became king and queen. According to Twelfth Day law, each party is to support