

hemorrhage, probably from the rupture of a blood vessel in the lungs; and at the same hour of the ensuing day the complaint returned, and he expired in the full belief, and joyful expectation

of a glorious immortality. Thus fell a great man in our Israel, Oct. 7, 1819, in the 46th year of his age. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

Religious Communications.

REASONS FOR NOT OBSERVING CHRISTMAS. ✓

Messrs. Editors,

You need not be informed, that this day is observed, by a large body of professed christians in commemoration of the nativity of Christ. As the denomination to which you and I belong, keep no day in commemoration of this great event, it is perhaps due to ourselves, and to others, that we should give our reasons why we do not. This indeed appears to me to be necessary; because many of our brethren have paid little or no attention to this subject, and others have seriously asked, "Why do you not keep sacred, the day on which the Saviour was born?"

As we have no wish to be singular, merely from the love of singularity; and as it is as proper to give a reason of our practice to every one that asketh us, as of the hope that is within us, I shall state some of the reasons, why we do not, by any particular rites, celebrate the incarnation of Christ.

1. We do not know, and no one can tell us on what day Christ became incarnate.

Though the most strict inquiries have been made by learned and pious men, yet they have not been able to ascertain either the day or the month in which the Saviour was born. There are several circumstances which make it very improbable that his birth occurred in December; and those

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who appear to have made the most correct calculations, suppose that the Redeemer became incarnate in the month of September, or October. It is therefore without any just foundation, that good men so confidently take it for granted, that the Saviour was born on the 25th of December.

We have as much reason to believe that the Star which guided the steps of the eastern sages was lighted up on the 25th of September, as on the 25th of December, for indeed, we have no satisfactory evidence in either case.

But, it will be said; "Though we cannot determine the day on which the Messiah became incarnate, yet reason and gratitude require we should observe some day; and though we should mistake the time, the Lord will know our motives, and accept our service." We acknowledge that this reasoning appears plausible, and it has no doubt much influence on many minds. But we cannot admit its force, because we conceive it has no legitimate support from the Scriptures; and because if our deference for this kind of reasoning should lead us to keep one day, it would be difficult to assign any limits as to the number of days which we ought annually to observe.

2. We can find neither precept nor example in the Scriptures for the observance of Christmas.

We think if the Saviour had intended that his birth should be commemorated, he would have left some injunction on this subject, and would have guarded against any uncertainty as to the day itself. We think, we should, at least, have had some evidence that primitive Christians celebrated this important event. And we are strengthened in our convictions that we should have had some intimations of this kind, when we refer to Scripture usage in relation to ancient festivals.

No one can imagine that the deliverance of the Hebrews from the sword of the destroying angel, or the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, were events to be compared in magnitude with the advent of Christ. And yet, as these events were to be kept, as a memorial throughout all generations; not only the month, but the day of the month was explicitly recorded. In relation to the Passover, Moses says, "Ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread: in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread until the one and twentieth day of the month at even." We see the same minuteness, as to the time, in which the feast of Tabernacles was to be observed. "The 15th day of this seventh month shall be the feast of Tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord." Now if we were commanded to celebrate the birth of Christ—if the day on which this service was to be performed was recorded in Scripture—or if we had the least evidence that the disciples of Christ commemorated the incarnation of their Lord and Master—then, we would with alacrity obey the command, we would keep the recorded day with joy and gladness, and imitate the grateful conduct of his first disciples. But, until such evidence, or authority can be exhib-

ited, we shall not consider ourselves as deserving censure, or reproach, for not keeping the day.

3 We do not keep the twenty-fifth of December as sacred to the commemoration of Christ's nativity, because we reject the authority that enjoined it. There is a difference of opinion whether pope Telesphorus, or pope Julius appointed this day as a festival in honor of the nativity of Christ. It is certain however, that a long period had elapsed after the birth of Christ—that the church of God had departed from the simplicity of the faith; and become corrupt both in doctrine and practice—and that the papal power was firmly established before the 25th of December was ordained as a Mass-day by the Church of Rome. It appears then that Christ-mass-day was appointed by one of the popes of Rome—by a power who set aside the simple institutions of Christianity, and substituted carnal ordinances in their place. This is sufficient reason why, as Protestants, and as Christians, we do not keep the day.

4. We do not observe this day, because the same authority which instituted it, would require us to observe other days. It would require us to keep days in commemoration of other events in the history of Christ—in honour of the blessed Virgin—and of men falsely called saints, who were chiefly distinguished by imbruing their hands in the blood of the faithful—and bringing to the stake those who were opposed to the corruptions of Christianity. Now, as we will not bow to the authority of his holiness at Rome by worshipping saints or keeping days to their honor, so neither will we submit to his dictates by celebrating Christ-mass-day.

Suppose, that from motives of politeness, or from an indifference

to the great principles which led the reformers to quit the Church of Rome, we should yield to the wishes of our friends and observe Christmas? What would be the consequence? We should have to celebrate other festivals. We should be called upon to shut up our stores, and cease from all business on Good-Friday. What objection could we make? Good-Friday is a day in which the death of Christ is held by them in sacred commemoration. Surely his death was an event as important as his birth; if then it is proper to observe Christmas, it is proper to observe Good-Friday. Indeed, the same remarks will apply to many other festivals, for the observance of which, there is as much scripture and sound argument, as can be advanced in favour of the festival of Christmas.

5. The celebration of the nativity of Christ is attended with much more evil than good.

With the exception of a few pious Christians who sacredly regard the day; we ask how is this Mass celebrated? Let any man who has been a resident in Europe answer this question, and he will tell you, that by the greatest part of what is called Christendom, it is celebrated as a day of feasting and merriment. It is devoted to eating and drinking—to gambling and dancing, and to sports of every kind. It is in this way the birth of Christ is honoured where Mass days are most frequent, and should the observance of this Mass become fashionable and general here, we have reason to fear that the same general dissipation would be associated with it.

The above remarks have not been made with a view to censure those Christians who keep this festival. We would rather say, "Let those who regard the day, regard it to the Lord." But they have been made to shield

ourselves from the opprobrium which has been cast upon us. It has been more than intimated that Christians who do not keep this Mass as sacred time, discover great insensibility in relation to the advent of Christ. It has been asserted that if the impulses of the hearts of Christians will not prompt them to express their gratitude—no arguments, though uttered by the tongues of angels, could be efficacious.

In the name of a multitude of Christians we would repel all such insinuations. We maintain that Christians ought to cherish an habitual sense of the infinite mercy which brought the Saviour from heaven to earth. We maintain that the incarnation of Christ was the most interesting occurrence that had ever transpired; for in that event, the present and eternal destinies of man were involved. We maintain, that we ought not merely to reflect on his birth one day in the year, but every day. And so far from being insensible to this momentous occurrence—we look back with adoring gratitude to the evening, when the Star of Bethlehem directed the wise men to the place where the Redeemer lay. With the heavenly visitants who came to pay him divine honours, and to congratulate the world on this auspicious event; we are ready to exclaim, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

At the close of my communication, I would caution all your readers, not to value the institutions of men, more than the plain and simple ordinances of the gospel. I have known some men who were very strict in observing Christmas, and yet their habitual neglect and contempt of the Lord's day furnished abundant evidence of their disregard of the authority of Christ. It is

not the observance of days, or an attachment to mere outward ceremonies, but a life of faith and charity, and holy obedience, which characterize the true Christian.

I would also suggest to them the importance of guarding against a censorious spirit. I have not had the least desire in any of my remarks to excite prejudices against those who differ from me in opinion concerning the commemoration of the birth of Christ. It is probable that many Christians who are ignorant of the origin of Christmas, do on this day

devoutly call to mind the goodness of the Saviour in visiting our world. I am willing they should enjoy their meditations. I do not censure Christians for setting apart a portion of time to meditate on the nativity of Christ. But I think they are worthy of censure when they assert with confidence that Christ was born on this day—and when they mingle with the commemoration of this event, reproaches and condemnation upon those whose consciences do not dictate the propriety of such an observance.

ETHELSE.

ON COMPETENT MINISTERS IN THE UNITED STATES.

The following Letters were addressed to the Rev. Dr S. President of a Theological Academy in Yorkshire, England. They are intended to remove the erroneous impressions, which, it is believed, have been made on the minds of English christians by a communication in the English Baptist Magazine for September last "said to be from a worthy Presbyterian minister in the city of N. York." As the same statements which that "communication" contains, continue to be repeated in this country, the writer has been requested to publish his correspondence in the American Baptist Magazine.

LETTER I.

Rev. & dear Brother, —, Dec. 1, 1819.

I AVAIL myself of the departure of a ship from this port to Liverpool to send you these lines. Should a private opportunity offer, I will forward you some of the works which are published here. You will excuse me, my much respected friend, when I remark, that the most intelligent Englishmen appear to me to have very degrading ideas of the state of society in America. This arises, perhaps, from a natural partiality to their own "Fast anchored Isle," from the incorrect statements of British travel-

lers in the United States, and from the misrepresentations of some Americans.

A love of country is commendable. He who does not cherish an affection for his native soil, is not likely to feel a strong attachment for any other place. Yet, I think, an affection for home may be cherished without feeling a strong antipathy for every thing abroad. But, if I may judge from the publications which daily teem from the English press, the most powerful prejudices exist against America. It would seem that nothing good, either in manners, morals, or religion, can obtain a place in this ill-favoured land.

I am surprised that men of literature, and talents, and religion, should repeat the calumnies which are contained in some of the journals and letters of British tourists in the United States. Whether these authors wrote for amusement, or profit, or order the feelings of disappointed pride, I cannot say; but I may venture to affirm that they have done this country great injustice. This is much to be regretted, because it keeps alive a spirit of mutual jeal-