

ANTIQUARY

Why Christmas Day ought not to be Observed
A Transcription from Manuscript of Notes from a
Sermon by George Gillespie, December 24, 1643

INTRODUCTION

As noted in this space last year,¹ the discovery of any sermon by George Gillespie, fragmentary though it be, is significant because all the manuscript sermons preached while he was in London at the Westminster Assembly, were allowed to be destroyed by the printer in whose care he had left them to prepare for the press.² The notes presented here of a sermon preached not long after Gillespie's arrival in London are so brief as would hardly merit much attention except for this fact.

INTRODUCTION AND TRANSCRIPTION BY Chris Coldwell. Chris Coldwell is the general editor and publisher of *The Confessional Presbyterian* journal and publishes Puritan era works via Naphtali Press. Photographs of the manuscript were obtained by Matthew Vogan, who assisted with the work for this article. Mr. Vogan is Media and Publications Manager at Reformation Scotland and lives near Edinburgh, Scotland. He is the author/editor of two volumes on Samuel Rutherford and contributes articles to a variety of different Reformed publications.

1. See "Antiquary: A Transcription from Manuscript of a Sermon on Psalm 2:10–12 by George Gillespie," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 14 (2018): 249–262.

2. "He had all his sermons in England, part polemical, part practical, prepared for the press; and but one copy of them, which he told the printer's wife he used to deal with, and bade her have a care of them. And she was prevailed on by some money from the Sectaries, who were mauled by him, to suppress them." Memoir of the Rev. George Gillespie, in *The Presbyterians' Armoury*, ed. William M. Hetherington, volume 1 (Edinburgh: R. Ogle and Oliver & Boyd, 1846), xl. See also Robert Wodrow, *Analecta: or, Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences; mostly relating to Scotch Ministers and Christians*, volume 1 (Edinburgh: Printed for the Maitland Club, M.DCCC.XLII), 159–160.

3. Upon its arrival in Scotland shortly after the start of the Second Reformation (having been printed most likely in the Netherlands), Gillespie's *Dispute* became the intellectual argument against the imposition of Laud's service book and the popish ceremonies. George Gillespie, *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies obruded upon the Church of Scotland* (1637; critical edition, Naphtali Press, 2013).

4. As noted below the baptism of Boothby's daughter at St. Mary Aldermanbury seems to confirm the identity as John Stoughton. This church was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. It was rebuilt and that structure was gutted in the Blitz in 1940. The stones of the structure were moved in 1966 to the campus of Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, and a church reconstructed as a memorial to Winston Churchill, who gave his famous iron curtain speech at the college in 1946.

But as sparse as they are, these notes underscore what was a key point, often overlooked or not appreciated, in Gillespie's *Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies*,³ which concerned the necessity of putting away monuments to idolatry. It is also of interest because it augments the details of the brief controversy the Westminster divines faced as far as what to do about preaching on Christmas day in 1643. Presented here is a transcription of these notes with a modernized text in the commentary.

"Why Christmas Day must not be observed," auditor's notes, in Commonplace book of Walter Boothby of Tottenham (ca. 1631–1665). MS Eng. c. 2693. Bodleian Library. xxvii + 914 pages.

The notes of this sermon by George Gillespie are recorded in a commonplace book compiled by Walter Boothby. The Gateway to Early Modern Manuscript Sermons Catalogue record for this manuscript provides the following detailed information:

Content Note: A commonplace book entitled "A Nosegay of Everlasting Orifficall Flowers, gathered out of Heavens paradise" (p. 1). Contains Boothby's notes on about 150 sermons, mostly by Presbyterians (pp. vii–766). The manuscript is organized as a commonplace book but is divided by subjects rather than following a chronological order, with Boothby's notes on sermons he has heard under the subject headings (e.g. "Of Christ", "Of Sinne"). Includes an index of the sermons by subject (pp. iii–xiv). Also includes correspondence, mainly Boothby's letters to family members, dated 1640–1643 (pp. 768–913).

Material features: xxviii + 914 pages. Bound in vellum wrapper. Boothby has put subheadings in the margin, apparently to summarize the point of the sermon that he has cited under the general heading.

Aquisition: Purchased at auction from D. P. White (Occasional List 35 [1991], item 137).

Other Note: The cataloguer dates this manuscript c. 1632–1655, but some of the sermons are dated 1631. This volume contains notes on many sermons that Boothby attributes to 'Dr. Stawton' (occasionally spelled Staughton). The most likely identity of Stawton is John Stoughton (1593–1639),⁴ whom the cataloguer identifies as a preacher mentioned in this volume. However, in some cases the name seems more like 'Stanton,' so it could be Edmund Staunton (1600–1671). Both of these preachers were Presbyterians, like Boothby and like most of the

other preachers mentioned in this volume. It could also be one of two preachers named John Stawton in CCEd (Person IDs: 101994 and 108233).⁵ Since Stoughton is the most likely attribution, these sermons have been attributed to him, but they remain uncertain. Among these sermons, those that are dated were all preached before Stoughton's death in 1639, except the sermon 'of feare [3]' (pp. 272–273), but in this case Boothby has clearly written 'Doc. Stanton' so this sermon is attributed to Edmund Staunton. For more information on this manuscript, see also John Spurr, *The Laity and Preaching in Post-Reformation England* (London: Dr Williams's Trust, 2013), pp. 18–19.⁶

TRANSCRIPTION.

The following transcription is rendered in more reader friendly form in the commentary. Bolded words have some degree of doubt as to the transcription. A question mark means a letter was not decipherable. Parenthetical text explains or defines the previous text. Text that reads ????? is intentionally crossed out text that is no longer legible. Crossed out text is legible text the writer crossed out. Interline text is surrounded by the caret symbol (^). Words in braces were originally in abbreviated form. Double underlining is in the original and seems to indicate titles. The fact that the first portion identified as from Gillespie takes up the middle of page 286 with almost enough room for the next portion on page 287, which is titled as a new topic, at least raises the question whether the second portion is a separate new topic in Boothby's commonplace book and not necessarily from the same source or occasion (and there is a case to make that it is by an Englishman). However, since it is a topic Gillespie addressed in his *Dispute*, the text is included and some ties to that work are noted in the comments.

Why Christmas Day must not be observed.

By Mr Gelaspe
a Scot. Minister
Dec. 24, 1643.

1. If it had bin God's will that such a day as {this} should have bin observed, then certainly he would have mayd knowne the day, that soe the self same day wh. did appertaine unto his (its) commemoration, should have bin celebrated, & not another, but that day is consealed & so close (*completely*) as {that} all {the} witts in the world cannot pouynt it out, & I contend for {that} self same reason {that} Moses' body was,

2. {That} worship wh. God **never** commanded must be unlawfull, as was the washing of the Pharasees [Mat. 15.9],⁷ & therefore Christ accompted them but vayne inventions of man's brayne, if so, then though it did teach them holiness, yet it having his (its) **entre** from men, & a human institution, it was a vayne thing, but so is this day merely instituted by man, & therefore but vayne,

3. Such things wh. have bin abused unto superstition must not bee allowed; but this day hath binn grossly abused to superstition, therefore unlawfull. Instance in the Brazen Serpent [a thing of **greate** use]⁸ wh. though appoynted by God, yet when once it was abused to idollatry, it was broken to powder, much more should {that} be abolished wh. hath only man's warrant for its institution.

4. In **regarde** of the late Sollem covenante, where{with} the State hath bound themselves to observe, wherein they, & wee have covenanted, to oppose and withstand all superstitious worshippe, and to furder a Reformation to our uttmost power, such as shall be most agreeable unto God's Sacred word, & will,

5. More particularly it is ????? now to be refused because of the unsutabellnes thereof unto our times, now God calls us not unto his Sollum feaſt in wh. we should joy, & make merry, attending to the aboundance wh. he hath given, but he callas us unto weepeing mourneing, & lamentation [Isa. 22:12]⁹ as now how unagreeable should our **condition** ^**carriage** (carriage)^ be unto {our} condition, if upon God's call for weepeing mourneing & lamentation, behould feasting & mirth. this did much insense the Lord agaynst the Jews & So would it agaynst us.

Whether the observation of holy Dayes bee lawfull.¹⁰

[Whether it be in the power of a state King or parliament to

5. Clergy of the Church of England Database. <https://theclergy-database.org.uk/>.

6. GEMMS-MANUSCRIPT-000541, Gateway to Early Modern Manuscript Sermons, Catalogue record. https://gemms.itercommunity.org/view_record.php?table=manuscript&id=541 Source of data: "Jeanne Shami; Bodleian Library Catalogue of manuscripts acquired singly: albums, commonplace books, notebooks and scrapbooks (online)."

7. "Mat. 15.9" is in the left-hand margin.

8. This text was in the left-hand margin next to this line of text and would seem to refer to the brazen serpent.

9. "22 Esa. 12" (Isa. 22:12) is in the right-hand margin. The subsequent "as" is very faint.

10. This new topic and text is on page 287. It is unattributed and no occasion given, so it may be from the same occasion or not since the volume is arranged topically. The "our state" would seem to indicate the comment is by an Englishman, though Scotland also had recently with the Second Reformation once again thrown off the yoke of the

establish holy Dayes]¹¹ For answer unto this question. I affirm {that} it is not in the power of any state or kingdome to establish an holy Day, & {that} it hath bin the Sinne of our State to ????? make holy dayes, & to rase them up in *equpage* (*equal establishment*) {with} the Lord's Day, my Reason is this.

The effect cannot rise higher than the cause, as a stream cannot assend above the fountaine, but for a civill state to establish holy rights (rites) is to assend above there (their) prinsipell:

pretended holy days, which had indeed been on a par with the Lord's Day as well. Stoughton may have been the speaker since he opposed the popish innovations and was punished by Laud. See below.

11. The first text in square braces was in the right-hand margin. The text runs into the binding and the presumed "or" is obscured.

12. Frederick Arthur Crisþ, ed., *Visitation of England and Wales, Notes Vol. 12* (Privately Printed, 1917), 149.

13. Haberdashers "sold, amongst other wares, French and Spanish gloves, and French cloth or frizarde (frieze), Flanders-dyed kersies, daggers, swords, knives, Spanish girdles, painted cruses, dials, tables, cards, balls, glasses, fine earthen pots, saltcellars, spoons, tin dishes, puppets, pennons, inkhorns, toothpicks, silk, and silver buttons." Dorothy Williams Whitney. "London Puritanism: The Haberdashers' Company," *Church History* 32, no. 3 (1963): 299.

14. *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1660–1690*, ed. B. D. Henning (London: Published for the History of Parliament Trust by Secker & Warburg, 1983), 657. The entry is for John Jolliffe (Jolley) who married Rebecca Boothby, Walter's daughter.

15. Whitney, 298, 310.

16. *The Diary of Samuel Rogers, 1634–1638*, ed. Tom Webster and Kenneth Shipp (Trowbridge, Wiltshire: Cromwell Press, A Church of England Record Society publication published by The Boydell Press, an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2004), 130.

17. It may well be that Stoughton is the source for the second question in the MS, since nonconformists as well as Scots Presbyterians viewed the pretended holy days as popish innovations.

18. Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans*, 3 vols. (1813), 3:527.

19. Crisþ, 150.

20. "The Churches Cordiall in her fainting Fitts MS," MS I.f.18, Congregational Library Collection, Dr. Williams's Library, London. The first pieces are from 1661 with the Marshall and an undated unattributed sermon in the middle followed by a sermon from 1653 by Calamy and others dating to 1661 and 1662. It is not clear why the earlier sermons are in the middle, but it may be Boothby was creating a new collection from previous and current notes sometime around 1661. See GEMMS record, https://gemms.itercommunity.org/view_record.php?table=manuscript&id=323.

21. *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 3, September 14, 1643 (H. M. Stationery Office, 1803), p. 241. *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, ed. David Laing, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Alex. Lawrie & Co. for The Bannatyne Club, 1841–42), 1.xlix. *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly 1643–1652*, 5 vols., ed. Chad Van Dixhoorn (Oxford University Press, 2012), 2:123, 124.

22. Laing, 1.1.

23. This may have been granted by the King. At least there is no record in the parliament journals for the time of the Treaty. Nor I have found confirmation of this for the later period, though it stands to reason if the Scots Commissioners were given a church in which to hold services of the Scottish Presbyterian form, a similar accommodation

therefore it's unlawfull. true it is, a state may establish Sivill (civil) dayes.

WALTER BOOTHBY'S COMMONPLACE BOOK

The brief notes of this sermon are found in a commonplace book penned by Walter Boothby of Tottenham (ca. 1631–1665). Boothby (1600–1669)¹² was a merchant, a Haberdasher¹³ both in Tottenham and in London.¹⁴ The Worshipful Company of Haberdashers via its leadership if not general membership, supported puritan lectureships for forty years prior to the time of the Westminster Assembly, including the successful St. Bartholomew lectureship of John Downname in London.¹⁵ The most frequent preacher recorded by Boothby in this commonplace book is John Stoughton, "one of the most popular godly preachers in England" at the time.¹⁶ For seven years Stoughton was the permanent curate and lecturer at St Mary Aldermanbury in London, where "he was a laborious, orthodox, and useful preacher; but having occasionally touched upon the popish and arminian innovations, he was, by the instigation of Laud, prosecuted in the high commission."¹⁷ He died in the year 1639, when he was succeeded by Mr. Edmund Calamy....¹⁸ St Mary Aldermanbury appears to have been Walter Boothby's parish church. His daughter, Rebecca, was baptized there on March 13, 1633/34.¹⁹ In his commonplace book Boothby recorded sermons or extracts and arranged them topically, apparently at least in part or in whole drawing on notes from sermons he had recorded previously between 1631 and 1655. The entries include material from Stoughton and Calamy. In another manuscript he records sermons by Calamy (1653, 1661–2) as well as by Thomas Watson (1661), Simeon Ashe (1661), and Stephen Marshall (1641).²⁰

George Gillespie and Alexander Henderson were admitted by parliament and welcomed into the Westminster Assembly on September 14 and 15 respectively,²¹ and Samuel Rutherford and Robert Baillie arrived later and were admitted to the assembly on November 20.²² It is not certain if Boothby heard Gillespie preach or obtained a manuscript from which he made these brief notes; but it is not improbable he heard Gillespie himself. Calamy might have invited the Scot to preach or lecture on the Lord's Day, December 24, 1643, though as will be seen there is reason to think he would not have done so. But if he did, Boothby certainly could have heard Gillespie in his own parish church. But if not, he also may have attended where Gillespie was preaching or lecturing that day. Laing writes that previously when Baillie and Henderson were in London in 1640–41 for the treaty ending the Second Bishops' War and later with others during the years of the Westminster Assembly, they resided at Worcester House (or Place), and were given nearby St. Antholins to hold services (at least in the earlier period).²³

At this time [1643], as well as during their former mission to London, the Scottish Commissioners resided in Worcester House, in the City, and St. Antholin's Church was set apart for their use, the ministers preaching in their turn, for a time, at least, to very crowded audiences. "The people throngs to our sermon (he [Baillie] says in January 1641), as ever you saw any to Irwin [Irvine] communion; their crowd daylie encreases." Lord Clarendon also refers to their great popularity at that time. The Treaty being now adjourned to London, the Scottish Commissioners, he states, "came thither in great state, and were received by the King with that countenance, which he could not choose but shew to them; and were then lodged in the heart of the city, near London-stone, in a house which used to be inhabited by the Lord Mayor or one of the Sheriffs, and was situated so near to the church of St. Antholins, that there was a way out of it into a gallery of the church. This benefit was well foreseen on all sides in the accommodation, and this church assigned to them for their own devotions, where one of their own chaplains still preached, (amongst which Alexander Henderson was the chief, who was likewise joined with them in the treaty in all matters which had reference to religion;)..."²⁴

This Worcester House has been confused by another of the same name which later belonged to Edward Hyde (Earl of Clarendon),²⁵ but as he indicates in his history, the Scottish ministers at the earlier time resided in a house next to St. Antholins, which had private access to it. This could not have been Worcester House, which judging by current maps would have been about 0.3 miles south on the banks of the Thames. So either the commissioners moved at least once or perhaps it was just the Scottish ministers who lived in the adjacent house in 1641.

It is also not clear if the Scottish Commissioners who arrived in September and November of 1643 were immediately accommodated again at Worcester House, though parliament would have had to have made accommodations for those present to negotiate the Solemn League and Covenant in September. The earliest notice of Parliament providing for Worcester House is an order dated January 30, 1644, which was either the order setting it aside for the Scots use again or to further provision the house.²⁶ While Baillie rarely signs his letters as at "Worcester House," and the earliest is dated in July 1645,²⁷ he seems to indicate Worcester House was his residence for the entire time and both before and after the January provision refers to his accommodation as "our house" (Gillespie, Rutherford, Henderson and Maitland all residing there).²⁸ And as much preaching as the Scottish ministers did, the parliament may have continued the prior practice of giving them St. Antholins to use, though

Baillie indicates he preached regularly at the Savoy, which may indicate they had places aplenty in which to preach.²⁹

So though it remains in the realm of supposition, it may well be that on December 24, 1643, Gillespie's turn had come to preach at St. Antholins if that was the custom as in 1641, which was not half a mile south from St. Mary Aldermanbury, and so Walther Boothby could easily have attended.³⁰ Or it may be that Gillespie had been invited to speak at St. Mary Aldermanbury or some other nearby church, though as will be seen there may be some doubt if Calamy would have done so on this occasion.

would have been extended or had been in continuance for the later period.

24. Laing, 1.1-li.

25. "This was not the house of the Earls of Worcester, which Lord Clarendon afterwards inhabited, on the site of the present Beaufort-buildings in the Strand; but Worcester Place, the house of John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, Lord High Treasurer of England, also on the banks of the Thames, but nearer the Tower." Laing, 1.1, n3.

26. January 30, 1643. "It is this Day Ordered, by the Lords and Commons in Parliament assembled, That Worcester House be forthwith fitted and prepared for the Receipt and Accommodation of the Commissioners and Committees sent from our Brethren of Scotland; and that all manner of Household Stuff, Linen, and other Necessaries for the same, be provided and supplied out of any of his Majesty's Wardrobes, or other Stores, to make up what is wanting, at the present, in the said House..." House of Commons Journal, vol. 3, p. 383.

27. Laing, 2.281. Some of Gillespie's letters from September 1644 are all signed "Worcester House." Laing, 2.500. Other letters by all or some of the commissioners later in their stay are so signed as well. Laing, 3.541. Other such letters are noted in, Publications of the Scottish History Society volume XI, General Assembly Commission Records. May 1892. *The Records of the Commissions of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland Holden in Edinburgh in the Years 1646 and 1647*, edited from the Original Manuscript by Alexander F. Mitchell, D.D., LL.D. and James Christie, D.D. with an Introduction by the former (Edinburgh: Printed at the University Press by T. and A. Constable for the Scottish History Society, 1892) xxiv, 12, 99, 162, 182, 187, 189, 200, 210, 223, 233, 257, 274, 275, 310, 312, 326.

28. Laing, 2.107, 133, 145 and 206. "from the 1643 to 1647, I lived at Worcester House, and preached in the Savoy.... Laing, 3.265.

29. Rutherford preached at least all the sermons making up *Trial and Triumph of Faith* while in London, and the volume of sermons Gillespie preached has already been noted. The Savoy Chapel was part of the Savoy Hospital built by Henry VIII replacing the Savoy Palace destroyed in the peasant revolt of 1381. The hospital was demolished in the 19th century but the chapel, which dates to the 1490s, still survives. At the time Baillie was in London, the congregation of St. Mary le Strand held worship services there, which they did from 1549-1714. Thomas Fuller was appointed lecturer in 1642, but when the Solemn League & Covenant was drawn up he would not sign without reservation and left Savoy and attended upon the king at Oxford. He was reinstated at the Savoy at the Restoration (*The Collected Sermons of Thomas Fuller, D.D., 1631-1659*, Volume 1 [London: The Gresham Press, 1891] xxiii; ccxcii).

30. See the discussion of Worcester House and the map of locations in "Appendix: Westminster Abbey Library: And Other Theological

THE SUBJECT OF THE SERMON NOTES

The Church of Scotland had rejected the entire church calendar of holy days at the Reformation. These had been imposed again by the King at the 1618 Perth Assembly, and jettisoned again at the Second Reformation in 1638. The English church had retained much of the ceremonies and holy days which to varying degrees with little choice the puritan movement put up with. But with the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant, the two nations and churches had agreed to conform to the best doctrine and practice of the Reformed churches. Within weeks of arriving and becoming part of the Westminster Assembly, the Scottish ministers and their English counterparts faced the question of what to do about the English custom of holding services on Christmas Day, which was a Monday in 1643.³¹

WHETHER TO PREACH ON CHRISTMAS IN 1643?

George Gillespie did not just randomly pitch upon the subject of “Why Christmas Day should not be Observed” for his December 24, 1643 sermon. The minutes of the Westminster Assembly do not survive for December 21, 1643 to February 14, 1644, but Lightfoot records the following for the session on Friday, December 22.

After this vote, was a proposal made by some, “That the Assembly would determine whether there should be any sermon upon Christmas-day;” but it was waived to treat of it, because we are not yet come to it. Then was there

Resources of the Assembly of Divines (1643–1652),” *The Grand Debate* (Naphtali Press, 2014), 393–396; or similarly in an earlier version of the same material in *The Confession Presbyterian* 6 (2010): 274–276. The map has an error in that location 11 is St Mary Aldermary which was confused with St Mary Aldermanbury (Aldermanbury is location 1). This affects the accuracy of some of the statements regarding proximity in these prior articles dealing with Worcester House. Both St. Antholins and St. Mary Aldermanbury no longer stand, but based on their locations comparing with the Agas Map of London, it appears roughly 0.4 miles distance between them, and it would have been about a mile’s distance from where Worcester House stood and St. Mary Aldermanbury.

31. The Presbyterian were not alone struggling with the holy day issue. Initially many of the Reformed desired to reduce or eliminate them, but they were retained or re-imposed due to political circumstances and by insistence of magistrates. See Rev. Anderson’s article in this issue, and in previous issues see Andrew J. Webb and Chris Coldwell, “American Presbyterianism and the Religious Observance of Christmas,” 11 (2015): 142–187 and “*In Translatiōe*: John Calvin’s Letters to the Ministers of Montbéliard (1543–1544): The Genevan Reformer’s Advice and Views of the Liturgical Calendar,” 13 (2017): 198–220.

32. John Lightfoot, “Journal of the Assembly of Divines,” *The Whole Works of the Rev. John Lightfoot*, volume 13 (London: 1824), 91–92.

some question how long we should adjourn, and some few would have had us to have sitten on Christmas-day; but it was more generally thought otherwise; and so we adjourned till after the fast, viz. till Thursday. In the afternoon, the city-ministers met together to consult whether they should preach on Christmas-day, or no. Among them there were only Mr. Calamy, Mr. Newcomen, and myself, of the Assembly. And when Mr. Calamy began to incline that there should be no sermon on that day, and was like to sway the company that way, I took him aside, and desired him to consider seriously upon these things. 1. That one sermon preached at the feast of the dedication, which had but a human original, John x. 2. That the thing in itself was not unlawful. 3. That letting the day utterly fall without a sermon, would most certainly breed a tumult. 4. That it is but this one day, for the next we hope will be resolved upon about it by authority. 5. That he, being an Assembly-man, and advising them, would bring an odium undeserved upon the Assembly. With these things I prevailed with him to change his mind; and so he also prevailed with the company; and it was put to the question, and voted affirmatively, only some four or five gainsaying, that they would preach, but withal resolving generally to cry down superstition of the day.³²

The agreement which Lightfoot reasoned from Calamy would seem to cast some doubt that Calamy would have immediately had Gillespie preach against observing the day at St. Mary Aldermanbury. However, it likely would have been arranged before the meeting on the 22nd and if so it would seem as unlikely the invitation would have been rescinded. So it remains a possibility that Boothby could have heard Gillespie at St. Mary Aldermanbury. As to the controversy, Baillie records this same matter brought up on Friday, December 22, giving the Scottish point of view. In an undated letter “For Scotland” but with a postscript dated January 1, 1644, he writes,

On Friday [i.e. Dec. 22] I moved Mr. Henderson to go to the Assembly; for else he purposed to have stayed at home that day; that as all of us stoutly had preached against their Christmass, so we might in private solist [importune] our acquaintance[s] of the Assembly, and speak something of it in public; that for the discountenancing of that superstition, it were good the Assembly should not adjourn, but sit on Monday, their Christmas day. We found sundry willing to follow our advice, but the most resolved to preach that day, till the Parliament should reform it in an orderly way; so, to our small [i.e. little] contentment, the Assembly was adjourned from Friday till Thursday next: yet we prevailed with

our friends of the Lower House to carry it so in Parliament, that both Houses did profane that holy day, by sitting on it, to our joy, and some of the Assembly's shame. On Wednesday we kept the solemn fast. Mr. Henderson did preach to the House of Commons as most gracious, wise, and learned sermon, which you will see in print. Mr. Rutherford is desired by them to preach the next fast day.³³

According to Baillie it appears that the Scots may well have been among those behind the raising of the question in the assembly and that some discussion did take place in the assembly on the question and not just in the afternoon meeting where the only assemblymen present were Newcomen, Calamy and Lightfoot, though he may have been drawing from knowledge he gained of that meeting in his report. While there was some "joy" that the parliament did not take Christmas day off, the Scottish ministers were clearly "little content" the assembly took a Christmas break. It is in this context that two days later on the Lord's Day, December, 24, 1643, that Gillespie preached his sermon or lectured on the topic of "Why Christmas should not be observed."

As Lightfoot suggested, the subject did come up again the next year and during the debates on the assembly's Directory for the Public Worship of God. Lightfoot notes the following: "Thursday, Dec. 19 [1644].], Then was there a motion made, and order accordingly, that some of our members should be sent to the Houses, to desire them to give an order, that the next fast-day might be solemnly kept, because the people will be ready to neglect it, being Christmas-day."³⁴ The minutes omit the actual concern that the fast would be neglected for the accustomed holiday.³⁵ Neal gives greater background,

But that which occasioned the greatest disturbance over the whole nation, was an order of both houses relating to Christmas-day. Dr. Lightfoot says, the London ministers met together last year to consult whether they should preach on that day; and one of considerable name and authority opposed it, and was near prevailing with the rest, when the doctor convinced them so far of the lawfulness and expediency of it, that the question being put it was carried in the affirmative with only four or five dissenting voices. But this year it happening to fall on the monthly fast,³⁶ so that either the fast or the festival must be omitted, the parliament, after some debate, thought it most agreeable to the present circumstances of the nation to go on with fasting and prayer; and therefore published the following order:

"Die Jovis 19 Dec. 1644. Whereas some doubts have been raised, whether the next fast shall be celebrated,

because it falls on the day which heretofore was usually called the feast of the nativity of our Saviour; the lords and commons in parliament assembled do order and ordain, that public notice be given, that the fast appointed to be kept the last Wednesday in every month ought to be observed, till it be otherwise ordered by both houses; and that this day in particular is to be kept with the more solemn humiliation, because it may call to remembrance our sins, and the sins of our forefathers, who have turned this feast, pretending the memory of Christ, into an extreme forgetfulness of him, by giving liberty to carnal and sensual delights, being contrary to the life which Christ led here on earth, and to the spiritual life of Christ in our souls, for the sanctifying and saving whereof, Christ was pleased both to take a human life, and to lay it down again."

DIRECTORY FOR THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD

Around this same time in 1644 the assembly was working on the last portions of its directory for worship, and the topic of holy days came under discussion again in relation to their actual work. With their intended deliberations on the preface delayed because Dr. Burges had taken the text to meet with members of parliament, the assembly began to debate a portion of text to add to the section on the Sabbath day regarding abuses, which evolved into a separate section, and finally an "appendix touching days and places of public worship."³⁷

33. Laing, 2.120. Spelling modernized. The sermons noted are Alexander Henderson, *Fast Sermon to the House of Commons, December 27, 1643* (text: Ezra 7:23) and Samuel Rutherford, *Fast Sermon to the House of Commons, January 31, 1643/44* (text: Daniel 6:26). See *Sermons Preached before the English Houses of Parliament by the Scottish Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly of Divines, 1643-1645* (Naphtali Press, 2011).

34. Lightfoot, 13.344.

35. Van Dixhoorn, 3.484.

36. Writing about an ordinance prohibiting public diversions and recreations during England's civil war, Neal explains, "The set times of humiliation mentioned in the ordinance refers to the monthly fast appointed by the king, at the request of the parliament [January 8, 1641], on account of the Irish insurrection and massacre, to be observed every last Wednesday in the month, as long as the calamities of that nation should require it. But when the king set up his standard at Nottingham, the two houses, apprehending that England was now to be the seat of war, published an ordinance for the more strict observation of this fast, in order to implore a divine blessing upon the consultations of parliament, and to deprecate the calamities that threatened this nation." Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans*, 3 vols. (London, 1837), 2.155.

37. The appendix was sent up on December 30, approved in the House on January 1 by the Lords with changes on the fourth, and after conference approved by both houses on the January 5, 1645.

Sess. 324. (Novemb. 18, 1644). Munday morning. "Ordered to report the Preface to the directory, and that concerning the Sabbath day."³⁸

Sess. 325. Novemb. 19, 1644. Tuesday morning. "Ordered: That in the Directory for the sabbath day something be expressed <against parish feasts, commonly called by the name of Rushbearing[s], whitsunales,> wakes, as prophane and superstitious."

"Some motions made about holy dayes, to expresse something against them."³⁹

"Ordered: [The Lord's Day]⁴⁰ being the standing holy day under the New Testament to be kept by all the churches of Christ, consider of something concerning

Van Dixhoorn, 3.491. See William A. Shaw, *A History of the English Church during the Civil Wars and under the Commonwealth*, 2 vols. (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), 1. 353. See the text in Document 54, Van Dixhoorn, 5.159.

38. Van Dixhoorn, 3.457. Text inserted interline in the manuscript minutes are noted by <braces>; [brackets] are editorial insertions.

39. Rushbearings: "The practice of covering the church floor with rushes through the winter developed as a rural festival with accompanying entertainment." Whitsunales: "The Whitsun ale was one of the main annual parish ales. Held at Whitsun (Pentacost), the event was a festive fundraiser for a local church." Wakes: "A wake could refer to funeral ceremonies prior to the burial of the body, a party on the eve of a festival, or an annual feast honouring the patron saint of a church." Van Dixhoorn, 3.458.

40. Van Dixhoorn (3.458) inserts "The Lord's Day." Struthers reads "the only standing holy day..." *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, ed. Rev. Alex F. Mitchell, D. D. and Rev. John Struthers LL.D. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1874), 4. At this place, John Struthers has other minor variations in his rendering of the text.

41. Van Dixhoorn, 3.458. "Tuesday, Nov. 19.]—Then was there speech about Holydays, and some motion about declaring against them. This held us much canvassing; and it was well approved that the superstition of Holydays should be cried down, but yet some days allowed for relief of servants. The conclusion was, that the business was recommitted to the first committee to consider of it." Lightfoot, 13.332–333.

42. Van Dixhoorn, 3.468.

43. Van Dixhoorn, 3.477, 478. In this session an exchange takes place concerning "holy places" between Palmer, Rutherford, Gillespie, Burges, Seaman and Marshall. Lightfoot records some of this debate as well. *Ibid.*, 341–342.

44. Van Dixhoorn, 3.479. "Next did we fall upon the debate about holy days; and had some debate about one proposition concerning the Sabbath..." Lightfoot, 342.

45. Van Dixhoorn, 3.480; Struthers, 19. Struthers: "waived. (?)"

46. Van Dixhoorn, 3.489.

47. Van Dixhoorn, 3.491.

48. George Gillespie, "Notes of Proceedings of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster," *Works: The Presbyterian's Armoury* (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle and Oliver and Boyd, 1844–46), 97.

holy dayes <& holy places> & what course may be thought upon for the releife of servants. To meet tomorrow in the afternoone. Wakes & feasts Whitsunales, Rushbearings & garlands [and] all other <such like> superstitious customes."⁴¹

Sess. 329. Novemb. 25, 1644. Munday morning. "Mr. Coleman made report of the directory for Holy dayes and holy places; it was read."⁴²

Sess. 338. Decemb. 10, 1644. <Tuesday> morning."Report 'of holy places' debated." "Ordered: To proceed in the debate tomorrow morning <upon a motion that the committee for the drawing up the directory or others that may be gotten.>"⁴³

Sess. 339. <Decemb. 11, 1644.> Wensday morning. "Debate upon the Directory for dayes."⁴⁴

Sess. 340. Decemb. 12. <Thursday> morning. "Neg: Resolved: the report concerning holy dayes shall not be waved."⁴⁵

Sess. 348. Decemb. 27, 1644. Fryday Morning. "Report of the Appendix concerning dayes and places for publique worship." "Debate about holy dayes."⁴⁶

Sess. 349. Decemb. 30, 1640 [*sic* 1644], Munday morning. "Ordered: That the Appendix be sent up tomorrow morning."⁴⁷

The development of this appendix to the directory for worship again has George Gillespie coming to the foreground. From Gillespie's notes on the assembly for December 30, 1644, we learn:

December 30. There were many abuses spoken of to be condemned in the Directory, as Wakes, etc. I said, if these be put in the Directory, the Church of Scotland must put in abuses among them in the Directory too, and it is not fit to make public in both kingdoms what is proper to either. So it was agreed to send up this in a paper by itself to the Parliament.⁴⁸

What is clear is that as the divines perceived many corruptions in the English worship, there was an idea suggested during the forming of the directory, to add a list of condemned abuses in worship to the directory's preface. As noted, Gillespie opposed this, as it would require enumerating practices in one kingdom not practiced in the other. Subsequently it was determined to send a separate paper to Parliament regarding the matter.

C. G. M'Crie writes:

From Gillespie's "Notes of Debates and Proceedings," however, we learn that at a certain stage of the discussion as to what should find a place in the book, it was proposed to insert a statement of abuses "to be condemned, as Wakes, etc." The proposal was resisted by Gillespie on the ground that, if English abuses were to be specified, then the Church of Scotland would claim an enumeration of abuses peculiar to that kingdom, and he did not think it "fit to make public in both kingdoms what is proper to either." Ultimately, it was agreed to send up a separate paper to Parliament containing a list of such abuses.

Interesting light would seem to be thrown upon this document by a loose paper in Gillespie's writing preserved by Wodrow, and printed among the "Notes" of the former. On the one side of the MS. is an incomplete list of eight practices or ceremonies, beginning with "Gloria Patri," and breaking off with "the people's responsibilities." On the other side is a statement "concerning other customs or rites in the worship of God formerly received in any of the kingdoms," to the effect that, "though not condemned in this Directory," yet if "they have been, or apparently will be, occasions of divisions and offences," it is judged "most expedient that the practice and use of them be not continued, as well for the nearer uniformity betwixt the Churches of both kingdoms, as for their greater peace and harmony within themselves, and their edifying one another in love."

If, as it appears likely, the list on the one side of this paper consists of an unfinished enumeration of "customs or rites" spoken of on the other, then it is probable the latter was drafted as a proposed, but not accepted, addition to the preface as it now stands. In that case the Doxology, along with the Creed, standing up at the reading of the Gospel, preaching on Christmas, funeral sermons, churching of women, saying the three Creeds after reading of Scripture, and congregational responses, will rank among practices "not condemned in this Directory," but the observance of which Gillespie and his fellow-commissioners judged it expedient to be discontinued in the interests of uniformity, peace, harmony, and mutual edifying in love.⁴⁹

The English puritans had their own strong feelings about the old pretended holy days such as Christmas, but it seems clear that the influence of the Scottish Commissioners and Gillespie in particular, is seen even in this small issue of what

to do about preaching on Christmas day. The idea to add a list of abuses was dropped, but an appendix condemning the entire old calendar of holy days was crafted and added to one of the most approved and authorized of the documents produced by the Westminster Assembly, having been approved by both governments and churches in England and Scotland, whereas the confession of faith and larger catechism were not authorized by the English parliament.

THE CONTENT OF GILLESPIE'S SERMON

At first glance the content of these notes seems so brief as to be relatively inconsequential to merit much comment. However, as noted in the opening, the content harkens back to Gillespie's prior work, *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies*, and highlights one of the more crucial principles he spends a good amount of space explaining and defending in that work.

1. If it had been God's will that such a day as this should have been observed, then certainly He would have made known the day, that so the selfsame day which did appertain unto its commemoration should have been celebrated, and not another; but that day is concealed and so close [completely] as that all the wits in the world cannot point it out, and I contend for that selfsame reason that Moses' body was.

In his *Dispute* Gillespie does not descend to particular or detailed arguments against each of the specific holy days that had been imposed at Perth Assembly, so it is interesting to see a specific argument here. The point is founded on often cited statements he makes regarding elemental versus circumstantial matters in the Worship of God. In his preface to "All the Reformed Churches," Gillespie writes,

Besides all this, there is nothing which any way pertains to the worship of God left to the determination of human laws, beside the mere circumstances, which neither have any holiness in them, forasmuch as they have no other use and praise in sacred than they have in civil things, nor yet were particularly determinable in Scripture, because they are infinite; but sacred, significant ceremonies, such as cross, kneeling, surplice, holy days, bishopping, etc., which have no use and praise except in religion only, and which, also, were most easily determinable (yet not determined) within those bounds

49. Gillespie, 108. C. G. M'Crie, *Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1892), 208–210. See Thomas Leishman, *The Westminster Directory, Edited, with an Introduction and Notes* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1901), 152–153.

which the wisdom of God did set to His written Word, are such things as God never left to the determination of any human law.⁵⁰

He addresses the same subject again in part one of his *Dispute* against the necessity of the ceremonies.

And as for particularities, all the particular causes, occasions, and times of fasting could not be determined in Scripture, because they are infinite, as Camero says.⁵¹ But all the particular causes of set festivities, and the number of the same, might have been easily determined in Scripture, since they are not, nor may not be infinite; for the Bishop himself acknowledges that to appoint a festival day for every week cannot stand with charity, the inseparable companion of piety. And albeit so many were allowable, yet who sees not how easily the Scripture might have comprehended them, because they are set, constant, and anniversary times, observed for permanent and continuing causes, and not moveable or mutable, as fasts which are appointed for occurring causes, and therefore may be infinite.⁵²

And again under part three concerning the unlawfulness of the ceremonies he writes,

That which the church may lawfully prescribe by her laws and ordinances, as a thing left to her determination, must be one of such things as were not determinable by Scripture, on that reason which Camero has given us, namely, because *individua* are *infinita*. We mean not in any wise to circumscribe the infinite power and wisdom of God, only we speak upon supposition of the bounds and limits which God did set to His written Word, within which he would have it contained, and over which he thought fit that it should not exceed. The case being thus put, as it is, we say truly of those several and changeable circumstances which are left to the determination of the church, that, being almost infinite, they were not particularly determinable in Scripture; for the particular definition of those occurring circumstances which were to be rightly ordered in the works of God's service to the end of the world, and that ever according to the exigency of every

present occasion and different case, should have filled the whole world with books. But as for other things pertaining to God's worship, which are not to be reckoned among the circumstances of it, they being in number neither many, nor in change various, were most easily and conveniently determinable in Scripture. Now, since God would have His Word (which is our rule in the works of his service) not to be delivered by tradition, but to be written and sealed unto us, that by this means, for obviating Satanical subtilty, and succoring human imbecility, we might have a more certain way for conservation of true religion, and for the instauration [*restoration*] of it when it fails among men, how can we but assure ourselves that every such acceptable thing pertaining any way to religion, which was particularly and conveniently determinable in Scripture, is indeed determined in it; and consequently, that no such thing as is not a mere alterable circumstance is left to the determination of the church?⁵³

As for the analogy to Moses' body, Gillespie may be drawing for David Calderwood's *Perth Assembly* (1619), which work he twice references in his *Dispute* (though not in this point).

The diversity of the ancients observing some the 6th day of January, some the 19th of April, some the 19th of May, some the 25th day of December, argueth that the Apostles never ordained it. Bellarmine nor no other can produce a writer for 300 years to testify that the nativity day was kept.... Ye see then as God hid the body of Moses, so hath He hid this day and other days depending on the calculation of it, wherein He declared his will concerning the other days of his notable acts. To wit that not Christ's action, but Christ's institution maketh a day holy.⁵⁴

2. That worship which God never commanded must be unlawfull, as was the washing of the Pharasees (Matt. 15:9), and therefore Christ accounted them but vain inventions of man's brain. If so then, though it did teach them holiness, yet it having its entering from men, and a human institution, it was a vain thing; but so is this day merely instituted by man, and therefore but vain.

This second point is a condensed version of the following section of Gillespie's *Dispute*, which is found in part three against the lawfulness of the ceremonies, which also brings in material relevant to the first point.

§10. 3. The church is forbidden to add anything to the commandments of God which He has given unto us,

50. Gillespie, *Dispute* (2013), 16.

51. John Cameron, *Praelectiones*, tom. 1, de Potesť. Eccl., contr. 2. See *Praelectiones Theologicae in selectiora quaedam loca N.T.*, 3 vols. (Saumur, 1626–1628), 1:369, 370.

52. Gillespie, *Dispute* (2013), 51.

53. Gillespie, *Dispute* (2013), 261–262.

54. David Calderwood, *Perth Assembly* (1619), 80.

concerning His worship and service (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6); therefore she may not lawfully prescribe anything in the works of divine worship, if it be not a mere circumstance belonging to that kind of things which were not determinable by Scripture.

Our opposites have no other distinctions which they make any use of against this argument, but the very same which papists use in defense of their unwritten dogmatical traditions, namely, that *additio corrumpens* [*destructive addition*] is forbidden, but not *additio perficiens* [*perfecting addition*]: that there is not alike reason of the Christian church and of the Jewish; that the church may not add to the essential parts of God's worship, but to the accidentary she may add.

To the first of those distinctions, we answer (1) That the distinction itself is an addition to the Word, and so does but beg the question.

(2) It is blasphemous; for it argues that the commandments of God are imperfect, and that by addition they are made perfect.

(3) Since our opposites will speak in this dialect, let them resolve [*answer*] us whether the washings of the Pharisees, condemned by Christ, were corrupting or perfecting additions. They cannot say they were corrupting, for there was no commandment of God which those washings did corrupt or destroy, except that commandment which forbids men's additions. But for this respect our opposites dare not call them corrupting additions, for so they should condemn all additions whatsoever. Except, therefore, they can show us that those washings were not added by the Pharisees for perfecting, but for corrupting the Law of God, let them consider how they rank their own ceremonial additions with those of the Pharisees. We read of no other reason wherefore Christ condemned them but because they were doctrines which had no other warrant than the commandments of men (Matt. 15:9); for as the law ordained diverse washings, for teaching and signifying that true holiness and cleanness which ought to be among God's people, so the Pharisees would have perfected the law by adding other washings (and more than God had commanded) for the same end and purpose.

3. Such things which have been abused unto superstition must not be allowed; but this day has been grossly abused to superstition, therefore unlawful. Instance in the Brazen Serpent [a thing of great use],⁵⁵ which though appointed by

God, yet when once it was abused to idolatry, it was broken to powder; much more should that be abolished which hath only man's warrant for its institution.

This third point brings in one of the important principles laid down by Gillespie in his *Dispute against the English Popish Ceremonies*, often found in other works. It could be called the principle of the brazen serpent, or of the necessity of putting away monuments of or memorials to gross idolatry.

We see this illustrated in Calvin, who in his sermons presses the avoidance of evil and necessity to advance edification, and remove anything that would "foster superstition" and "divest ourselves of all silly superstitions and frivolous inventions, renounce all idolatry in order to worship God in spirit and in truth."⁵⁶ Along these same lines, Calvin articulates a principle against "monuments of idolatry" in one of his tracts, elaborated upon by later writers and which is also adduced in some of the Reformed Confessions.⁵⁷ In 1561 Calvin wrote a response to George Cassander's work arguing for a reunification of the Protestant churches with Rome.⁵⁸ In perhaps the standout portion of this tract Calvin writes,

Recognizing that God's law commands the form of his worship, and by this he expresses detestation of all false

55. "The brazen serpent (having been God's own ordinance) was for Idolatrous abuse to be abolished. Therefore human inventions, for the like abuse, much more." William Ames, *A Fresh Suite Against Human Ceremonies in God's Worship* (1633), 395.

56. This material is drawn from the 2013 article, *In Translatione*: John Calvin's Letters to the Ministers of Montbéliard (1543–1544): The Genevan Reformer's Advice and Views of the Liturgical Calendar," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 13 (2017).

57. The phrase or idea of "monuments of idolatry" can be found in The Debrecen Synod (1567), The Synod at Szikszo (1568), The Nassau Confession (1578) and Bremen Consensus (1595). Calvin does not use the term in his tract, and this may just as well be called the principle of the brazen serpent. The Westminster Assembly would appropriately state the duty from the principle: "The duties required in the second commandment are . . . the disapproving, detesting, opposing all false worship; and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry" (WLC 108). Foxe compared Edward VI to Josiah in the destruction of "all monuments of idolatry." See also usage in Edward VI's injunctions for such destruction (1547), and in Hooper's injunctions (1551). Knox and Hooper likely picked up the language from the earlier use. See "American Presbyterianism and the Religious Observance of Christmas," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 11 (2015), 178–179; Andrew Lang, *John Knox and the Reformation* (1905), 113; John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570), book 9, 1521–1522; *Visitation Articles and Injunctions*, volume 2, 1536–1557, ed. W. H. Frere et al. (London: Longmans Green & Company, 1910) 126; *Later Writings of Bishop Hooper together with his letters and other pieces*, ed. Charles Nevinson for The Parker Society (Cambridge: University Press, 1852), 135.

58. G. Cassandro, *De officio pii ac publicae tranquillitatis vere amanti viri in hoc religionis dissidio*, edited by F. Bauduin (Basel: 1561; repr. Lazari Zetzneri, 1612).

gods, of course it is a repugnant thing to say that in pleasing men something must be added to his Commandments. The vile buffoonery of the Papacy soils all religion. This also is not a thing suitable to good conscience. If some customs are useful and of good faith, I confess that the error that detains the spirits of some must not stop those who are well instructed to use only that which is good—provided that it would not become a common error confirmed by use. But because superstition is bindingly connected with many ceremonies which in themselves are good, anyone who would want to keep them shows in effect that he is of those who fall short. In this way, a false opinion, commonly received, will soil by abuse customs that otherwise are good. It becomes not only necessary to flee from it in your personal observation, but also that the fault be liberally noted out of fear that simple people would be hardened by it more and more. For it is not proper for a zealous Christian to say, “To each his own,” without also admonishing the others to be on their own guard.

Similarly, what is alleged of an Italian writer, that abuse does not take away good use, will not be true if one holds to it without exception: because it is clearly commanded to us to prudently watch that we would not offend the infirm brothers by our example, and that we should never undertake what would be illicit. For Saint Paul prohibits offending the brothers in eating flesh that was sacrificed to idols [1 Cor. 10:28], and speaking to this particular issue he shows a general rule that we are to keep ourselves from troubling the consciences of the weak by a bad or damaging example. One might speak better and more wholesomely if he were to say that what God himself ordains may not be abolished for wrong use or abuse that is committed against it. But even here,

59. “Response a Un Certain Moyenneur Rusé” [French], *Recueil des Opuscules* (Geneva: Stoer, 1611) 2191–2192. Cf. *Responsio Ad Versipellem Quendam Mediatorem* [Latin], CR 37 (CO 9), 542. For a full translation of this tract into English from the French see, R. V. Bottomly, “Calvin’s Response to a Certain Tricky Middler,” *The Confessional Presbyterian* 8 (2012), 254–275. For this quotation see page 264.

60. The ceremonies, including the pretended holy days, “are idolatrous, because having been notoriously abused to idolatry heretofore, they are the detestable and accursed monuments, which give no small honor to the memory of that by-past idolatry which should lie buried in hell.” The principle which Gillespie draws from Calvin among others is “All things and rites which have been notoriously abused to idolatry, if they are not such as either God or nature has made to be of a necessary use, should be utterly abolished and purged away from divine worship, in such sort that they may not be accounted nor used by us as sacred things or rites pertaining to the same.” Gillespie, *Dispute*, 149.

it is necessary to abstain from these things if, by later human ordinance, they have become corrupt with error, and if their use is harmful or scandalizes the brothers.

Here I marvel how this “Reformer,” after granting that superstitions sometimes have such strong popularity that it is necessary to remove from the realm of man those things once ordained by public authority (as we read of Hezekiah doing with the bronze serpent), finally does not consider even a little that his shrewdness is a horror to the ways of good action: as if in defending supportable rituals, he would oblige that all superstitions should be considered as safe and whole because they are weighty. For what is there in the papacy now that would not resemble the bronze serpent, even if it did not begin that way? [Numbers 21:9.] Moses had it made and forged by the commandment of God: he had it kept for a sign of recognition. Among the virtues of Hezekiah told to us is that he had it broken and reduced to ash [2 Kings 18:4]. The superstitions for the most part, against which true servants of God battle today, are spreading from here to who knows where as covered pits in the ground. They are filled with detestable errors that can never be erased unless their use is taken away. Why, therefore, do we not confess simply what is true, that this remedy is necessary for taking away filth from the church?⁵⁹

At a crucial point in his *Dispute*, George Gillespie elaborated upon this principle which Calvin articulated, in crafting his argument for the necessity of putting away monuments of idolatry.⁶⁰ Much like Cassander, the Anglo-Catholics who had been arguing for the rites imposed by King James in the Articles of Perth (1618), including the re-imposition of some of the old pretended holy days which the Scottish Kirk had rejected completely at the Reformation, argued “that it is needless to abolish utterly things and rites which the papists have abused to idolatry and superstition, and that it is enough to purge them from the abuse, and to restore them again to their right use.” Gillespie answered, citing Calvin’s response to Cassander,

Calvin, answering that which Cassander alleges out of an Italian writer, *abusu non tolli bonum usum* [abuse does not take away the good use], he admits it only to be true in things which are instituted by God Himself, not so in things ordained by men, for the very use of such things or rites as have no necessary use in God’s worship, and which men have devised only at their own pleasure, is taken away by idolatrous abuse. . . . [*The safer part*] here, is to put them wholly away, and there is, by

a great deal, more danger in retaining than in removing them.⁶¹

Gillespie shows in his argument against the popish ceremonies, that the old pretended holy days and other popish ceremonies “are thrice idolatrous: “because they are monuments of by-past idolatry;” 2. “because they are badges of present idolatry;” 3. “because they are idols themselves.” Ceremonies such as the old holy days “are unlawful, because they are monuments of by-past idolatry, which not being necessary to be retained, should be utterly abolished.”⁶²

By communicating with idolaters in their rites and ceremonies, we ourselves become guilty of idolatry; even as Ahaz, was an idolater, *eo ipso* [for that very reason], that he took the pattern of an altar from idolaters (2 Kings 16:10). Forasmuch, then, as kneeling before the consecrated bread, the sign of the cross, surplice, festival days, bishoping, bowing down to the altar, administration of the sacraments in private places, etc., 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.⁶³

Just prior to citing Calvin’s answer to Cassander, Gillespie reinforced his argument for the necessity of removing monuments of idolatry with a twofold reason, drawing from Calvin again.

Fifthly, our proposition is backed with a twofold reason, for things which have been notoriously abused to idolatry should be abolished: (1) *Quia monent* [because they remind]. (2) *Quia movent* [because they move]. First, then, they are monitory [admonitory; give a warning], and preserve the memory of idols; *monumentum* [a monument] in good things is both *monimentum* [a memorial] and *munimentum* [fortification]; but *monumentum* in evil things (such as idolatry) is only *monimentum*, which *monet mentem* [instructs the mind], to remember upon such things as ought not to be once named among saints, but should lie buried in the eternal darkness of silent oblivion. Those relics therefore of idolatry, by which succeeding generations, as though by a memorial, may be reminded (as Wolphius rightly says),⁶⁴ are to be quite defaced and destroyed, because they serve to honor the memory of cursed idols.

God would not have so much as the name of an idol to be remembered among his people, but commanded to

destroy their names as well as themselves (Exod. 23:13; Deut. 12:3; Joshua 23:7); whereby we are admonished, as Calvin says, how detestable idolatry is before God, *whose memory a repentant man wants to be erased so no trace of it may be seen afterward.*⁶⁵ Yea, he requires, *that the memory be erased [abolished; put away] of all those things which were at anytime consecrated to idols.*⁶⁶ If Mordecai would not give his countenance (Esther 3:2), nor do any reverence to a living monument of that nation whose name God had ordained to be blotted out from under heaven (Deut. 25:19), much less should we give connivance, and far less countenance, but least of all reverence, to the dead and dumb monuments of those idols which God has devoted to utter destruction, with all their naughty [bad, wicked] appurtenances, so that he will not have their names to be once mentioned or remembered again.

But, secondly, *movent* [they move] too; such idolatrous remainders move us to turn back to idolatry. For by experience we have verified, that, even after superstitions have been cast out, if any monuments of them be left to remain, not only has the memory of those persisted, but in the end it has obtained that they might be revived, says Wolphius;⁶⁷ who hereupon thinks it behoveful [necessary] to destroy *funditus* [utterly] such vestiges of superstition, for this cause, if there were no more: *so that both for those aspiring to resume idolatry, hope may be diminished, and for those attempting new things the opportunity and material may be forestalled.*⁶⁸

God would have Israel to overthrow all idolatrous monuments, lest thereby they should be snared (Deut. 7:25; 12:30). And if the law command to cover a pit, lest an ox or an ass should fall therein (Exod. 21:33), shall we suffer

61. Gillespie, 156–157.

62. Gillespie, 149ff.

63. Gillespie, 172ff.

64. “Com. in 2 Reg. 23:6. *quibus quasi monumentis posteritas admoneatur* [Melachim; id est, 1599 ed., ibid., p. 398r].”

65. “Com. in Isa. 27:9. *cujus memoriam vult penitus deleri, ne posthac ullum ejus vestigium appareat.* [Cf. CR 63 (CO 26), 456; Commentaries, vol. VIII, 2.261.]”

66. “Calv., Com. in Exod. 23:24. *eorum omnium memoriam deleri* [sic aboleri], *quæ semel dicata sunt idolis.* [CR 52 (CO 23), 546; Commentaries, vol. II, 2.387. The compositor of the 1637 text may have transposed the *deleri* from the citation from Isaiah just prior.]”

67. “Ubi Supra [2 Kings 23:6]. *usu compertum habemus, superstitiones etiam postquam explosæ essent, si qua relicta fuissent earum monumenta, cum memoriam sui ipsarum apud homines, tum id tandem ut revocarentur obtinuisse.* [Melachim; id est, 1599 ed., ibid., p. 398r.]”

68. “*ut et aspirantibus ad revocandam idololatriam spes frangatur, et res novas molientibus ansa pariter ac materia præripiatur.*”

a pit to be open wherein the precious souls of men and women, which all the world cannot ransom, are likely to fall? Did God command to make a battlement for the roof of a house, and that for the safety of men's bodies (Deut. 22:8), and shall we not only not put up a battlement, or object some bar for the safety of men's souls, but also leave the way slippery and full of snares? Read we not that the Lord, who knew what was in man, and saw how propense he was to idolatry, did not only remove out of His people's way all such things as might any way allure or induce them to idolatry (even to the cutting off the names of the idols out of the land (Zech. 13:2), but also hedge up their way with thorns that they might not find their paths, nor overtake their idol-gods, when they should seek after them (Hosea 2:6, 7)? And shall we by the very contrary course not only not hedge up the way of idolatry with thorns, which may stop and stay such as have an inclination aiming forward, but also lay before them the inciting and enticing occasions which add to their own propension, such delectation as spurs forward with a swift facility?⁶⁹

4. In regard of the late Solemn covenant, wherewith the State hath bound themselves to observe, wherein they and we have covenanted to oppose and withstand all superstitious worship, and to further a Reformation to our utmost power, such as shall be most agreeable unto God's sacred Word and will.

Here Gillespie adduces the Solemn League and Covenant sworn by Scotland and England in its call to Reformation and to abandon all superstitious worship. "II. That we shall, in like manner, without respect of persons, endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy (that is, Church government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors and commissioners, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons, and all other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy), superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness; lest we partake in other men's sins, and thereby be in danger to receive of their plagues; and that the Lord may be one, and his name one, in the three kingdoms."⁷⁰

69. Gillespie, 154–155.

70. The Solemn League & Covenant, in *The Confession of Faith*, etc. (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1855), 359.

71. Apud [cited in] Balduin, *de Cas. Consc.*, lib. 2, cap. 12, cas. 1. *Dies Christo dicatos tollendos existimo judicoque, quotidie nobis in evangelii praedicatione nascitur, circumciditur, moritur, resurgit Christus*. Cf. Balduin, *Traclatus Luculentus* (1654), 348. See the text in Lambertus Daneau, *Ad Roberti Bellarmini disputationes theologicas De Rebus in religione controversis Lamberti Danaei responsio* (Joannes le Preux, 1598), 1519–1520.

5. More particularly it is now to be refused because of the unsuitableness thereof unto our times. Now God calls us not unto His solemn feast in which we should joy and make merry, attending to the abundance which He hath given, but He calls us unto weeping, mourning, and lamentation (Isa. 22:12), as now how un-agreeable should our [carriage] be unto [such a] condition, if upon God's call for weeping, mourning, and lamentation, behold feasting and mirth. This did much incense the Lord against the Jews and so would it against us.

Gillespie here is making the point of how inappropriate it is to set recurring feast (or fast) days, holy days commemorating Christ's acts in redeeming His people, because in God's providence our condition will change from one year to the next. Set anniversary feast or fast days (holy days) are not the same thing as God's providential calls for fasting or feasting. The Directory for the Public Worship of God and Confession of Faith which Gillespie helped to draft, recognize the latter but not the former.

§6. The Bishop has yet a third dart to throw at us: *If the church* (he says) *has power, upon occasional motives, to appoint occasional fasts or festivities, may not she, for constant and eternal blessings, which do infinitely excel all occasional benefits, appoint ordinary times of commemoration or thanksgiving?* ANSWER. There are two reasons for which the church may and should appoint fasts or festivities upon occasional motives, and neither of them agrees with ordinary festivities. 1. Extraordinary fasts, either for obtaining some great blessing, or averting some great judgment, are necessary means to be used in such cases; likewise, extraordinary festivities are necessary testifications [*testimonies*] of our thankfulness for the benefits which we have impetrate [*procured*] by our extraordinary fasts; but ordinary festivities, for constant and eternal blessings, have no necessary use. The celebration of set anniversary days is no necessary mean for conserving the commemoration of the benefits of redemption, because we have occasion, not only every Sabbath day, but every other day, to call to mind these benefits, either in hearing, or reading, or meditating upon God's Word. *I esteem and judge that the days consecrated to Christ must be lifted*, says Danæus: *Christ is born, is circumcised, dies, rises again for us every day in the preaching of the Gospel*.⁷¹

God has given his church a general precept for extraordinary fasts (Joel 1:14; 2:15), as likewise for extraordinary festivities to praise God, and to give him thanks in the public assembly of his people, upon the occasional

motive of some great benefit which, by the means of our fasting and praying, we have obtained (Zech. 8:19 with 7:3). If it is said that there is a general command for set festivities, because there is a command for preaching and hearing the word, and for praising God for his benefits; and there is no precept for particular fasts more than for particular festivities, I answer: Albeit there is a command for preaching and hearing the word, and for praising God for his benefits, yet is there no command (no, not in the most general generality) for annexing these exercises of religion to set anniversary days more than to other days; whereas it is plain that there is a general command for fasting and humiliation at some times more than at other times.⁷²

The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ; are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God: beside religious oaths, vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings, upon special occasions, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in a holy and religious manner. WCF 21.⁷³

There is no day commanded in Scripture, to be kept holy under the Gospel, but the Lords Day, which is the Christian Sabbath. Festival dayes vulgarly called Holy dayes, haveing no warrant in the word, are not to be continued. Nevertheless, it is lawfull & necessary upon special emergent occasions, to separate a Day or dayes for publique Fasting, or Thankesgiveing, as the several eminent & extraordinary dispensations of Gods providence shall administer caue, & opportunity to his people.⁷⁴

Whether the observation of holy Dayes bee lawfull.

Whether it be in the power of a state King [or] parliament to establish holy days. For answer unto this question, I affirm that it is not in the power of any state or kingdom to establish a holy day, and that it hath been the sin of our state to make holy days and to raise them up in equipage (equal establishment) with the Lord's Day. My Reason is this: The effect cannot rise higher than the cause, as a stream cannot ascend above the fountain, but for a civil state to establish holy rites is to ascend above their principle: therefore it's unlawfull. True it is, a state may establish civil days.

In his *Dispute*, Gillespie deals extensively with what power the magistrate has and does not have with regard to the church. With regard to rites and ceremonies and the elemental aspects of worship, he writes,

§19. But in all the Scripture princes have neither a commendable example, nor any other warrant, for the making of any innovation in religion, or for the prescribing of sacred significant ceremonies of men's devising. Jeroboam caused a change to be made in the ceremonies and form of God's worship, whereas God ordained the ark of the covenant to be the sign of His presence, and that his glory should dwell between the cherubims. Jeroboam set up two calves to be the signs representative of that God who brought "Israel out of Egypt;" and this he means while he says, "Behold thy gods," etc. (1 Kings 12:28), giving to the signs the thing signified. Whereas God ordained Jerusalem to be the place of worship, and all the sacrifices to be brought to the temple of Solomon; Jeroboam made Dan and Bethel to be places of worship, and built there altars and high places for the sacrifices. Whereas God ordained the sons of Aaron only to be his priests, Jeroboam made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. Whereas God ordained the feast of tabernacles to be kept on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, Jeroboam appointed it on the fifteenth day of the eighth month.

Now, if any prince in the world might have fair pretences [*claims*] for the making of such innovations in religion, Jeroboam much more. He might allege for his changing of the signs of God's presence, and of the place of worship, that since Rehoboam's wrath was incensed against him, and against the ten tribes which adhered unto him (as appears by the accounting of them to be rebels, 2 Chronicles 13:6, and by the gathering of a huge army for bringing the kingdom again to Rehoboam, 2 Chron. 11:1), it was no longer safe for his subjects to go up to Jerusalem to worship, in which case God, who required mercy more than sacrifice, would bear with their changing of a few ceremonies for the safety of men's lives. For his putting down of the priests and Levites, and his ordaining of other priests which were not of the sons of Levi, he might pretend [*claim*] that they were

72. Gillespie, *Dispute*, 50–51.

73. S. W. Carruthers, M.D., Ph.D., *The Westminster Confession of Faith, Being an account of the Preparation and Printing of its seven leading editions to which is appended a critical text of the Confession with notes thereon* (Manchester: R. Aikman & Son, [1937]), 130.

74. Van Dixhoorn, 5:159. See also the directories for fast and thanksgiving days, 5:154–157.

rebellious to him, in that they would not assent unto his new ordinances,⁷⁵ which he had enacted for the safety and security of his subjects, and that they did not only simply refuse obedience to these his ordinances, but in their refusal show themselves so steadfastly minded, that they would refuse and withstand even to the suffering of deprivation and deposition; and not only so, but likewise drew after them many others of the rest of the tribes to be of their judgment (2 Chron. 11:16), and to adhere to that manner of worship which was retained in Jerusalem. Lastly, for the change which he made about the season of the feast of tabernacles, he might have this pretence [*claim*], that as it was expedient for the strengthening of his kingdom⁷⁶ to draw and allure as many as could be had to associate and join themselves with him in his form of worship (which could not be done if he should keep that feast at the same time when it was kept at Jerusalem); so there was no less (if not more) order and decency in keeping it in the eighth month, when the fruit of the ground were perfectly gathered in (for thankful remembrance whereof that feast was celebrated) than in the seventh, when they were not so fully collected.⁷⁷

These pretences [*claims*] he might have made yet more plausible, by professing and avouching that he intended to worship no idols, but the Lord only; that he had not fallen from anything which was fundamental and essential in divine faith and religion; that the changes which he had made were only about some alterable ceremonies which were not essential to the worship of God, and that even in these ceremonies he had not made any change for his own will and pleasure, but for important reasons which concerned the good of his kingdom and safety of his subjects. Notwithstanding of all this, the innovations which he made about these ceremonies of sacred signs, sacred places, sacred persons, sacred times, are condemned for this very reason, because he

devised them of his own heart (1 Kings 12:33), which was enough to convince [*convict*] him of horrible impiety in making Israel to sin.

Moreover, when king Ahaz took a pattern of the altar of Damascus, and sent it to Urijah the priest, though we cannot gather from the text that he either intended or pretended any other respect beside the honoring and pleasuring of his patron and protector, the king of Assyria (for of his appointing that new altar for his own and all the people's sacrifices, there was nothing heard till after his return from Damascus, at which time he began to fall back from one degree of defection to a greater), yet this very innovation of taking the pattern of an altar from idolaters is marked as a sin and a snare (2 Kings 16:10, 18).

Last of all, whereas many of the kings of Judah and Israel did either themselves worship in the groves and the high places, or else, at least, suffer the people to do so, howsoever they might have alleged specious reasons for excusing themselves,⁷⁸ as namely, that they gave not this honor to any strange gods, but to the Lord only; that they chose these places only to worship in wherein God was of old seen and worshipped by the patriarchs; that the groves and the high places added a most amiable splendor and beauty to the worship of God, and that they did consecrate these places for divine worship in a good meaning, and with minds wholly devoted to God's honor; yet notwithstanding, because this thing was not commanded of God, neither came it into His heart, He would admit no excuses; but ever challenges it as a grievous fault in the government of those kings, that those high places were not taken away, and that the people still sacrificed in the high places. From all which examples we learn how highly God was and is displeased with men for adding any other sacred ceremonies to those which He himself has appointed.⁷⁹

75. Martyr in 1 Reg. 8:31. [Cf. *Melachim; id est, Regum libri duo posteriores cum commentariis Petris Martyris Vermilii in primum totum et secundum priora . . . Ioannis Wolphii in secundi . . .* (Heidelberg: 1599) 59v–61r.]

76. *Ibid.*, 1 Reg. 8:32 [1599 ed., *ibid.*].

77. *Ibid.*

78. Hošpin., *De Orig. Templ.*, lib. 1, cap. 1 [Cf. “De Templis hoc est, de Origine, Progressu, usu et abusu Templorum & Rerum ad Templum pertinentium,” in *Opera omnia in septem tomos distributa*, volume 1 (Geneva: Samuel de Tournes, 1672) 3–4.]; Wolph. in 2 Reg. 12:4 [1599 ed., *ibid.*, 270v ff].

79. Hošpin., *ibid.*, p. 3.

80. Edmund Calamy, *An indictment against England because of her selfe-murdering divisions* (London: Meredith, 1645) 40–41.

CONCLUSION

In 1644 when the subject of the holy day had come up again with the regular fast falling on December 25, Edmund Calamy preached the fast sermon for the House of Lords.⁸⁰ He concluded, paralleling some of what George Gillespie briefly noted the prior year,

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

profaneness. It is not easy to reckon whether the superstition hath been greater, or the profaneness. 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 profaneness 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) then God had all the year after.⁸¹ Seneca saith of his time, *Olim December mensis erat, nunc annus est.*⁸² 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) 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, 13, 14. ["And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts."▪

81. Edmund Calamy is paraphrasing from Hugh Latimer's second sermon before a convocation of the clergy in 1536. Cotton Mather seems to have picked up this paraphrase in his denunciation of Christmas in 1712, and this seems to be the source in modern citations of the saying, which do not actually cite from Latimer (e.g. Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas* [New York: A Division of Random House, Inc. Vintage Books, 1997], 7).

Hugh Latimer's words to the clergy in 1536 were: "Do ye see nothing in our holidays? of which very few were made at the first, and they to set forth goodness, virtue, and honesty: but sithens, in some places, there is neither mean nor measure in making new holidays, as who should say, this one thing is serving of God, to make this law, that no man may work. But what doth the people on these holidays? Do they give themselves to godliness, or else ungodliness? See ye nothing, brethren? If you see not, yet God seeth. God seeth all the whole holidays to be spent miserably in drunkenness, in glossing, in strife, in envy, in dancing, dicing, idleness, and gluttony. He seeth all this, and threatenth punishment for it. He seeth it, which neither is deceived in seeing, nor deceiveth when he threatenth. Thus men serve the

devil; for God is not thus served, albeit ye say ye serve God. *No, the devil hath more service done unto him on one holiday, than on many working days.*" Emphasis added. *Sermons by Hugh Latimer*, edited for the Parker Society by George Elwes Corrie (Cambridge, 1844), 52–53.

Cotton renders the saying as, "Yea, the zealous Martyr Latymer complained, That Men dishonour Christ more in the Twelve days of Christmas, than in all the twelve Months of the Year besides."

Cotton Mather, *Grace defended. A censure on the ungodliness, by which the glorious grace of God, is too commonly abused. A sermon preached on the twenty fifth day of December, 1712. Containing some seasonable admonitions of piety. And concluded, with a brief dissertation on that case, whether the penitent thief on the cross, be an example of one repenting at the last hour, and on such a repentance received unto mercy?* (Boston: Printed by B. Green, for Samuel Gerrish, at his shop in Marlborough Street, 1712), 20.

82. "Once December was a month, now it is a year." "... qui dixit olim mensem Decembrem fuisse, nunc annum." *Seneca ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, trans. Richard M. Gummere, The Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, [1925]), 116, 117.