

# THE COLONIAL CHURCHMAN.

"BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE."

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## HYMN ON THE NEW YEAR.

The God of life, whose constant care  
With blessings crowns each opening year,  
Our scanty span doth still prolong,  
And makes anew our annual song.

How many precious souls are fled  
To the vast regions of the dead,  
Since to this day the changing sun  
Through his last yearly period run.

We yet survive; but who can say  
Or through this year, or month, or day, —  
"I shall retain this vital breath,  
"Thus far, at least, in league with death?"

That breath is thine eternal God,  
'Tis thine to fix my soul's abode;  
It holds its life from thee alone  
On earth, or in the world unknown.

## RELIGIOUS MICELLANY.

*To the Editors of the Colonial Churchman.*

Gentlemen,

In looking over some of the works of the late pious and lamented Bishop JENN, I met with the following letter, written by him in early years, to a friend on the subject of amusements, and I shall feel obliged if you will give it publication in your useful paper.

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Dear Sir,

I cannot remove from this place, without taking care of you on paper, though prevented from doing so in person; particularly, as I have matters to talk out, of no slight importance, and which have occasioned me no little thought. It has given me deep concern, that you were present at Mrs. —'s ball, and indulged expectations too sanguine, as events prove, that you possessed sufficient steadiness and resolution to act upon, what, I know, must be your hard conviction, respecting the common amusements of the world. The utter incompatibility of such tumultuous gaieties, with christian seriousness, should be, at least, as well aware of, as I can possibly be. For such scenes, you can have no reason; they must be to you as a strange and unnatural event. Why, then, should you sanction them, by your presence? Why should you, thus, do violence to your principles, and your feelings? And why do you, contradict, by your practice, without even the shadow of rational inducement, the general tenour of your words.

Perhaps, my dear sir, you have never distinctly adverted to the fact, that what constituted the essential guilt of idolatry, in the earlier periods of the world, is fully implied, in attachments to the amusements of the present day. The grossest idolatry, does not, more effectually, defraud the one true God, of the worship that was due to Him, as a provident and moral governor, than attachment to such amusements, precludes devotedness of heart to the one gracious being as the source and centre of all

true happiness. This will appear, upon very brief consideration. That natural thirst after some undefined good, that irksomeness of life, that craving void of soul, under which half the world is laboring, are all so many indications, that something is wanting, which the world cannot give; are all kindly meant, to impel us to the blessed fountain of goodness, of enjoyment, of full and complete bliss. On the other hand, can it be doubted, that diversions are the chief engines of a diabolical counter scheme, by which, people are enabled, at least for a time to get rid of themselves, and are, thus, kept from earnestly, and devotedly, betaking themselves to God, as their light, their life, and the very joy of their hearts? Now if these things be so, it inevitably follows, that common amusements contain the very essence of spiritual idolatry; and, for my own part, I have no doubt, that, the great enemy can hardly be more deeply gratified, or the interests of his dark kingdom more essentially promoted, than when souls capable of God, are seduced to 'prop up a frail and feverish being,' by those wretched shifts, and expedients, which are miscalled the innocent pleasures of life.

Observe, that I presume not in this matter, to judge the mass of society. Before a far different tribunal, it must stand or fall. Great multitudes unquestionably err, through ignorance. And as God mercifully winked at the gross idolatry of the Gentiles, it is highly probable, that He now winks at the subtler idolatry of mere professing, or of imperfectly informed christians. It is, however, a most instinctive fact, that, against the idolatry of His own people, — of those who had been taught to know, and trained to adore Him. His denunciations and inflictions were dreadfully severe. A most instinctive fact: for it follows, by inevitable consequence, that they who have been brought within the higher influences of christianity, cannot, without deep criminality, and extreme hazard, break down the barriers between themselves and the world; or, in any degree, countenance a system, which goes to shut out God from the heart.

What estimate the sacred writers formed, of such enjoyments as the world delights in, it is needless for me to state. Let me barely direct your attention, to that passage of Isaiah; — "The harp, and the viol, and the tabret, and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands;" and that other of Amos, "They chaunt to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music," &c. — The sequel is doubtless, familiar to your mind; and it is awfully decisive see Isaiah 5. 12, and Amos 6. 5.

How different the picture, given, by the last of the prophets, in that lovely passage, where he describes the intercourse of good men, in times of public calamity; in times not unlike the present! — Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one

to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought on his name: and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." — It would be trifling with a serious subject, to ask is this the manner of communication that prevails in scenes of tumultuous gaiety? But it may be fairly inquired, would not such conversation be incompatible with the whole scope and character of these assemblies? Nay, would it not, amidst such concomitants, be justly accounted at once, ridiculous and profane? Can a christian then (I use the term in its highest and only adequate sense) can a christian, consistently, and conscientiously, frequent meetings, which, by their nature, exclude these topics which should be habitually present with us, and of which we are not only to think, but also to speak, "when we sit in the house, and when we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up?"

Thus far, I have merely considered the case of any serious christian. But how transcendent is the obligation, how solemn the responsibility, of a christian Teacher! When our Lord, in his divine sermon, exhorts his followers to "enter in at the strait gate," He immediately subjoins this most significant warning. "Beware of false prophets:" intimating what the experience of eighteen centuries has but too abundantly confirmed, that the most effectual obstacles in the way of strict religion, and the most dangerous seductives to a careless and secular mode of living, would be furnished, by the erroneous doctrine and example, of religious instructors. The "wide gate, and the broad way," may be fairly taken to signify, the way of the world. And since it is notorious, that tumultuous gaieties, constitute the chief occupation of this frequented road, and are the great allurements, which induce multitudes to choose it, what can be more emphatically the duty of a christian minister, than to bear testimony, at least by his own undeviating example, against such anti-spiritual pursuits? Or how can he, more fatally betray the holy cause, which he has been solemnly set apart to defend, than by a weak and dastardly compliance with the ruinous practices of the world. I use strong language. I can employ no other, to do common justice to what I feel. And I am conscious, that my words fall infinitely short of the mischief which they attempt to describe. If a clergyman were to commit some flagitious enormity, if he were to forge a bank note, or to rob on the highway, the act, though more atrocious, would be far less prejudicial to the cause of true religion, for he would not then be 'Exemplar vitii imitabile,' (which may be freely rendered — an example which induces others to do wrong). His conduct would be reprobated; his character would be stigmatized; his life would be forfeited to the laws of his country; but christianity would remain uninjured and unblenched. On the other hand, — it should be deeply laid to heart that the more innocent, the more edifying, the more ex-