

Let your measures be adopted, and carried into execution with a prayerful spirit, and not with a factious temper. Whatever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Ask his direction, and seek his blessing. With him upon your side, success may be expected. We are persuaded that it is his will that these battlements should be overthrown, but have an eye to him in your attempts for their abolition. Let your governing motive be his glory and not your own—the advancement of his kingdom, and not the praise that you have come off victorious. “Go ye upon her walls and destroy, but make not a full end; TAKE AWAY HER BATTLEMENTS, FOR THEY ARE NOT THE LORD’S.”

[TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN, FOR CANADIAN PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.]

### THE NIGHT IS PAST, THE DAY IS AT HAND.

*Extract of a Sermon, by DR. JULIUS MÜLLER, delivered on the first Sunday of Advent, from the text, Rom. 13th, 11—14.*

With the present Sunday, my beloved, we enter upon a new church year. The world indeed concerns itself little about the church's new year—it is scarcely cognizant of the presence of such an event; and when it accidentally hears of it, it is greatly astonished. But we, who give it to be understood by our presence in this holy place, that we participate in the heavenly concerns of the church, that we will not be the children of the world but the children of God, should we be indifferent to the importance of this Sunday? Should we allow the new year of the church to pass without thought over our heads? Are there not very serious, important considerations to which it calls us? Not merely the universal recollection as to the rapid flow of time, and as to the changeableness of every thing earthly to which indeed every great period in our life gives occasion, and which may be properly suggested by the civil new year; but other thoughts, considerations, questions, here force themselves on our notice, which are more intimately connected with the importance of the passing from one new year to another. Behind us, a long course of Sundays are concluded, every one of which was celebrated in the house of the Lord, by the common divine service; for the purpose of imparting strength to the spiritually destitute every time was the word of God proclaimed, explained, enforced; many fine, pious hymns were sung for the honor of God and for the edification of the community, and the table of the Lord was prepared; but how has every one of us employed them all? The Sunday clock has called us to this place; have we followed its call, and have we diligently appeared here for the purpose of praying to God and of receiving his holy word? And has the preached word every time found an entrance into our heart and a well prepared soil, for the purpose of bringing forth fruit? Has it promoted in us obedience to the divine precepts?

The present Sunday summons us not merely to more serious self-examination, the result of which must more or less shame us all, but also to very joyful feelings and considerations. The dawn of a new church year is likewise the entrance to the time of Advent, and this is a period of holy joy, of joyous hope. Now already the heavenly message sounds in our ear from afar, the word is made flesh, that to us a Saviour is born; already the sun of the Christmas festival approaches, and as the beams of the day-blush break out upon the mountains, for the purpose of announcing to the night that the day cometh, so the time of advent, as a herald of the joy of Christmas, prepares the way to our hearts.\* On the life of many of us lies the dark night of sorrow and care, or there spreads out the still darker night of sin; but now the magnificent lustre of advent-time shines on this night, and calls upon all hearts, who open themselves to its beams, to light and joy. The night is past, the day is at hand! this is the principle of all advent preaching, and the source of all right advent feeling in the hearts of the community. And as the first of the advent texts meets us with this announcement, should we not hear so very joyful a proclamation with pleasure; and ought we not willingly to linger on such a subject that we may refresh our memories with its meaning? We will, therefore, employ, for this purpose, the hour devoted to common devotion.

[After a short introduction, Dr. Müller considers first, the past night and the coming day, and then enquires if the night is past and the day come for us? We shall translate his illustration of the first of these particulars.]

The prophet Isaiah says, “Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.” As a dark night of the latest harvest-time is spread over the earth—mountain and valley, wood and field, cities and villages being wrapped in its dark shadow, the nearest objects are hidden from our view, the stars send only a scanty light on the path of the wanderer

\* Christmas is celebrated by the Roman Catholic, Episcopal and Lutheran Churches, on the 25th of December; while the Greek Church asserts that Christ was born on the 6th of January. Immediately before the birth of Christ a census was ordered of all the Roman empire, and Luke says “all went to be taxed every one into his own city”—Luke ii. 3. Now it is not very likely that Augustus would issue such a decree during the depth of winter. The inference from this is, that the precise period of our Saviour's nativity is unknown.—Note by the Translator.

—so once the night of ignorance and superstition covered the human race. And indeed it was so through their own blame. Had the nations truly preserved the light, which was given to them from the beginning, that light would have in return preserved them from the folly of superstition and idolatry. “For the nature of the invisible God, it is, his eternal power and Godhead, are so clearly seen, that it can be truly perceived in his works, namely, in the creation of the world, so that they are without excuse. For although they knew that there is a God, they have not worshipped him as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the glory of the ever changeable God into an image made like to changeable man and to four-footed and creeping beasts.” Desiring the knowledge of the true God, the heathen dreamed of a great multitude of deities, of which they sometimes made to themselves very strange and unholy representations; they moulded them into a variety of forms, and fell down before the image after which their heart lusted, for the purpose of supplicating them. And though many of the nations of antiquity were far advanced in human culture, skill and knowledge, they could not tear themselves away from this dark error.

But though the nations wandered from God, yet they could not wander back again; because they thought not that God perceived them. God consequently gave them over to a perverse feeling to do that which is not convenient. His law was written in the heart, whereas their conscience bore them witness, even their thoughts agreeing thereto, which accused or excused among themselves; but fallen from the holy God they wished not to hear the voice of conscience, which reminded them of Him and of his holiness. For the light that was in them was dark; their knowledge of good and evil was perplexed and darkened; the voice of conscience spake lower, at last, it was almost entirely silent; they regarded sin not so much as sin as what ought to be avoided; they not only themselves did evil deeds, but had pleasure in those that did them. Thus great was the power of darkness in their heart.

But the Lord chose one nation for himself from the nations of the world; as his peculiar property, the people of Israel; that they might preserve the knowledge of the truth. Abraham, the pious progenitor of this people, indeed, held fast to the worship and service of the one God, and God had complicity in him, and revealed himself in divers manners to him and to his descendants, for the purpose of preserving them from the contagious power of idolatry all around; he gave them, by Moses, the law, that they might know his holy will and live according to it.

Though the seed of Abraham was, however, highly favoured above all the nations of the earth by the divine revelation, yet it was still imperfect, only the first rudiments of the Divine word, such as was necessary for immature children; the law was a shadow of good things to come, not the nature of the good things themselves. In the revelation of the Old Testament there shone a dusky glimmering light, yet not the clear light of day itself. The Lord summoned Moses to the top of Mount Sinai for the purpose of making known his will to him and his people; the fire of the Lord burning on the mountain, but veiled with thick gloom, and darkness and tempest. Solomon built a house to the Lord for a habitation, the priests prepared to serve the Lord with wind and stringed instruments, but, behold, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, and Solomon, astonished, went back and said, “the Lord has said he would dwell in the thick darkness.” The law possesses clearness, yet it is not to be compared for clearness to the superior clearness of the Gospel; as the light of the moon pales and disappears before the clearer splendor of the sun. The light of Goshen appeared amid the surrounding darkness of Egypt, yet was that light darkness in comparison with the pre-eminent glory of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, and when there Moses and Elias appeared with him in light and splendor, yet it was only the reflection from the countenance of Christ that enlightened them; the law and the prophecies of the Old Testament, when alone by themselves, being surrounded with darkness, must receive their true light from their fulfilment in Christ.

But as the traveller, on whom the night has fallen in an unknown path, so that he goes into error and knows not where he is, thinks on the light with earnest longing and sighs for the break of day, so also the heathen long for light and truth. It is not, indeed, all the heathen, but only a few, who long for something better and higher than earthly pleasure and honor, and with corresponding earnestness endeavoured to do the work of the law that was written on their hearts; these perceived the darkness that lay out-stretched upon the nations, and were sensible of their misery. Then some in the agonies of despair, raised a melancholy complaint over the ruins of all human knowledge and wisdom. “He cutteth out rivers among the rocks, and his eye seeth every precious thing. He bindeth the floods from overflowing, and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the place thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. The abyss saith it is not in me; and the sea saith it is not in me.” And only some venture, in humble confidence, to add to this complaint the words, “God knoweth the way thereof, and understandeth its place.” A preachment of the higher light enlightens your souls, as the star the wise men in the east, and they longed to see it; they were earnestly desirous that it might recommend them to the favourable consideration of that God who was still unknown to them, that he might reveal himself to poor man inclined to error.