

From the Episcopal Watchman.

CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST.

(Friday, January 1.)

At whatever period of life, or on whatever occasion, we view our blessed Saviour, there is one feature in his character which is strikingly conspicuous. Though as man, sinless, and as God, omnipotent, he was nevertheless made obedient to the law, from the earliest to the latest period of his life; complying with every religious ordinance, that, by fulfilling the law, he might fulfil all righteousness. Accordingly, in his earliest days, we find him undergoing circumcision—'When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus:' which occasion, as the beginning of his holy fulfilment of the law, our church sees fit to commemorate; and, to proper meditations upon which, the prayer of the Collect of the day is well fitted to lead us.

That our blessed Saviour, who was spotless, and needed no remedy for ills to which he could not be liable, should so perfectly obey his Father's will, as to undergo this outward act—painful in itself, and significant of inward guilt—must convince every reflecting mind, how absolutely necessary it is for us—who are even born in sin,—that we be, in our infancy, brought to the sacrament of baptism, and early made to observe that ordinance; for it is to us, what circumcision was to the Jew—significant of inward devotion to God's service on our part, and of covenanted mercy and grace on his.

The Collect marks this truth very forcibly. It observes that our blessed Saviour was thus obedient, for man, viz. for the sake of man—for our benefit: that, by thus himself fulfilling every tittle of the law, he might complete our redemption, and also might be, even in this first period of his infancy, an ensample for our good. Our Church therefore provides, that the children of her people now, should be presented for purification at baptism: for Jesus Christ was the last who observed the ceremonial law; which law ceased to be in force, as soon as He had perfectly fulfilled the conditions of it. His commandment was 'Go ye forth, and teach all nations; baptizing them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

'By thy holy nativity and circumcision, good Lord deliver us.'

EPIPHANY.

(Wednesday, January 6.)

The meaning of the word Epiphany, is Manifestation. Under that term we commemorate the season, in which Jesus Christ was manifested to the Gentile world—It had pleased God, before the Advent of the Saviour, to confine the revelation of his will, and its attendant spiritual privileges, to his chosen Israel: but upon the coming of his Son, he called the Gentiles also, both to a knowledge of his revealed will, and to a participation of the privileges which accompany that knowledge. To this event, therefore, our Church very properly appropriates a particular service.

The circumstances attending the Epiphany, are stamped with that characteristic regard to the peculiar habits of those affected by it, which so eminently distinguish all God's dealings with mankind.

The coming of the long-expected Messiah, was first announced to the Jews, by a message from Heaven itself, to simple and unlearned shepherds—a mode which was direct and intelligible to them:—Angels brought the tidings of great joy, and declared that a Saviour—Christ the Lord—was born into the world. To the Gentiles his Advent was signified in a different mode—but one which was adapted to the habits and dispositions of those, to whom the sign was sent: 'There came Magi, or wise men from the East, to Jerusalem, saying, 'where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him?'

These Magi, who had journeyed from the distant country of Arabia, were much devoted to the study of the heavenly bodies, and were continually watching their motions. Now, as in the course of their studies, aided by the experience of men of old time, and by their own diligent observation, they must have found the most perfect order and regularity to prevail in that glorious assemblage of the works of God, which the starry firmament presents; we may readily imagine,

that a very powerful curiosity was excited, when they observed this new star; a star, which was doubtless of peculiar form, and so bright, that even the noon-day sun eclipsed not its brightness. By day and by night it shone: not transitory; but fixed, radiant, and lambent, over the distant region of Judea; aptly pointing out Him, who was to be a 'light to lighten the Gentiles.'

This star, which hung low over the horizon, like a beacon-light to guide them, the Magi were divinely inspired to follow. They were led by it to Jerusalem, but there the miraculous light was lost to them.—Learning, however, after diligent enquiry, that the expected Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem, they continued their journey thither;—again they saw their guiding star—and found at last the Saviour.—Thus the lowly shepherds of Judea, and the illustrious Magi of Arabia, met together, with one heart, and one soul, to worship the long expected Messiah; and there was no longer difference between Jew and Gentile in his sight, 'who is no respecter of persons.'

We are shown by this history, that the call of the gospel is universal. In the manifestation of the Saviour to the unlearned shepherds of Judea, and to the learned Magi of the East—the wise and great of Arabia—the Almighty hath united all nations, and all degrees of men, in one holy faith, and in one blessed hope. Jews and Gentiles, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, noble and ignoble—these are all called to salvation; that, in the promised Saviour of the world, every nation of the earth, every family, and every person, might be blessed. For in the persons of these Magi, all the nations of the Gentiles may be considered to have laid low their proud distinctions of human acquirement, and devoted all to Him, from whom come riches, and wisdom, and honor: whose kingdom, not of this world, is greater than all worlds—for it is from everlasting to everlasting.

As the wise men by their star, so we by faith, are led to the knowledge of God: and the beautiful prayer which our Church thereon frames, is 'that God would grant us after this life, to have the fruition of his glorious Godhead.' To shew ourselves sincere in offering up this petition, let us imitate the example of the first worshippers; for though we bring no gold, or frankincense, or myrrh, we can bring honor to our heavenly king—devotion to our God—and a heart, dead unto sin, but alive unto Righteousness. Let us then emulate the zeal of the Arabian Magi. Let us yield ourselves to the guidance of a brighter light than shone for them; and taking faith for our star, follow as it guides, till it lead us to the Son of God. and through him conduct us to the fruition of the glorious Godhead hereafter.

From the Boston Recorder.

CAPE TOWN.

The English population of this place may be 4000 or 5000. Of the class of English merchants, very few indeed seem to have any regard for true religion. They are mostly speculators, having come out to the Cape very poor to make their fortunes at all hazards. Religion, therefore, to them is a thing of no consequence till near the close of life. Others, probably, are at heart atheists. To this character there are a few noble exceptions. One especially might be named, H. E. Rutherford, Esq., who, to a well-balanced mind, adds a heart alive to the various calls of benevolence.

There is another class of the English for whose souls no one cares, and well are they called *low English*. Even below the level of the drunken Hottentot have they sunk, and chance ever to lie there, till the Temperance Reform, having made the circuit of the world, at length reaches Cape Town, and awakes the community from their apathy on this subject.

UNION CHAPEL. Rev. John Philip, D. D., Pastor, and Superintendent of the London Society's Missions.

Dr. Vanderkemp originally collected a small English congregation; but nothing efficient was done till the arrival of Dr. P. in 1819. Government frowned upon every thing of the kind. In fact, some few soldiers and others who wished to meet together for worship, were driven to the mountain, like the Waldenses, by a tyrannic officer, and having there

erected their building, it was ordered to be pulled down upon their heads.

Says Dr. P. 'When we first arrived here Jesus Christ was not preached in the place. A Wesleyan, who had arrived a short time before, had been sent away. However, we began preaching, and the first Sabbath, I had of all classes, men, women, and children, Malays, slaves, &c., 21 in number, to hear me. The Sabbath was a day of pleasure, and these were all the English who could turn aside to hear the Gospel.'

It was not long before Union Chapel was built, a house seating 300 or 400, which is often well filled; since that time, the Scotch and Wesleyan denominations have taken an origin, and the Established Church has had an increased number of hearers. On this little congregation the eye of the Christian rests with pleasure. The Church has at times been robbed of its brightest ornaments to supply the mission stations. From hence go the tract distributors, the Sabbath school teachers. Here the missionary passing on to his field, meets some kindred spirits to bid him God-speed. Here are the greater part of the ladies who are planning benevolent works, schools, &c., for the salvation of Cape Town. There is preaching twice on the Sabbath, and other meetings during the week. During the afternoon of Sabbath, there is an interesting Sabbath School, where, we trust are training many future heralds of the Cross. The English at the Cape excuse themselves from God's house on Sabbath, P. M., because they wish to sanctify the day at home by a dinner an hour and a half long!

The people of Union Chapel are very attentive to the word preached. Impressions are made on some minds from time to time, and conversions are not unknown. The church contains 50 or 60 members. But I know not that one of them deems such a thing as a revival of religion possible in a church in Cape Town!

The people of Union Chapel are in a sense working Christians. Very interesting Sabbath schools and other labors are carried on by them among the Heathen in different parts of the town. May the Lord reward them in heaven!

Much has been done during the last 15 years in Cape Town, for which future generations will no doubt rise up and call Dr. and Mrs. P. blessed. The latter, by her unremitting exertion, her schemes of usefulness, must perhaps be acknowledged as much the almoner of blessings to this place as Dr. P. The Doctor is often absent on his tours among the stations: or even if in Cape Town, his comprehensive mind is occupied with the important business for which Providence seems to have sent him to this land.

Mission to Abyssinia.—We rejoice to learn that the mission of the Church Missionary Society to Abyssinia has been resumed, and that the Rev. Mr. Gobat, whose labors in that country have excited so much interest, has returned thither accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Isenberg, and the families of these missionaries.—The London Missionary Register for August gives some extracts from their journal, by which it appears that they reached Massowah (a small island and town in the Red Sea, on the coast of Abyssinia,) on the 20th of December, 1834. They intended proceeding with as little delay as possible to Axum, a town in the interior.

The following extract from the journal of Messrs. Gobat and Isenberg, will doubtless furnish food for reflection to those who pray and to those who neglect to pray for the success of missions.—*Episc. Rec.*

'Dec. 2.—Yesterday evening, being the first Monday evening of the month, we united in prayer for the extension of the kingdom of the Lord, also reading Eph. iii. and enjoying great comfort by knowing that we were united at one and the same time with thousands of Christians at the footstool of the Lord, in one spirit, one prayer, and having one promise.'

It sometimes appears in the display of God's love to sinners, as it does in the manifestation of His works in the Heavens, that the least of the planets moves in the nearest course to the Sun, and there enjoys the most powerful influence of his light, heat, and attraction.

No cloud can overshadow a true christian, but his faith will discern a rainbow in it.