

THE COLONIAL CHURCHMAN.

"BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE. Eph. 2 c. 20 v.

VOLUME III.

LUNENBURG, N. S. THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1838.

NUMBER 6.

For the Colonial Churchman.

EVENING MEDITATIONS.

"Evening points emphatically to those future and invisible issues, to which all human labours should be subordinated."

The light of the departing day
Now gently shrouds itself away—
The glowing tints around the sun
Tell that its wondrous race is run.
Nature her "sober livery" wears,
Calm then, my soul, thy doubts and fears,
And dwell on that eternal day,
Where neither grief nor care can stay.
Let meditation mount her throne,
And bid each earthly thought be gone ;—
Holy and solemn themes now cherish,
And cause each wayward thought to perish.
Examine well thy state, and ask,
How thou perform'd'st each holy task ?
Humbly seek pardon from above,—
Apply to Him—the God of love.
Now that the shades of Evening fall,
Thy acts, thy thoughts, thy hopes recall.
If good—pray that they come again ;
If ill—seek Grace to check—restrain.
Give cheerful thanks, for good God sends
His word—food—raiment—comforts—friends ;
Meekly submit when He reproves ;
For He doth chasten whom He loves.
How must my murmuring sighs appear
To Him who judged will be clear ?
If husband—master—I should be—
A priest in mine own family ;
To teach them well, not that which blinds,
But offer wisdom to their minds.
A Saviour, risen for us on high,
A gracious God—such themes supply.
Let him who doth such lessons teach,
Take care his words and actions preach ;
And then, when day and night are gone,
He will surround his Maker's throne.
January, 1838. SIGMA.

For the Colonial Churchman.

Messrs. Editors,
In the last number of your useful paper, I noticed with pleasure your remarks upon Christmas Decorations, and the praiseworthy attention of the members of St. John's Church, Lunenburg. The custom of ornamenting churches with flowers and branches was very early prevalent, as is noted and commended by Augustine and Jerome.* The interesting customs of the earlier and purer ages of the church are in this our day too lightly thought of by many, and but seldom referred to, by those whose fondness for change, induces them oftentimes to attempt to cast in the shade the practice of ancient times. To me, however, the usages and customs of earlier and better days are particularly pleasing ; and not among the least so, is the one of placing in the church of Christ at this season, "the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of His sanctuary"—Isaiah, 60 c. 13 v. On this subject, in a late number of the New York Churchman, are the following remarks :—"A word for the old evergreens
* Bingham's Origines Ecclesiasticæ, Brief view of, by Rev. C. S. Henry.

of Christmas. Long may it be before they are vanished from our houses and churches. Their freshness seems to us a token of a heart unchanged from youth and the early virtues of life, by the cold barren principles of the world and age. They bloom the more verdant from the very desolation of winter that surrounds them. They are appropriate in themselves to the sacred festival of Christmas, and bear witness in their living hue, plucked from the snows and lifeless woods, of a life and immortality brought to light on this day. They are consecrated to the pious purpose of honoring a christian temple by that incident in the life of our Saviour when on His entering into Jerusalem, multitudes cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. The walls of the church should be well and warmly covered ; not as we have seen them of latter years, scantily sprinkled here and there with a single sprig or a poor plucked branch in the window, emblems of a careless and indifferent piety, but carefully arranged round the pillars, the chancel, and the altar. On entering a church clothed in this manner, at this season, piety naturally assumes a warmer expression, and devotion cannot be lukewarm, or the very leaves would upbraid us. Churchmen should love and honor this custom of pious antiquity, in the church which is now intrusted to their keeping. We have too few relics of the early days." As many at first thought may consider the custom of dressing churches at Christmas, an unmeaning custom, I therefore send you for insertion an address on the subject, taken from a religious periodical of 1823.* This will shew the propriety of the custom—a custom, I trust, that will never be neglected ; and how very appropriate such emblems are of the church of God which has stood from the foundation of the world, and like them (notwithstanding the cold blasts of opposition) will forever flourish !—Well is it, however, for us ever to remember, as you justly observe in your concluding remarks, that the best decoration is "the clothing the soul in the spirit of holiness," which sentiment brings to my mind a verse from one of Bishop Heber's hymns on the Birth of Christ—

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
Vainly with gifts would His favour secure ;
Richer by far is the heart's adoration,
Dearer to God ARE the prayers of the poor,
SAMECH.

DEVOTIONAL.

"Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts."—Psalm 119. 74.

The psalmist here begins to direct his address to his God, and call to mind those obligations to obedience, in which he felt his own happiness most nearly concerned. For even under that dispensation which gendereth to bondage, much encouragement was connected with the command to keep the Lord's precepts diligently. "O that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever." But surely we, under a dispensation of love, can never want a motive for obedience ! Let the daily mercies of Providence stir up the question—"What shall I render to the Lord ?" Let the far richer mercies of grace produce a "living sacrifice" to be "presented to the Lord." "Let the love of Christ constrain us." Let the recollection of the "price with which we were bought," remind us of the

*The address shall appear hereafter.

Lord's property in us, and of our obligation to "glorify Him in our body and in our spirit which are His."

Let us only "behold the Lamb of God"—let us hear his wrestling supplication, his deserted cry, his expiring agonies—the price of our redemption: and then let us ask ourselves—can we want a motive ?

But what is the scriptural view of evangelical obedience ? It is the work of the spirit enabling us "to obey the truth." It is the end of the purpose of God, who hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

It is the only satisfactory evidence of the sincerity of our profession ; then let me make the inquiry in the morning—what is the work appointed for the day ? "Teach me thy way, O Lord ; I will walk in thy truth : smite my heart to fear thy name." Let me maintain an anxious and watchful spirit, that in my daily business I may be employed in the Lord's work. Let a guard be set upon my thoughts, my lips, my temper and pursuits, that nothing may hinder me, but rather every thing assist me, in "keeping the Lord's precepts diligently."

Let there be a trading for Him, with all the talents entrusted to me. What is the reason that I ever find the precepts grievous to me ? Is it not that some indolence is indulged, or some "iniquity regarded in my heart," or some principle of unfaithfulness operating to divide my service with two masters, when I should rather be conflicting with besetting hindrances, and seeking to overcome them all, in following the Lord fully. Oh ! for the spirit of "simplicity and godly sincerity" in the precepts of God ! Oh ! for that love, which is the mainspring of diligence, main and constant, taking the place of every other motive in leading me on in the service of God. Oh ! for a large supply of the "wisdom which is from above," and which is without partiality and without hypocrisy."—Rev. C. Bridges, M. A.

SELECT SENTENCES.

A mere professor of religion is like a butterfly, all surface—if the breath of heaven breathe upon it, it is driven hither and thither ; but the Christian is like the dove, a strong-pinioned bird. She may meet the thunderstorm in her course, but she is determined to persevere ; she will tack about, and give even the winds and the tempest to know she has a nest—that it is her home—that her heart is there, and she must reach it.

Christ.—To be without God—without Christ—is more, and infinitely more, than to be without any or all outward good things.—Traill.

The best Fountain.—I never found any fountain to supply the wants of my soul, till my Saviour revealed Himself to me. Until that happy time I was a stranger to real happiness.—Evans.

The one thing needful—

The spring of the regenerate heart—

The pulse—the glow of every part—

Is the true love of Christ our Lord,

As man embraced, as God adored.—Keble.

True riches.—Thy blessing, Oh ! Saviour, makes an estate not competent only, but rich. Thou art the bread of life—all in all.—Bp. Hall.

'After all my readings,' said SELDON, 'nothing now remains to comfort me; at the close of life but this, "CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners." To this I cleave: and herein I rest.'