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NEW YEARS' ADDRESSES

BY

J.C. PHILPOT

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J. C. Philpot was the editor of the "Gospel Standard" from 1849 until 1869, the year he died. Every January, he would write a New Years' Address, of which the following are a sampling. The "Gospel Standard" was distributed monthly to some 10,000 subscribers.

New Years' Addresses

by the Late J.C. Philpot

January, 1850

God has ever been pleased to work by instruments. Had it been his holy will, every event might have been brought about by a succession of miracles, and human agency been wholly discarded. But from the beginning *instruments* have been employed in the execution of his eternal purposes. By Noah were the inhabitants of the old world warned of the coming deluge; by Moses and Aaron was Israel led up out of Egypt, and by Joshua brought into the Promised Land. By a succession of prophets were the children of Israel admonished, reprov'd, or instructed; by deliverer after deliverer were they brought out of repeated scenes of captivity and bondage.

In New Testament times *instruments* were still made use of to accomplish the designs of infinite mercy. The risen Jesus said to his disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." And then, to show that he would raise up a succession of faithful ministers, he graciously added, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

But it may be further remarked that it has always pleased God to make use of, in themselves, very *weak* and *inefficient* instruments. The rod of Moses, the rams' horns of the priests under Joshua, the earthen pitchers of Gideon's little band, the sling of David, the mantle of Elijah, the waters of Jordan in which Naaman washed, and the salt which was cast into the springs of Jericho, were all so many instances of this grand truth, that though God works by instruments, it is always by the *weakest*. And, indeed, were it otherwise, the glory of God—the great, the final end of all his works, would seem to be tarnished or suffer loss. Were he to work by any but the weakest instruments, the pride and infidelity of the human heart would arrogate to itself all the praise. To lay claim to this has ever drawn down the resentment of God. Sennacherib, (Isa. 10:13-18,) Nebuchadnezzar, and Herod (Acts

12:22, 23) paid the penalty of robbing God of his glory. But to prevent the creature thus breaking in upon the divine prerogative, God has purposely employed the weakest instruments, that all human glory might be effectually cut off. This is beautifully set forth in the first chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and especially verses 26 to 29, where the whole seems to be summed up: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."

If any good be, then, now doing to the souls of men, we may be sure of two things: 1. That it is for the most part by instruments. 2. That these instruments will be weak and despised. And, whatever be the gloomy state of Zion, let us bear in mind that "all the promises of God in Christ are still yea and in him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us." "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." Among these promises, uncanceled and unrevoked, is the Lord's gracious presence with his people to the end of the world: "Because I live, ye shall live also;" "I will never leave you nor forsake you;" "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you;" "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Zion may be low in a low place; faithful ministers may be taken away; hypocrites and dead professors may abound; popery may be coming in like a flood; upon earth there may be distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves of revolution and tumult roaring; the world, as well nigh worn out, may be rocking to her base, and tottering to her fall like a cottage; and, worst symptom of all, the people of God may be rent and torn asunder with division and strife, so that faith and love seem well nigh perished out of the land. But Jesus still lives. He still sits and rules upon his throne. He must still see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. A seed shall still serve him; a people formed for himself, in whom he will be glorified. And he still holds the keys of hell and death; is still the Resurrection and the Life; and must, and will, reign till he hath put all things under his feet.

If he, then, lives as Zion's glorious Head, he still has living members; if he be still the great High Priest over the house of God, he has spiritual worshippers; if still a King, he has subjects; if still a Prophet, he has those that sit at his feet and hear his word. A Shepherd without sheep, a Husband without a bride, an Advocate without clients, a Headstone of the corner without "lively stones," a Saviour without objects to save, an Intercessor without any for whose cause to plead—this is not Jesus. No, whatever occur, there is still, and ever will be, a living people on earth who have union and communion with a living Head.

But these instruments, it may further be observed, are not only weak and feeble, they are also *fallen*; and, as such, partake of, and therefore frequently manifest, the sins and infirmities of our fallen nature. Noah "drank of the wine and was drunken;" Aaron fashioned the golden calf; Moses was guilty of impatience and unbelief, and rebelled against God's commandments;

(Num. 20:12; 27:14;) Gideon set up an idolatrous worship; (Judges 8:27;) Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord to Tarshish; Jeremiah cursed the day of his birth; and, not to mention others, Jephthah, Samson, David, all instruments of Israel's deliverance, flagrantly showed they were fallen creatures.

These three points may, then, be considered as established from the word of God: 1, that the Lord works by instruments: 2. that these instruments are, as regards themselves, weak and feeble: and 3, that, as fallen creatures, they often manifest the sins and infirmities of fallen nature.

But from these points flow three consequences: 1, that God chooses his own instruments; 2. that he makes his strength perfect in their weakness; 3, that all the sin and shame are theirs, and all the glory his.

But admitting the truth of these remarks, the question at once arises, how are they applicable to the "Gospel Standard," and how do they bear upon the Annual Address? In this way: If the Lord choose to employ the Standard as an instrument of good to his people, may he not do so? Is he not a sovereign? Can any step between him and his divine prerogative of selecting his own instruments to do his own work? Who dare say that God shall not use it as an instrument? And if he graciously condescend to use it, what matters it if one man say, "He cannot," another, "He will not," a third, "He must not?" That God has mercifully wrought good by it is unquestionable. One instance will suffice, which cannot but be considered a remarkable providence. Rusk sat writing year after year in his lowly garret, as if by a divine impulse that his works would one day be published: but what human probability was there of this coming to pass? He was very poor, and the only work he published had scarcely any sale. Is it not a singular circumstance that, after his death, his persuasion should be verified; and that by the publication of his works in the "Standard," a much wider circulation should be given to his writings, and they brought before the family of God much more than if he had published them himself? And if these writings have been blessed, can the hand of God be denied in it? and is not this a sufficient proof, were all other wanting, that the "Standard" has been employed as an instrument of good?

But what poor judges are individuals generally of any good that may be doing to the souls of men! A number of the "Standard" comes in; it is hastily cut open, and a piece is hurriedly read. It does not suit the reader: it is at once, therefore, thrown down, and neglected, or unhesitatingly condemned. A judgment instinctively, as it were, springs up in the mind, and perhaps escapes the lips: "*This* can do nobody any good." But who made thee a judge? It may be blessed to another; and, if so, whose is the loss and whose the gain? A similar circumstance often occurs in the ministry of the word. A sermon is preached by a gracious man, but is not blessed to a certain individual. He perhaps hastily condemns both sermon and minister. Some months afterwards it comes out that that very sermon has been signally blessed to a poor, tried child of God. Until we know all men's hearts, trials, states, cases, and circumstances, and until we can determine what instruments God shall employ, and how, when, where, and to whom he shall employ them, hasty judgments are best suspended. Let this question be rather asked: "Is it truth? Is it agreeable to the word of God and the

experience of the saints?" If so, let this be rather my feeling: "If not blessed to me, it may be to others. God is a sovereign, and in his hands I leave it."

2. But if the second position be true, that the strength of Christ is made perfect in weakness, can the "Standard" be in itself anything but weak, if it be an instrument of good? Its weakness is its strength, as its strength would be its weakness. And if this weakness be felt and acknowledged, if creature strength be utterly renounced, if all dependence be placed in the Lord, if the object sought be the glory of God and the good of his people, why should not the blessing of God rest upon its pages?

Whether for good or evil, periodicals are almost universally sought after and read. Books of any size are too expensive for the poor, and too bulky for general reading. By means of the "Standard," letters by gracious men, extracts from authors, and a variety of profitable reading may come before the eyes of many to whom they may be made a blessing.

3. Admitting still further, that the Lord employs *fallen*, and therefore sinful instruments, as well as weak and feeble ones, can it be expected that many traces will not be discoverable of sin and infirmity in the pages of the "Standard?" Fallen creatures will ever manifest a fallen nature. But the grand point is, whether these infirmities are seen; and if seen, felt; and if felt, avoided. In these things a periodical, conducted in the fear of God, will resemble the course of a Christian. Rashness, hasty judgments, harsh speeches, strife and controversy will sometimes characterize the infancy of a periodical as the infancy of a Christian. But as there is, or should be, growth in a Christian individual, so there is or should be growth in a Christian periodical. The kind advice of friends, and the harsh censure of enemies; a growing experience of the evil of strife; a clearer view of what is really experimental and profitable; a greater willingness to know and do the mind of Christ; a more matured view of men and things, both as regards the church and the world; a more mellowed state of soul, springing out of the dealings of God in afflictions and trials, as well as corresponding blessings: all these, it may be hoped, will be evidenced in the growth of a periodical as well as in that of a Christian. In conducting the "Standard," the grand object has been to insert only what is really profitable, and to exclude what is unprofitable.

Religious gossip, therefore, three fourths of which are generally false, old wives' tales about churches and ministers, personal attacks or allusions, flattery of friends and censure of enemies, strife and controversy on unimportant points, dry doctrinal statements without power, dew, or savour, all such unprofitable matter will not, it is to be hoped, appear in the pages of the "Standard;" but only what is "honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report."

With every care and desire to the contrary, evil, indeed, and infirmity will occasionally appear; but let this be considered as incidental to fallen nature, and not deliberate, wilful transgression. Nay, this incidental, not wilful, infirmity may be graciously overruled to cut off creature-exaltation, and mar the pride of man. "Where is boasting? it is excluded." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

But is there not another side of the case—another view of the question? God condescends to employ instruments—these are weak and sinful. But is that all? Does not grace still reign, still superabound? Is it not still an ever-flowing, overflowing fountain, unexhausted and inexhaustible?

Man dies, but Jesus lives; nature fails, but truth abides; sin abounds, but grace superabounds; instruments are weak, but Christ is strong. Should, then, the weakness and sinfulness of the instrument thrust it into despair? Should the work be laid down because creature-knees totter and creature-hands flag? If so, the gospel ploughman might leave his plough, and the spiritual fisher his net. Pressed down by a sense of creature-weakness, Jonah fled to Tarshish, and Mark from accompanying Paul and Barnabas. But the one got into the whale's belly, and the other caused a strife between two apostles. Paul learnt a different lesson from his thorn in the flesh. Creature-strength oozed out through the wound of the rankling thorn; but in weakness thus made known was Christ's strength made perfect.

This, then, is the true place of an instrument, preacher, or writer, pulpit or periodical: to be weak, utterly weak; to be sinful, desperately sinful; and yet to have Christ's strength made perfect in weakness, and Christ's grace superabounding over sin.

And what will this lead to in experience as a practical result? To self-confidence and self-righteousness, to sloth or despair? No, but to the exact contrary. Throw the creature upon itself, it will be swollen with pride or agonized with desperation. Success will puff up, and disappointment hurl down. It will ever fluctuate between utter sloth or hurried activity; be swift to condemn others and slow to condemn itself; will seek its own profit and glory; mistake its own spirit; listen to no voice but that of flattery; move restlessly and proudly round its own narrow circle; despise all the true followers of the Lamb; and close a life of hypocrisy by a death of despair. Such is the creature left and abandoned to its own ways, strength, wisdom, and righteousness. But take an instrument used in the Lord's honoured employ. He is all weakness, folly, blindness, ignorance, and sin. But by this experimental knowledge of sin he is made and kept humble, tender, teachable, dependent. Nay, more, his sense of sinfulness makes him strive after sanctification, of weakness after strength, of ignorance after wisdom. Sin brings him to Jesus' feet, and weakness keeps him there. Boast he dare not, for he is altogether vile; and work he cannot, for his strength is gone. Presume he must not, and despair he may not. Ever least, and ever last; seeing none so bad as himself, and therefore slow to condemn; admiring grace wherever seen, and loving the image of Christ wherever discerned; seeking the Lord's glory, not his own; ever working, and in his own eyes doing nothing; a willing servant of the Lord's people; faithful, but tender; spiritual, but not censorious; righteous, but not self-righteous; neither a Pharisee nor an Antinomian; using the world, but not abusing it; neither slothful nor hurried; living *to* the Lord, and dying *in* the Lord—such is a feeble picture of what an instrument in the hand of God should be.

If this be a true description of what an instrument of good to God's people ought to be, should not the aim of the "Standard," if it desire to be such an instrument, be to walk in the footsteps thus traced out? It may fail in the

attempt; but such should be its aim and object. And if it has no such definite aim or distinct object, its claim to be an instrument is but a pretence. But be it remarked, to aim is one thing, to attain the mark is another. The archer aims at the bull's eye; if he aim not at the centre, will he strike the target? His aim, however, may be good, but his eye defective or his arm weak. Let the motive, end, aim, object of a preacher or writer, editor, or correspondent be considered. Is that right? Is that the glory of God and the profit of his people? Then let defects, infirmities, short-comings, everything not absolutely inconsistent with its primary end and aim be tenderly passed by; and where the "Standard" has been made in any way a blessing, let the throne of grace be sought on its behalf, that only that may appear in its pages which shall be made instrumental in promoting the glory of God and the spiritual profit of his church and people.

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January, 1851

All true religion flows out of the life of God in the soul. Wherever this divine life exists, there will true religion be found. Where it exists not, there may be the name of religion; but it will be a shadow without substance, a form without power, an imitation without reality. Almost the first truths that are sealed on the conscience in the earliest dawn of life and light, when men are beheld as trees walking, are connected with the life of God in the soul as a divine work.

That God is a Spirit; that he must be worshipped in spirit and truth; that there is a new birth; that the seat of all true religion is in the heart; that every thing must be given up for Christ; that sin is a dreadful internal reality; and that therefore grace and salvation must be internal realities too—amidst all the darkness and confusion of mind in the beginnings of the work of grace, these truths stand prominently forth, as the mountain tops lift themselves up out of the mists of the valley.

Nor are these simple truths ever shaken or undermined by subsequent experience. Much may have to be renounced. Many opinions, prejudices, pursuits, connexions, attachments, may have to be abandoned; much pride, self-righteousness, creature-strength and wisdom to be burnt up; the soul may be stripped naked and bare, and "left like a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill;" but this truth is never swept away, that the kingdom of God set up in the heart with a divine power is the main point, the one thing needful, the treasure in the earthen vessel, the white stone and the new name, without which all profession is but a mask and a show. Nay, all the storms, waves, and billows that, rolling over the soul, bury and drown all religion that is of the flesh and the creature, only settle and ground it more deeply in the firm persuasion that all true religion is a divine work, a new creation, and that it is begun, carried on, and perfected by the sovereign, efficacious power of God alone.

Hence springs the separation between those that are born of the flesh and those that are born of the Spirit. Probe all false religion to the bottom; put

the scoop into its heart and centre; strip off its garments and trappings, and what will you find? SELF.

False religion may assume a thousand shapes, from preparation for Confirmation at a young ladies' boarding school to the hair shirt and bleeding back of a Popish saint. It may run through all shades of profession, from wild Ranterism or Mormonism to the highest flight of doctrinal Calvinism. But hunt it down through all its turnings and windings, and you will find the *creature* at the end of the chase.

How this leaven met and thwarted Paul at every step! "Ye must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses," was the first stumbling block cast into the path of the Gentile believers. And by whom? By "certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed;" (Acts 15:5;) who, in bondage themselves to the law of works, envied the Gentile saints the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. With them, as with all who are not effectually humbled under the mighty hand of God, the grand stumbling stone and rock of offence was this, that Christ must be all and the creature nothing. "I bear them record," says the apostle, "that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." (Rom. 10:2, 3.)

And so it is in our day. The "straitest sect of the Pharisees" did not die out in the days of the apostles. Its roots still lie deep in the human heart. It is a religion taught at the mother's knee, nurtured and fed by schools, tutors, and governesses, strengthened in maturer years, where not knocked to pieces by worldly lusts, by sermon upon sermon and tract after tract, and handed down in old age as a precious legacy to the rising generation. Nor is it confined to what is called "the religious world," and to be found only in little books bound in crimson watered-silk as Christmas presents for good little boys and girls. Alas! it is found in a higher, purer atmosphere, intruding itself into the church of God—a rank, rampant weed in the garden of spices. Nearly all the mistakes, errors, confusion, strife, and division everywhere seen in the churches that hold the truth arise either from the want of divine life, or from mingling with it what is of the creature and the flesh.

Religion is with some almost as indispensable as the air they breathe or the food they eat. It is a natural craving that requires a suitable aliment. In some it is Popery, in others Arminianism, in others Calvinism—a numerous tribe of sisters, but with a strong family likeness stamped on all. "Let us have some religion. We cannot do without religion. Our church, our chapel, our pew, our minister, our people—we can't exist without them." Such is the feeling, such the language of hundreds who have not a grain of real religion, not a spark of divine teaching: who, with all this clamour about religion, have never once, perhaps, in their lives cried from a broken heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner," or ever had one sight, by living faith, of the King in his beauty. When this strong natural feeling of religion is well varnished over by a few tears under a sermon, gilded by a sound Calvinistic creed, and kept duly polished by a consistent life, who can wonder that there are shoals of professors in the churches in whom the very root itself of divine life is wanting?

Now these, though embarked under a free grace profession, will be either Pharisees or Antinomians. The leaven, though hidden for a time, will, and must work; and when it breaks forth, contention must ensue. For errors and mistakes must arise where the Spirit of *truth* is not; strife and division must exist where the Spirit of *love* is not; pride and self-righteousness must prevail where the Spirit of *Christ* is not; carnality and death must reign where the Spirit of *life* is not; and sin must rule where the Spirit of *holiness* is not. A spirit of loose Antinomian licentiousness has, it, is to be feared, deeply infected many Calvinistic churches. They have argued, or, if not argued, have almost acted, as if free grace were a freedom to evil, and gospel liberty a liberty to please the flesh and the world. And need we wonder that in churches where the admission is so easy, where so shallow a work is considered sufficient for membership, there are many real Antinomians—Antinomians in heart and secret practice, who are not sufficiently so in life to bring them under church censures? But because there is this great evil in one form, shall we correct it by an equally great evil in another form? To avoid Scylla, must we fly to Charybdis?* Because the Antinomian has bent the stick in one direction, shall we straighten the curve by passing it into the hand of the Pharisee to bend it in the other direction? That were to break the stick, not straighten it; to cure of arsenic by administering prussic acid. Pharisaism is every whit as deadly an enemy to Christ as Antinomianism. Gentile sinners and Jewish Pharisees crucified, by mutual consent, the Lord of life and glory. The austere priests of the Hebrew Sanhedrim "spit in his face and buffeted him," and the wild soldiers of the Roman camp mocked him with the crown of thorns and the purple robe. One error is not to be corrected by another: an abused gospel cannot be rectified by introducing into it a strong tincture of the law. Error of any nature or shape, introduced into the gospel of Jesus Christ, is like the introduction of a foreign body into the human system: it must fret and irritate till dislodged or worked out. Arminianism is as much a grain of sand in a living eye as Antinomianism. In a gospel church a handful of Arminians will cause as much confusion as a handful of Antinomians. The gospel of Christ fights equally with both; and therefore both equally fight with the gospel of Christ. Nay, the greatest confusion frequently arises from the Arminian quarter. Fretted and irritated by a condemning law, which they are vainly endeavouring to keep, they are ready to quarrel with a straw, and secretly hate a free grace gospel, because it will not go partners with their righteousness.

* *Scylla* was a rock on one side of the narrow strait between Italy and Sicily, and *Charybdis*, a whirlpool on the other; and as it often happened that in avoiding one a ship fell on, or into the other, it became an ancient proverb to express how, in endeavouring to shun one difficulty, a person ran upon the opposite.

Need we wonder if, under these circumstances, there is so much confusion and division in the churches, and so little love and union among the ministers?

But what should all do who love vital, spiritual, experimental godliness? Contend for *all* truth and oppose *all* error. And above all, seek to be endued themselves with power from on high, and to get their religion from the

Fountainhead; to be satisfied with nothing short of divine teaching and divine testimony: to buy of Christ gold tried in the fire, and to beg of him to anoint their eyes with his own precious eye-salve, so that they may see. A mighty conflict is apparently at hand, which may arouse the most sleepy and try the most strong. We shall want in that battle, not notions, but faith: not only union with a church, but union with Christ; not a lazy hearing of sermons, as though that were the all in all of religion, but sheddings abroad of the love of God: not a sitting under the vine and fig-tree of the pulpit, and a snug corner in a Calvinistic chapel, but a putting on of "the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in that evil day, and having done all, to stand." Whilst the officers have been quarreling, and the crew asleep, the pirates have come alongside the ship. Rome has hoisted her black flag, and we may have to contend with her foot to foot, and shoulder to shoulder, upon a deck flowing with blood. When the day comes "for the slaying of the witnesses" (Rev. 11.)—a prophecy yet unfulfilled, for the testimony of the gospel has never yet been silenced—realities, divine realities will be found needful. There will be no nice, neat, well pewed, softly cushioned chapels then, no quiet sleeping corners to nestle down in after the text has been given out. "Our chapel" may be then a store-house or a granary: "our minister" be an exile or in prison; and "our people" gone over, two thirds of them, to Popery.

Whilst, then, a breathing time remains, let us be seeking that which can alone

"Stand every storm, and live at last,"

a vital union and communion with the Son of God.

As a humble instrument, then, in the hands of the Lord, would we, whilst opportunity is allowed, "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

We have spoken of the black flag of Rome. Let ours be a different banner—the banner of truth and love. (Psalm 40:4; Song 2:4.) "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth."

1. The new man of grace has a pure appetite. Husks cannot satisfy it. *Truth*, pure truth, is the element it breathes: bread, heavenly bread, the food it eats; water, living water, the stream of which it drinks. This air, this food, this water, it seeks as with a spiritual instinct. As the new-born babe seeks the mother's breast, the new-born soul desires "the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby."

Truth revealed by the Spirit is the soul's food, whether milk for the babe or meat for the man. This truth, in its purest form, is contained in the Scripture. But it often needs to be dealt out. Truth flows in God's word as a mighty river: but it often reaches the soul through canals, pipes, conduits appointed of God or sanctioned by him.

Among these canals or conduits of divine truth we would fain hope the "Gospel Standard" has a place. May it be our increasing desire that through it pure truth may flow. But what truth? Not truth in a dry, dead, cold,

abstract form. It is vital truth, truth impregnated with the power and unction of the Spirit,—truth wet with the dew of heaven, truth to which the Holy Ghost has given bone and sinew, life and breath,—that alone is profitable. What this is requires a spiritual eye to see and a spiritual heart to feel.

2. But we need over us also the banner of *love*. Paul has beautifully combined both in one short sentence: "Speaking the truth in love," (Eph. 4:18,)—love to Jesus, love to the people of Jesus, and love to the truth as it is in Jesus. Love in the heart and truth in the lips form a beautiful and harmonious union; and both are needed to blow the silver trumpet of the gospel and bring forth its melodious and joyful sound.

An archer needs a mark, a pilot a compass, a runner a goal, an architect a plan. Without this definite object, the arrow has no aim, the ship no course, the racer no prize, the building no symmetry. What, then, is or should be the object of a Periodical that, like the "Standard," circulates widely amongst the living family? The same object that Paul set before the Ephesian elders, (Acts 20:28) "to feed the church of God." "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs," was Christ's thrice repeated injunction to Peter. Every preacher, writer, and editor that addresses himself to the church of God should have this set before him as his whole aim and desire.

This we can honestly say is ours, and the only motive which keeps us at our difficult and responsible post. Here we feel our conscience clear. It is not worldly interest, or ambition, or aiming at popularity and influence, but a desire to be instrumental in feeding living souls, that bears us up and keeps us at our post amidst many discouragements, from both within and without, best known to ourselves. Added to which, we are deprived of the valuable aid and advice of our late dear friend and coadjutor, poor M'Kenzie, who, in mercy to himself, but with a heavy loss to the church, has been removed from this vale of tears. Pressed with the difficulties of our post, wearied with its toils, sensible of our own insufficiency, cast so much upon our own judgment that, as regards our editorial task, we may well say, "Of friends and counsellors bereft:" wishing to do right, but often not knowing how: anxious to avoid what is wrong, but often entangled unawares in it, our path as editor resembles very much the exercised path of a Christian. Let such sympathize with us. Let them consider our difficulties; bear with our infirmities; hold up our hands at a throne of grace, and beg of the Lord to endue us with grace and wisdom needful for our post. We can assure them the bitters much outweigh the sweets. But, through mercy, there *are* sweets. Our labour is not in vain in the Lord. Again and again have we been on the point of resigning our post, but some instance of a blessing has come to our ears, which has encouraged us to persevere and to hold on, "faint, yet pursuing."

During the year now before us, may the blessing of God accompany what is brought before the church of Christ in our little work.

This blessing, as it has rested upon our pages, so we hope it may rest upon them again; and that will be an ample reward for all the difficulties and discouragements that have hitherto beset our path, and will, if we be faithful, beset it to the end.

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January, 1852

The Lord in his kind and merciful providence has permitted us to open our eyes upon a NEW YEAR. The Old Year, with all its accompanying sins and sorrows, trials and temptations, and, we are bound to add, its mercies and favours, is vanished and gone—swallowed up in that unfathomable abyss which has engulfed so many centuries since the creative word sounded forth, "Let there be light." The New Year will bring its own trials, akin to, if not identical with, those of the past, and let us hope, as Jesus still lives at God's right hand, its own deliverances.

At this season of the year, men in business often, if not usually, examine their accounts, take stock, collect their bills, and survey their general position. Why should not we follow their example? "The children of this world," it is true, "are wiser in their generation than the children of light;" and the worshippers of the unrighteous mammon are far more diligent and faithful to their golden god than those who serve, or profess to serve, the God of all grace. But a leaf out of their book may, at this present season, not be an unsuitable subject for our Annual Address.

Without knowing the mysteries of "Book-keeping by double entry," we may have sufficient idea of business to be aware that the Tradesman's Ledger has its two sides—its "Debtor" and its "Creditor," its "For" and its "Against." Shall we greatly err if we run the parallel as having its counterpart in the bosom of a Christian? And as under one of these two heads all business transactions may be arranged, may we not, in posting up our inward accounts, open the two corresponding pages of the spiritual ledger, and examine what is there written with an iron pen, and the point of a diamond?

But as with trembling hand we throw wide open the heavy volume, what at the first glance meets our eye? How closely written is the page that breaks upon the sight! And ah! what figures are here! against every line what sums to pay! As page, too, after page is opened, lines equally crowded, sums equally immense, meet the bewildered eye. Take a page a day; let each sin have its entry; in three hundred and sixty-five pages shall we find less than three hundred and sixty-five thousand sins? And all, in their nature, essence, and character, deep, dreadful, damnable. Alas! alas! how little do we see, how less do we feel, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, its horrible and detestable nature!

Like those who live night and day in one close stived-up room, or like the degraded creatures who tenant London's low lodging-houses, herding together more like wild beasts than human beings, we are so habituated to an atmosphere of corruption, that, except at rare intervals, when heaven's pure breath blows in through a broken pane, we are hardly sensible of the noisome element of sin in which we are immersed. To feel it, we must in some measure come forth out of it. But if the sin that dwelleth, lusteth, worketh in us, were more seen in the light of God's purity and holiness, and, above all, more viewed in Gethsemane's garden and at Calvary's cross, we should have more deep, poignant, overwhelming, contrite, broken feelings about it than

most of us are acquainted with.

It may serve, with God's blessing, to set this more before our eyes and heart, if we specify a few items which stand against our names in the huge book to which we have alluded.

1. Our *base ingratitude* is one of our most crying sins. What mercies and favours have we not enjoyed! But what base returns have we not rendered! Did we but see and feel how much we owe to the ever-watchful eye and ever-bountiful hand of him in whom we live, move, and have our being, and did we compare his favours with our returns, we should be overwhelmed with shame and confusion of face.

2. Our said *unbelief* and *infidelity* forms another item in the bill of charges. Much is said of assurance, but it is to be feared that there is much assurance in the lips, where there is little faith in the heart. Gilt coin may pass for gold till the scales come forth. Weigh in the scales of the sanctuary much of what is called faith: put into the one scale the trials, the sufferings, the actions, the fruits, and into the other the faith that is, or should be, productive of them, upon how much of what is called faith will "Tekel" be stamped! Faith upon parade, and faith in battle; faith flaunting in lace and feathers, and faith reeling and staggering on the sod slippery with blood, differ as widely as the raw recruit and the scarred veteran. If the Lord has called thee to be a soldier, examine thy faith. What has it done for thee? Does it purify thy heart, (Acts 15:9) crucify thy lusts, (Gal. 5:24,) overcome the world, (1 John 5:4) resist Satan, (1 Pet. 5:9) conquer sin, (Rom. 6:14,) work by love, (Gal. 5:6) and make thee fight a good fight with death and hell? (Eph. 6:16.) Separated from its fruits, thy faith may appear fleshy and well favoured as the kine that fed in the meadow; examined by these scriptural tests, it may be as lean and meagre as those that came up out of the river. A grain of faith removes a mountain. Has thine moved a molehill? True faith overcomes the world—the great world without. Has thine overcome the world—the little world within? True faith works, fights, suffers, takes heaven by violence. Has thy faith risen beyond talk and notion, noise and bluster? If matters be so, rather, instead of boasting of thy faith, confess thy want of it, and cry with the distressed father of old, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," or with the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith."

3. *Worldly-mindedness and carnality of heart and affection* may be mentioned as another fearful item in the great debt book. "To be carnally-minded is death; but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." If there be death in the land, death in the churches, death in the soul, we need not, with this text in our hand, go far to find the cause. Put the lamp nearer to thee, if thine eye be dim. (Ps. 119:105.) Place it before thy feet to cast a light upon thy path. Thou art often, too often, dead in soul, dead in praying, hearing, reading, meditating, fighting, acting. What is the cause of all this deadness? Carnal-mindedness. There is a going out after idols; a love to the world; a cleaving to the unrighteous mammon; a general carelessness; a neglect of the throne of grace, of self-examination, of confusion of sin, of making straight paths for thy feet, of sticking to God's testimonies, and of cleansing thy way by taking heed thereto according to God's word. Thence come ease, sloth, and carnality; and the issue of all these is death in the soul. How deeply has this

paralytic stroke fallen upon the professing church! It has dimmed its eye so as to see little beauty in Jesus; it has stopped its ear so as to become deaf to admonition and warning, promise and precept; it has unnerved its hands so that they hang down in prayer; it has unstrung its knees so that they are weak and feeble; it has crippled its feet so that they move sluggishly along in the paths of self-denial and obedience; in a word, it has paralysed all its system from the crown to the sole, so that the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint.

4. Our next item shall be a _____ blank. In the account books of the Government there is one article that swallows up a large sum, called, "*Secret service money.*" Ah! how much of this secret service money is there in the ledger the leaves of which we have here opened!—*Secret service money paid to sin and the devil!* Secret lusts, hidden sins, the teraphim in the camels' furniture, the ephod in the house, (Jud. 17:5,) the wedge of gold in the tent, the creeping things on the wall, the drink offerings to the queen of heaven, (Jer. 44:19,) the image of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, (Ezek. 23:14,) let each for himself put down against this item the amount (if possible) of his defalcations.

But let us not dwell only on the adverse side of the ledger. The Bible does not, nor should we. God, indeed, in his word, calls on his prophets to "cry aloud and spare not," but to "lift up their voice like a trumpet, and show his people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." But at the same time he bids them, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people; speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." (Isaiah 40:1, 2.) The Lord would have us know both sides of the question—our damnation and his salvation, our misery and his mercy, the debt of ten thousand talents and nothing wherewith to pay, and the free full discharge. By the one he would kill, by the other make alive, by the one bring down, and by the other raise up; by the one preach the law, and by the other the gospel; by the one strip of all creature righteousness, and by the other clothe in the spotless obedience of Immanuel.

Be it, then, admitted that our sins are grievous, aggravated, unceasing; our backslidings perpetual; the pride, unbelief, infidelity, adultery, and idolatry of our heart ever ready to break forth. Shall we, need we, must we despair? Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no Physician there? Yes, there is a balm for the bleeding conscience; there is a Physician for sin-sick souls.

1. On the opposite page of the debt book stands written in letters of light this heading, "*Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*" What a liquidation is here! Sin hath abounded—fearfully abounded in thought, word, and deed; but grace doth much more abound. If sin has a tide that swallows all wherever it comes, grace has a spring tide that rises higher still, and buries beneath it the floods of ungodliness that make the soul afraid. Take thy sins, then, with all their horrid and dreadful aggravations; sins against light, conscience, love, mercy, and blood. Examine them well; scan thoroughly, as far as thou canst, their height, depth, length, and breadth, till thy knees tremble, and thy heart sinks with fear and dread. Must thou perish? Must thou sink to rise no more? Is all hope gone? Is hell thy destined

unavoidable place? Look, look, if thou canst not get a view of this gospel declaration concerning grace. Only get this brought by the Spirit into thy heart, "Where sin hath abounded, there doth grace much more abound," and thy debts are at once liquidated.

2. Again, there stands this sentence also on the same side, the blessed side, of the page, "*The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.*" "All sin!" How comprehensive! What sin does not this embrace? And take with it, too, this word from the Lord's own lips, "*All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.*" "All manner of sin and blasphemy." Then all vile, infidel, blasphemous thoughts and suggestions, all the pride, unbelief, infidelity, obscenity, and filth of a depraved, desperately depraved nature; all the dregs of that foul sewer which has flowed down from Adam, and still floods the imagination; all the hard, rebellious uprisings of a carnal mind at enmity with God; all the heavings and tossings of a heart bottomless as hell, with all the rollings up, fermentings, and workings to and fro of an abyss of iniquity, where deep calleth unto deep at the noise of the water-spouts—all, all evil from within and from without, shall be forgiven unto men, and is already forgiven to the repenting, believing children of God. Let the blessed Secretary, commissioned by the great Creditor, and sent by the Almighty Surety, only write against thy fearful debts, "PAID," and it will be said, "O man, O woman, where are those thine accusers?" "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve." (Jer. 50:20.) Well, then, may the saints cry, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:18, 19.)

May we not, then, repeat the Scripture question, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there?"

To hold forth this balm—the atoning blood of Immanuel, to exalt this Jehovah Rophi, "I am the Lord that healeth thee," is the office of the Gospel to proclaim, and the covenant work of the Holy Spirit to reveal to the soul. To be beaten off self-righteousness, self-wisdom, self-strength, self-dependence, by the storms of guilt and fear, and then to embrace the Rock for want of a shelter, and to cleave, under all circumstances, to the Person, blood, righteousness, and love of Jesus is, and must ever be, the ground-work of all vital godliness.

But, it may be asked by some of the Lord's poor and needy ones, "What testimony have *I* of an interest in this superabounding grace, in this pardoning mercy? Is there not some qualification required on my part? some obedience, some holiness, some cleansing of myself?" What says one who knew as much as any one both sides of the spiritual account book:

"All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him.
This he gives you;

'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

Ah! "This he gives you!" To feel our need of this atoning blood and justifying righteousness, to groan, sigh, and mourn under a body of sin and death, to look, and long, and wait, and grieve, and repent, and confess, and seek—all this is the work of the Spirit, and so far is a testimony of an interest in the finished work of the Son of God.

"But strength for the future? How are my lusts and passions to be subdued; how am I to walk worthy of my heavenly calling; how bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness so as to live and walk in all godly obedience?" This, too, the gospel provides for. Grace subdues sin as well as pardons it; cleanses from the filth as well as removes the guilt; breaks its dominion as well as buries and hides its shame. God knew from the beginning what his people would be. He therefore provided not only a Lamb for a burnt offering, but a living Head of influence, a risen, exalted, and glorified Jesus, in whom it hath pleased him that all fulness should dwell, that in him there might be strength against sin, deliverance from temptation, preservation from evil, and perseverance unto the end.

For all these purposes the gospel is efficacious, and therefore is and ever must be the root and spring of all obedience and of all fruitfulness. Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good. Gospel fruits must grow upon the gospel tree. It is the fruits of the Spirit, not the fruits of the flesh, which are acceptable to God. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." All obedience, therefore, which is not wrought by the Spirit, all practice which does not grow out of a living union with the Lord Jesus Christ, is but legality and self-righteousness. "The love of Christ," says Paul, "constraineth us."

A man may, from the mere lashes and stings of conscience, from the powerful impulse of an ascetic temper, deny himself and mortify his carnal desires and appetites. Yet what is this but Popery at the best, if there be no gracious principle at its root? Here is sin entwined with every fibre of our natural being—sin, that has hurled its millions into hell. How is this dreadful sin, this sin of our being, to be silenced, subdued, overcome? The cloister, the cell, the midnight watching, the long fast, the hair shirt, the bloody scourge, these, these shall bind and crucify the wretch, the rebel. Shall they? Is sin of that corporeal nature that the scourge can flog it out? It is in the mind. Take pride, unbelief, or sensuality. These subtle sins are beyond the reach of all mortification or self-denial grounded on natural conscience.

But where the law fails, the gospel comes in. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Why? "Because ye watch, fast, promise, vow, resolve?" No. "Because ye are not under the law," from whose working all these fleshly movements spring; "but under grace," which not only supplies motives but affords power; which not only pardons the past but gives strength for the future. Hundreds of God's family can say with Cennick,

**"The more I strove against sin's power,
I sinn'd and stumbled but the more;
Till late I heard my Saviour say,**

'Come hither, soul; I am the Way.'

And not only "the Way," but "the Truth, and the Life,"—"the Truth" to preserve from all error, and "the Life" to supply out of his fulness grace and strength. "Because I live, ye shall live also."

To the gospel, then, in the hands of the Spirit, must we look for everything,—pardon and peace, mercy and salvation. And not only so, but to keep us from all evil, to supply us with influential motives to put off the old man and put on the new, and to bring forth in us "the peaceable fruits of righteousness."

We have thus embodied our views of what the gospel is, and, by implication, what experience is too. Objections have been raised to the name of our periodical, as assuming too much. *We* did not so christen it. It was neither originated nor named by us. It is true, that unlooked for as well as unsought circumstances gradually, in a good measure, brought it under its present management; but if the name be faulty, let not that charge be laid at our door. But perhaps the objection itself may rest on an unfounded assumption that by it was intended that this periodical was indeed the *Gospel Standard* by which all writings were to be weighed. This, we have reason to believe, was not the meaning of those who so named it: but that the *Gospel*, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Gospel as revealed in the Scriptures, the Gospel as made known by the Holy Spirit to the soul, the Gospel as implying in one comprehensive expression all the doctrine, all the experience, and all the practice of the New Testament, was to be its *standard*. In a word, that not the opinions or writings of frail, fallible man, not the "shibboleth" of a sect or party, but the GOSPEL alone, in its length and breadth, was to be the STANDARD by which all its contents were to be weighed and adjusted; that to that bar and that alone was it amenable; and that all which fell short of the Gospel, whether in itself or others, was justly to be condemned. In this sense,—the sense in which we have always understood it, the title seems unobjectionable.

"But we come short of the Gospel standard." True; but dost not thou? do not all? But, with all thy shortcomings, is not the gospel still *thy* standard? May it then not be *ours*? Can we safely or scripturally allow ourselves any other?

Or if the word be used in the sense of a flag or ensign, may we not hoist it? "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth." (Pa. 60:4.) If there be this banner, may we not display it? And amidst the strife of tongues, may not this standard quietly float over the pavilion?

May this precious, this everlasting gospel be ever ours, in all its fulness and blessedness. Where ignorant, may we be taught gospel wisdom; where sinning, may we be blessed with gospel repentance; where in danger of our own spirit, may we be favoured with the Spirit of the gospel; where weak, may we be supplied with gospel strength. But let us not lower or pervert the standard of the gospel, because we fall short. "A full weight is the Lord's delight," and should be ours. More than the gospel we cannot desire; less than the gospel would neither suit nor save. The main thing to desire is that this blessed gospel may be a living gospel in our hearts, lips, and lives; that it

may "come, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;" that we may enjoy its sweetness, experience its efficacy, and bring forth its fruits; and thus find that, though the preaching the cross is to them that perish foolishness, to those that are saved it is still the power of God.

May our Periodical be filled with gospel food, breathe a gospel spirit, bring gospel consolation, and produce gospel fruits! The gospel is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" and in the hope that a measure of this power may rest upon our pages, do we venture to continue its monthly publication.

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January, 1853

In the world everything at this moment speaks of movement and progress. Science daily wins new fields; art advances in taste and beauty; trade flourishes; employment abounds; wealth increases; luxury prevails. Australia pours forth her golden treasures, and draws thousands across the ocean, to turn up, like Demas, her glittering ore. America opens wide her arms to myriads of needy emigrants. Steamships, railways, electric telegraphs, spreading in every direction and knitting in close bonds the most distant nations, all bespeak an era of activity and progress such as the world has never yet seen. Well may the prince and god of this world look from his dusky throne upon his devoted subjects and worshippers, and say, "All goes on well. Never did the sons of Adam post faster to hell. The whirl of business; the ever-clanging hammer; the ever-whirring shuttle; the snorting of the iron steed, hourly dragging in its swift train thousands of throbbing brains; the incessant occupation of mind in office, shop, and counting-house; the clamour of "work, work, work," ever knolling from the factory-bell—in this huge fermenting vat of life all seems heaving and moving. Men view these signs of the times and cry, "What prosperity! what success! Let us only have more of it; more business, more gold; greater crops, larger barns; then will we take our ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

But where, with all this material prosperity, is religion—vital godliness, the work of grace? Does this flourish too? Is the church, the Lamb's wife, growing in grace and in knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do striking conversions or remarkable deliverances abound? Does love reign in the bosom of churches? Do ministers preach with power and savour? Is God deeply feared, his promises firmly believed, his precepts carefully obeyed, his ordinances highly prized, his word dearly loved, his glory earnestly sought? Are those who profess the truth humble, prayerful, watchful, spiritually-minded, walking as living witnesses for God, and testifying to an ungodly world that they are children and servants of the Most High? Is the line of separation between the church and the world clear and distinct? And does she shine forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" Who can say so? Who can say of the church that she is flourishing, and that her prosperity runs parallel with that of the world? We

may rather take up Joel's lament: "The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted; the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen: howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley: because the harvest of the field is perished. The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field are withered." (Joel 1:10-12.)

No one who knows what grace is, and what grace does, can help seeing that Zion's sky is much beclouded, that the life of God is at a low ebb, and that the blessings and consolations of the Spirit are much restrained. Go where you will, the same complainings reach the ear. Churches are much rent and divided, party spirit widely prevails, coldness and deadness benumb those who once seemed full of life and feeling. When the children of God meet there is little real spiritual conversation. Worldly subjects, the mere trifles of the day, the weather, the markets, and the crops, politics and gossip, thrust out the things of God. When religion is talked of, it is all at a distance; experience is lost in a cloud of generalities; the gifts and abilities, texts and sermons, changes and movements of ministers are a prevailing topic; some controversial point is broached, on which the combatants fall tooth and nail; the contending parties lose their tempers; one warm word produces another, till the whole degenerates into an ale-house squabble, and poor religion is as much trampled down in the vestry as sobriety is in the tap-room. Where is love and union amidst this strife of tongues? What are the feelings of the tender-hearted, the meek and quiet, the newly-called, the young members of churches, the exercised part of the flock, the doubting and fearing, when they see those who, for age and experience, should be fathers in Israel, cold and dead in conversation, asleep under the ministry, buried in carnality, and whose tongues can only wag when the world is on the carpet, strife at the church meeting, or disputation in the vestry? When churches are made up of discordant materials, strife and disunion must needs exist. How can the stormy petrel and the timid dove dwell in the same nest? The dove cannot scream on the crest of the boiling wave and gather up its fishy prey between the heaving billows, revelling in wind and storm. Nor can the petrel lodge in the calm nest of love, cooing lamentations for the absence of its beloved. It is, however, a mark that the Lord has not left his church that there are such doves still. "Behold, thou art fair, my love!" says the Lord to the church; "behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes." (Cant. 1:15.) "Open to me, my sister, my love, my *dove*, my undefiled." "My *dove*, my undefiled, is but one." (Cant. 5:2; 6:9.) These doves are the quiet in the land; the meek, who are to inherit the earth; the humble and contrite, who tremble at God's word; the marked in forehead, that sigh and cry for all the abominations; the tender-hearted Josiahs, who rend their garments at the discovery of the law—the Baruchs, who seek not great things for themselves, but whose life is given them for a prey. These abhor themselves, with Job; cry out "Woe is me!" with Isaiah; lament over Zion's desolations, with Jeremiah; lie on their side all the days of her siege, like Ezekiel; and rejoice in the building of the temple of the Lord, with Nehemiah. These pray for the peace of Jerusalem, love the very dust and stones of Zion, are valiant for the truth on earth, and cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. True, they are, like Asaph, plagued all the day long and chastened every morning; like Heman, their soul is often full of troubles and their life draweth nigh to the grave; their hope with Job's, is sometimes removed like a tree; like Hezekiah, for peace they have often great

bitterness; and, like Joseph, the archers frequently grieve them, and shoot at them, and hate them. At the throne of grace, Satan resists them, as he did Joshua, the high priest, and accuses them before God day and night, as he did the ancient martyrs; snares beset their feet on every side; often do they slip and stumble in slippery places; lusts and passions work at a fearful rate; an evil heart is ever sprouting evil things: and gloomy despair sometimes opens wide her arms, as if at the last gasp she would bear them away into the blackness of darkness for ever.

We do not say there are not some favoured individuals whose souls are more warmed by the beams, and watered with the rains and dews of heaven than those whose experience we have just sketched out. The Lord bless them more and more abundantly, and, if his will, increase their number! They are bright and blessed exceptions to the generality of the living family at this day. But they are, for the most part, deeply afflicted, and need these cordials; and if they have more of the consolations they have more of the afflictions of Christ.

But is the state of things at this day without a parallel in the word of truth? The latter days of the Jewish Church, just before the Babylonish captivity, and the period just before the prophet Malachi closed the canon of the Old Testament, appear to present very similar features—we may perhaps add, even worse. Read the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and see their lamentations over prophet, and priest, and people. "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:31.) "For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." (Jer. 6:13, 14.) "Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar; say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it." (Ezek. 13:10, 11.) Bold indeed and fearless were the denunciations of these servants of God against the ungodliness that abounded in those days. Without fear and without flattery they proclaimed the coming judgments of God upon a guilty nation. But how did they treat the suffering remnant? Did they make no distinction between the timid and the stout-hearted; the tremblers at God's word and the doers of evil; the sickly sheep and the strong he-goats? Here are they eminently worthy of our imitation. Did they whip the afflicted saints with scorpions? Did they lash them with the same scourge as the ungodly world or the false prophets? No; on the contrary, they gave them repeated promises of the Lord's favour. This was the burden of their testimony, "Verily, it shall be well with thy remnant." They encouraged them to seek the Lord's face: "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." (Zeph. 2:3.) They encouraged them to trust in the Lord: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." (Isa. 50:10.) They assured them that the Lord would appear to their joy; (Isa. 66:5;) that he would be a wall of fire round about them, and his glory in the midst of them; (Zech. 2:5;) that

he would seek them out and deliver them out of all places where they had been scattered in the cloudy and dark day; that though the mountains should depart, and the hills be removed, yet that his kindness should not depart from them, nor the covenant of his peace be removed. Should not we follow in this track? If we are called upon to cry aloud and spare not; to lift up the voice like a trumpet and show the people their transgression and the house of Judah their sins, yet are we equally called upon not to make the heart of the righteous sad whom God hath not made sad. The inspired prophets, if they had a commission "to root out, and to pull down, to destroy, and to throw down," had also a commission "to build and to plant." (Jer. 1:10.) If the hail swept away the refuge of lies, there was still laid "in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." Let not Jesus be overlooked; his precious blood be tacitly set aside; his justifying obedience be put out of sight; his grace forgotten; and his dying love neglected. We may see so much evil in ourselves and others as to see nothing else; have our eyes so fixed and riveted on the malady as to lose all view of the remedy: dwell so much and so long on Zion's sickness as to forget there is balm still in Gilead and a mighty Physician there. There is much hazard of falling into a legal spirit in the endeavour to avoid an Antinomian one. Zion is sick and languishing. How is she to be healed and restored? By the law or the gospel? Does balm flow from Mount Sinai or Mount Sion? The sheep are sickly. To cure them, shall the under-shepherds beat them on the head with the crook and throw them over the hurdles, or shall they take them to the green pastures and the still waters? Shall they overdrive them, with Esau, or lead them on softly, with Jacob? Shall they rule them with force and cruelty, or feed them upon the mountain of Israel, in a good fold, and in a fat pasture? (Ezek. 34:4, 14.) Strife exists in churches. How are these strifes to be healed and peace restored? By the ministers taking the whip into the pulpit, like a vixen mother, who flogs the children all round more as a vent for her own passion than for their good? A slap here and a box on the ear there will no more restore peace to a church than to a household. Families and churches are to be ruled by love, not by the rod. Let there indeed be a rod, and, when necessary, let it be brought out, for discipline is as needful in the church as in the house: but let not the rod be the main instrument, and not be used till all gentler means have been tried and fail. And if the rod be necessary, let it be steeped in the pastor's tears, and be laid on, not as a schoolmaster flogs a truant, but as a parent chastises a child.

We are bound, by the tenderest ties and the most blessed obligations, to show forbearance and forgiveness to erring brethren. We are not to justify their evil deeds nor wink at sin, but to consider ourselves, lest we also be tempted. We are not to be harsh and unforgiving, ever prone to censure and condemn, taking our brethren by the throat for a hundred pence, with a "pay me that thou owest," forgetting our own debt of ten thousand talents. We are not to be ever weighing and tithing mint, anise, and cummin, and neglecting the weightier matters of judgment and love. We are not to sit as judges, but to stand at the bar as criminals; not to elevate ourselves by depressing others; nor increase our own comparative goodness by throwing into the opposite scale the deficiencies of professors. This did not the prophets. They identified themselves with the Lord's people in all their confessions. Who more blameless than Daniel? Yet read his confession (Dan. 9): "*We* have sinned, and have committed iniquity," &c. Not, "I, Daniel, am free." Who more

faithful than Jeremiah? Yet how he identifies himself with sinning Israel! "We have transgressed and rebelled." "Turn thou us unto thee, and we shall be turned; renew *our* days as of old." (Lam. 3:42; 5:21.) Who more obedient than Moses? Yet he does not separate himself from transgressing Israel "Pardon *our* iniquity and *our* sin." (Exod. 34:9.) When he departed from this putting his mouth in the dust, and taking the rod in his hand, smote with it not only the face of the rock but the backs of Israel, with a "Hear now, ye rebels," as if *he* too were not one, he shut himself out of the land of promise. He stood then as a god, and not as a man, and therefore did not "sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the children of Israel." (Num. 20:11, 12.) When Paul sent a rod to the church at Corinth, it was not in a self-exulting, self-righteous spirit, but "out of much affliction and anguish of heart, with many tears:" and when his reproofs were blessed to their repentance, he was "filled with comfort, and was exceeding joyful in all his tribulation." (2 Cor. 2:4; 7:4.) What an example of the highest faithfulness blended with the tenderest affection! He is slow to wound and swift to heal; last with the rod and first with the kiss; angry with the sin, but tender over the sinner: jealous of the Lord's glory, but mindful of his grace; careful for the purity and profit of the flock, but yearning to bring back the wandering sheep. Were pastors Pauls and churches epistles of Christ, there would be fewer divisions, and those sooner healed. But when an unyielding, unforgiving spirit is manifested on either side, when churches cannot bear with the infirmities of their minister, and ministers will not give way where they are evidently in fault, a smouldering volcano lies under pulpit and pew which will one day burst forth into, in this life, unquenchable flame. "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

There is no truer sign nor more alarming symptom of the decline of vital godliness, than the want of love and union amongst those who profess the truth. If love to the brethren mark the dawn of spiritual life, the decay of that love most certainly denotes its decline. A house divided against itself cannot stand. A besieged city, if torn with internal faction, must fall before the enemy. Peace in the church is the next blessing to peace in the soul, and is most intimately connected with it. It is as absurd as it is hypocritical to talk of having peace with God when the heart is at war with the brethren. To peace, then, must we sacrifice everything but truth and conscience. Our strife should be, not to gain our own selfish ends, nor stiffly carry out our own opinions, nor rule and domineer over the minds of others, as if our own views were necessarily infallible, but to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The prosperity of a church does not consist in the number of its members, nor in the praying gifts of its deacons, nor in its liberal quarterly collections, nor in the gifts and abilities of the minister, nor in the clear doctrinal views of the people, but in the love which knits the whole body together. The real increase of a church is not so much from without as from within, "the increase of the body unto the edifying itself in love." Without this internal increase members may be added to a church by scores, and yet the whole body be a discordant mass of shapeless limbs, without union either to the Head or to each other.

We may be certain that the precepts of the New Testament for mutual love and forgiveness cannot be slighted and neglected with impunity. Our stubborn temper and unforgiving spirit may refuse to listen to the word of

God, but we cannot, except to our own cost, set aside Scripture precepts and Scripture practice because our corrupt nature withstands them. God's ways may not please our carnal mind, but he will not alter them for that reason. If we walk contrary to him he will walk contrary to us, and if we are disobedient we shall reap its bitter fruits. If sin be at one end of the chain, sorrow will surely be at the other. If we sow to the flesh, we shall most certainly of the flesh reap corruption; but if we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

But what we chiefly need, and that to which our prayers and desires should be directed, is the pouring out of the Spirit upon pastors and churches, and the whole church of God. No other means will avail. For want of this we are continually in extremes. We see this in the ministry of the present day, for the ministry is but a reflection of the times. Some are all for doctrine. Doctrine, doctrine, doctrine, and all in the hardest, driest form, is their unvaried staple. Most sweet and precious are the doctrines of the gospel when distilled into the soul by the Holy Spirit; but delivered in a cold systematic way as a mere creed, they are made a substitute for vital godliness, and thus become a curse instead of a blessing. Others, seeing the neglect in our day of practical religion, urge the precept continually, but in a spirit so legal, and with a temper so warm, that grace seems almost thrust out of sight, and the poor hearers are ever filled with bondage and slavish fear. And others, who preach experience, dwell so much on the workings of sin as almost to omit the workings of grace, and, pointing out the malady, almost forget to dwell on the remedy.

But all these, and innumerable other evils under which Zion now labours, can only be remedied by the pouring out of the Spirit from on high. From Him alone comes a true sight of sin, repentance for it, confession of it, and turning from it. Then will Zion repent and abhor herself in dust and ashes; then will confession flow forth to God and the brethren; then will love and union be revived between ministers and churches; and then will the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Till that happy time arrive, our wisdom and mercy will be to avoid strife and contention. A sight and sense of the evils in ourselves and others should teach us mutual forbearance. We are all in the hospital, and shall we quarrel with our fellow-patients? Should we not rather sympathise with each other's complaints, and be looking out for the arrival of the Physician who alone can cure each and all? On this common ground, even in the present dark and gloomy day, all the living family may meet. But if we cannot keep out of contention, and desire a matter of strife with the brethren, let this be our ground of dispute. Who is the greater sinner; who owes most to the Saviour; who shall live most to his glory.

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January, 1854

We have been so long accustomed to greet our spiritual readers at the opening of each New Year with an Annual Address, that, were we now to discontinue our wonted custom, we should incur, we fear, the charge either of neglecting our friends, or of a declension from those kind and affectionate

feelings which we have hitherto entertained towards them. It is the privilege of the editor of a periodical which circulates so widely among the children of God to count them as so many friends; and to minister to their spiritual instruction, consolation, and edification, as it is his peculiar office, so it is the main reward of his labour of love. In thus ministering to their spiritual profit, we would rather set before them what has dropped from the lips and pens of others than anything of our own. Yet as something is expected from our pen on the present occasion, and in consulting our own feelings, we might seem to be inattentive to the feelings of others, we will, without further preface or apology, direct the thoughts of our friends to a subject which must ever be of vital importance to the church of *Christ—the manifested union which exists, or should exist, among the living family of God.*

When the Lord Jesus was about to shed his precious blood on the cross for the redemption of his church, he offered up before he suffered, as if anticipating that branch of the priestly office which he now exercises, that intercessory prayer for his disciples which is recorded by the Holy Spirit (John 17.) Among the petitions which he, as the great High Priest over the house of God, then offered up, was one which, reaching beyond his immediate disciples, embraced the whole church of which he is the living Head: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17:20, 21.) The union thus prayed for by the blessed Redeemer is not so much *actual* as *manifested* union. A few words may show the difference and explain our meaning. There is a *real* union amongst the family of God which exists previously to, and is the basis of, their *manifested* union. The foundation of this union amongst the members, as well as the source whence it flows, is their union with Christ, their living Head. This actual union of the members with Christ, their divine Head, and with each other in him, is set forth in Scripture under various figures. The husband and the wife, the vine and the branches, the corner stone and the living stones, the head and the body, the elder brother and the younger brethren,—these and similar figures will at once occur to the spiritual mind as emblems of this true and actual union, which, uniting the members to Christ, unites them in him with each other.

But besides this actual, substantial union, there is a *manifested* union, of which love is the cementing tie, and whereby they become evidenced to themselves and to each other, and, as the Lord prayed, even to the world, as fruitful branches in the only true vine. This union, therefore, is no mere agreement in opinion, though this harmony does for the most part exist; nor a similarity of taste and inclinations, though this actually prevails: nor a coincidence in the object of pursuit, though a oneness on this point subsists. Such bonds of union are too earthly, too natural, too temporary, and too feeble to constitute that peculiar tie which unites heart to heart the regenerated family of God.

These two kinds of union, actual and manifested, as they are contained or implied in the petition of the Lord which we have quoted, so are they clearly and beautifully set forth by the Apostle Paul (Eph. 4:1-6). We quote the latter portion of the text first as showing the foundation and nature of that

substantial union which binds together the Head and the members: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." In the above words we find actual, substantial union set forth. Thus there is "one body," of which Christ is the Head; "one Spirit," who regenerates, teaches, leads, and comforts all the members; "one hope," laid up for all in heaven, and now anchoring within the veil; "one Lord," Jesus, whom all adore and worship, believe in and love; "one faith," one in grace as its source, in Jesus as its object, in doctrine as the truth, in operation as purifying the heart, in end as salvation; "one baptism," one in substance, the baptism of the Spirit, and one in shadow, immersion in the name of the Trinity; "one God," whom to know is life eternal; "and Father of all," who loves every son and daughter, whether fathers, or young men, or little children, or babes with equal love: who is "above all," and therefore above all their differences and divisions, and their Father notwithstanding them; "through all," shedding abroad his love in their hearts, and thus pervading and influencing all: and "in them all," dwelling and walking in them all, according to his covenant promise, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. 6:16.) What a union is this! how substantial and actual, binding together in one harmonious body the members with Jesus, their glorious and exalted Head!

But the object and desire of every child of God, as a living member of this harmonious body is, or should be, to obtain and maintain *manifested* union with the Lord Jesus, the Head, and with his fellow-members, as the evidence and fruit of this actual and substantial union. This is in deed and in truth, "holding the Head, from which all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." (Col. 2:19.) Therefore the apostle, enforcing this manifested union, and showing how it is to be maintained, says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love: endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He knew the difficulty of maintaining a spirit of love and union amongst the children of God: and yet, feeling its indispensable importance, he beseeches them, as one suffering bonds and imprisonment, for Jesus' sake, to labour after it. To "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called" is to walk in love to the brethren, which is the first and chief evidence of being a partaker of the heavenly calling. (1 John 3:10, 14; 4:7.) But as love cannot take root or flourish where pride reigns and rules, that being its chief hindrance, there must be "all lowliness," whereby we have the lowest, meanest opinion of ourselves, "and meekness," whereby in word and conversation, as well as in general deportment, we are gentle and tender towards others. As there will be much in the brethren to try our mind, this requires "long-suffering;" and as we shall try them with our crooked ways as much as they will try us, there must be "forbearing one another," or mutual forbearance. And as to do this as a mere matter of duty or conscience is poor, legal, miserable work, it must spring from, and be kept alive by, a higher and more evangelical principle,—"in love." The striving so to walk from gospel means and under gospel influences is "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "The unity of the Spirit" thus enforced by the

inspired pen of the apostle is a spiritual union with the Lord's living family generally, and those of them with whom we are brought into personal intercourse particularly. To produce this is the special work of the blessed Spirit, and is therefore called "the unity" (or as the word literally means, "oneness,") "of the Spirit." It is, therefore, not a mere oneness of mind, by their being "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," (1 Cor. 1:10,) and thus seeing eye to eye in the grand truths of the gospel, but a oneness of heart by their being "knit together in love," (Col. 2:2) and thus "loving each other with a pure heart fervently." To produce this is the special work of the blessed Spirit, and was beautifully exemplified in those primitive days, when "the whole multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." This "unity of the Spirit" is held firm and fast by being bound up in "the bond of peace," whereby an end is put to all strife and war, and being at peace with God through Christ Jesus, they are at peace with each other in Christ Jesus.

But as this is a subject which we wish specially to bring before our readers on this occasion, and as it is one of deep importance to the family of God, we shall take the present opportunity of dwelling upon it somewhat more practically and experimentally, our remarks hitherto having been chiefly directed to explain and enforce it from the word of truth.

As Satan is the author of all ill, so in strife between brethren must we trace his mischief-working hand. If there be one sight which he especially hates in the family of God it is to see them enjoying union and communion with God and union and communion with each other. Milton represents Satan as looking with envious and malignant eye on our first parents in Paradise, happy in each other in all the purity of their sinless love:

"Aside the devil turned

For envy; yet with jealous leer malign
Eyed them askance, and to himself thus plain'd;
Sight hateful, sight tormenting! thus these two
Imparadised in one another's arms," &c.

But what was all their natural love, though pure and innocent in their unfallen state, compared with the spiritual love of the saints to God and to each other? That paradise he quickly marred. This he hates the more because beyond the touch of his destructive hand. Yet will he try to weaken it, for the weakness of the church is the strength of his kingdom. In her union, he knows, mainly resides her strength. The church is compared (Sol. Song 1:9) to "a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot," and therefore not only well-matched and paired, but pulling harmoniously together; and to "an army with banners;" not a ragged regiment plundering and pillaging, without captain or ensign; nor a routed mob fleeing before their foe, with their flags captured; but an army moving gallantly and unitedly onward, in close rank, with banners, and conspicuously over the rest "the banner of love," (Sol. Song 2:4,) floating over their heads as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." A church torn with divisions is little better than a routed army, which can present no firm front to any quarter.

But let us examine this point a little more closely. A church is a standing witness for the truth of God by the purity of her doctrines, by the depth and power of her experience, and by the godliness and consistency of her practice. But as all this flows only from the grace of God, whatever dams back or narrows the stream whereby she is continually watered and made fruitful in every good word and work, weakens and impairs her testimony. Strife and division seem more than anything, gross corruptions in doctrine or practice excepted, to have this evil effect. A church therefore, rent with internal strife, cannot, with any consistency, or with any power and effect, "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints" in any one point of doctrine, experience, or practice. If she advocate the doctrine of *election*, may not the world justly say, "What! are these the elect? Were they elected to quarrel with each other? Look at this elect church! Why, we whom they call reprobates agree together better than they do." Nor can she advocate *particular redemption*, when those who profess to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, instead of taking his yoke upon them and learning of him to be meek and lowly in heart, are filled with all the party-spirit of Diotrephes. Nor can she advocate the *union of the Church* with Christ above, when she can show no union of the church below; or contend for the *final perseverance* of the saints when her own perseverance is but a perseverance in evil? Thus, instead of "holding forth the word of life" as a lamp brightly burning, she is forced for very shame's sake to hide it, lest its rays betray her own torn and soiled garments. Nor when divided and torn with inward strife can a church consistently advocate any one branch of Christian *experience*. Her nest is not that of the dove, but of the daw: her fold not that of the meek ewes, but of the butting rams. The fruits of the Spirit in a gracious experience are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." But how is any one of these consistent with "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders," all which are the fruits of the flesh, and are brought forth profusely in all divided churches? If she contend for "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," it may well be said to her as to one of old, "What hast thou to do with peace?" Where there is peace within there will be peace without. He who is at peace with God is at peace with his brother. How can she contend for pardoned sin, when mutual forgiveness is set at nought? or how for manifested mercy, when there is no mercy manifested in the divided parties to each other? In *practice* too she is and must be wholly mute, when she sets at defiance the grand distinguishing precept of the gospel, love to the brethren. Conscience must fly in her face if she attempt to enforce the precepts of the New Testament, when the new commandment which Christ especially gave to his disciples she sets at nought, and the badge which he has given whereby she is to be known, she has torn from her forehead and trampled in the mire. O melancholy, miserable sight! that those of whom God has said, "Ye are my witnesses," should prove so false to their office that either they must be utterly dumb, or if they speak, their testimony for God be turned against him! Unfaithful as a witness, a divided church is equally worthless as a champion for the truth. Crippled and maimed, she has no hands to war or fingers to fight. The Holy Spirit is grieved, the presence of God withdrawn, and his blessing denied: and thus shorn of her strength she stands the grief of the godly, the jest of professors, and the scorn of the world. All this sad fruit of strife and contention Satan well knows, and therefore his grand aim is to sow divisions amongst the Lord's people, that the church's testimony for God

and against him may be weakened, if not wholly frustrated and overthrown. When the Lord of life and glory was upon earth he said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." This he could well say, for he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners: the Lamb of God without spot." But we cannot speak thus. Satan has much in us,—much on which he can work, much closely allied to his own nature. It is, then, on this corrupt nature that he works, for in some unknown, mysterious way he has wonderful access to and influence upon our carnal minds.

But there is one especial portion of our corrupt nature on which he seems mainly to work. Pride is that peculiar limb of the old man, that wide-spread domain of the estate of sin, inherited from Adam, on which the sower of tares employs his special culture. "Only by pride cometh contention," is the express testimony of the Holy Spirit: for by pride alone it comes, and by pride alone it is maintained. A slight, real or fancied, is shown us. What feels it? Pride. What resents and will not forgive it? Pride. See how this, which is so often the cause of variance between individuals, acts in a collective body, such as a gospel church. At a church meeting, a difference of opinion arises, as must often be the case where free discussion, in which is the very essence of liberty, exists. Shall the pastor go out for so few or so many Lord's Days? Shall this or that minister be invited to supply in his absence? Shall this or that candidate be received into the church? These questions and others of a similar kind, often fruitful sources of strife in churches, might all be settled in five minutes in harmony and union, did a spirit of meekness and love prevail. Discussion there would be and should be, for a church is not to be driven blindfold by either minister or deacons, honourable men or devout women. The poorest member has here a voice, and for the most part a weighty one too, for the poor of the flock have generally the richest experience and clearest discernment, and many an uneducated labourer or mechanic has a soundness of judgment of which the wealthy deacon is destitute. But with all needful discussion there need be no strife, and will be none where grace reigns. Still less will there be angry words, which, out of place everywhere, are never so much out of place as in the assemblies of the saints. In matters unimportant there will be a giving way, a mutual concession, and in matters really important there will be a general feeling to do that which is right; and if there be not perfect union of mind there will still be union of heart. But how different when pride lifts up her hateful head in the courts of the Lord's house, and turns the assemblies of the saints into the likeness of the brawling of sinners. Pride flushes the cheek, pride kindles the eye, dictates the angry speech or sharp retort. Pride is never in the wrong. Pride always sees and says what is right to be said and done. Reason, argument, scripture, experience, age, church standing, or church office—Pride is deaf and blind to every appeal from such quarters. It has taken up one impregnable position: "This is my opinion." This strong fortress needs no arguments to support it, as it fears no arguments to demolish it. Shiver it to pieces by scripture and reason; a moment rebuilds it as impregnable as before. If, unhappily, a combatant on the opposite side arises who, like his brother warrior, is

"Stiff in opinion, ever in the wrong,"

a wordy warfare at once arises; and if these two captains marshal their

opposing forces, farewell, a long farewell to peace. Satan has gained the day. The peaceable and quiet hang their heads, the tender in conscience are grieved, the younger members astonished and perplexed, and the soul of the pastor burdened, perhaps for months and years. Words are soon spoken, but not soon forgotten, and wounds are inflicted by flying arrows which may rankle unto death.

Seeing, then, the miserable effect of strife and disunion, how desirous should we be in all our intercourse with the family of God, (for our remarks take in a wider range than the comparatively narrow precincts of a gospel church,) to obtain and maintain manifested union. Have we ever felt union of soul with a child of God? Has he ever been manifested to our conscience as a vessel of mercy and an heir of glory? How tenderly we should act ever after towards him. He has tender feelings. How careful we should be not to wound them! He has, like ourselves, many infirmities. He must bear with ours. Why not we with his? His temper, disposition, cast of thought, situation in life, former habits, perhaps religious experience, may in many points differ from ours. All this calls for more forbearance. He is warm tempered. That is the very reason why we should be cool. He is easily offended. That is the very reason why we should take care not to offend him; or if we do so, why we should manifest a forgiving spirit. He at times much tries our patience. What a good thing it is to have a patience to be tried by him, that it may have its perfect work. He is very poor, is sickly himself or has a sickly family, is often out of work, and always seems needing help. What an opportunity to manifest that we love him not only in word but in deed and in truth. Look at a mother's love to a sickly child. What a means is that poor pale cheek of drawing out the love and affections of a mother's heart! Thus the difficulty of showing love and affection to the members of Christ is not in them, but in ourselves. All those disagreeable things which exist, or seem to exist in many of the choicest people of God, are so many tests of the weakness or strength of our love. Weak love is soon chilled, as a low fire soon dwindles to a faint spark. The mother of little affection is repelled by the many disagreeable accompaniments of her child's illness, till tenderness seems turned into harshness. Such for the most part, is the state of the church now. Love is waxed cold: therefore soon repelled by the infirmities of brethren. And as every other grace rises and sinks with love, therefore little forbearance, little patience, little forgiveness, little kindness, little humility, little meekness or gentleness—in a word, little of the mind, likeness, and image of Christ. But because the corn is so starved and scanty a crop, is there nothing else visible in the field? Alas! yes. A huge crop of tall, noxious, poisonous weeds fills up the furrows and covers the soil. It would be well even if the crop were scanty, if it occupied the field alone, and there were nothing else besides: but as Hart says of his own heart,

"Alas! there's worse than nothing there."

In a church if there be not love, there will be coldness, or dislike: if no forbearance, there will be quarrelling; if no patience, there will be harsh words; if little of the Spirit, abundance of the flesh: if there be not health, there will be sickness: and as in families, if there be not affection, there will be quarrelling; so in a church, if there be not love, there will be strife and division.

Every spiritual reader of our pages has a special interest in the things which we have thus endeavoured to lay down and enforce: and this is one reason why we have made it the subject of our Annual Address. Many of our readers are members of gospel churches. To them our remarks especially apply. But every disciple of the Lord Jesus whose eye these lines may meet has almost an equal share in them. Because not baptized or not a member of any church, is he exempt from the great law—the law of love? Has he no brethren in company with whom he attends the preached word? Has he no Christian friend with whom he holds sweet intercourse? If favoured with this world's goods, has he no poor brother or sister to whose help he can minister? Is there no sick child of God to visit, to read with, to pray by? Are you never so burdened with sin and temptation as to need the sympathy of a brother, or never blessed so as to want to speak of it to the glory of God? Wherever you may be, or whatever your state, you will need Christian communion. If a member of the body, you must have union with your fellow-members.

May we all, then, bear in mind, that love and affection amongst the family of God is not only indispensable to the prosperity and comfort of the body generally, but of each member particularly. And as much self-sacrifice, forbearance, gentleness, and meekness will be necessary to maintain Christian union, may it be our earnest desire to obtain these, with all other fruits and graces of the blessed Spirit, from the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, and with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

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January, 1855

What shall be the *subject* of our Annual Address necessarily demands with each recurring year a larger amount of anxious thought. Our main aim and desire still are, as indeed they ever have been, to *edify* our readers—at least, as many of them as are willing to receive in a spirit of affection what flows, we trust, in the same spirit from our pen. Our next desire is to be favoured with such a *variety* in subject, thought, and expression, that each successive Address may not be the mere echo of the preceding. To combine these two desirable requisites is difficult, not only, or rather not so much from the limited nature of our subjects, as from our own limited abilities and attainments. Yet as the Fountain of all wisdom and truth is unexhausted and inexhaustible, may we not hope that He may still in this as in other instances, graciously "supply all our need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus?"

One subject, however, this year has so forced itself on our attention, that, as we could not totally pass it by, we have felt induced to give it a prominent place—indeed, to make it the chief topic of our Address. That subject, we need hardly add, is one which is in everybody's mind and mouth,—the fearful WAR in which we as a nation are now engaged.

It has, therefore, struck our mind, that it might not be wholly out of place to present our readers with some thoughts which may help them to a *Christian*

view of the subject. Should some of our preliminary remarks wear too much of a political aspect, let be borne in mind first that such a view of the matter is almost inseparable from the subject itself: and, secondly, that we have purposely dwelt upon this point in order to relieve difficulties which may have presented themselves to and perplexed some of our readers.

The opening year finds us engaged in deadly strife with a foe alike gigantic in resources and unscrupulous in their use. After a Peace of almost unexampled duration, during which, amidst alternations of suffering, the Giver of all good has largely showered down prosperity on our native land, WAR has broken out with all its attendant horrors: and though its present seat is happily removed from our favoured shores, yet it has already exacted a fearful amount of victims from English homes and hearths. It is scarcely possible, were it even consistent with Christian feeling, to be unconcerned, unsympathising spectators of such important events as are now so deeply agitating the mighty heart of England: nor does it seem as if we could or should shut up our ears and minds in a kind of apathetic, monkish seclusion from all interest in public affairs, when English blood is flowing in torrents, and English homes in almost every class of society are saddened with lamentations and woe.

Ours has been for many years, and still is, a highly-favoured land. Civil and religious freedom, with all their attendant blessings, we have so long inherited from our ancestors as now to claim them as our very birthright, and to hand down to our children this legacy unimpaired is a fixed determination with every true Englishman. No one, therefore, in whose breast an English heart beats could view Russia spreading her net of crushing slavery over the fairest part of Europe, and eventually over our own country, with tame, passive indifference. Into political matters it is not our office or inclination to enter. If, therefore, we seem to touch upon them, it is, as above hinted, chiefly with the view of relieving a difficulty which has probably presented itself to some of our readers. Afflicted and distressed with the scenes of horror and bloodshed which the war has already brought, anticipating greater, and doubting perhaps the eventual issue, they may feel induced to ask, "Can war under any circumstances be justifiable? Is not peace preferable at any price?" To answer this question we propose the following considerations. As Christians, we must ever deeply lament the existence of war under any circumstances, and loathe and detest its attendant cruelties and bloodshed: and as believers in the precepts of the gospel, we should, in our own individual capacity, not take up the sword at all. But what *we* should do as followers of Christ, and what *England* should do as a great and mighty nation, at the head of European liberty, are very different matters. We should not, therefore, view the war as if England were a gospel church, and the Queen's ministers partakers of the grace and power of the gospel. But cast as our lot is on English ground, and bound up as we are in our time-state with England's weal and woe, we must view the matter as free citizens of a free country. And our own firm conviction is, that whether justifiable or not, the present war was inevitable either now or at no distant date. It is not an *offensive* war, to enlarge our territory or advance our power: but strictly a *defensive* war, entered into with great reluctance to prevent our own eventual overthrow. It is not, then, as some suppose, an attempt to prop up an infidel power like Turkey, but it is a life-and-death

contest for liberty and civilisation against slavery and barbarism; or rather, to prevent the universal prostration of all freedom, civil and religious, under the most crushing despotism which imagination can conceive. Was England then to wait till Russia had seized Constantinople and thus secured for her fleets and armies an impregnable position, or to oppose her deep-laid schemes whilst resistance was possible?

It is with reluctance that we discuss a point which seems so foreign to the gospel; but we believe the conclusion to which all thinking minds have come, is, that if Russia had been permitted to carry out her deep-laid plans in the Baltic, and to obtain also possession of Constantinople, the certain result must have been the universal prostration of civilisation and liberty throughout Europe.* If, then, we think for a moment what would certainly have been our position a few years hence had no check now been offered to Russian ambition, and what additional suffering would have been entailed by each successive advance in power of that unscrupulous Czar who sways millions with his nod, we may be content to accept war now, whilst success is probable, rather than war hereafter, when defeat would be almost certain. The present war, then, is not a general madness, a blind fury without end or object, but a national instinct of self-preservation, which has therefore enlisted all classes to support it with a spirit and a unanimity unparalleled in our history. Without entering further into politics, we have been induced to offer these thoughts in the hope of reconciling to existing circumstances the minds of some of our readers, who might, in their horror of war, think peace preferable at any price. One word more before we quit this portion of our subject. If our Puritan ancestors took up arms against their king, and plunged their country into all the horrors of civil war rather than part with their political and religious liberties, we, their degenerate children, may well be reconciled to a foreign war if it be to prevent England being degraded into a Russian province.

* There are two narrow straits, one of which, the Sound, (in which we may include the Great Belt,) commands the Baltic, and the other, the Dardanelles, which commands both the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. The Emperor of Russia was steadily, though stealthily, advancing to the occupation of both these passages. By fortifying Bomarsund, which commands Stockholm, he was advancing, first to the conquest of Sweden and then of Denmark, which would have given him the occupation both of the Sound and of the Great Belt, the only two practicable passages into the Baltic Sea. By seizing Constantinople he would have commanded the Dardanelles, making him master of the Mediterranean in front, and of the Black Sea behind, and really constituting him lord over Europe and Asia. Now what would have been the consequence? From his northern position he could have sent his fleets not only to destroy the trade and commerce of England, but to ravage all our sea coasts, burning all our naval and mercantile ports at Portsmouth, Liverpool. &c. From Constantinople he could have transported his armies by sea to the south of France, cutting off meanwhile our communication with India, and overawing or crushing Germany with his immense forces on the northern frontier. Would England, would France, submit to be what Poland now is? If not, war was unavoidable either now or at some no distant period. But quitting political ground, let us turn our thoughts into a more profitable channel. There are few events of any magnitude in which there is not a

Christian view of things; and as we cannot keep our minds from sympathising with that gigantic struggle which is taking place in the East, it will be our wisdom and mercy if we can stand upon our watch-tower and view with a believing eye scenes which are now agitating so many hearts at home and abroad.

I. As almost everything which agitates the mind lays it open to a peculiar class of temptations, our first word shall be *a word of warning* and affectionate admonition to our Christian readers; and in so doing, we shall point out several snares that may be spread for our feet at the present eventful crisis. Let them be assured that, in so doing, we shall not speak of these temptations as mere spectres seen in imagination, or viewed in the dim unknown distance, but practically and experimentally, as we have felt them ourselves.

1. One main temptation, in the present posture of affairs, when with well-nigh every day heart-stirring tidings flash along the electric wire, is *undue excitement*. As the experience of one heart is often the experience of another, will our readers allow us to mention a little circumstance of personal feeling which may serve to illustrate this?

Lord's Day, Oct. 1st, was a season of more than usual feeling and solemnity with us in the things of God, and the impression remained in good measure on the morning of the following day. About noon on the Monday we sallied forth to breathe a little fresh air, but had not gone many hundred yards up the public street before a large placard, surrounded by a numerous throng, met and in a moment riveted the eye, announcing the "BATTLE OF ALMA AND CAPTURE OF SEBASTOPOL." It was impossible not to stop for a few moments and read the few lines of the telegraphic despatch. But what was the effect? The heart almost leaped into the mouth; an electric shock ran through the frame, quickening the pulse and step, and filling the mind with a torrent of engrossing, exciting thoughts. Where were solemn feelings now? Where was spiritual meditation, secret prayer, or any lifting up of the heart God-ward? Gone, gone. During the rest of the walk;—and, we must confess, almost the rest of the day,—the heart-stirring tidings were uppermost. It may be from want of sufficient grace, or from inability to master the risings of strong natural feeling, but we do acknowledge that the gallant exploits of our brave soldiers and their alleged success in capturing the Czar's stronghold did stir up the blood and make it leap and bound in every artery. Haters of oppression, lovers of liberty, friends of civilisation, and above all, English to the heart's core, could we, could any of us, read or hear of such deeds of valour, and of such triumphant success, and remain as cold and as calm as the mountain pool? United as we trust we are, many of us, dear readers, in a higher, holier, and more enduring tie, as citizens of a heavenly country, is there one of us who, in the thought that he is a Christian, can forget that he is also an Englishman?

But here lies, just now, a great temptation—one against which we shall do well if we can be on our watchful guard,—the temptation of being carried down the stream of absorbing excitement. Now, this excitement of mind, this voluntary yielding up of the thoughts to a rushing troop of spoilers that rudely trample under their hoofs the rising crop of that spiritual-mindedness

in which alone is life and peace, is a sad evil. To dwell with avidity on the details of battle and bloodshed, to be as anxious about the siege of Sebastopol as if our very soul and all were at stake, to be daily waiting with excited minds what news from the Crimea each successive post may bring, is most unfavourable to the life of God in the soul and most deadening to every divine feeling in the heart.

To have no sympathy with and take no interest in events of such heart-thrilling magnitude is scarcely possible, or if possible, not desirable, and may rather argue apathy and selfishness than great spirituality. Some of us may have relatives at the seat of war; others may have just received tidings that some one near and dear to them has been struck down in battle or is languishing of wounds in the hospital; and visions of that dear face when last seen, so radiant with health, are ever floating before the eyes in appalling contrast with what that face is now. If not so deeply and personally interested, members of the same church and congregation with us may have sons or grandsons in the tented field or on the storm-heaved deck. Are we to be stocks and stones, devoid of pity and compassion for them? Nay, even if not so sensibly reminded of the miseries and anxieties which the war creates, can we at night lie down in our warm beds and listen to the howling wind, or see in the starry sky the signs of a biting frost, without thinking of our poor soldiers shivering on the frozen heights which overlook Sebastopol, and exposed every moment to shot and shell hurrying them out of time into eternity. May we not, too, as Christians walking in his steps who wept over Jerusalem, fore-viewed by his all-seeing eye as surrounded with armies, drop a sympathetic tear over the dying and wounded of our fellow-countrymen? Every feeling of patriotism and natural tenderness says, Yes; nor do we believe that the precepts of the gospel say, No.

The difficulty is to steer the middle course, and neither on the one hand shroud ourselves in sullen apathy under the idea of eminent spirituality of mind and conduct, nor on the other give way to that avidity after intelligence, and that undue engrossment of mind, which by exciting it on passing events, opens a door for thoughts and feelings very hostile to vital godliness.

2. Closely connected with this excitement of mind is an evil of scarcely inferior magnitude. If undue engrossment of thought, if to be, as it were, continually thrown out of gear by shock after shock of exciting intelligence, is to disturb that "quietness and confidence" in which is our "strength, (Isa. 30:15,) what shall we say of the *enkindling a warlike flame* in our breast? We may read of bayonet charges by our noble Guards, of the bold dash of cavalry regiments rushing fearlessly on destruction, of the slaughter of thousands of Russians by the deadly Minie rifle, until we seem transported in imagination to the very scene of this blood-fraught strife, and almost to see with our eyes the desperate struggle on the heights of Inkermann. We may be even so carried away by this warlike spirit as almost to exult in the destruction of thousands of those miserable Russians who are driven on to battle like sheep to the slaughter-house. But to convince yourself what a foe this spirit is to all vital godliness, take this test. When your mind is in this excited state, open your Bible at John 14., and try to read that and the following chapters. One of these two things will result. You must either lay down your warlike spirit or lay down your Bible. If enabled to lay down your

warlike spirit, you will feel how contrary the precepts and spirit of Jesus are to what you have been indulging, and this will or should fill you with self-condemnation. If you are, on the other hand, compelled to lay down the Bible with a sigh as being unable to read it, that in itself is an evidence that it is too holy ground for you to walk on in your present spirit, and therefore that the Scriptures condemn both it and you.

3. As evils are rarely single, but one is almost sure to introduce another, we will in the same spirit of affectionate warning, mention another temptation which may beset some of our readers at this present crisis. It is the danger of being *entangled with worldly men*. Any link of union between us and the world is fraught with temptation, and tends to impair that distinct and separate spirit which the Lord inculcates in those striking words, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Our families in most cases, and our worldly occupations in very many others, connect us with the world more than is good for our souls. We need not, then, any additional link to bind us to one of our chief enemies. But what an approximating tie may Satan and the carnal mind weave between the church and the world out of this war! "Have you heard the important news this morning?" may be the first thread to weave a web of conversation between a child of God and a servant of Satan. The ear thus opened, which would be barred to mere worldly talk, drinks in at once the exciting intelligence. The two men feel alike interested in the subject and make their remarks upon it with an agreement which seems to draw them together. They part, but not as they met. "Well, after all," says the servant of Satan, "he is not such a bad kind of fellow as I thought. I like very well what he said about the war and the soldiers. He's not so stupid, either, as most of those canting chaps." The child of God feels that he has not done right in talking about the war to this worldly man; but the poison is at work. He feels a strange thirst for a little more news from the seat of war. His yesterday's companion is all ready for him. He has been reading up at the pot-house over night all the accounts of the battle, and he is charged up to the muzzle for his new friend. We need not pursue our sketch. Who does not see the snare thus laid for a child of God, and what it may entangle him in to his soul's injury? It can never be sounded too loudly in the ears of the family of God, that all beyond absolutely needful association with worldly men is fraught with peril. They may draw us on to *their* ground to our soul's grievous hurt, but we can never draw them to *ours* to their souls' real good.

4. At the risk of being wearisome in sounding so many notes of warning, we can hardly forbear mentioning another snare, closely connected with the preceding, and perhaps more subtle in operation, if not so dangerous in result. It is the temptation of making the war too much *the subject or conversation among Christians themselves*. Few things are more edifying than spiritual conversation. When the speech is with grace, seasoned with salt, it is not only good to the use of edifying, but it is taken favourable notice of by the Lord himself. (Col.4:6; Eph. 4:29; Mal. 3:16.) But, on the other hand, few things are more carnalising than worldly conversation amongst the family of God. It lowers that tone of Christian feeling and depresses that standard of spiritual-mindedness which believers should seek to maintain in themselves and each other; and where it does not grieve the spirit, hardens and deadens the conscience. What a handle, then, may Satan make of the war to stifle with

this engrossing topic Christian conversation, perhaps even to introduce argument and discussion how it is or should be carried on, until professed followers of Jesus Christ, whose conversation should be in heaven, differ little from a knot of worldly politicians.

II. But having struck the note of warning, suffer us, Christian readers, to add a word of *instruction*, and to point out how these events should be viewed in harmony with the revealed will of God and the spirit of faith in a believer's heart, as well as what is the becoming path of those who fear the Lord at this eventful crisis.

1. The first grand point is to view them as *all working out God's decreed purposes* and bringing about the plans and designs of the Most High. Whilst the unbelieving world sees nothing in these events beyond the hand of man, let the Christian see behind the cloud the directing, controlling, overruling hand of God. This will enable us to look at them with a degree of calmness not otherwise attainable, and preserve us from being elated or depressed by every gust of prosperous or adverse tidings. "The LORD reigneth" is or should be sufficient to still every fear and remove every doubt as to the eventual issue. That issue, beyond all doubt, must be the glory of God and the good of those who fear his great name. But our own impression is, that it will be a long and arduous, even if it should eventually prove a successful struggle. This persuasion arises not only from what we see in common with others of the amazing strength and tenacious resistance of the Russian Empire, but from what we see or think we see in the inspired record. We have laid aside our prophetic pen and do not mean to resume it; but, in addition to our remarks in our last August No., on the threatened plague of hail, (Rev. 16:21,) which, if our interpretation be correct, implies the unbroken power of the Czar, we can hardly forbear mentioning our conviction that Russia will yet play some important part in the fulfilment of prophetic history. Her very name is mentioned as heading that numerous host which is to perish on the mountains of Israel; not, it is true, in our version, where the word "Rosh," (Ezek. 38:3) instead of being preserved untranslated, as the name of a nation in conjunction with Meshech and Tubal,* is rendered "the chief prince." It can hardly escape notice, if this view be correct, that Rosh is akin in sound to Russia, as Meshech is to Moscow. But apart from this, which may seem to some too much to border on conjecture, or at best to be a mere matter of private opinion, we may be sure that the events now on the wheels are full of importance both to the church and the world. Their ultimate effect none can foresee, but few can doubt that the intervening period will be marked with suffering and blood. The latter we may not be called upon to spill or witness; the former we may have, in some measure, to endure. So great a calamity as war cannot occur without seriously affecting all classes of society. Heavy taxes, commercial embarrassments, serious losses in trade and business, and general rise of prices, may press deeply on those of our readers who have a little measure of this world's goods; and dear provisions, failing employment, and scanty wages may sorely try those who have to live by the skill of their fingers or labour of their hands. But let us only believe that the Lord holds the reins of government, and must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet, and it will be like oil on the troubled sea, stilling every wave into a calm.

* Tubal, we understand, is the native name for Siberia.

2. Now what we would desire to feel in ourselves and to see in our Christian friends, is what will certainly flow from such a believing view as we have just spoken of—*a patient submission* to what we may be called upon to endure. We cannot alter matters. The war may be a great evil, and we may be ready, under the pressure it may bring, to murmur against our rulers for plunging the nation into it. But there it is; and all our murmurings and frettings against heavy taxes and dear provisions will not put an end to it. The load, however, which cannot be shaken off, may be made lighter by submission under it.

3. The last point to which we would direct the mind of our readers is the desirableness of *bringing these matters before the throne of grace*, especially in the assembling of ourselves together. We have of late felt ourselves reprov'd in conscience as guilty of having too much neglected the apostolic injunction 1 Tim. 2:1, 2. Afraid of formality, chiefly pleading for spiritual blessings, we have most commonly closed our public petitions without dropping a word of supplication for our Queen and "for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." In so doing we have neglected that which the Holy Spirit declares is "good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." Without falling, then, into that dry and formal round of praying for everything and everybody which characterises the congregations of the dead, we would press on those who are mouth for the people, whether ministers or private Christians, in our public assemblies, that they would put up a word for our beloved country, and for those who sit at the helm of government. And why should not a word be dropped for our poor soldiers, among whom there may be some who fear God? To this and every other thing really needed in providence, the good word of God fully encourages us; for if we are invited "in *everything* by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving to let our requests be made known unto God," we have a full warrant to ask of Him who alone can "make peace in our borders," to put a stop to this horrid bloodshed, and grant us a secure, lasting, and honourable peace. Though it may clash upon the ear, we deliberately use the last epithet, because, apart from our sympathy with England's renown, we are sure that a *dishonourable* peace would but madden the nation and reopen the war with additional horrors.

If in our Address this year we have diverged from our usual track, we trust our readers will accept the present crisis as our excuse. There are several points more intimately connected with the "Gospel Standard" which we could willingly bring before them; but we have occupied for the present more, perhaps, of their attention than we desire or deserve; and we will, therefore not weaken the impression of the foregoing pages by any further addition.

That during the coming year the best and richest blessings which a covenant God can give or a believing heart receive may rest upon and be the happy portion of those of our readers who fear the LORD and desire to live to his glory, is the desire of their affectionate friend and servant.

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January 1, 1856

Spared as we are by the tender mercies of God once more at the commencement of another year to address those of our readers who fear his great name, we desire to come before them with the Gospel in our hands, and under the teaching and unction of the blessed Spirit in our heart. Unable of ourselves even to think a good thought, much less to produce by tongue or pen anything for the spiritual edification of the family of God, we have again and again presented our supplications to the God of all grace, that he would on this occasion teach us how and what to write, that our words might be truly profitable to that portion of the church of Christ to which they may come. Our only claim upon their attention is the truth we may bring before them, and the spirit in which we write; and if these be commended to their conscience and fall with any weight or power upon their heart, they will receive our words, not because our pen indites them, but because of the testimony which accompanies them to their own soul. We can say, we trust with all honesty, that we feel an increasing desire to be made a blessing to the church of God. Placed as we are in a position unsought and undesired by us to edit a periodical widely circulated among the living family, we desire it to be a means in the Lord's hands of great and increasing profit to their souls. In labouring month after month for their benefit, we have no party ends to serve, no miserable petty ambition to gratify, no schemes of pelf or pride to advance, no rich readers to flatter, nor worldly professors to fear. To say we have no workings of pride and self would be to say that we have no blood of the old Adam nature circulating in our veins; but we hope we can say, in the sight of God, and before his people, that our chief desire and aim is the spiritual profit of the church of Christ. If our readers believe this, and if, in addition to our assertion, they have the more convincing evidence of their own conscience that they have felt any blessing or derived any profit from our labours, they—as knowing that in many things we offend all—will overlook those blots and stains which human infirmity will ever drop on the fair page of truth, and will ascribe them not to wilful design, but, to a hand unsteady through the fall.

To speak the truth in love; to be faithful yet affectionate, keeping back nothing that is profitable, but abstaining from all harsh, unbecoming language; to watch for souls as those that must give account; to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God—if this is the spirit which should influence the servants of God who *speak* in their master's name, should it not equally be the ruling desire and aim of those who *write* for the honour of the same blessed Lord and for the benefit of his people? What is any man or minister but a fallen creature in himself? Whatever measure anyone may possess of light or life, wisdom or knowledge, faith or hope, liberty or love, he owes it wholly and solely to sovereign grace. If, like Asher, he be blessed with spiritual children; if he be acceptable to his brethren, because he dips his foot in oil, it is only as poured to him out of the Rock. (Deut. 33:24; Job 29:6.) Well, then, may the Lord say to any servant of his, who from deeper experience or greater gifts would fain lift up himself above his brethren, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou

that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it," but hadst procured it by thine own exertions? Or if any wanderer in the wilderness gather less manna than his brother, still, when meted with the spiritual omer, it will be found that, as he who has gathered much has nothing over, so he who has gathered little has no lack. This is the beauty and blessedness of grace, that it sets all the family of God upon a level, suffers no man or minister to exalt himself above another, allows no boasting for deeper experience or greater manifestations, but most humbling the most favoured, and most exalting the most self-abased, hides pride from man, and secures all the glory for God. Whence, then, such self-exaltation amongst many, such bitterness of spirit, such envy and jealousy, such slander and detraction? Certainly not from grace: for grace no more teaches a servant of God to exalt himself and despise others, or beat his fellow-servants, than it teaches him to eat and drink and be drunken. (Luke 12:45.) Grace, on the contrary, constrains him by every tie of love to the Lord and his people to count all things but dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, to lay himself out for his brethren's good, and to esteem all time lost that is not spent in seeking the profit of his own soul, the glory of God, and the welfare of Zion. We know too much of ourselves, and of the evil that dwelleth in us, to say that this is our constant or frequent frame: but if this be not deeply engraven on our heart, and do not influence our mind and guide our pen, the sooner we lay it down the better.

In this spirit, then, do we now desire to address our spiritual readers, and to present them with a few thoughts which have struck our minds as applicable to the present state of things amongst us.

Spiritual matters are, by general confession, at a low ebb in the church of God. Churches are much rent and torn; godly ministers very scarce; little blessing comparatively resting upon the preached Gospel: and most of God's saints complaining of barrenness in themselves and in others. Pained and wounded by seeing so much carnality and death in the churches, or disgusted, perhaps, by individual instances which have come before them of ungodliness in professors, many, tender in conscience, but not much acquainted with the evils of their heart, have experienced a revulsion of feeling which has almost driven them from truth itself. "Are *these* the people of God? Is *this* a church of Christ? Can *this* man be a servant of the Most High? Are *these* the doctrines of the Gospel, and do Gospel doctrines produce effects like these?" Staggered and thrown back by such thoughts and feelings, some of God's people have been tempted to secret infidelity, and to think religion itself all a delusion; others, almost to abandon their profession, or renounce the truths they have hitherto held; if members of churches, to throw up their membership; if accustomed to hear at a certain place, to resolve to go thither no more. Driven from those they once so highly esteemed, they look around to see where they are to go, or what they are to do. Some specious form of religion at this moment catches their eye. The "Brethren" have a little room in the town; they will go there. They will find, they think, more spirituality among them, more love and union, more zeal and fervour, more devotedness and holiness, more faith and fruits of faith, as well as more frequent opportunities for communion and religious intercourse. Others, who see clearly enough where the "Brethren" are, determine to go nowhere; they will stop and read the Bible at home, and will

have nothing more to do with any professors whatever. There are, they think, now no ministers worth hearing, and no books worth reading. There is no real religion in the land; all professors are alike, deceivers or deceived, the Calvinists worse than the Arminians, and the experimental ministers, so called, not a whit better than the dry doctrinal men. They will, therefore, they say, come out from them all, and read nothing but the Bible and Hart's hymns, and sometimes the old Puritan writers, or Huntington and Hawker, and have nothing whatever to do with the profession of the day, for they are sick and tired of it.

Much of this feeling, we doubt not, springs in some from spiritual pride and secret mortification that they themselves are not valued by others so highly as they stand in their own eyes: in others, from that self-righteous spirit which leads men to say, "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou;" in others, from ignorance of their own hearts, and expecting more from the church of God than is usually found in her. On persons in this state of mind we do not expect our words to make any impression; but if these lines should meet the eye of any who, pained and grieved by the state of things in many churches, are perplexed what path to take, and have felt any such workings of mind as we have just sketched, will they bear with us in laying before them and the church of God generally what we believe is the safest and wisest way to take?—and in so doing we shall attempt so to frame our observations and counsel, that they may have as wide a bearing as possible on the line of conduct which those should pursue who love Zion.

We do not conceal from ourselves the evils we have mentioned, and which all who fear God must deeply deplore. Let us confess and acknowledge them, and seek of the Lord deliverance from them. But let us not be driven by them to the other extreme. If our words could find an entrance into the heart of any who are tried and exercised by painful things in the church of God, and by powerful inward temptations, springing out of and connected with them, we would lay before them the following advice—advice which we have proved in our own souls, and therefore know to be sound and good.

1. Hold on to the truth of God.

Remember those words of the Lord himself: "If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Let men profess the truth and not possess it; or let men profess the truth and disgrace it. Does that stain and sully the purity of truth itself? Look at that limpid stream gushing out of the hill-side, sparkling in the sun, as it leaps forth to meet his rays. A few yards lower down a sheep, attempting to drink, muddies the water with its foot. Stay a moment. That water you need not drink which the sheep has stained. See how the pure stream comes leaping to you from the rock. Drink that which neither foot of man nor beast has yet polluted. Have you ever felt the power and sweetness of God's truth? Has it ever made you free from the guilt and filth of sin, the bondage of the law, the terrors of death, the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life? Can you, then, abandon it? Is it not your life, your all? Say that men disgrace it, hold it in unrighteousness, act inconsistently with it, or profess it without feeling its power. Let these be warnings to you not to do the same; but, do not give up truth because others

make an ill use of it. Do not countenance their evil deeds, nor be a partaker of other men's sins; keep thyself pure from their or similar inconsistencies; but forsake not truth because men abuse it. What blessings have men not abused! Some have fed their dogs with hot slices from the joint. Will you never touch meat again? Health is abused by thousands. Will you, therefore, prefer sickness? Money is daily perverted to the vilest purposes. Will you, therefore, throw up your situation, let anybody take your rents or profits, work without wages, or put up your shop shutters, because wicked men abuse what you may accept with thankfulness as God's gift, and use to his glory? No; let us rather hold on to truth all the more firmly because it is abused; let us rather seek for a more full revelation and powerful application of it to our own soul, a stronger faith in it, and a more earnest desire to live more abidingly in the enjoyment and sweetness of it, seeing all the more clearly from the example of others how dangerous a profession of truth is without a heartfelt possession. If you are grieved or disgusted by the conduct of some who profess truth, show that there is *one* person at least in this crooked and perverse generation that can and does adorn it; and bear in mind that the purity of truth can no more be really sullied by the treachery of its professors than the cheek of Christ was stained by the kiss of Judas, or his pure humanity disgraced by the stripes and thorns of Pilate's judgment-hall.

And in holding on to truth, hold on, above all things, to the *power* of truth. It is not the letter of truth, however clear or correct, which can save or bless your soul. How well, because how experimentally, does Hart speak on this point in that wonderful experience of his—that undying testimony against Pharisaic self-righteousness and Antinomian licentiousness:—

"Notions of religion I wanted no man to teach me—I had doctrine enough; but found by woful experience that dry doctrine, though ever so sound, will not sustain a soul in the day of trial."

When we look a little more closely at matters, we see why many, of whom better things were once hoped, have been driven from the truth. They never felt its power, nor tasted its divine blessedness, by a gracious experience of it as made known to their soul. Therefore they were driven from truth to error by the conduct of its professors, just as men are often driven from one extreme of politics to another by the ill-treatment they meet with from their own party. But the truth of God—the truth as it is in Jesus—the truth which makes free is not to be abandoned thus. Let this rather be our feeling. If every professor in England disgrace it, if every minister in England turn from it, let me hold it all the closer for if I abandon it, I abandon Christ himself, who is the "Truth," as well as the "Way" and the "Life." Let us rather, if all abandon it, follow that noble example portrayed so beautifully in the seraph Abdiel:—

"So spake the seraph Abdiel, faithful found;
Among the faithless faithful only he;
Among innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified;
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal
Nor number nor example with him wrought,

To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
Though single."

2. Hold on to the Church of Christ.

The Lord's own promise was, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." There is then a church of Christ still. Men speak sometimes as if there were no people of God now, no church of Christ on earth, and almost say, with the prophet Elijah, "I, even I only, am left." But as in those gloomy times, there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so in our day God has still a seed to serve him, a remnant according to the election of grace. Were it not so, we should soon be as Sodom, and be like unto Gomorrah. However low, then, or divided, or scattered, this remnant may be, they are still the church of Christ, dear to him as members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. And should they not be dear to us? Can we love the Head and not love the members? seek union and communion with the Lord, and separate ourselves from the Lord's people? "Ah! but they are so crooked, and I have had so much trouble among them; have been so cruelly wounded in the house of my friends; have had such grief and sorrow of heart from my connection with them; my feelings have been so crushed and trampled on; my motives so misinterpreted, my words and actions so misrepresented, that I have been absolutely forced to leave them!" Does this step that you have taken, or are about to take, flow from grace? May there not be some strong mixture of self-pity, or wounded pride, or natural resentment, or fretfulness and irritability of temper, or mortification because you cannot have your own way, blended with your present exercises of mind? Oh! how deceitful and desperately wicked is the heart of man! How it can hide from itself all its own faults; and, dwelling on or magnifying the faults of others, can raise up storms of wrath against our dearest friends, and for a little offence cherish enmity towards the choicest saints of God! Your present feelings then of shyness and distrust, and your shunning those you once had sweet intercourse with, may not be wholly from grace. Would not grace rather say, "Well, with all their faults, they are the people of God still. I mourn and grieve over their crookedness and waywardness; but I cannot and must not give them up. May not I too be partly to blame? Have I always spoken and acted quite in the spirit of the gospel? Have not I sometimes been provoked myself, and dropped hasty expressions, given way to my temper, and though I contended only for right things, yet did not do so in the spirit and meekness of the gospel? Have I not also been too ready to take up prejudices and listen to unkind speeches: and may I not have wounded them as well as they have wounded me?"

But whether so or not, let you have acted most blamelessly in word and spirit, still it comes to the same point. Nothing must separate us from the suffering members of Christ. These we took as our brethren and friends when we came out of the world, and we must not give them up. Christ, whom we profess to love, loves them with all their crookedness; and think what we may, or say what we may about them, there is more crookedness in our heart—any one of us—than in all their words and actions put together.

But if our advice be good for those who fear God generally, many of whom are not in church fellowship, how much more forcibly will it apply to

members of gospel churches! This is your position. You have joined, and still are a member of a gospel church. But many things in that church deeply try your mind. It is much divided, and with some of the members you have little or no union; others you believe are deeply tainted with legality and free will, and others, who have a good experience, are so obstinate and headstrong, that if they cannot rule and have just their own way, the church has no rest or peace. Well, certainly, you might save yourself a great deal of trouble and sorrow if you left them altogether. And so would the martyrs, if they would have given up the truth: and so would Paul, had he abandoned the care of all the churches: and so would the blessed Lord himself, had he prayed the Father for twelve legions of angels. But he suffered, and so must you. And this may be your especial cross. We know how heavy church troubles are—the greatest of all next to personal soul trouble, and few can be in church-fellowship without them.

If the church is an ordinance of Christ, for a believer not to be a member of a church is, to say the least, not to walk in Christ's ordinances; and if he be a member of a church, he must, in the exercise of Christian love, bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things, sooner than give up his membership with it.

3. Hold on to the servants of God.

We move here on tender ground, for really, when we look around us, we find but few worthy of that title. But the point we would mainly press is this. It is not for us to say who are and who are not servants of God; but we do say, if any man be commended to your conscience as a minister of Christ, and any blessing has ever been communicated to your soul through him, do not suffer a little thing to separate between him and you. We are creatures of extremes. Some think too much, and others too little, of the servants of God. Some see in them no fault, at least, none in the one object of their idolatrous affection, and others see in them little else but faults. Remember that God sends men to preach, not angels: and as men, they are not only of like passions with their hearers, but are peculiarly exposed to temptations, not only from their very position, but because Satan more particularly thrusts sore at them that they may fall, well knowing that their fall would fill the church with mourning, and the enemies of truth with rejoicing, would disgrace the cause of God, stumble the weak, drive the tempted almost to despair, and cast a cloud over a congregation which might never be removed, but furnish a standing reproach for years, and supply hundreds with the most powerful weapon against the truth as long as the chapel walls stand. Bearing this in mind, how incumbent it is on the family of God to hold up the hands of the servants of Christ by prayer and supplication, and if the ministry has been blessed to their souls to seek of the Lord continued supplies of grace for their minister that his soul may be watered and kept alive, and that dew, savour, and power may rest abundantly on him and the word preached by him.

4. Hold on to the work of God on your own soul.

This is your treasure—the treasure in the earthen vessel which God has lodged there by his Spirit and grace. Here you may be deeply tried. Such darkness may at times cover your soul that you cannot see a single feature of God's work upon your heart; or you may have got into such a cold, dead,

lifeless state, that you seem past all feeling, without even a sigh or cry; or you may be sorely tempted to think yourself a wretched hypocrite or self-deceiver, and that the best way will be to make away with your profession or even with yourself. Still, with it all, there is a secret something which you cannot give up. You know there have been times with you when you could and did feel Christ precious, when you did love him with all your heart, when you did see the King in his beauty, and the land now so very far off, and were softened and melted into contrition by a taste of his love. You can look back, too, and see how you were first wrought upon, what convictions you felt, what sighs and groans you uttered, what prayers and cries you poured forth, and how you were brought out of the world or a dead profession, and made to seek pardon and peace for your own soul. How can you really give up what you have thus felt? No! Hold on, then, to it, for it is your life. Part with everything before you part with that. The Lord can and will shine, sooner or later, on his own work, and bring it forth to his own praise.

5. Hold on to any promise ever made to your soul.

The Lord's usual way is first to give a promise, and then try it. So it was with Abraham, so with Jacob, and so with Joseph. Sarah's barrenness tried Abraham; Laban's persecutions tried Jacob; and Pharaoh's prison, where the iron entered into his soul, tried Joseph. But not one jot or tittle of the promises made to them fell to the ground. And so, if the Lord has ever made you a promise, though your path now be dark and gloomy in Providence or grace, still, if you are enabled to do as Jacob did, put the promise that God made into God's own hand, with a "Thou saidst I will surely do thee good," (Gen. 32:12,) he will honour in his own time and way his own word, and fulfil it to his glory and your joy.

6. Hold on to those means of grace which have been blessed to your soul.

God has given his word of truth into your hands, set up a mercy-seat, a throne of grace, for you to approach, favoured you with Christian friends, and blessed you, perhaps with a servant of his own teaching and sending for you to hear. How good it is to read his word with an enlightened understanding and a believing heart; to pour out the soul before the mercy-seat with liberty and access; to feel union and communion in Christian converse with the saints of God; and to hear the preached gospel with life and power. It is true that we may not be often thus favoured; but, if we are sometimes or ever have been, we shall prize these means of grace, these channels of divine communication. The Scriptures may be to us a sealed book, but we shall read them still; the throne of grace covered with a cloud, but we shall still present our supplications there; converse with the children of God may be a burden, but we shall not forsake their company: and the ministry a dry breast, but we shall not neglect the assembling of ourselves together in the house of prayer. We may give way to temptation in these matters, be overcome by sloth and negligence, till our soul resembles the garden of the sluggard. We may neglect reading the Bible, until we get into a habit of scarcely looking into it at all: be cold and formal at a throne of grace, till prayer is quite restrained; be shy of the saints of God, till we forsake their company altogether: suffer any excuse to keep the foot away from the house of prayer, till it becomes a burden to go. The Lord does not

tie himself to means; but he is usually found in them, and it is therefore our wisdom and mercy in them to seek him.

7. Hold on to the Lord Jesus Christ to the utmost of your faith and hope in him.

Many changes pass over our mind; but he changeth not, for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Without him we can do nothing; with him we can do all things. He can support us under our trials, comfort us in our afflictions, deliver us out of our temptations, subdue our sins, smile away our fears, cheer us in life, bless us in death, and present us in eternity before his Father's throne, holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight. To him, then, may we ever cleave with purpose of heart; and may our desire ever be to glorify him on earth, with the prospect before us of spending an eternity with him in heaven.

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January, 1857

In venturing once more, at the opening of another year, to greet our readers with our Annual Address, we desire to come before them under the gracious teachings and influences of the blessed Spirit—that holy Instructor, that promised Comforter, that unerring Guide into all truth; for if we are but favoured with his heavenly dew and divine anointing, we shall not write in our own spirit, or seek our own glory; we shall not arrogate to ourselves any undue authority, presume upon our position, or abuse our privilege; we shall not use flattering words, or seek the passing breath of human applause; but shall, by manifestation of the truth, command ourselves to their conscience in the sight of God, as seeking their spiritual welfare and the glory of the blessed Redeemer.

To edify, to comfort, to instruct, to lead on, to encourage the family of God, amid all their trials and sorrows, temptations and conflicts, is, or should be the aim of all who, as preachers or writers, stand on the battlements of Zion. If God, then, in his providence and grace, has placed us in a position whence we can, if not with voice, yet with pen, address many, very many of his dear children; if he has inclined any of their hearts to listen to us as believing that we know and love the truth as it is in Jesus, we are bound, not only by the weight which eternal realities have with our own soul, but by the very readiness of our friends and brethren to receive our words, to seek to the uttermost their spiritual profit. To be of the least spiritual service to the Church of Christ; to profit the souls of any, though the least and lowest, of God's dear children; to promote in any way a spirit of love and union in the churches of truth specially, and amongst individual believers generally; to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints earnestly, but affectionately; to testify boldly against all error and all evil; and be a favoured instrument of advancing in any measure the kingdom of the Redeemer, the cause of vital, experimental godliness, and the glory of a Triune God—what earthly rank or dignity, what place of worldly power or profit can for a moment be compared with an honour such as this? And are any of us, friends and brethren, so highly favoured and honoured? Blessed are our eyes, dear Readers, if they have seen any divine beauty and blessedness in Jesus;

blessed are our ears if we have heard his voice with sweetness and power; blessed are your tongues, ye servants of God, if, in testifying of his Person and work, love and blood, suitability and preciousness, you have felt the dew of the Spirit dropping from your lips: and blessed are your fingers, you whose pens seek to trace his worth, if what you write is attended with the unction of his grace to contrite, believing hearts. If this be our experience, and this our aim and end, one living bond of union will knit together editor, writers, readers, servants of God, members of Gospel churches, and believers generally among whom our pages come.

The union of the church with Christ her living Head, and the union of all the members of his mystical body with each other in him, are truths so vital and essential that, if lost sight of or not realised, confusion in doctrine, experience, and practice, must be the necessary result. "I am the vine, ye are the branches." "Abide in me, and I in you." "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." "That they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one of us." If these divine truths be hidden or obscured: if these springs of love to Jesus and of love to his dear saints cease to flow into our hearts; if they are dried up by contention, or muddied by error or evil, we at once lose sight not only of our own standing in Christ, but of the place which the church holds in his person and heart. We would then, the Lord enabling, fix our eyes steadily on these two points as guiding stars, as we sail over the waters of time; and we invite our readers to look at them with us in this opening season, that, with the help and blessing of the Lord, they may influence our hearts, lips, and lives, day by day in our walk before God and our walk with his children, from the beginning to the end of the year.

From ignorance or forgetfulness of these grand distinguishing truths of the glorious gospel of the grace of God, many, both preachers and writers, who appear to have some desire for the welfare of Zion, have dwelt, we think, too exclusively, and some almost angrily on the evils which afflict, on the divisions which separate the sheep of Christ; and, in their zeal and warmth against what they consider the low, carnal state of the church, seem well nigh, if not quite, to lose sight of her covenant standing in the Son of God, her place in his heart, her interest in his blood and righteousness, as well as of his tender care over her, and that what she is she is by his sovereign grace, or by his all-wise permission. We may look at the church sometimes as we often look at ourselves, seeing in her, as in our own evil hearts, nothing but what is carnal and vile; and with much the same result—unbelief, and hopelessness of any better or brighter days. But, as the more we look at ourselves apart from Christ, the lower we shall sink, so the more we look at the church separate from him, the worse she will appear. To be ever fixing our eyes on the low state of the church, and be ever censuring her for her spots and blemishes, is a spirit akin to that which sees nothing in individual believers but their faults and infirmities. A parent may keenly grieve that his eldest child is a cripple, or a husband that his wife is afflicted in body or mind; but the love that so deeply feels the affliction will not be ever roughly uncovering these family infirmities to the rude gaze of the common eye; nor is the child less a dear son, or the wife less a beloved partner because of them. Are we members of the family in heaven and earth, (Eph. 3:15,) that royal family, all of whom are made kings and priests unto God? (Rev. 5:10.) Let us, then, be

jealous of the family honour; not stain with contention the family dignity; and, whilst deeply lamenting family infirmities, still manifest family love, and cleave in affection to every member of the family as equally dear to their covenant Head, and for that reason, dear also to us. Take away the people of God, where are our friends, our companions, our brothers? Do we hope to spend with them an eternity of bliss? Can we not, then, bear with them a little on earth, if we hope to be for ever with them in heaven? To be always dwelling on their infirmities, is to speak a language very different from the language of Christ to his bride, and from all that the blessed Spirit has revealed of the covenant standing of the affianced spouse of Jesus. To view the church separate from Christ, is to look at a headless trunk; to view the members of his mystical body, apart from their union with each other, is to see only scattered limbs. Such unscriptural views must lead to a wrong judgment, and must necessarily make us dwell more upon what the church is in herself, sunk and fallen, than what she is in her covenant Head, all fair, without spot, or wrinkle.

In the same spirit many seem also much disposed to dwell upon the breaches of Zion, the divisions which undoubtedly exist among those who profess the same truths, and to believe in the same blessed Lord. But here, too, they appear to want the anointing eye-salve, which would show them that as there is more in the blood of Christ to save the individual believer than there is in sin to damn him, so there is more in grace to unite together the members of Christ than there is in strife to separate them.

Whatever be the divisions and dissensions that rend the visible church, which at the best is a mixed multitude, a firm, indissoluble union binds together the living members of Christ's mystical body. Small are their differences compared with their points of agreement. A stranger to the spiritual union which knits the members of Christ to him as their living Head, and to each other in him, sees only the divisions which separate; whilst he who knows the strength and sweetness of that inward life which gives him union with Christ, feels the power of that grace which gives him also union with his brethren.

Unless we believe that sin is stronger than grace, Belial than Christ, the world than faith, the works of darkness than he who was manifested to destroy them, we have no ground to believe that disunion, division, strife, contention, and discord are stronger than love, union, affection, concord, and peace. To a common eye the ship of the church may seem tossed with every wave, driven out of her course, or pursuing no definite course at all, her sails rent, her masts and yards broken, her pilot heedless, her officers asleep, and her crew at strife. But the spiritual eye looks beyond all that meets the common gaze, and sees that there is at her helm an almighty and unerring, though invisible, Pilot, who steers her after his own will, who holds the winds in his fists, governs and directs the movements of all on board, overrules all their ways and wills to his own glory, and is bringing her through every storm to her desired haven.

Let us freely acknowledge that there is not always that love and affection, that tenderness, kindness, gentleness, forbearance, meekness, and brotherly interest manifested by the children of God to each other, which should mark Christ's disciples. Let us confess that amongst many who really fear God

there is often a want of mutual consideration for each other's feelings, a lack of sympathy with each other's trials and temptations, an inability or an unwillingness to make any allowance for differences of station, education, or natural disposition, all which things are very trying to tender minds, and especially so to those who are disposed to lean too much upon them for help and comfort. Nay, let us go a step further, and own that in many instances there is more than a want of love and affection; that there is actual strife and contention; envy and jealousy in the pulpit, sullenness and bitterness in the pew; members of the same church who will hardly speak to each other in public, and almost cut off each other in private; pride or covetousness in one, love of dress and the world in another, a censorious, quarrelsome spirit in a third, a readiness to take offence and an inability to bear the least reproof in a fourth, a cavilling, contentious disposition upon every point or no point at all in a fifth, a hot, fiery temper in a sixth, a self-pitying, self-bemoaning complainingness in a seventh, that always feels or fancies it is ill treated and imposed upon by every one. Allow that all these evils, which, beyond doubt, sadly impair union, exist in many churches; still, we assert and are willing to stand by our assertion, that under all these hindrances there lies a firm bond of union amongst the family of God; which, as being of grace, and, therefore, eternal and indestructible, as much surpasses in strength and duration all these temporary ills as the sun outshines the mists, or eternity stretches beyond time. The man who stands on Dover cliffs sees merely the channel that divides England from France. He looks on the wild waste of waters that is spread between, on the rolling waves that sunder them from each other. But, underneath the dividing sea, lies the electric cable, hidden indeed from view, but carrying every moment messages to and fro, and binding our island to the continent more closely than the channel keeps it asunder. Nay, the very waves themselves are but seeming barriers, for over them speed the ships laden with goodly merchandise, and bearing to each country the productions of the other. So, under all the waters of contention which seem to separate the living family of God, there lies a firm bond of spiritual union; and over the very sea of discord there pass occasional winged prayers for each other's good, and kind, affectionate feelings, not the less deeply felt because not always freely expressed, that tend more to unite than the waves to divide.

Union with Christ, our living Head, and union with his people as living members of his mystical body, stand on the same foundation with the other blessed truths of the everlasting gospel. Do we believe that the everlasting covenant stands ordered in all things and sure; that the work of Christ is a finished work; that his blood cleanseth from all sin; that his righteousness perfectly justifies; that he has fulfilled the law, conquered Satan, destroyed death, and gained a full and final victory for all that believe on his name? These are the foundations of our most holy faith, and the ground of all our hope; and if the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do? Let it, then, not be forgotten, that as sin cannot destroy grace, or the law overthrow the gospel; as Satan cannot triumph over Christ, as death cannot reign over life, and as hell cannot defeat heaven, so all the divisions and dissensions that harass the church cannot break to pieces the bond of union that knits together the family of God.

These divisions are works of the flesh, (1 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:20:) the evil fruits that hang on the boughs of our fallen nature; the spawn and filth of that old

man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and all influenced and drawn out by the restless agency of Satan, acting upon our carnal mind. But as there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, as they stand complete in him, without spot or blemish or any such thing, as all the members of his mystical body must be partakers of his glory, and can no more fall out of his body than he himself can fall from his throne, we must view all these divisions as mere passing things of time, evils, it is true, much to be lamented, and as much to be avoided, but not touching the foundation, nor removing the church from her standing in Christ's person, or Christ's heart. And even admitting that divisions do subsist in the visible church, yet we believe they are very much confined to those who are out of the secret—mere professors of the truth, without divine light or life, liberty or love. Say that a church appears, and, indeed, is much divided. But before we begin to lament and bewail how a church of Christ is so rent and torn, it might be as well to examine a little more closely the actual condition of that church. Perhaps it is very large, made up of members, hastily, almost heedlessly, taken in, when the pulpit was filled by an unsound minister, or an undue influence exerted by worldly deacons; perhaps, even at the present moment, more respect is paid to money and respectability than grace; a spirit of contention is fostered from the pulpit; great laxity of discipline and order prevails; evils are allowed to grow instead of being nipped in the bud; loose-living characters are tolerated; doctrine is more contended for than experience and the power of godliness; and a general deadness and stupor evidently pervade the whole. Now, if such a church be rent and torn with divisions, it will not do to point to it as a specimen of a gospel church and say, "See how the children of God are divided," when, perhaps, not half are children of God at all, or, if children, sunk so low into carnality and death as to give little evidence of the life of God being in them. Instead of looking at the contentious spirits who fight and wrangle in the van, fix your eyes upon those who, out of the din and strife, occupy the rear. Search and look for the broken in heart, the quiet in the land, the sick and afflicted, the tried and tempted, the doubting and fearing, the simple and sincere, the slow to talk but quick to act, the tender in conscience, the exercised and distressed, the warm-hearted and affectionate, the prayerful and watchful, the humble and spiritually minded. Put aside the fighting men and women, the talkers, the brawlers, the boasters, the contentious, the self-conceited, and the ignorant; and see if you cannot, when you have blown away the foam, get at something more palatable and drinkable; when you have swept away the chaff, tail corn, and blind ears, if you cannot find some precious grain below. It is among the mourners in Zion, the weighted with a heavy cross, the plagued all the day long and chastened every morning; it is among the true lovers of Jesus, who have some personal experience of his love and grace; it is amongst those who know the sweetness of communion with Christ, and love the brethren with a pure heart fervently, that you must look for union. These do tenderly and affectionately cleave to each other. Say that the heads of the church are at variance; minister and deacons jarring; the word little blest either to call or deliver: the main supporters of the cause worldly and proud, keeping the poorer members at a distance, and little disposed to words of kindness or deeds of liberality towards them; beneath all this sad state of things, in a church sunk even so low as this, there may still be a deep, close, and blessed union amongst those unknown and unnoticed sheep of the flock, whose souls are alive to God, and who are favoured with his teaching and

blessing.

It is then neither true nor fair to represent the real church of God, that which alone deserves the name, as torn with divisions, when these contentions and quarrels are much confined to dead churches, sunk into worldliness and error, or to those members of living churches who are either destitute of grace, or sadly departed from it. Sure we are that no one living under the influence of grace can be quarrelsome or contentious. That holy Dove, who, as a Spirit of peace and love broods over contrite hearts, never rests upon that bosom which indulges in constant war mid strife, and in which allowed enmity rankles against any of the dear saints of God.

We do not believe it then to be a fact that God's real children, at least those who are daily living under the influences of the blessed Spirit, are divided, or are ever jangling and wrangling with each other. It is true that unkind, angry feelings may at times, with all other evils, work in their carnal mind, and may occasionally, to their grief and sorrow, manifest themselves in hasty words or cold looks; but these are passing clouds: for the same grace which subdues their other sins restrains also this beginning of strife, and that promise is fulfilled in them with this, as with other iniquities, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

We have known during our pilgrimage many dear saints of God, some now before the throne, and others still in the wilderness, in different parts of England, and we would desire to leave it on record when God calls us away from this mortal scene that we have received little else but the greatest kindness and affection from them, that with those with whom we have been brought into closer connection we have lived in undeviating love and union, and that except for a few passing moments the noise of strife has not been heard in our gates. And we may add, that as a Christian, as a minister, and as an editor, the desire of our soul is to seek and pursue peace, love, and union with all who fear God and love the Lord Jesus Christ, and to avoid as much as possible contention and strife.

True it is that strife in churches as well as amongst individuals cannot always be avoided, for there are contentious spirits, who, if permitted, would set any church on fire—salamanders who live in the flame, petrels that revel in a storm. Mark and avoid all such, ye saints of God. (Rom. 16:17.) If in the church, treat them kindly and courteously, but bring no fuel to their fire, (Prov. 26:20, 21,) nor make them bosom friends; if out of the church, do all you can that they do not get in. (Prov. 22:24.)

But enough, and perhaps more than enough, has been said by us on this subject. Other points, besides that of Christian union, call for some notice from us in our annual appeal to our readers' hearts and consciences.

If we are, as we profess to be, followers of the Lamb, three things, we believe, will be with us primary objects of spiritual desire. 1. The glory of God; 2. The edification of our own souls; 3. The good of our brethren. If we lack the first, our eye cannot be single, and, therefore, the light that is in us must be darkness; if we lack the second, eternal realities can rest with but little weight and power upon our conscience; if we lack the third, pure love to the

brethren cannot dwell in our breast. In opening, then, and dwelling upon these three points a little more fully, we may, perhaps not unprofitably occupy the rest of our Address.

1. Preachers, writers, editors, *if the glory of God be not their main object*, cannot look for his blessing to rest upon their labours. Yet how little of this singleness of eye, this simplicity and godly sincerity, is seen in many who call themselves ministers of Christ and servants of God. And how painfully evident the contrary often is in them to such as are possessed of any measure of spiritual discernment. Pride, self conceit, and self exaltation, as they are the chief temptations, so they are the main besetments of those who occupy any public position in the church; and, therefore, where these sins are not mortified by the Spirit and subdued by his grace, instead of being, as they should be, the humblest of men, they are, with rare exceptions, the proudest. O did we but see what we really and truly are; had we a penetrating, abiding view of the depths of the fall, in which we as sinners are so fearfully sunk; did we carry about with us a daily, hourly sense of what our heart is capable of, if left of God to itself, and what but for grace we could say or do the very next moment; were we continually sighing and mourning over our ignorance, unbelief, ingratitude, shortcomings and miserable unfruitfulness; did we bear in constant remembrance our slips, falls, and grievous backslidings; and had we, with all this, a believing sight of the holiness and purity of God, of the sufferings and sorrows of his dear Son in the days of his flesh, and what it cost him to redeem us from the lowest hell, we should be, we must be clothed with humility, and should, under feelings of the deepest self abasement, take the lowest place among the family of God, as the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints. This should be the feeling of every child of God. But if, in his infinite condescension, the Lord has made any of us his servants, and has qualified and commissioned any of us to preach the gospel to his people, what peculiar, what additional self abasement does this call for! If we did not know the human heart, and how it takes advantage of God's own gifts, and even of his very grace to lift itself up against him, we should at once say, "A proud minister of Jesus Christ, a self conceited servant of God! A man to preach humbling grace, and yet be proud of his way of preaching it! The thing is impossible; it is a self contradiction. Such a man is a monster, not a Christian, still less a Christian minister." Truly he is a monster; and such the Lord makes some of his dear servants feel themselves to be when this accursed pride lifts itself up in their hearts, and they see in the light, of his countenance what a hideous guest is lodged there. But till this pride be in some measure crucified, till we hate it, and hate ourselves for it, the glory of God will not be our main object, and we shall lie under the weight of that cutting reproof. "How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"

Readers, friends, brother ministers, may we all with one mind and heart seek the glory of God with a single eye, and be ever willing to be nothing that Christ may be all in all. Let the world, profane and professing, seek their own honour, their own pleasure, and their own profit. Let us who profess ourselves to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works," seek the honour of that dear Lord, who, as we trust, has called us by his grace, brought us near to himself, and is employing us in some measure in his service.

2. *The spiritual profit of our own soul*, the blessing of the Lord, as a personal, experimental reality in our own conscience, the dew of his favour resting on our branch, and our own growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ—how weighty, how essential should these blessings be felt to be by us. Surely our own soul's salvation and consolation should be our main concern. What are our farms, our shops, our business, our property, our families, our friends, our very bodies and lives themselves, compared with the worth and value of our immortal souls? If it be well with them, all is well; if ill with them, all is ill. And if any of our readers are called to minister to the souls of others, with what power or earnestness, we may well say with what *face* can we press eternal realities on the conscience of others, when they have so little weight with ourselves, or bid them keep their vineyards clean, when we are so neglecting our own? If our soul be like the garden of the sluggard, overrun with thorns and briars, never weeded or watered, the fences broken down, and the wild boar of the wood wasting it, and we are idly looking on, careless what the crop is, or whether there be any crop at all, we shall prove sorry gardeners of the church of Christ—that "garden enclosed," into which she invites her beloved to come that he may eat his pleasant fruits. Now, without a spirit of prayer, reading, meditation, seclusion from the world, self searching and communing with one's own heart; without visitations of the Lord's presence, and the operations and influences of the blessed Spirit, we can never be fruitful in every good word and work. "Abide in me and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." Associating with worldly people, gossiping and visiting from house to house, lounging their precious time away in empty talk, not giving themselves to reading, meditation, or study, but spending hour after hour in utter idleness of mind, neither tried, nor exercised, nor crying to the Lord, nor even thinking about eternal things at all, much less enjoying the Lord's presence—if such be their state week after week, can we wonder if the occupiers of the pulpit are rather a burden than a benefit to the occupiers of the pew; and if, instead of being honoured and resorted to, they gradually become despised and forsaken? "By much slothfulness the building decayeth: and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through." When we look around and see decaying buildings and dropping houses, well may we say, "Slothfulness and idleness have done this."

3. *An earnest desire for the good of the brethren* will flourish or fade much in proportion to the weight and power with which eternal realities press on our own soul. In this desire for the welfare of Zion, this love to the people of God for Christ's sake, this pure, disinterested, affectionate solicitude that the blessing of God might rest upon them, does the grace of the gospel shine forth so conspicuously, and forms such a noble contrast with the spirit of the world. *That* says, "All for me, none for you: all I get I keep: all you get I grudge." But the noble, unselfish principle of grace says, "Dear brother, I want you to be blessed as well and as much as myself: for the more the Lord gives me, the more I want him to give you. We are partners, not rivals: friends and brethren, not antagonists and foes!" In nothing does divine grace more display its heavenly origin than in seeking the good of the brethren. Ministers seeking the spiritual welfare of their flock: members of churches desiring the blessing of God upon those connected with them in church fellowship: believers generally labouring in prayer and supplication for the

power of God to rest upon his servants, his churches, his people,—how becoming the gospel is this, how consistent with our profession, how following the example of the blessed Redeemer,

**"Who spared no pains, declined no load,
Resolved to buy us with his blood.**

We wish to say little of ourselves, lest we fall into the same spirit of self exaltation that we have been condemning: but this much, we trust, we may say, that in editing this periodical, we desire to seek the good of the brethren among whom it comes. In what falls from our pen, as well as in selecting what is sent by our correspondents for insertion, our main aim and object are to profit the Lord's people, to avoid all questions that may minister to contention and strife; and whilst we contend for the truth in the power and experience of it in the heart, to do so in a spirit of tenderness, affection, and love.

In this spirit have we desired to write what we now lay before our readers, and if any of them think we have, in some expressions, borne rather hard on existing evils, let them forgive us this wrong, and attribute it to our desire to be faithful, as well as affectionate, and not, under a show of seeming gentleness, smooth over manifest inconsistencies. "Brethren, pray for us," is the best request and the most fitting close that can be offered to those of our readers who know and love the truth, by their affectionate friend and servant.

THE EDITOR

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January, 1858

Ever since the subject of our Annual Address has presented itself to our thoughts, a word of the Lord has been on our mind, which we feel should be our guiding rule, not only in what now lies before us, but be ever present with us from the beginning to the end of the year, if we are to be of any real service or spiritual profit to the Church of God in the position which we occupy as the Editor of the "Gospel Standard." The word is this: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4:16.)

They are the words of Paul the aged, Paul at the end of his race and in sight of his crown, to Timothy, his own son in the faith; and they are words of solemn warning and admonition, which should ever be before the eyes and in the heart of every servant of Christ; for though written by the pen of Paul, they are, as part of the inspired testimony, the express language of the Holy Ghost to all whom he has made overseers to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. If the Lord, then, in his providence and grace, has placed us in a position whence we may speak in his holy name to any of his redeemed and regenerated family: if he has given us any singleness of eye to his own glory, or any desire that what we send forth from our own pen, or that of others, may be made a blessing to his people; and if

he has bestowed upon any who seek his face and believe in his dear Son any willingness to receive with affection what, in all faithfulness and love, is in our pages set before them, we are bound by every gracious tie to listen to the admonition that we have quoted, and which seems so peculiarly adapted to our case and situation.

I. The first part of the admonition come home with solemn weight and power to our own conscience, "Take heed to *thyself*." As all evil begins, so all good commences in a man's own bosom. Sad then must be the lamenting cry for any minister, or any editor of a religious periodical, to be compelled to take up, as his own bitter and painful experience, "They made me a keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." To take care of other men's souls, and take no care of one's own; to warn, to admonish, to reprove the flock of Christ, and listen to no warning, admonition, or reproof that belongs to one's self; to teach others, day by day, and week by week, and seek no heavenly instruction from the Lord for ourselves; to contend for a living faith, without any inward experimental acting of it, on its Author and Finisher, or any earnest breathing to the God of all grace to bestow a larger measure of it, and draw it forth into more living and continual exercise; for a good hope through grace, and not to realise it; for love to the Lord and his saints, and neither to feel, nor to be desirous to feel it; to set before the people the joys of heaven and the smiles of God, with the terrors of hell and the frowns of the Almighty, yet neither seek the one or dread the other—surely, surely, there are no men, much less ministers, so deceiving or deceived as to act thus! Yes; but there are, and more in number than any of us probably dream of; nay, such shall we, and you, ye ministers who read these lines, and all be, who fill any public office in the Church of God, but for special grace. Familiarity with sacred things has a natural tendency to harden the conscience where grace does not soften and make it tender. Men may preach and pray till both become a mere mechanical habit, and they may talk about Christ and his sufferings till they feel as little touched by them as a tragic actor on the stage of the sorrows which he personates. Well, then, may the Holy Spirit sound this note of warning, as with trumpet voice, in the ears of the servants of Christ. "Take heed *unto yourselves*." It was Paul's public warning to the elders of the church at Ephesus. (Acts 20:28.) It was Paul's private warning to his friend and disciple, his beloved son, Timothy. And do not all who write or speak in the name of the Lord need the warning? Are they not all then—men of like passions with their hearers, and usually more tried and tempted than they? Have they not, besides the snares common to all the children of God, snares peculiar to themselves—snares connected with the ministry itself? How many a star has fallen from the bright firmament of the church! How many burning and shining lights, as they were once considered, have smouldered out, or been suddenly extinguished! How many have cooled in their youthful zeal; left their first love; fallen into sin; embraced error; and made themselves and their profession to stink in the nostrils of men. If the way to heaven be strait and narrow: if surrounded with snares and pits on every side; if the heart of man be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; if Satan be ever on the watch to deceive and allure; if all our strength be weakness, all our knowledge ignorance, all our light darkness, and such they are without grace in its continued supply, who can walk in this path except as guided by the Spirit, and upheld by the power of God? The mercy is, that those whom the Lord loves, he loves unto the end:

that those whom the Father has given him, he keeps in his name; and that He who is in the midst of the candlesticks holds the stars in his right hand, that none may pluck them thence, hide their lustre, or extinguish their beams.

But apart from this special and divine keeping, as the Lord does not work mechanically, but makes use of the word of his grace, of his own promises, precepts, and admonitions, as gracious means to keep the feet of his saints, we shall do well to give earnest heed to the things which we have heard from his lips, lest at any time we should let them slip. And sure we are that no Christian man or minister will, in his right mind, think himself placed in a position where such an admonition can be safely neglected; or, that whilst he is in the flesh, he is beyond the necessity or reach of such warnings. There are few Christians, and we may well add, few Christian ministers, who have not ever found self their greatest enemy. The pride, unbelief, hardness, and impenitence of a man's own heart: the deceitfulness, hypocrisy, and wickedness of his own fallen nature; the lusts and passions, filth and folly of his own carnal mind will not only ever be his greatest burden, but will ever prove his most dreaded foe. Enemies we may have, enemies we shall have from without, for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, and we may at times keenly feel their bitter speeches and cruel words and actions. But no enemy can injure us like ourselves. In five minutes a man may do himself more real harm than all his enemies united could do to injure him in fifty years. And if this be true of a private Christian, how much more will it hold good in the case of one who occupies a public situation in the church of God? "Take heed then to thyself." To thyself thou canst be the most insidious enemy and the greatest foe. "Take heed to thyself," minister of the Gospel, writer, reader, editor, that thy loins may be girt, thy lamp burning, and thou engaged in the Master's work, with the Master's presence, the Master's smile, and the Master's blessing.

We would then, in the opening of the present year, view this admonition as placed before our own eyes as a lamp unto our feet, and a light to our path, and as such we would open the words a little more closely and fully, as bearing more immediately upon our own conscience.

1. First, we seem specially admonished thereby to take heed that we ourselves should *experience the power*, and live under the influence of the truths for which we contend. It is impossible for us otherwise to fulfil our office as the glory of God and the good of the Church both require. We have many communications to read, many inquiries to answer, many nice and difficult points to weigh, the good of many to consider, the petulance, quibblings, and enmity of many to endure; many books to peruse, many Reviews to write, friends whom we must not flatter, foes whom we must not fear, and, above all, to be ever looking up for wisdom to guide, and power to strengthen; feeling, as we do, that we have neither one nor the other in our own hands, or at our own command. We have instrumentally, unworthy as we are of the position, and inadequate as we are to the task, some to instruct, others to comfort, others to encourage, others to feed of the saints of the Most High: and when we say "*we*," it is meant thereby to include whatever appears in our pages, whether written by our own pen, or that of others. Without, then, the continual power and influence of the Blessed Spirit upon our heart, how soon the hands hang down, how soon the knees totter, how soon do eyes and

ears and heart all become weary in well-doing.

2. We are also admonished thereby to take heed *to our own spirit*. Here we are liable chiefly to fail. We are not much afraid of being entangled in the slough of Arminianism—at least, as far as regards any open adherence to, or expressed sanction of, its God-dishonouring views and sentiments. The truth as it is in Jesus is, we hope, too dear to us to sacrifice it to any broad and palpable error, come from what quarter it may, and last of all from a point that proclaims, with shameless forehead, creature strength and righteousness. But to maintain truth in a spirit of tenderness, affection, and love; not to be betrayed into a contentious, wrangling temper, nor be provoked by any obstinate opposition to call down fire from heaven on all who do not or will not see as we see, and believe as we believe; here we have much need to watch our own spirit, lest it betray us into words and expressions unbecoming the meekness of Christ and the spirit of the Gospel. To be bold and faithful, on the one hand, in defence of truth and godliness, yet without wrath and bitterness, and to maintain, on the other, "the love of the Spirit," the affection and tenderness which ever become a sinner in this vale of tears, and a follower of the meek and lowly Lamb, and yet not to be entangled in that wretched universal charity, that false and canting spirit which, either in pretence or self-deception, thinks well, hopes well, and speaks well of everything and everybody who can prate about Jesus Christ and the Gospel, this safe, this Christian path, we would desire to tread. The servant of the Lord is to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; (Jude 3;) but he is not to strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves; (2 Tim. 2:24, 25;) and he is to put away all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking. (Eph. 4:31.)

3. We are also warned and admonished, in taking heed to ourselves, to watch against *any carnal influence* that, under the guise of religion, may work with craft and subtlety on our own mind, and impose itself upon us for the work and witness, the power and teaching of the Holy Spirit. We are expressly bidden in the word of truth, "not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God." Spirit has its filthiness as well as the flesh; (2 Cor. 7:1;) and if not so gross and sensual, is much more subtle and deceptive. In all its forms, whether in our bosom or that of others, in a profession or out of it, in the pulpit, the pew, the closet, or the study, self in its inmost spirit is still a deceitful and subtle, restless, proud, and impatient creature, masking in a thousand ways, all the while, its real character, and concealing by countless devices its destructive designs. We have but to look on the professing church to find the highest pride under the lowest humility, the greatest ignorance under the vainest self-conceit, the basest treachery under the warmest profession, the vilest sensuality under the most heavenly piety, and the foulest filth under the cleanliest cloak. But if self be such, and those who know its features will be the best judges of its likeness, well may we take heed to ourselves lest, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, we should be deceived by the twining movements and glozing speeches of this serpent, and, professing to exalt Christ, be secretly exalting ourselves.

4. To be kept from *all evil* and to be preserved from *all error* may form also a part of that solemn admonition, "Take heed to thyself." We know too much

of what we are as a fallen sinner to think for a moment that we can keep ourselves from either. Sin is sweet to the flesh; error suits well the reasoning mind. Who can mortify the one, who can shut out the other, without special help from the sanctuary? But if we take no heed to our steps, or receive without fear or care doctrines that are preached and taught from pulpits and books without number, we may soon fall into as much sin as may make us limp all our days, and embrace as much error as shall make us a wandering star and a rainless cloud to the church of God.

"Take heed then to thyself:" but in so doing may a sense of the Lord's own blessed keeping ever be deeply engraved on thy heart and conscience. "He keepeth the feet of his saints;" "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." "Keep me as the apple of thine eye: hide me under the shadow of thy wings." "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Only in the strength of these promises and in the experience of their fulfilment, would we say to ourselves, would we say to those who have ears to hear, "Take heed to *thyself*."

II. But we are bidden also to "take heed *to the doctrine*." And surely this is a most needful admonition, not only to us, but to all who profess, whether by tongue or pen, to teach the church of Christ. Few, comparatively speaking, seem to realise sufficiently the solemn position of standing forward to teach the church of Christ. Almost anybody who has a little fluency of tongue thinks himself able to preach, and almost everybody in a profession who can hold a pen deems himself capable of writing upon the weighty matters of salvation. But in so doing they profess to be the mouth of God. Well, then may every one who fears God and trembles at his word take heed what words his mouth utters; for God can only speak his own truth, and it is a fearful position to stand up as his mouth-piece, and then to speak lies in his great and holy name. How careful, then, should we, and those who, like us, fill any public office in the church of Christ, be that what we speak by mouth and what we teach by pen is according to the oracles of God.

By the word "doctrine" we understand all that holy truth, whether viewed as one consistent, harmonious whole, or as branching out into various parts, which the blessed Spirit has revealed in the word of truth, and which he makes experimentally known in the hearts of the people of God. The word "doctrine" has in the New Testament a larger, broader, and nobler meaning than that comparatively limited signification which is generally attached to the term. Doctrine is often now spoken of as something distinct from experience and precept, whereas it comprehends both. The word "doctrine," translated literally, means, "teaching;" and therefore includes every branch of divine truth which the Holy Spirit teaches, whether outwardly in the inspired Scriptures, or inwardly by his sacred unction and power. As used with reference to the ministry of the word, it means, as well as includes, all that "teaching" wherewith a servant of God, according to the ability bestowed upon him, instructs, feeds, comforts, and admonishes the Church of Christ. In this sense our pages should be full of "doctrine," that is, of heavenly truth, according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the word and in the heart.

What need, then, is there that we, as Editor of these pages, should take heed to the *doctrine!* in other words, carefully watch and examine whether what we write ourselves, or insert as written by others, be in strict accordance with the truth of God as revealed in the Scriptures, and as experienced, under the power and teaching of the Holy Spirit, in the heart of his saints.

1. If we are enabled then to take heed to the doctrine as there directed, the first quality looked for will be *purity*. How "clear as crystal," did holy John see the pure river of water of life proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. (Rev. 22:1.) Such should be, though alas! from human infirmity, never can fully be, the truth as preached by God's ministering servants.

Three times in one short Epistle does the apostle Paul urge on his son Titus "sound doctrine," (1:9, 2:1, 8,) that is healthy, untainted with error, free from all the sickly corruptions and pestilential disease of human wisdom or human ignorance. "In doctrine," again he urges, that is, in thy teaching, in what thou settest before the people, "showing uncorruptness, gravity," (not jokes and ridiculous anecdotes, to make fools laugh and saints sigh,) "sincerity," (not craft and hypocrisy, flattering the rich and keeping back the truth for fear of giving offence,) "sound speech," wise and weighty, "that cannot be condemned," as commending itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God from its intrinsic authority and power. Whether the writing and preaching of the day resemble this divine model, let those judge whose ear trieth words as the mouth tasteth meat. But it should ever be our earnest desire, and watchful care, to preach and write only what bears this divine stamp upon it.

2. In taking heed to the doctrine we should see that it *be impregnated with the life of God*, anointed with his unction, watered with his dew, and accompanied by his power. What is all our preaching and writing worth if it fall upon the ears and hearts of the saints of God with no weight or influence; if it never melt or soften, comfort or bless his tried and exercised people? There is a power in the word of his grace, when God is with his servants, to kill and to make alive, to wound and to heal; there is then in their hands a two-edged sword, which pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; there is a balm, too, which brings pardon and peace to a troubled, distressed mind; and there is an influence that reaches the inmost thoughts, lays bare the hidden depths of conscience, and speaks with a voice that unmistakably assures the soul it is the very voice of God himself. It is true that he who has the keys of David, who opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens, keeps in his own hands this power, for it is his own heavenly voice by which he himself speaks to his own sheep. But he does from time to time thus speak from heaven by his own sent servants; and when they thus preach, it is Jesus himself who gives them mouth and wisdom; (Luke 21:15;) yea, the Spirit of their Father which speaketh in them. (Matt. 10:20.) And his sheep know his voice and follow it, but they will not hear the voice of strangers.

Now, are we to take no heed to our "doctrine" whether it be accompanied or not with this heavenly power? Is it quite enough to preach or write consistently with the mere letter of truth, and there leave it, with a sort of reckless, Antinomian carelessness, "I can only preach the truth; God must

apply it"? True; but are there no blessings to be called down upon your preaching by prayer and supplication? Is there no inward experience in your own soul of the power of God, no sense of his absence or presence, of his opening or shutting up? How can you preach or write to the comfort and edification of the saints of God, if you are an utter stranger to the things in which is all their life and all their religion? And if you do not know vitally and experimentally the things you preach and write, why do you preach or write at all? If you call experience "cant," and the life of God in the soul "frames and feelings," beware lest God say unto you, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee." (Psa. 50:16, 17.)

3. That the doctrine shall be such as *shall save the soul*. This is what the Apostle seems chiefly to insist upon in his admonition. "Take heed to thyself, and to the doctrine," for he adds immediately, "continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."

When the people of God come to hear a servant of Christ, or read a book that professes to show the way to heaven, they want to be well assured that what they hear or read shall be such saving, vital truth, that they can rest their souls upon it for time and eternity. A man's own soul is a tremendous stake to put into the balance; and he who holds the scales should be equally well satisfied that they are such as Christ holds in his own hands for heaven or hell. "What this man preaches, what this book teaches, can I rely on it as able to save my soul? Is it the real truth of God? Have I any evidence that it is so from salvation having reached my heart through the truth I now read and hear? Can I, as before a heart-searching God, with heaven and hell both before my eyes, hang all the weight of my soul for eternity upon what I hear from this pulpit, or what I read, in this book?" Well may a dying sinner thus narrowly and anxiously weigh and consider this point; well may he interrogate again and again his own conscience in this matter, for if he has no internal evidence, from what he has felt in his own soul of its saving power, that this man preaches or writes what can and does save, let him at once leave the man, let him without delay throw aside the book. A guide who does not know the way, a chart that does not mark the rocks, a pilot who cannot steer the ship—to follow or be in company with such is to seek death and destruction.

But men by thousands are contented with reading and hearing book after book, and minister after minister, without ever having or seeking to have any secret testimony in their own consciences that there is salvation in the things which the man preaches or the book declares. And why, but because they hug the deception and love the deceiver?

But our limits admonish us that we must now draw to a close. We are writing an Address, not preaching a sermon, though, perhaps, our almost sermonising strain may to some appear not very unlike it. Yet a few words more. "*Continue in them,*" says the apostle. In what? in the things that thou hast known and felt: in the truths of the gospel as revealed in the scripture and in thine own conscience. The truth of God in its life and power, the truth of God as saving and sanctifying the soul, cannot be taken up and laid down

like a trade or a business. Nor is a man to be all for his soul this week and all for the world next: making the children of God his friends and companions on the Sunday, and his partners, his carnal relatives, or his fellow workmen, his chosen associates on the Monday. If truth is worth knowing at all, it is worth knowing for life; if worth having, it is worth having for ever, for salvation reaches down to death, in death, and after death. He that endureth unto the end, he, (and he only,) shall be saved.

As conducting the "Gospel Standard," we have no new views to offer no new patterns for the coming Spring, no novelties of the season to please and attract a crowd of customers. We have only one Gospel, for there is but "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all."

The Gospel is our Standard; we have, and we want to have no other: and by this standard we hope ever to abide. Each revolving year only confirms us more strongly, and roots us more deeply in that precious truth which now for many years it has been the object of our pages to set forth. All that we want is to experience more of its power, live more under its influence, and adorn it more by our life.

Friends and readers, do you see eye to eye, and feel heart to heart with us in these important matters? However the truths we love may be despised by the profane and professing world, may they be more and more dear to us! Many read our pages whom we have never seen, whom we may never know; but if we are taught by the same Spirit, a bond of union knits us together, and in doing so unites us to one common Lord.

We have no promises to make for the year upon which we are now entered; but we desire to be ever looking up to Him from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift, that he would give us grace and wisdom, if he still spare life and grant health, equal to our task, and make his strength perfect in our weakness.

Brethren, pray for us.
Your affectionate friend and servant,
THE EDITOR

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January, 1859

One of the greatest blessings which the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ can bestow upon any one of his elect family is, to let down into his soul the word of his grace, so as to make him spiritually and experimentally acquainted with the truth as it is in Jesus. Sunk as we are in the Adam fall, buried in the lowest depths of darkness and ignorance, without one ray of divine light to illuminate the gloom, and without one breath of heavenly life to guide our feet into the way of peace, how condescending in our most gracious Lord to send a quickening beam out of his own glorious fulness into our soul, to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God! Truth, his own truth, his pure, precious truth, is the means which he

employs to effect this mighty change in a sinner's soul. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;" (James 1:18;) "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. 1:23.) And as it is by the word of truth that he first begets the soul into spiritual life, so does he maintain by the same means the life that he originally thus communicated. We attach, perhaps, hardly sufficient importance to the *exact language* by which the truth of God has been made known to the sons of men; but the very words which Jesus spake were as much a part of the covenant as his most precious blood itself. How clearly and distinctly did the Lord declare this in the days of his flesh! "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which has sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak;" (John 12:49;) again, "The word that I speak unto you I speak not of myself" (John 14:10;) and again, in that solemn intercessory prayer which he offered up, when here below, as the great High Priest over the house of God, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me," (John 17:8.) God the Father gave unto the Son of his love these words of truth and righteousness when he anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power, and thus constituted and qualified him to be his Messenger and Servant. These exact words he spake, as he himself declares, "Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak. (John 12:50.)

Now the grand distinction between the living saint of God and the servant of Satan, whether dead in sin or dead in a profession, is, that the one receives, believes, feels, and obeys the word of truth, whilst the other either rejects it or holds it in unrighteousness. As, then, we cannot lay too much stress upon the exact words by which truth is revealed in the inspired Scriptures, so we cannot insist too strongly upon their being received into a believing heart as a proof and test of discipleship. The Lord, therefore, after he had said of his disciples, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me," added, "and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." (John 17:8.) It was this believing reception of the words of Jesus that held Peter and the rest of the disciples from apostasy, when "many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him." (John 6:66.) Were they not tempted to turn back with the rest? Had they no hard things to believe when Jesus told them that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood? But the grace that had reached their heart, through the word of life held up their staggering feet on the very brink of the abyss. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" said Peter, in the name of them all; "Thou hast the words of eternal life." And what effect had the reception of those words of eternal life produced? "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:68, 69.)

Viewing, then, the position which we occupy as the professed disciples and followers of the Lord the Lamb, standing prominently forward in our day and generation before the eyes of the world as witnesses of the truth of God, may we not solemnly ask ourselves, Have we received into a believing heart the truth as it is in Jesus, so as to tread in any measure in the footsteps of those whose faith and walk are recorded in the word of God? We profess to know it by divine testimony. The very root and ground of our Christian standing, our peculiar and distinctive mark as separated from the general profession of the day, is, that we have, from conviction of conscience, to take

the lowest ground, embraced the truth, whilst others are left still to wander in the dark mazes of ignorance and error. The only justifiable ground of our separation from the churches by which we are surrounded, not only in creed but in heart and life, is, that we have been taught of the Blessed Spirit to know and believe for ourselves the truth of God, which is hidden from their eyes. Most of us were in some way once mixed up with them; but when the veil of ignorance and unbelief was taken off our heart, when the mists of darkness and error were chased away by beams of divine light from the Sun of righteousness, we were compelled by a constraining influence to withdraw from those regions of the dead. Some of us, like Lot, may have fled for our lives; others may, after many exercises, have been drawn by the attractive power of truth into its embracing arms. Woefully, then, awfully must we be deceived, or be deceiving ourselves, if, with all this profession, we have neither seen nor tasted, neither felt nor handled anything of the word of life, so as to distinguish us by vital power and spiritual possession from the general religion of the day.

Not that we can always realise this vital distinction. It is hard, especially in seasons of darkness and unbelief, at all times to see our signs. We believe, however, we have experienced a certain amount of scriptural truth; we have evidences more or less distinct; we have traversed a path much chequered by temptation and trial; we have had our share, and some a very heavy one, of sorrows and afflictions, and a share too of comforts and blessings; we occupy a certain position as ministers or hearers, as members of churches or attendants upon the preached word; we are all advancing in the path of life, getting every day nearer and nearer to the grave; and we profess to be living as dying men and women in a world of sin and sorrow, looking forward to a glorious inheritance, where we shall see Jesus as he is. But we cannot always clearly realise our state and standing: or if not tried as to the final issue, may be much tried by the coldness of our affections, and the sad lack of the fruits of righteousness, internal and external, which we are sensible should adorn our profession. This is one thing; to be satisfied with a mere creed, or a gracious, **[graceless?]** godless profession, is another. Life may not rise high, but the well of water is in the heart: faith may be weak, or rarely in exercise, but it has been given and is maintained: hope may have cast forth its anchor, but the storms blow and the waves roll; love may have been shed abroad, but it has waxed cold. What God doeth he doeth for ever; and if he has done anything for our souls we are safe if not sound, delivered from death and hell, if our feet still slip and stagger. The state of a child of God at his very worst is better than that of a professor at his very best. If, then, we are what we profess to be, "the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world," it is because the light of life has visited our once dark, benighted souls. The eyes of our understanding have been divinely opened to see, our hearts graciously touched to believe, our consciences quickened to feel, our affections kindled to embrace the truth as revealed in the inspired Scriptures, and as it shines forth in the Person, work, love, blood, and righteousness of the Son of God. Truth thus lodged in the heart by the power of God, and sealed and witnessed there by the operations and influences of the Blessed Spirit, becomes a sacred deposit: "Thy word have I hid in my heart:" (Ps. 119:11:) "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." (2 Tim. 1:14.) Truth, as planted in our hearts by a

divine hand, is not lodged there as a dead, inert, useless, unprofitable possession. It is meant to save and sanctify our souls: to deliver us from all error and all evil: to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path: to comfort in affliction, support under temptation, to smooth a dying pillow, and carry safely through the dark valley into the realms of heavenly bliss. Not that truth can do this independent of the Spirit of truth; we mean not, this, nor to ascribe to the instrument the grace and glory that belong to the Lord. But as a blessed means in his sacred hands, the Holy Spirit the Comforter does most undoubtedly use the word of truth in the execution of these and other gracious purposes.

Never, then, were these two things to be held with a firmer or stronger hand than in the day wherein our lot is cast, when there is so wide a departure from both: 1. That the Scriptures are the inspired word of the living God, the only standard of truth and error; and, 2. That the Blessed Spirit opens up, reveals, and applies the truth contained in them to the heart. Though the statement of these two grand truths seems simple enough, perhaps, to some minds, so self-evident as to be trite and needless; yet, as carried out in daily experience, they assume different aspect, and are felt and found to be the very life-blood of all vital godliness. All the error and heresy which, to an extent, little suspected, infect the churches; all the darkness and death which hang like a thick pall on the general profession of the day; and, we may add, all the sin and ungodliness which drown men in destruction and perdition, may be traced either to ignorance of the truth as revealed in the scriptures, or ignorance of the Blessed Spirit who formerly inspired and now applies them. Would such glaring errors as a denial of the eternal Sonship of Christ, the Fatherly chastisement of believers, of the possibility of a child of God backsliding,—would, we say, such plain, such scriptural truths have been questioned or denied, if those who broach or those who hold such errors either simply and believingly received the scriptures as the unerring truth of God, or had them applied to their heart by the Holy Ghost? And whence, too, that lack of love in the churches so much complained of; those strifes and divisions which rend many of them well-nigh asunder; those envyings and jealousies among ministers: that want of power attending the word, and that generally low state of the life of God so visible to the discerning eye, so painful to the feeling heart? Were the scriptures bound more closely to the heart, were they more believingly and vitally received as the truth of God, and were the Blessed Spirit more fully and frequently to bedew the churches with his heavenly visitations in the application of the word of his grace, would there not be a change in all these matters? Would not the wilderness and the solitary place be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose? One thing, at least, is very evident to us, that we live in a day when the truth as it is in Jesus is little known in the way that we have here attempted to enforce. Wherever we tune our eyes we meet with something different from, or discordant with those two vital principles that we have here laid down. In many quarters, and, if we are not misinformed, in the very Dissenting colleges and academies whence so many youthful ministers continually issue to fill the pulpits of the general churches, the very inspiration of the sacred volume is called into question, or if verbally admitted, is so qualified and explained as virtually to deny it altogether. This is, indeed, removing the rock from under our feet. This is destroying the foundation of our faith: and "if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:3.)

Remember this, we must have full inspiration or none. If only a part of the Bible be the word of God, or if it be only half inspired, what security is there for any one part being so? If wrong here, why not wrong there, and wrong everywhere? If the chronometer lose five minutes to-day and gain ten minutes to-morrow, we may as well heave it into the sea. If the compass in this latitude be deflected five degrees to the east, and in that five degrees to the west, what security is there that the ship shall not run right upon the very ridge of sunken rocks which she is trying to avoid? So, unless we fully admit the complete and verbal inspiration of the scriptures, we must lose all faith and confidence in them, and be ever filled with perplexity and confusion. And even where the inspiration of the sacred volume is held, it is by hundreds more from tradition than any experience of its power. Though the denial of its inspiration is an awful error, the mere fact of its inspiration may be held, and still be in the heart as a stone lies in a field. The Bible is widely read, but the veil remains over the heart of thousands of its readers: religion was never more talked about, but was never less known as an inward kingdom of God: profession was never greater, and practice never less: knowledge never more spread, and faith, and hope, and love less manifested. Yet as Jesus has never wanted a seed to serve him, as in the darkest and dreariest times there ever was an elect remnant, so now the Lord, beyond all doubt, has a people scattered up and down the land, whom he has formed for himself, that they may show forth his praise. Yet there are, thanks be to God, faithful ministers—men who know the truth by divine teaching, and whose ministry the Lord owns and blesses; there are pulpits still in which the truth is preached, and they are almost more numerous than can be supplied; and there is yet a tried and exercised people to whom the pure gospel of the grace of God is a joyful sound, and who from a knowledge of the dealings of God with their own souls feel a love to that spiritual and experimental preaching which meets their case, and which is attended with a divine power to their hearts. Were it not so, why need we continue our monthly publication, and that with increasing rather than diminishing circulation? We cannot but hail this as an unmistakable sign that the truths for which we have now for so many years contended have a place in many hearts. Twenty-three years is a long period for a periodical to last; vitality, one would hope, must animate it, or, like many of its brethren, it would have sunk into an early grave, or dragged on an invalid existence, calling out for perpetual help lest it die of weakness and exhaustion. This prolonged existence we do not ascribe to any wisdom or strength of ours. We look higher than the creature, and ascribe it to "the good will of him who dwelt in the bush;" and we thankfully acknowledge the help that he has given us, and the blessing that he has vouchsafed. But though we cannot and dare not sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own drag, for we are too sensible of our numerous deficiencies, we cannot but declare our honest conviction that we have never flinched from setting before our readers the truth of God from any apprehension of either offending readers or losing them. And now that the returning year has brought round the season for our annual Address, we embrace the opportunity of once more renewing that bond of union and communion with our spiritual readers, which time, that changes so many things, has, we trust, not diminished. "Hitherto," may we indeed say, "hath the Lord helped us." The barrel of meal has not wasted, nor the cruse of oil failed. Month after month, as supplies have been needed, they have never been lacking. Light has spring up in our darkness, life in our death, and

whether needing help for ourselves or for those who have contributed to our pages, all needful supplies have been granted, enabling us still to continue our course, and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints.

A few words may be admissible here. As regards, then, our own position, we feel much toward it as to the work of the ministry. It is, indeed, but another form of ministry, addressing itself to the eye as the preached word addresses itself to the ear. Let it not be ascribed to pride and vanity if we magnify our office. As all Christians are not qualified to be ministers, so all ministers are not fit to be Editors. Adequately to fulfil that office, not only must a man know the truth, but he must be able, by his pen, to explain and defend it. He must possess a certain degree of judgment and spiritual discernment, and such a Christian temper and spirit as shall preserve him from unbecoming personalities. He must have sufficient firmness of mind and love for the truth to keep him from being carried about with every wind of doctrine: and he must have a sufficient acceptance with the churches, that they may receive what he writes and edits as done with a desire for the glory of God and the good of his people. Practice, too, in handling the pen is required, and that experience of men and things which advancing life produces: for an editor is no more made in a day than a minister; and though to write a Review or an Address may seem easy work to those who read them, yet to do this month after month, and year after year, with a sufficient variety not to pall by continual sameness may not be so light a task as the unpractised writer may imagine. But enough of this, lest we seem to be indirectly claiming some praise to ourselves. If the Lord, then, has lodged his precious truth in our hearts, and by his Providence and grace placed us in the situation that we occupy—one never sought or desired by us, and from which we have frequently tried to escape, it is not to be wrapped up in a napkin, but brought forth for the instruction and edification of the church of God. If he has kindled a divine light in our soul, it is not to be put under a bushel or under the bed, but set on a candlestick, so as to give light unto all that are in the house. It is as much of his grace to put a pen into the hand of one man to write truth as a word into the mouth of another to preach truth, and he can as much bless the one as the other: for of both it may be said, that "the blessing of the Lord maketh rich," whether minister or editor, whether sermon or "Standard."

Nor is this true only of preachers and of those who occupy a public situation in the church of God, who labour in word and doctrine, by mouth or pen, and minister according to the ability which the Lord giveth. It is true of all in whose hearts he has planted his faith and fear: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord." (Isa. 43:10.) In every town, in every village where the Lord has a child of his own begetting into spiritual life, he has a living witness of his grace. He himself dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see; and though "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world, such as his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, yet to the great bulk of mankind he is an unknown, unseen, unthought of, uncared for God. But as he would not leave himself without witness, even in ancient days, before Jesus came, or the gospel was made known, "in that he did good and gave rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling the heart with food and

gladness;" (Acts 14:17;) so, in these latter days, he has still his witnesses as a God of all grace, by calling vessels of mercy and placing them here and there up and down the land, that they may testify he has a people who dwell alone and are not reckoned among the nations. If, then, the truth of God be in our hearts, it will most certainly manifest itself. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid." All eyes are upon a child of God: his words are noted; his actions watched: his dress, appearance, temper: his character and conduct as a husband and father, master and servant, buyer and seller, neighbour and friend, are all sedulously observed by a hundred sharp and often unfriendly eyes. Men in our day are too keen judges of character and conduct to be deceived with fair words and a smooth tongue. They have been so often deceived by a plausible profession that they have learned to examine such coin very narrowly and to weigh and ring the metal again and again before they accept it as genuine. And though they are no judges of a man's experience or faith, they are no mean judges of his character and conduct. Their only idea of religion is, that it is something to be done which is very good and excellent: and, therefore, when they see that the conduct and actions of professors of religion are neither good nor excellent, they very wisely and justly conclude that religion they have none. You may tell them that you believe in election, and have a good experience, that they are all going the wrong way, and must be brought to believe as you do; but if your actions at market, behind the counter, in your family, and in all the varied relationships of life give the lie to your profession, they will put your words into one scale and your actions into the other, and we need not say which will kick the beam. In these days men cannot conceal their daily habits and general character; and though it may take some time, in the first beginning of a profession, to disarm prejudice and silence suspicion, yet sooner or later a man's walk and conduct become generally recognised and appreciated. We read of the blessed Lord, that on one occasion "he entered into a house, and would have no man know it; but he could not be hid." So when he comes with power into a sinner's heart, it cannot be hid. His superabounding grace, his constraining love, his matchless beauty and blessedness, his heavenly glory, when experimentally seen and known must be made manifest in the believing lip and life. When merely seen in the word of God, when merely held as a creed, the most blessed truths are powerless and fruitless, as unhappily there are continual instances everywhere before our eyes. But as experimentally known and felt, they must exert a daily and visible influence. It would be a libel on our most holy faith, and a direct contradiction to the plainest declarations of the Lord and his apostles, to say that it had neither fruit nor effect, and that a Christian of God's own making, a saint of God's own teaching, a believer of God's own creating, did not differ in every respect from a dead, worldly, carnal, covetous professor. Yes; heaven and earth may be called to witness; he differs from him as much as grace differs from nature, spirit from flesh, Christ from Belial, and heaven from hell, he differs as much from him inwardly as a tender conscience differs from a seared one, a believing heart from an unbelieving one, a loving spirit from a selfish one, a prayerful, watchful frame from a prayerless and careless one, and outwardly as a godly life from an ungodly and loose one. We are not setting up a standard of fleshly holiness or Arminian perfection. We know too much of the deceitfulness of our own heart to set up any such vain figment, any such worthless idol. But we must contend for such a religion as the word of truth holds forth, such as the saints of God experience, and such as godly men in

all ages have advocated. A dead faith never yet overcame the world; a name to live never broke the power of sin; an mere assent to the letter of truth never melted the soul into godly sorrow for sin, turned the feet into the way of righteousness, brought the blood of Christ into the conscience, or shed the love of God abroad in the heart.

We are bound, then, by every sacred claim, by every godly consideration, by every gracious feeling for the honour of Jesus, the glory of God, and the welfare of Zion, to lift up our voice in favour of that divine religion which is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights as his own good and perfect gift, and to testify against all and every imitation of it wherewith Satan, as an angel of light, deceiveth the nations. We can do little against profaneness; it is beyond the reach of our tongue and pen. It is those in a profession only to whom we can speak; for few others would deign us a moment's attention.

In pleading, then, for a divine and saving knowledge and experience of the truth and against a name to live and a form of godliness, we well know that we have an echo in every bosom where the fear of God dwells. When the servants of God by voice or pen sound an alarm in the holy mountain, many a trembling heart instinctively cries, "Lord, is it I? Am I that deceived wretch? Am I blinded by Satan and my own deceitful heart? Have I a real work of grace in my soul? and what I have known and felt, tasted and handled of the word of life, has it been from the teaching and blessing of the Holy Ghost?" And when the Lord the Spirit bears his own inward witness that the work is his own, and Jesus once more appears as "the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely," the heart is filled with sweet peace and heavenly joy.

Friends and Brethren, let us seek, with God's help and blessing, to know more in our own souls of his precious truth by his own teaching and manifestation. "If he be for us, who can be against us?" and if he be against us, who can be for us? But how are we to know that he is for us, unless the Spirit itself bear witness with our spirit that we are his children? Now will he bear witness to anything but his own word and his own work? The Lord help us to give ourselves more to prayer, meditation, reading the scriptures, and communing with our own heart, that we may have clearer testimonies and brighter evidences that we are in the footsteps of the flock. Under every trial and temptation, his grace is sufficient for us, if we are but enabled to look more believingly to Him as the Author and Finisher of faith. The Lord bring us more and more out of the world, and nearer and nearer to himself: separate us more and more from carnal professors, give us more union and communion with himself and his poor tried and afflicted family, keep us from evil that it may not grieve us, hold up our feet in every slippery path, work in us everything that is pleasing in his sight, and preserve us to his heavenly kingdom.

Brethren, pray for us, that through the year on which we are now entered grace may be given to us the Editor, and to our contributors to furnish our pages with such communications as shall be instrumental in advancing the glory of the Lord and the profit of his people.

Your affectionate Friend and Servant,

THE EDITOR

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January, 1860

During the many years which have now rolled over our heads since we first ventured to lay before our spiritual readers our Annual Address, dark clouds have at different periods hung over the scene, both as regards the world and the church. The Cholera, the Irish Famine, the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, have, at different times during that period, cast a gloomy cloud over the nation; and most of us, as lovers of our country, or as connected by natural or spiritual ties with those on whom it has more immediately burst, have had either to suffer or sympathise. And, though less evident, or at least less susceptible of distinct mention than those national calamities which we have enumerated, the troubles of the church, as painfully witnessed or personally experienced by those connected with the churches of truth in this land, have been no less matters of gloom and anxiety to all those who truly love Zion and long for her prosperity and peace. But, without wishing to be unnecessary alarmists, and without professing any peculiar, still less any prophetic insight into the future, we believe we may say that at no former period since we commenced addressing to our readers a few words of friendly counsel at the opening year have the world and the church been shrouded in thicker gloom, or more evident symptoms of an impending storm been visible in the sky.

It is not for us, as professed followers of the Prince of peace, to intermingle in the strife and turmoil of political events, nor does it become us, as believers in the sovereignty of God, and subjects of a kingdom that cannot be moved, to tremble at every rustling leaf or be flurried by every breath of popular agitation as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind; (Isa. 7:2;) but it is impossible at any time, and especially at the present period, were it even necessary or desirable, wholly to seclude ourselves from looking out upon the troubled face of affairs, as hermits shut themselves up in their cells and monks in their monasteries, professedly, if not actually, blind and deaf to all sights and sounds, such as are now agitating the length and breadth of the land. A man may as well live near the sea and neither see nor hear the roaring waves in such a storm as hurled the "Royal Charter" against the rocks, as we at the present moment shut our eyes and ears to the troubled ocean spread before us. This, then, must be our excuse if, at the very outset, we drop a few words on a subject which at the present moment so occupies the minds of men of every rank and station.

A general persuasion that a time of imminent peril is at hand has seized the nation. From Caithness to Cornwall, from the Irish Channel to the German Ocean, in almost every town, men are arming themselves with rifles, and learning their use, as if the time might shortly come when they should have to defend their families and their homes from an invading foe. Nor does this appear to be a wild panic or groundless alarm, such as at various times has spread through the land, as the most thoughtful and far-seeing men, looking across the Channel, see preparations urged forward there which might soon convert present apprehension into a dreadful reality.

But though we could not well forbear alluding to these matters, as pressing on every heart, it is not for us to dwell upon them beyond the bearing that they have on our Annual Address, and more particularly on our position as professed followers of the Lord the Lamb. Times of tribulation in the world, and especially when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, speak loudly to believing hearts. We see in the Old Testament how the prophets called aloud to the people of God before the Lord sent the sword, or famine, or pestilence, through the land. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." (Mic. 6:9.) It is not well, then, for us to be heedless of the coming storm, or wrap up ourselves in vain security. Trouble is at hand; the cloud is in the horizon, at present, perhaps, no bigger than a man's hand, but who can tell how soon it may cover the sky, and burst in such a storm as our shores have never yet witnessed. Who at this time last year anticipated that the plains of Italy were to be deluged with blood, and thousands of lives to be sacrificed to the warlike ambition of princes? How soon might the same arms be turned against us, and even if repelled it would be, under the present mode of warfare, amidst such slaughter and destruction of life that, but for the consequences, victory would be almost as terrible as defeat. Now, as believers in the Son of God; as personally, experimentally acquainted with a throne of grace, and him who sits upon it in power and glory; as witnesses for the truth of God in this land: as mourning and sighing over our sins and the sins of others; as dearly valuing our privileges, civil and religious; as hitherto sitting under our own vine and our own fig tree, no man making us afraid; and, to say no more, as citizens of no mean city, but dear lovers of our native country, and deeply interested in its weal and woe, what should be our position, as Christians, as ministers, as members of gospel churches, as alive from the dead by regenerating grace, as possessing power with God, and as privileged and enabled to bring our wants and desires before his footstool,—in this present crisis? Should it not be to present our prayers and supplications, in private and public, to the Lord of lords and King of kings, that he would look down upon us from heaven his dwelling-place, and have mercy upon us?

In the last war, when invasion was not only contemplated but was fully prepared, the Lord in a most signal manner watched over this favoured isle, blighted and withered all the hostile designs of its implacable foe, and in due time hurled him from his seat of power to die in captivity. The same ever-adorable Lord still reigns and rules, and can again protect us as he shielded us before. "The pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them;" (1 Sam. 2:8;) and who are these pillars but the saints of God, the excellent of the earth, dear to God as the apple of his eye? We trust that, amidst all our declensions and backslidings, there are still in our midst a goodly number of these pillars of England, whose prayers and cries, and, indeed, whose very existence amongst us as the saints of God, will do more to prop up our beloved land than our fleets, our armies, or our riflemen. All these are but at best an arm of flesh, and may fail in the hour of need, as Egypt and Assyria failed the children of Israel when they leaned upon them; but the Lord is an unfailing help in time of trouble, and can deliver our beloved land as he delivered Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, etc., from their invading foes. It becomes us, then, as looking to a higher help than an arm of flesh, not, on the one hand, to be unduly alarmed, as if invasion were certain, and

defeat sure, nor, on the other, to be unduly content, as if our fleets and armies and clouds of rifle men would either deter the attack of an invading foe or repel him if he attempted to assail our island home. If, as a nation, we are left to confide in our warlike preparations, to the neglect of the Lord, he may leave us to reap the folly of our own devices; but if his people through the land are enabled to call upon his holy name, and trust in him, and not in an arm of flesh, he will in due time appear for our help and deliverance. But the cloud will most probably get darker and darker, and the danger more and more imminent, before the Lord's people will cry to him with all their hearts, and trust in him as alone able to deliver.

But enough of this subject for the present. We turn to the Church, the general aspect of which, we must say, is but dark and gloomy, too. The perils may not be so obvious—as they are usually most dangerous when least seen—but not less real. If, then, in all friendliness, and yet in all faithfulness, we attempt to unfold what we consider as peculiarly dark and gloomy features of the present time in the churches of truth, for with them lies our main concern, and to them do we chiefly speak, we trust that we shall not be hastily or indignantly met by the retort, "Physician, heal thyself;" "Art thou so free from these evils, or perhaps worse, that thou canst afford to reprove us? Self-constituted reprove of the churches, first cast the beams out of thine own eye, before thou attemptest to take the mote out of our eye." But may not all or any rebuke, reproof, warning, or admonition, from any quarter, be similarly met? If we, and those in our position, are to wait till we are perfectly free from all fault before we may venture to reprove or admonish others, all reproof or admonition must at once and for ever cease. None may point out an evil, expose an error, rebuke a sin, or reprove a transgression because the party condemned thereby turns from the reproof to fall upon the reprove. The pulpit must be silent because the pew requires perfection above before it will listen to it below. The grossest disorder may prevail in a church, and neither minister nor deacons be suffered to reprove any disorderly members, or carry out church order and discipline because themselves not free from visible faults and failings; nor dare one private Christian admonish or rebuke another, however entangled in a snare, or acting however inconsistently, because there may be infirmities still cleaving to himself. This would indeed be a most fearful state of things, and would afford the clearest indication possible not only of universal corruption but of universal connivance; and the church would resemble a huge jail where one criminal countenances another till all shame is gone, for the thoroughly corrupt establishment of some profligate nobleman, where all are too deeply steeped in vice for reproof or remonstrance. But, laying aside the unwelcome office of a public reprove, may we not view present matters under the following aspect? If a number of persons are, at one and the same time, suffering under any severe complaint or epidemic illness, one patient may surely say to another, "Brother sufferer, we are both very ill. But is there not some cause for this wide-spread illness? Let us look and see whether, as more specially regards ourselves, there may not be some untrapped sewer beneath the house, or some reeking dung-heap under the windows, or some slimy pool at the bottom of the garden, or some neglect of cleanliness of person or dwelling: or whether sun and air may not have been too much shut out, and we are now reaping the sad fruit of our negligence and folly in taking so little heed to these causes of illness?" In a similar way, if we see and feel epidemic

sickness in the churches, we may, on good grounds, search and see not only the nature of the malady, but whether we may not be able to discover the cause, as the first step to the cure. In this spirit, let us, then, plainly point out some evils which seem to us to be undermining the health of the churches.

1. The first that we shall name as being, if not the most widely spread, yet the most important, is, *the breaking out of great and grievous errors* in various churches professing the doctrines of discriminating grace.

Not being wholly ignorant of Satan's devices, and led to it by a train of circumstances we need not here enumerate, we had long suspected that there was a good deal of error, covered up with a form of sound words and a show of experience, secretly entertained by many members of professing churches. But we certainly were not prepared to find such a serious amount of it in the churches professing a high standard of doctrinal and experimental truth. Now, what has brought these errors to light? The distinct, clear, positive declaration of truth. It is this, and nothing but this, which at once detects and discovers error. Truth wrapped up in vague, general declarations is the sword in the scabbard, which, as it wounds no conscience, so it pierces no error. Clear, plain, positive statements of divine truth are the two-edged sword which pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; and this naked sword discovers the foundation of error unto the neck. How, for instance, John Wesley wrapped up his free will till Toplady unmasked him; and how Butler, Terry, the legalists, and the Jacobins in Mr. Huntington's day all held in secret their different errors, till that vigorous thresher winnowed them in his sieve, and drove them off the floor like chaff before his fan. The same thing is going on in our day. There are gross and grievous errors in the church, and these will be undetected till the sieve and the fan come into the barn floor. If we are forbidden to hide our talent in a napkin, much more are we prohibited to wrap up naked truth in general statements, that they may please all and offend none. Now, just see how this acts in the case of a grievous error to which especial attention has been lately drawn in our pages. All will subscribe to the general statement "that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," because each puts his own interpretation upon the expression. The Socinian, the Arian, the Pre-existerian, the Sabellian, etc., will all allow that he is the Son of God in their sense of the term. But, when you come to a more clear, precise, and positive declaration that Jesus Christ is the Son of God by eternal generation, and that he is truly and properly his only begotten Son as the very mode of his subsistence in the Godhead, then the error of those who deny this foundation truth is discovered, as the spear of Ithuriel detected by its touch Satan as he squatted in the form of a toad at the ear of sleeping Eve:

"Him thus intent, Ithuriel with his spear
Touched lightly; for no falsehood can endure
Touch of celestial temper, but returns
Of force to its own likeness: Up he starts
Discovered and surprised."

In a similar way the touch of heavenly truth has detected an error previously existing but working unseen, undermining the churches like a gangrene, but covered up with a form of godliness. The present necessary consequence of

this has been strife and confusion. Ancient bonds have been broken, and anger and bitterness on both sides perhaps have been shown. Seeing this contention where quiet seemed before to reign, many who love peace at any price, and would sooner have a church seemingly united even if it involved the sacrifice of truth and a good conscience, rather than strife and division, look on with regret, if not anger, that such mere questions, as they call them, should ever have been brought forward to distract the churches: and they secretly, if not openly, condemn those who have done all this mischief. "We were peaceful before," say they, "but now, since the introduction of this controversy about the eternal Sonship of Christ, we are all strife and confusion." Yes: but what sort of peace was it? Was there ever any real union of heart and spirit between the lovers of truth and the lovers of error? Was there ever any vital agreement between those who mourn and sigh as chastised for their sins and those who respect the doctrine of chastisement for transgression? Or was there ever any real soul union between those whose "fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" and those who deny that he is the Son of the Father in truth and love? Much that passes for union in a church is merely a natural feeling of friendship and regard as worshippers in the same place, and as from time to time brought together in a kind of social religious intercourse. Real soul union is one of the rarest things in the world. There is much warm shaking of hands, and kind inquiries, and friendly looks and expressions, and a few words about the sermon or general soul matters, where the Holy Ghost has neither given spiritual life nor cemented spiritual union. When, then, God means to sift a church in his sieve, and search Jerusalem as with candle, he brings to light errors and heresies thitherto concealed: and this is the first snap which begins to break to pieces the false bond of union. This is cutting asunder the staff "Bands" to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. (Zech. 11:14.) And the staff is often broken thus. A man of God sounds the trumpet through the camp with a clear sound, and proclaims boldly and plainly the truth in doctrine, experience, or precept, which his own soul has experimentally tasted, felt, and handled. He does not do this in a controversial, angry, bitter spirit, as if for the very purpose of stirring up strife and contention, but as a part of the gospel entrusted to him—the burden of the Lord which lies upon his conscience, which he delivers for the glory of God and the profit of his people. The lovers of truth, who have been taught by the same Spirit, and known and felt the power of the same vital realities in their own souls, at once respond to the clear notes of the trumpet, and cleave to the certain sound, for it fills their heart with peace and joy. Being thus blessed, they cannot but speak warmly of the truth, and of the instrument who has proclaimed it so faithfully and feelingly. But what response do they meet? The erroneous and the unsound, who have been hugging their errors in secret, are offended by the naked truth, as pointed, they think purposely, against their views, and are stirred up to opposition and anger. And now the strife commences; for those who have been blessed under the truth, and know it for themselves by divine teaching and divine testimony, will not, and must not, give way, and sacrifice truth and conscience, and even the Lord himself, to maintaining a false peace.

But we have said enough, and perhaps more than enough, on this subject. There is another prominent evil which has of late forced itself upon our observation, and that is, *the loose, Antinomian spirit so widely prevalent in the*

Calvinistic churches.

In order to observe this, compare the loose, careless spirit and walk of many professors of doctrinal truth in our day with the vital, experimental, practical godliness contended for by Bunyan, Owen, Rutherford, Romaine, etc., or, to appeal to a higher standard, with the precepts of the Lord and his Apostles, and then see how deeply, as a body, many churches and congregations professing the letter of truth are sunk into carnality and disobedience. As evil may be manifold in act and yet one in spirit, so this denial of practical godliness, by deed rather than by word, has assumed two distinct forms:

I. It appears under *a resting upon mere doctrinal truth* in a vain confidence of interest therein, without any vital experience of its liberating or sanctifying effect, or any fruits made manifest in the walk and life. Books, periodicals, and sermons are coming continually under our eye, sound in the letter of truth, in which there is not the faintest attempt to enforce vital, practical godliness, either in its experience in the heart, or in its influence on the life. The highest doctrine is set forth, in the most decided, unflinching way; free will, so called, is chased over hill and dale; the Arminians and Pharisees are soundly rated as the most weak and foolish of men; and shouts of victory are pealed forth to the triumph of sovereign grace. But there it begins and ends. A little shallow experience may be named; but of fruit inward or outward, a godly life, a Christian walk, not a syllable. Spiritual readers, judge for yourselves. Is fruit generally insisted upon as the mark of union with Christ? Such fruits as self-denial, crucifixion of the flesh with its affections and lusts; labouring to know and do the will of God; repentance and godly sorrow for sin; mourning and sighing over a backsliding heart; a prayerful, meditative spirit, and that sweet spirituality of mind which is life and peace—are not these vital realities positively ignored, and not even named, much less insisted upon? It would almost seem, from the general neglect of enforcing upon believers practical godliness, as if the elect might do anything they liked, and that we are saved not from sin but in sin: delivered, not from the curse of the law to walk in the obedience of the gospel, but almost to do any abomination in which the carnal mind delights. (Jer. 7:10.) Doctrinal preaching in many pulpits has become crystallised into a regular form, so that were the preacher to diverge from the established round to insist upon the vital experience of truth in the heart, and the fruits of the Spirit as manifested by a holy, godly walk in the life and conduct, a suspicion would spread from pew to pew that he was wavering in his creed, and was secretly introducing free will and Arminianism. There are very few men who dare be faithful to their own congregations and break through bands which they have themselves forged. Nor can a man be expected to preach his own condemnation. If a minister is not himself living under the influence of the Spirit, and seeking to know and feel the power of divine truth in his own heart and life, he cannot and will not insist upon vital, experimental godliness in others; and if the leaders in the church and congregation are sunk into carnality and death, they will cover up their own misdeeds by resenting all practical preaching as a departure from the truth, and will rather hurl back the arrow than allow it to stick in their conscience.

2. But there is another phase in this loose, Antinomian spirit which is, *a resting in the doctrine of man's thorough helplessness*, and in a knowledge of

sin, without any deliverance, and scarcely a desire after deliverance from it. How many old professors are there, in almost every congregation where truth is preached, who never rise, and never have risen, beyond a confession of their sinfulness and helplessness. Were this deeply felt and groaned under, were there, in the midst of all this conviction, a spirit of prayer, a sighing and crying for help and deliverance, there would be good ground of hope that there was life at the bottom, and that the Lord would, in due time, appear; but when we know that an enlightened judgment and the convictions of natural conscience, with repeated disappointments in the attempts to break the bonds of sin, are amply sufficient to produce this sense of sinfulness and helplessness, we cannot ascribe that to the blessed Spirit which is but another form of Antinomian carelessness. But how little is this evil seen and faithfully met and exposed. On the contrary, what pillows are sewn under armholes, and poor dead, carnal professors pitied and patted as dear children of God—weak indeed in faith, but precious souls. Is it not a solemn fact that many preachers of doctrinal truth are well satisfied if their hearers are not Arminians, and set down the reception of the truth into the mind as a sure evidence of divine life? Have such teachers ever seriously thought, or ever deeply felt, that men might cease to be Arminians to become Antinomians; that a change of creed is not necessarily a change of heart; that there is a form of godliness whilst denying the power; that a man may be called a Christian and rest in the gospel, and make his boast in God; may know his will in the letter, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the word; may be confident that he himself is a guide of the blind, a teacher of babes; may have all the form of knowledge and of truth; (Rom. 2:17-20;) and yet, with all this confidence, all this knowledge, and all this profession, be but a servant of sin and Satan? It will be found in that great day that not only "many who are first shall be last and the last first," but, more solemn truth still, "Many are called, but few chosen."

Did time and space, and perhaps we may add, did the patience of our readers admit, we might mention other prominent evils, such as the general coldness and deadness—the spirit of strife and division—the disposition to harsh judgment and suspicion, and often to slander and detraction—the want of spirituality of mind and conversation; and the pride, covetousness, carnality, and worldly conformity so widely prevalent.

But we do not wish to dwell wholly on the disease, and omit all mention of the only full, glorious, and sufficient remedy. Thanks be to God, he has still in this land a seed to serve him, still a people whom he has formed for himself, and who show forth his praise. He has still his hidden ones, who, through much tribulation, are entering the kingdom; still his sighing, mourning people, who love and long for his appearing. He has not left himself yet without witnesses, for here and there he has his faithful ambassadors, who shun not, as far as they are acquainted with it, to declare all the counsel of God; and we trust he is raising up others to take their place when they are called out of time into eternity. For the consolation of such, and of all who desire to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection, the Lord has said, we feel to sink under our weakness, he graciously added, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." May we ever bear in mind that there is no healing for sin but by his precious blood; no shelter for the guilty and self-condemned but his glorious righteousness; no salvation but by his grace; and no

sanctification but by his Spirit.

The coming year will, doubtless, bring its trials and afflictions, and these perhaps heavier than the past. The clouds that even now hang over the scene may become thicker and darker, as there is every symptom from present appearances; and in addition to trials of a more public or general kind, we may each have an increasing share of personal or domestic sorrow. Shall we, then, sink under their weight as men without help or hope? Has not the Lord hitherto supported us under our loads and burdens? Has he not promised that "as our day is so our strength shall be?" that "he will deliver us in six troubles, and in seven no evil shall touch us," if indeed we love and fear his great name?

As regards our little monthly work, in reviewing the past year we may again raise our grateful Ebenezer, for, indeed, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." All our wants have been supplied; needful strength has been given to fulfil our monthly task; and the blessing which maketh rich, we trust, has not been withheld.

Here, then, we pause, commending our work to the care of the God of all grace, and ourselves to the prayers of our spiritual readers, that life may be spared and health given to continue our labours; and that they may issue in the glory of a Triune God and the benefit of his believing people.

THE EDITOR

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January, 1861

The opening of a New Year permits us once more to avail ourselves of our annual privilege to address a few words of friendly counsel to those of our readers, who, having received the love of the truth, are willing to listen to such a word of exhortation from us as may be commended to their consciences as being in full harmony not only with the oracles of God, but also with the power of his grace as felt and realised in their own souls. In so doing, we assume no lordship over their faith, nor claim any dominion over their consciences; for such authority we neither possess nor desire to arrogate; but, speaking as friends to friends, as brethren to brethren, as sinners to fellow sinners, as sojourners in the same vale of tears to fellow travellers in the thorny road, as pilgrims walking side by side in the same path of tribulation, that we may enter together into the same kingdom of God—the kingdom of grace here, and of glory hereafter, we may without pride or arrogance, but in the spirit of humility and in the love of the gospel, simply and affectionately lay before them such a word of comfort, encouragement, admonition, or counsel, as we would have impressed by a divine power upon our own hearts. Those are justly condemned by the Lord himself who "bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, which they themselves will not move with one of their fingers;" (Matt. 23:4;) and those who give advice to others should desire themselves to follow their own counsel, lest they be found among the number of those who say and do not. But if we lay no load upon any man's conscience which has not first been laid upon our own, we are so far free from our

Lord's severe sentence of condemnation; and if we are ourselves desirous, with God's help and blessing, to follow that counsel which we offer to others, it cannot justly be retorted upon us, "Thou who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" (Rom. 2:21.) Considerations of this kind, especially in times past, have often checked both our tongue and pen. We have often almost timidly shrunk from tendering counsel and admonition, not that we were so much afraid of others as afraid of ourselves. But we can now plainly see that it was a temptation to unfaithfulness, and so rather a snare of Satan to keep back part of the price, than a gracious check from heaven. We freely confess that we have at times been so sensible of our own helplessness and our own sinfulness, especially if there were a consciousness of any idol still in the "chambers of imagery," that the word of exhortation, of admonition, and of reproof has been in the pulpit as if choked in the very utterance, and the pen in the study has as if dropped from the fingers, lest we should be guilty of hypocrisy before God, in urging upon others what we were not doing or could not do ourselves. We know that "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord," is a divine commandment; but, if no one is to carry a vessel in the Lord's house but he who is "clean, without transgression, innocent, neither is there iniquity in him," who of sinful men is to sound the silver trumpet over the sacrifices of the peace offering in the tabernacle of the congregation? (Numb. 10:10;) or who is to bear the censer to offer "incense with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne?" (Rev. 8:3.) It has pleased God to commit the ministry of reconciliation to sinful men, and to lodge heavenly treasure in earthen vessels. He might have sent angels to preach, and commissioned seraphs to write; but he has seen good to employ "men of like passions" with their fellow sinners to preach to them the gospel of the grace of God, that "by the foolishness of preaching he might save them that believe;" and "to give gifts unto men," "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Acts 14:15; 1 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 4:8, 12.) If then the Lord, in his providence and grace, has opened to us a door of utterance by tongue or pen that we may be a means in his hand of building up any of his saints on their most holy faith, to him alone be all the glory. A sense of our own sinfulness, and of being encompassed with many infirmities, should not, in dependence upon his help and blessing, prevent us from stirring up the pure minds of our brethren. But we trust that no such apology is now needed from us. This is not the first time that we have at the opening season of the year addressed our readers. It is no new periodical which now solicits their suffrages, no new editor that demands for the first time a few moments' attention to his Annual Address. For more than twenty-five years has the same Standard floated at the mast, and for nearly the same space of time have we pulled at the oar, or stood at the helm of our little barque; and though some sail now no more with us, as having landed in the harbour of endless rest, who once with friendly aid helped to trim our sails and steer our ship, yet we have a goodly number of fellow voyagers on board who still man our decks, though they may not con the compass or hold the helm. To these the land, which we have left behind, the seas over which we have passed, the harbour to which we are steering, the structure and navigation of our ship, should be by this time well known, for we have no secrets below deck: all is above board, and open to view from stem to stern. To drop the figure, our views and sentiments should by this time be well known to our readers, or there is a serious fault somewhere. Our dear and valued friend, the late Mr. Gadsby, used to say

that "he had no opinion of a minister who held any private sentiments," meaning, doubtless, thereby one who had one doctrine for the parlour and another for the pulpit: who could whisper confidentially to his deacon in the vestry, that he really believed none but the elect would be saved, and five minutes afterwards shout to the congregation, that salvation was open for all. In this sense, an editor should have no private sentiments, nor be ever trimming between two parties, so as to please each, and offend neither; still less should he have his faith still to seek, and his religion still to learn; but he should know both in whom and what he believes, and be able to say with Paul, "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore I have spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak:" (2 Cor. 4:13;) and to add also, in addressing his readers, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." (2 Cor. 1:12.) If, then, our views, sentiments, feelings, doctrines, the faith for which we contend, the religion which we advocate, the vital godliness on which we insist, be still obscure, we had better lay down our pen, and resign it to more faithful and honest hands. But let us pass away from self to more important matters.

The opening of a new year is a peculiar epoch. It is like a narrow isthmus between two seas, or a mountain top, such as is found on one of the peaks of the Andes, from which the traveller can gaze, from the same point of view, both upon the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. So may we take the opening year as a stand-point whence we may at once look back and look forward—back, at the year that is past; forward, to the year that is to come. Eighteen hundred and sixty is for ever gone. The same all-devouring grave of time which never says, "It is enough," which has already swallowed up so many centuries, and will open up its insatiable maw until the angel lifts up his hand and swears, "There shall be time no longer," has closed its mouth upon the year now past. It is gone, for ever gone: and with it are gone all its troubles, sorrows, trials, temptations, and afflictions. They are all fallen, as the autumn leaves, never again to appear on the bough. New trials, indeed, new temptations, sorrows, and afflictions will take their place, as new leaves will spring up on the branch; but the trials of 1860 are gone for ever. And if all the saints of God have each their appointed portion of suffering whereby they fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, (Col. 1:24,) each wave of sorrow which rolls over their breast makes the number less. But not so with their mercies and blessings. These abide; these are laid up for eternity: these do not pass away with the months that are past, and perish with the perishing year: but are so many tokens for good, so many choice jewels, so many sure pledges, so many foretastes of joy to come. Thus the saints of God, as favoured with faith in living exercise, may look back to the expired year and say, "O 1860, thou hast been a painful year to me; but thy pains are gone and thy pleasures remain. Thy miseries are past, but thy mercies are present; thine afflictions are over but thy blessings are ever; thy losses are perished but thy profit abides."

We have, indeed, both as a nation and as a church passed through a most eventful year—one in which the elements themselves have been at strife with the labours of man: one in which the very sun in the sky has much withdrawn his wonted heat and light; in which clouds and gloom have

obscured the face of the heavens, and such incessant rains have deluged the earth as almost to baffle our faith in the ancient promise that "seed-time and harvest shall never cease." And this external gloom which has cast a general depression over the land, and been to many attended with great pecuniary loss, may have been to some of our readers but too faithful an emblem of the darkness and gloom which have beset their path in providence and grace. Some of them, from the inclemency of the season, may have suffered great losses in providence, may have sown much and reaped little, and even literally, though "in the day they made their plants to grow, and in the morning made their seed to flourish, yet the harvest has been to them but a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow." (Isa. 17:11.) Others may have suffered most painful bereavements in their own homes, or have received such deep wounds in their tenderest affections, as time will scarcely ever heal. Others may have been called to pass through deep family afflictions so as almost to wish they had never been made the means of bringing an offspring into the world. Others may have found the past year one of severe or prolonged bodily affliction, as has been the case with the writer of these lines; and others may have suffered much gloom and darkness of mind, and found in the cloudy sky without, too faithful a representation of the darker and cloudier sky within. And yet, there may have been, and doubtless, though hidden at present from view, there is mercy mingled with these afflictive dispensations. Might it not be necessary that we, as a nation, should learn more of our dependence upon the God of providence? We have had such a succession of bountiful and beautiful harvests for many years, that we had almost forgotten from whose hand came not only the crop, but suitable weather to gather it in. So rapid have been the strides of agricultural improvement, that we were almost forgetting that it was the Lord alone who "gives fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness," that he might not leave himself without witness. (Acts 14:17.) It was needful, then, that this spirit of pride and independence should be broken to pieces, that both those who till the ground and those who eat of its fruits might not "sacrifice unto their own net and burn incense unto their own drag, because by them their portion was fat, and their meat plenteous." (Hab. 1:16.) And as regards those painful afflictions to which we have already alluded, as stamping the last year as peculiarly eventful, there doubtless has been mercy mingled with every stroke.

But literally, naturally, the skies were not always darkened through the past year. When the wheat was in bloom, a most critical period, we had nearly a fortnight of uninterrupted sunshine; and even at a later period, there was a short interval of summer heat, which enabled some favoured districts to gather in the fruits of the field without injury. And has it not been so also in grace? Have we no mercy to sing of as well as judgment? No reason to bless the Lord for his afflicting strokes? Have we not gained by trading, and even found our losses turned into profit? Has it been all gloom with us through the past year? Has no friendly beam of sunshine every now and then gleamed upon our path? And as the earth may now be storing up in her bosom a source of future benefit when heat and drought shall again visit the soil, so may the very storms in soul through which we have passed have laid up in our hearts matters of profit which may appear at a future season to our comfort and God's glory.

The Lord has never promised us a path of ease and worldly happiness. "Arise ye and depart: for this is not your rest, because it is polluted," (Micah 2:10,) sounds from above, as a warning voice when, with Job, we are tempted to say, "I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand." (Job. 29:18) And is it not mercy thus to be aroused? "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone," (Hos. 4:17,) [the book reads, Ephraim is *not* joined to idols... which is not the way the Scripture reads, and does not make sense in the context of this chapter.] is one of the worst of dispensations, one of the severest marks of God's displeasure towards his backsliding children. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten" is a much more favoured, yet to our coward flesh, a much more trying dispensation from his gracious hand. We often long to enjoy more of the rich blessings of the gospel, to be more watered with the dew of heaven, to have clearer and brighter manifestations of our sonship, and more believing and enduring views of our eternal inheritance. Feeling our leanness and barrenness, and being fully and deeply conscious that Jesus in his blood, and grace, and love, is the one thing needful, we are led out in desires to know more of him, to be brought nearer to him, to walk more in his footsteps, to be conformed more to his likeness, to drink more into his Spirit, and to live more to his praise. These breathings and desires, we trust, spring from a divine power and influence; but in longing for these manifestations, and seeking for these blessings, as so many whispers from above of covenant love, we scarcely think that we are really praying for trials and afflictions. The prayer may be for a mark of sonship, but the answer may be a stripe; for sons are chastened whilst bastards escape the rod. To know more of Jesus is to know more of the fellowship of his sufferings; to be brought nearer to him is to be a greater partaker of his cross; to walk more in his footsteps is to be more separate from the world, to be more hated of men, to be more tempted of Satan, to drink more fully of his cup, and to be baptized more deeply with his baptism; and to be more conformed to his image is more "to bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our body." (2 Cor. 4:10.) But if self-denial and the cross, trial and temptation, sickness and sorrow, persecution and affliction, and a thorny path of tribulation are so linked on to heavenly blessings that one cannot be had without the other, then a smooth, easy path is the very worst that a child of God can walk in, for it sets him far away from every gospel blessing, from every gracious manifestation, and from all true and sacred fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

Among the events of this eventful year has been the controversy which has arisen concerning the true and proper Sonship of our most blessed Lord; and therefore a few words on that subject may not be out of place. Our readers well know what our views and feelings are on this most important point, for we have not shunned to declare them without concealment or reserve; and, indeed, as desirous to be found faithful to our Lord and Master, we could not make any compromise of his honour and glory. We know that some condemn us for having, as they say, disturbed the peace of the churches. But what sort of peace is that which contending for the truth disturbs? Are we not bidden "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints?" (Jude 3,) and is not the true Sonship of Jesus a most important article of this faith? It is, indeed, a most weighty matter, not only as regards the glory of Christ and the honour of God, but as regards our own soul's salvation; for our state for

eternity depends on whether we believe or not on the Son of God. Now, unless we know personally and experimentally for ourselves who and what the Son of God is, how can we rightly believe in his name? And if we have no clear faith, what clear evidence can we have that we are partakers of eternal life? Upon a point of life and death there can be no neutrality. All, indeed, are not called upon to enter into controversy by tongue or pen; but all are called upon to know for themselves what they believe, and on whose side they stand. "Who is on the Lord's side? Who?" may well be asked at the present moment of ministers and churches, and that through the length and breadth of the land, for the subject is no longer hidden in a corner. The question now really is, whether Jesus is the Son of God or not? For if he is not so in reality and truth, but only in name, he is not the Son of God at all; and we, instead of being saved in reality and truth, may find our salvation to be but in name. It may do for professors of religion who have never felt the solemn importance, the weighty realities of eternity to play with scripture, to twist and twine round their fingers the most solemn declarations of the Holy Ghost concerning the Sonship of Jesus, and to pronounce the divine mystery of an only-begotten Son "a figment," that is, translated into simpler and plainer language, "a fiction, and a lie,"—words that one might well tremble to utter, lest they be a denying of the Son of God, if not worse; but those whose consciences are made tender in God's fear will not only keep at a distance from such playing with God's truth, and trifling with the souls of men, but will be seeking to have its power and blessedness felt and realised in their own heart. It is not all the Lord's believing family who can even defend their own faith. Yet they have their weapons of warfare, if not those of tongue or pen. Their controversy is not like ours—without, but within; nor do they fight so much against the cavilling opponents of God's truth, into whose company they may come, as against the cavillings and questionings of their own reasoning mind, for their chief adversary is their own unbelieving, infidel heart. But let us not fear the end of this controversy, whether without or within. The battle is not ours, but the Lord's. It is his cause we are defending, not our own; and he will surely, in his own time and way, make it plain to all his redeemed and regenerated family on which side the truth lieth. How much we owe to his grace, that we are not amongst the opponents of truth, that we are not under the influence of the same bad and bitter spirit, which they manifest, and are not left to speak and act as they do! And may the same grace, which has thus far restrained us from walking in their paths of darkness and error, lead us more and more forward into the sweet enjoyment of the truth which we believe and profess. Theirs is at best but a dry doctrine, for there being no truth, there can be no life in it. But ours is full of life and blessedness. As far as we have read their writings, they can but argue and cavil without any experience, or life, or power, or feeling. Whilst, then, they cavil, may we believe; whilst they fight against the truth, may we enjoy it; whilst they are wandering up and down in the mazes of error, hardly knowing their own sentiments, may our fellowship be with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true, the only way to learn the eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord—to learn it as Peter learned it, as revealed to the soul, not by flesh and blood, but by the very Father of Jesus in and from heaven; to learn it as Paul learned it, by an inward revelation of the Son of God; (Gal. 1:16;) to learn it as John learned it, enabling him to say with all holy confidence, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we

are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20.) Can any of the opponents of the true and real Sonship of Christ say that he was ever revealed to their soul by the power of God? Can they say that the Holy Ghost ever taught them to deny his real and true Sonship? Can they say that they have fellowship and communion with him as the only-begotten Son of God, or have ever beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth? We know they cannot, and we know that we can; we can see where they are, but they cannot see where we are; we know what they know, but they do not know what we know; we can see their errors, but they cannot see our truth. This may be galling language to their minds, but it is sound doctrine and sound experience too. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man;" (1 Cor. 2:15;) and again, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." (1 John 2:27.) But let us not be misunderstood. When we say "we," it is not the editorial "we" that we mean, but the whole of the believing family of God, who know that the Son of God is come, and hath given them an understanding, that they may know him that is true. Look at their writings, who have endeavoured to overthrow the real Sonship of Jesus. Can a living soul find any food in them? Is it not all dead and dry argument, cavilling, questioning, ridiculing, objecting, reviling, but not a syllable of any living experience, blessed manifestation, sweet revelation, or gracious discovery? It is at best but notion. But the faith of God's family in the Son of God is something more than mere notion, for

"Notion's the harlot's test,
By which the truth's reviled:
The child of fancy richly dress'd,
But not the living child."

Controversy may be necessary; but, blessed be God, we have something more than controversy; for if indeed we are partakers of this living faith we shall find it *do* something for us, for by it we live, by it we stand, by it we walk, by it we fight, and by it we overcome. Many of the dear family of God find this who have neither heart nor hand, tongue or pen for controversy; for they can believe though they cannot talk, feel though they cannot argue, and know who are right though they cannot prove how others are wrong. Here, as on common ground, those that preach the truth and those that hear it; those who wield the pen of controversy and those who believe from the teaching and testimony of God in their own soul, meet and see eye to eye and feel heart to heart. As, then, we and they find faith in the Son of God something more than a name and a notion, even a living, active, influential principle—yea, the very life of God in the soul, and as this faith is drawn out into livelier exercise, we shall see more and more beauty and blessedness, grace and glory in the Son of God. And as we find the nearer we live to him, the closer we walk with him, and the more fellowship we have with him, that these divine realities are indeed the very sum and substance of vital godliness, our only real happiness here, and our sure pledge and foretaste of eternal happiness hereafter, we shall hold them more firmly and prize them more dearly, for there is a holding the truth in the letter, yea, even in unrighteousness.

Whatever the truth be to others, it is nothing to us unless it save and sanctify our souls. We may fight for it and even die for it, and yet not savingly know it. It is the power and experience of it in the soul which is the grand test of life or death.

If blessed, then, with any testimony of a saving interest in the truth, let us not be moved by the opposition that we have to encounter, or the hard speeches, bitter language, and rough knocks that we receive from its adversaries. Your Editor, dear readers, has had his share of this scourge of the tongue, enough to make his back ever raw, were there no leaf of the tree of life to heal such stripes. But he has the testimony of a good conscience on his side, the witness of a believing heart, and, he doubts not, the prayers and sympathies of many of the dear family of God. For remember, dear friends of Jesus and his truth, that we are all in the same ship, all in the same army, all under the same banner, the banner of truth and love. Your Editor may be called upon, from his position, to take a more active part in this battle, for truth is not to be opposed without being defended, and he may, in his zeal, use warmer or stronger language than you could employ yourself or justify in him. He does not ask you to justify him in all he says and does, still less to follow him through thick and thin. He is not your hope or your priest, your liege lord or your father confessor. Follow him as far as he follows Christ and no farther. What he brings forward agreeably to the oracles of God, and the living experience of the family of God, stand by, so far as it is commended to your conscience; and as he occupies a most difficult, important, and responsible post, is daily thrust at, and would, but for God's help, be thrust down; and besides enemies without has many trials within, a heavy load upon his shoulders of anxiety and care, with a large measure of bodily weakness and affliction, he needs all your prayers and affectionate sympathies that his hands may be held up in fighting this battle. As then we draw nearer and nearer to the end of our course, may we have it made more and more manifest to ourselves and to others that the Lord is with us of a truth. We are all poor dying men and women in a dying world, and in a few years at best the praise or censure of men will be no more to us than the sun which shines upon our tomb or the storm that sweeps over our grave. But to have lived and died in the fear of God; to have been washed in the blood, clothed in the righteousness, and sanctified by the Spirit of Jesus, to have served him upon earth, and to be for ever with him in heaven, will be what all the smiles of men could not give, nor all their frowns take away. The desire of our soul is to possess for ourselves, and to be a means of strengthening in others, nothing short of a saving faith in the Son of God, and all the gracious fruits which gladden the heart and adorn the life, as springing out of union and communion with him. However we come short of this, and we are always so failing, this is the goal towards which we run, the mark at which we aim: and to be an instrument in the Lord's hand to promote his glory and his people's good is the highest privilege he can confer upon us.

But we have said enough on this point. Our best testimony will be the blessing that attends our pages. If the Lord then spare our life and give us health and strength to labour in his service as we have thus far done, endue us with the teaching of his Spirit and the unction of his grace still to send forth our monthly testimony, and above all crown it with his blessing, he will fulfil the desire and prayer of,

Dear Friends,
Your affectionate Friend and Servant,
THE EDITOR

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January, 1862

The rapid and unceasing flight of time must, in some measure, force itself on the attention of all, but will ever lie with peculiar weight and power on the heart of the living family of God. Even those who live only for time must sometimes feel that the ground on which they stand is gradually crumbling under their feet, and that every advancing wave is sweeping away some fresh portion of the soil. But enjoying no comfort in the prospect of eternity, and thus "having no hope, and without God in the world," they either, like children, play on the sands heedless of the incoming tide, or in reckless hardness sullenly make up their mind to wait for the last plunge, when the dark waters of death must flow for ever over their head. Those, however, who live not for time but for eternity, not to sin and self but to Christ and his glory, whose hearts are made tender in the fear of God, whose conversation is in heaven, and whose affections are set upon things above, whilst they continually feel the flight of time, yet seem on certain occasions more peculiarly to realise the solemn fact that they are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," runners whose race will soon be run, sojourners whose place will ere long know them no more. Painful breaches made from time to time in their families by the entrance of death into the circle, and the removal of some beloved member; the decease of some esteemed servant of God under whose ministry they may have sat, or whose friendship they may have enjoyed; the recurrence of their own natal day; an attack of severe illness in their own persons; a sense of advancing age and of growing infirmities—such and similar occurrences in the experience of us all serve continually to remind the saints of God that the angel is ever lifting up his hand and warning them that with them soon it will be time no longer.* Nor do they repel the thought as an unwelcome intruder, or seek to drown the solemn impression thus produced upon their spirit, as if death and eternity were doleful themes which damp all rising joy; but they seek rather to strengthen the feeling and maintain the solemn recollection, in the hope that solid profit may be communicated to their souls thereby. At such seasons as these memory with them casts her thoughtful eye back on the irrevocable past, earnest musing meditates upon the vivid present, and anticipation, with mingled feelings of hope and fear, looks forward to the unknown future. But though the rapid wing of time is ever thus leaving impressions of this nature on believing hearts, yet there is one special season when these impressions make themselves more deeply and distinctly felt. The *commencement of a New Year* is the season to which we thus particularly allude. We seem then to stand as if on a narrow isthmus between two boundless seas—the past and the future. There is, geographers tell us, one point and one point only on the Andes, that lofty ridge of mountains which, like a huge backbone, runs through both the American continents, whence the eye of the traveller can descry both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. History records the feeling of the Spanish captain who, after days and weeks of incessant toil amidst dense

woods and steep mountain passes, first gazed upon this wondrous scene, and tells us with what emotions he beheld the Pacific never before seen by European eye. Two oceans far deeper, far broader, far more involving our happiness and peace, than Spanish eye ever saw, or warrior's heart ever felt, meet our view when in musing meditation we look back on our life past, and forward upon our life yet to come. The year just closed is a portion of the one; the year on which we have just entered a part of the other.

* What an instance of this uncertainty of life and of the unexpected entrance of death into the highest circle has lately fallen upon the nation in the decease of the Prince Consort in the prime of his days. How all hearts feel for and sympathise with our widowed Queen in this hour of her deepest affliction, and how earnestly many desire that, if consistent with the will of God, it may be sanctified to her soul's eternal good.

Under this feeling, it has been our pleasing, though difficult, task for many years to avail ourselves of the new-born year to address a few words of friendly counsel to our numerous readers. They have been hitherto kind enough to lend a favourable ear to that annual Address in which, not as having dominion over their faith, but as a helper of their joy, we have sought, in the exercise of our Editorial position, to speak to their hearts and consciences.

Let us, then, as those who desire to fear God, under a feeling sense of his presence and of his power, once more take our stand upon that isthmus of time of which we have just spoken; and let us first cast our eyes on the year now for ever past, as that may better prepare our mind to direct its view toward that which is to come. Though it may in some respects be a painful retrospect, for what one period of time, whether short or long, can bear to be closely scanned? yet let us seek to look back upon it with believing eyes, and in a meditative, prayerful, thankful spirit. Moses, the man of God, when, after forty years' weary wanderings, he stood upon the edge of the desert, with the Holy Land in view, separated from it but by Jordan's deep and rapid stream, recalled to the minds of the children of Israel the varied transactions of the wilderness before he set before them the blessings of Canaan. "Thou shalt remember," he says, "all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." (Deut. 8:2, 3.) Let us then, with God's help and blessing, seek to realise a similar spirit of godly recollection, whereby we shall, with Moses and the children of Israel, look back upon the year now past before we traverse the year still future. The rebellious murmurings of the children of Israel, their idolatries and other grievous sins, were not urged against them by Moses, except to bring before them the Lord's rich, free, and superabounding grace in overruling their wilderness trials and temptations into a means of making his word precious to their hearts. In the same spirit shall we seek to recall to the minds of our readers the goodness of the Lord during the past year; and if we touch upon its trials and temptations, or bring to remembrance its sins

and transgressions, we shall do so only as magnifying the exceeding riches of that grace in which alone we stand, and by which alone we can be saved and sanctified.

1. *Mercy* must be the first note of our song, yea, the very keynote which regulates the whole theme. "I will sing of mercy and judgment," was David's gracious resolution. (Ps. 101:1.) "Judgment" shall have its place in the song, as bass mingles with treble to produce the sweeter harmony, but mercy shall lead the strain. With this keynote let us, then, commence our theme.

As we look back upon the year now just past, and, according to the frame of our mind, or the strength of our faith, various feelings spring up in our bosom, *thankfulness* is one which has, or at least should have, a foremost place. As viewed by a believing eye, that wondrous faculty which sees a present God in every circumstance of life, what countless mercies have crowned with goodness the year whose birth and burial we have now witnessed! The bountiful hand of a most kind and tender God in providence, as so conspicuous in giving us an almost unparelled harvest in the year now past demands our first and earliest tribute of thankful praise. What a striking contrast did the past summer and autumn afford to the corresponding seasons of the preceding year,—a contrast which made it doubly felt and appreciated. What a succession of bright suns was day after day granted us to mature and ripen the corn, and yet occasionally there fell genial showers to prevent too great a deficiency of needful moisture. How the soil, too, sick and saturated with the unprecedented rains of 1860, seemed to gather, day by day, renewed health and strength under those warm solar rays which brought forth "the precious fruits from the deep that coucheth beneath," turning in God's mysterious chemistry the very superabundant moisture of one year into a source of fertility for another. How many anxious eyes and trembling hearts were watching at the commencement of the harvest the aspect of the heavens, scanning with doubt and fear the appearance of every passing cloud. In all our long recollection of such seasons, and we have been no unwatchful observer of them for many years, we never remember to have witnessed such a universal feeling of dependence upon the sky, and we hope, in very many instances, on Him who rules the sky, as marked the commencement of last harvest. All seemed to feel that the worth of millions was suspended in the visible heavens, and that the recurrence of another such a wet and deficient harvest as that of 1860 would fall upon the nation as a public calamity. When, then, day after day, the sun shone bright and fair in the sky, and the corn, rapidly maturing under his warm rays, was cut and gathered in an almost unprecedented condition of dryness, it was as if the nation breathed again, like one who holds his breath in awe and suspense in the sight of some expected disaster, but, recovers respiration when escape is obtained. Let us hope that the lesson of dependence thus experimentally taught us was not in vain, and that it has been treasured up in many believing hearts. And though men, blinded by the fall, will not see the Lord's hand, yet surely we, as a nation, need to be reminded by these changeful visitations that "the Lord leaves himself now not without witness, in that he still does good and gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." If deficient in quantity, the grain was so excellent in quality that we have abundant reason to say, as we eat our daily bread, "The Lord be praised for the beautiful

harvest of 1861."

This was a *general* mercy, but one of so marked and abundant a character that we could not in a review of the year now gone pass it by without notice. One of the worst marks of the fall, and one of the crying sins of the Gentile world was that when they knew God by the things that are made, "they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." (Rom. 1:20, 21.) Let us not imitate their sin and their folly; but whilst we believe in and love a God of all grace, let us thankfully adore him as our kind God in providence.

But in a review of the year now past, faith bids us call to mind those *special* mercies which peculiarly demand a note of thankful praise. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." (Ps. 50:23.) "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. 4:6.) We lose much of the sweetness of mercies for want of a believing eye to see them, and of a thankful heart to feel and acknowledge them. Surrounded as we are by mercies, through the power and prevalency of unbelief, we continually lose sight of them, and fixing our eye perhaps on some trial or affliction, murmur amidst our favours and rebel amidst our blessings. Thus we commit two evils—ingratitude and rebellion, and by the indulgence of this unthankful, murmuring spirit, lose the sweetness of our mercies and add to the weight of our miseries. But, has faith no eyes to view past favours, or rather the gracious hand which has showered them down upon us during the months gone by? Our *temporal* mercies have been great. It is true that all may not have been unmixed prosperity and success. Providential trials, losses in business, great and unexpected disappointments, serious reverses, want of employment, and other painful circumstances, have doubtless fallen to the lot of some, if not many of our readers, for the precarious and peculiar state of our foreign relations has much depressed trade, injured profits, and thrown hundreds out of work: and as the Lord's people, whilst in the body, are in the world, though not of the world, they necessarily suffer with it. But if these heavy providential trials have at times sorely tried their minds, and deeply depressed their spirits, yet have not these very difficulties made the Lord's providential hand more conspicuous? A course of unchequered prosperity is not the way in which the Lord generally leads his children. Severe and heavy trials much more usually mark their course. But, these very trials only reveal him more plainly as a God in providence. When, then, we call upon our spiritual readers to acknowledge with thankful heart their past temporal mercies, we do not mean that they should do so except in connection with their providential deliverances. To see the kind hand of the Lord in daily giving us food and raiment, house and home, in supplying our temporal wants with necessaries if not with luxuries, enabling us to maintain an honourable position, according to our respective stations, disgracing neither ourselves nor the name we profess to love by running into debt or injuring others by hopeless insolvency, but, amidst many difficulties, from which few are free, by prudent economy and needful self-denial, still enabled to fulfil the precept, "Owe no man anything"—is not this a mercy that demands a thankful note of praise? When we look around and see the misery that men bring upon themselves and their families, and if professors of religion, and especially if ministers, what disgrace upon the cause of God and truth by running into debt and involving others who have confided in them by their recklessness and extravagance, we may well count it a rich mercy if the kind

providence of God has hitherto held up our steps, and not put us to an open shame.

But casting our eyes back upon the year now for ever past and gone, are there no other mercies which claim a note of thankful praise? It is sweet to see the Lord's kind hand in providence, but sweeter far to view his outstretched hand in grace. Are we then so unwatchful or so unmindful of the Lord's gracious hand in his various dealings with our soul as to view the whole past twelve months as a dead blank in which we have never seen his face, nor heard his voice, nor felt his power? "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" (Jer. 2:31.) the Lord tenderly asks. Has he been such to us also for twelve long and weary months? What! No help by the way, no tokens for good, no liftings up of the light of his countenance, no visitations of his presence and power, no breakings in of his goodness for all that long and dreary time—for dreary it must indeed have been for a living soul to have been left and abandoned of the Lord so long! If not blessed with any peculiar manifestations of the Son of God, with any signal revelations of his Person and work, blood and love, grace and glory, for such special seasons are not of frequent occurrence, have we not still found him the Way, the Truth, and the Life? Have we not from time to time found secret access unto God by him as the Way, the only Way, unto the Father? known him as the Truth, by an experience of his liberating, sanctifying power and influence on our heart? and felt him to be the Life by the sweet renewings and gracious revivings of his Spirit and grace? If we have indeed a personal and spiritual union with the Son of God, as our living Head, there will be communications out of his fulness, a supplying of all our need, a making of his strengths perfect in our weakness, a maintaining of the life that he has given, a drawing forth of faith and hope and love, a support under trials, a deliverance from temptations, a deepening of his fear in the heart, a strengthening of the things which remain that have often seemed ready to die, and that continued work of grace whereby we are enabled to live a life of faith on the Son of God. If we have no such tokens for good, no such testimonies to record, the year has indeed been to us a blank, and we may almost say of it what Job said of the day of his birth: "Let it not be joined unto the days of the year! let it not come into the number of the months." But not to have it is one thing, not to see it is another.

"The Christian often cannot see
His faith, and yet believes."

You may have had all and more than all that we have described as the life of faith, and yet through timidity, unbelief, fear of presumption, a sense of your dreadful sinfulness, deceitfulness, and hypocrisy, may fear to take what really belongs to you. But where or what, are we if we have no spiritual mercies to record? How do we differ from the dead in sin who are without God in the world, or the dead in a profession, who have a form of godliness, whilst they deny the power thereof?

But we may also have to sing of "*judgment*" as well as of "mercy:" not indeed of judgment as implying the penal wrath, the judicial and implacable indignation of the Almighty, but as a kind and fatherly chastisement for our multiplied sins and transgressions. "Fury is not in me," said the Lord. No:

there is no wrath in the bosom of God against the persons of his people. They are for ever "accepted in the Beloved," and stand in him before the throne of God without spot or wrinkle; but there is displeasure against their sins; and this displeasure their kind and gracious Father makes them feel when he withdraws from them the light of his countenance, and sends his keen reproofs and sharp rebukes into their conscience. But these very "judgments" help them; (Ps. 119:175:) for they lead to deep searchings of heart; and as the same blessed Spirit who sets home the reproof communicates therewith repentance, they sorrow after a godly manner, and this godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of. (2 Cor. 7:10.) If, then, our afflictions, crosses, losses, bereavements, family troubles, church trials, and more especially if the rebukes and reproofs of God in our conscience have been a means of humbling our proud hearts, bringing us to honest confession of, and godly sorrow for our sins and backslidings, if they have instrumentally separated us more effectually from the world, its company, its ways, its maxims, and its spirit: if they have, in the good hand of God, stirred up prayer and supplication in our hearts, led us into portions of the word of truth before hidden from view, laid us more feelingly and continually at the footstool of mercy, given us a deeper insight into the way of salvation, made mercy more dear and grace more sweet, have these trials and afflictions been either unprofitable or unseasonable? The tree is to be judged by its fruits. The stem may be rough, and crooked,—what more so than the vine? and yet what rich clusters may hang upon the bough! Measure your trials and afflictions by this standard—fruit. The true believer longs to bring forth fruit unto God; he mourns under his barrenness, often fearing lest he should eventually prove to be one of these branches which, as not bearing fruit, are to be taken away: and as these fears and feelings work in his breast, the earnest desire of his soul is to be more manifestly, both to himself and others, a fruitful branch in the only true Vine. The sweet psalmist of our Christian Israel has well expressed his desire:

"Smile me into fruit, or chide,
If no milder means will do."

We are surrounded, we were going to say pestered, by a generation of loose-living professors, both in the pulpit and in the pew, men whose character Jude has written with the point of a diamond, as "feeding themselves without fear, as clouds without water, carried about of winds: trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame," etc. (Jude 12, 13.) Who that views the professing church with an enlightened eye does not see how such characters abound in this day of loud profession? What a separation of spirit, not in pride and pharisaism, not in harsh censure, not in acrimony and bitterness, not in wrath and malice, but in the calm depths of a quiet humble mind, does the child of God feel from such wanton professors! Their company is death to his soul; and if his lot be unhappily cast under a light, unprofitable, dead, and barren ministry—the very element of such graceless characters, what darkness, bondage, and misery are communicated to him thereby! Shall we, then, murmur and rebel under those strokes of kind and fatherly chastisement which, by making our conscience tender and our souls alive unto God, show us the awful spots into which men fall who have not the rod of God upon them? How are we, or how are any kept from their presumption

and vain confidence, from their evils and their errors, except by the hand of God holding us up and holding us in? Nothing is more dangerous than a profession of the truth without an experience of its power, for nothing more hardens the heart and sears the conscience than a wanton handling of sacred things. Natural men have often a reverence for sacred things, and a conviction that they are too holy for them to touch. By this they are preserved from presumption, if not from unbelief, and their conscience, though dead, is not seared. But when this barrier is broken down, and men without a particle of godly fear or heavenly reverence of the glorious Majesty of God, intrude into his sanctuary, a graceless familiarity with the solemn mysteries of truth is almost sure to harden their conscience and make them twofold more the children of the devil than they were before. The Lord has pointed this clearly out in the parable of the man out of whom the unclean spirit had "gone out,"—gone out, not cast out, departed for a season under the influence of a profession, but not turned out by the mighty power of God. Being thus at liberty to go and come, he returns to spy out the state of his former mansion: and he finds it "empty" of grace, but "swept" by the brush of profession, and "garnished" with the letter of truth. This is just the place for Satan and his crew, and thus exulting over his suitable home, "he goeth and taketh seven other spirits more wicked than himself,"—for they are religious devils, whereas he is but an unclean or profane spirit, "and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." (Matt. 12:43-45.)

But let us now look a little forward. The year is before us. We have seen its beginning; the Lord knows whether we shall see its ending. Will it not then be our wisdom and mercy to live in it as if it were to be our last? Our Lord tells us what is the posture, the only safe and happy posture of his people: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately. (Luke 12:35, 36.) But though this posture can neither be obtained nor maintained except by special grace, yet the Lord does bless those means of his own appointment which he has afforded us; and most certain it is that without the use of these means the life of God cannot be sustained in health and vigour.

Let us glance at some of them.

1. *A spirit of prayer* is most certainly one of the most gracious means which the Lord employs in maintaining divine life in the soul. A spirit of prayer is something very different from a custom of prayer, a form of prayer, or even a gift of prayer. These are merely the fleshly imitations of the interceding breath of the Holy Ghost in the heart of the saints of God: and, therefore, may and do exist without it. But that secret lifting up of the heart unto the Lord, that panting after him as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, that pouring out of the soul before him, that sighing and groaning for a word of his grace, a look of his eye, a touch of his hand, a smile of his face, that sweet communion and heavenly intercourse with him on the mercy-seat which marks the Spirit's inward intercession—all this cannot be counterfeited. Such a close, private, inward, experimental work and walk is out of the reach and out of the taste of the most gifted professor. But in this path the Holy

Ghost leads the living family of God, and as they walk in it under his teachings and anointings, they feel its sweetness and blessedness.

2. *Having the eyes and heart much in the word of truth* is another blessed means of maintaining the life of God in the soul. O what treasures of mercy and grace are lodged in the Scriptures; what a mine of heavenly instruction; what a store of precious promises, encouraging invitations, glorious truths, holy precepts, tender admonitions, wise counsels, and living directions! What a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path! But O how little we know, understand, believe, realise, feel, and enjoy of the word of life. For four or five and thirty years have we read, studied, meditated, and sought by faith to enter into the treasures of truth contained in the inspired word; but O how little do we understand it! how less do we believe and enjoy the heavenly mysteries, the treasures of grace and truth revealed in it! Yet only as our heart is brought not only unto, but into the word of life, and only as faith feeds on the heavenly food there lodged by the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, can we be made fruitful in any good word or work. We should seek, by the help and blessing of God, to drink more into the spirit of truth, to enter more deeply and vitally into the mind of Christ, to read the word more under that same inspiration whereby it was written, to submit our heart more to its instruction, that it may drop like the rain and distil like the dew into the inmost depths of our soul, and thus, as it were, fertilise the roots of our faith, and hope, and love.

3. *Separation from the world*, and everything worldly, and that not in a monkish, austere, pharisaic spirit, but from the constraining influence of that love to the Lord which draws up the heart and affections unto him away from earthly things, is a gracious, we might almost say an indispensable means of maintaining the life of God in the believer's breast. Nothing more deadens the soul to every gracious and heavenly feeling than drinking into the spirit of the world. As long as *that* is kept out, mere external contact with the world, as, for instance, in the calls of necessary and lawful business, does not injure. The world without and the world within are like two streams of different magnitude which run side by side. Keep them apart, and the smaller stream will not overflow its banks; but let the larger stream get an entrance into the smaller, in other words, let the world without rush into the world within, who shall tell the width of that flood or the havoc that it may make of the crops? Some constitutions are so tender that every cold blast is sufficient to produce inflammation; and others are so susceptible of disease that they fall sick under the slightest taint of every epidemic disorder. Such sickly constitutions must watch against the east wind, and not expose themselves to the air of the marshy fen. But just such cold-catching, feverish invalids are we all in soul, whatever be the vigour and health of the body. Let us then be afraid of the very breath of the world lest it chill the heart, or inflame the carnal mind; let us dread exposure to its infectious influence lest it call forth into active energy our latent disease. And above all, let us dread the influence of worldly professors. The openly profane cannot do us much harm. The foul-mouthed swearer, the staggering drunkard, the loud brawler, are not likely to do us any injury. We can give them what the sailor calls "a wide berth," as he does to a known rock when he approaches the place as marked on the chart. Nor are we likely to suffer injury from the moral Churchman, or the zealous Arminian, or the political Dissenter. They and we

are far enough apart. But the professor of the same truths which we hold dear, who sits perhaps under the same or a similar ministry, whom we cannot altogether reject and yet cannot receive, who, like Bunyan's Talkative, is swift to speak on every occasion, and on no occasion at all, that he may have the pleasure of hearing the music of his own tongue, but who the more we are in his company the more he robs us of every tender, humble, gracious, and spiritual feeling—he, he is the robber, not indeed the highwayman who knocks us down with his bludgeon, but the pickpocket who steals our purse as he sits in the same carriage by our side.

4. *To cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart* under all cases and circumstances, under all trials and temptations, under all difficulties and perplexities, amidst a whole storm of objections and suggestions from the carnal mind, the sore thrustings of our pitiless and unwearied adversary, and every obstacle from without or within that may obstruct our path—this, too, is indispensable to the life of faith. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." It is not folding the hands and crying, "Peace, peace," that will take us to heaven; no, nor a sound creed, a form of godliness, or a name to live. This is not running the race set before us, or fighting the good fight of faith, or wrestling with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. Sometimes we are tempted to presume and sometimes tempted to despair. The only cure for both these diseases of the soul is to cleave to the Person and work, blood, love, and grace of the Lord Jesus, so far as he has been revealed to our soul and according to the measure of faith which is given unto us. To hang upon him at every step is the only way to be brought through.

5. The last gracious means which we shall name, as it is time to come to a conclusion, is to *live, walk, and act in the daily fear of God*. This is, indeed, a most blessed fountain of life to depart from the snares of death. Only, then, as this fountain of life springs up in the soul, watering and thus making the conscience tender, the heart fruitful, the affections heavenly, and the spirit soft and contrite, can the power of grace be maintained in the breast. This heavenly grace of godly fear, the believer's treasure, the beginning and the end of wisdom, makes and keeps the eye watchful, the ear attentive, the smell quick and sagacious, the tongue savoury, the arm strong, the hand open, and the foot wary; and thus amidst thousands of snares and temptations he walks forward to a heavenly kingdom with his eyes right on, and his eyelids straight before him.

Dear friends, friends of Jesus, partakers of his grace, and heirs of his glory, there is a divine reality in the things of God and the kingdom of heaven. We have not followed cunningly devised fables in leaving all things for Jesus' sake,—name, fame, prospects in life, worldly joys, earthly hopes, and carnal pleasures. In choosing, with Moses, through the power of God's grace, rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, we have not made a choice which will end in disappointment. The Lord give us to realise during the coming year more of his love; and may his rich, free, sovereign, distinguishing, and superabounding grace manifest itself in a godly walk, a holy life, and a conversation becoming the gospel, that we may adorn the doctrine we profess, and compel our very enemies to hold their mouths for shame when they would fain find occasion of reproach

in us. Under every trial may we find heavenly support, out of every temptation a gracious deliverance; and should the sentence even be "This year thou shalt die," may we feel the everlasting arms underneath on the bed of death, leave behind us a sweet testimony to the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord, and be borne aloft to join that happy and glorious company who with tongues of ceaseless praise for ever adore the Lamb.

Brethren, pray for us.

Your affectionate Friend and Servant,
THE EDITOR

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January, 1863

Gone, for ever gone,—sunk, for ever sunk into that deep gulf which has swallowed up so many centuries, is that year whose well-known date our pens have so often traced, but which they will no more trace again as a present waymark on the beaten road of life. Yes, 1862, with all its varied cares and sorrows, trying events and memorable circumstances, has now become a thing of the past, and will never again date our letters, never again be familiar to our eyes and ears as marking day by day and week by week the silent flight of time. A new year spreads itself in the dim distance before our eyes, on which we seem to gaze with that mixture of hope and fear, doubt and desire, which swells the breast of the adventurous mariner who bends his prow into the depths of an unknown, untraversed sea. Already has a hand, irresistible in might, launched us on its waters, and the voyage is even now begun. Will our fellow-voyagers, then, before land recedes from view, and whilst we are still looking with anxious eyes, sometimes back on the past and sometimes forward to the future, suffer us once more to address to them a few words of friendly, affectionate counsel? It is not the first time that we have traversed with them the stormy deep, and shared with them the trials and perils of the voyage. We are not now strangers to one another. Some years have rolled over our heads since we first met: and, as the good Lord still continues us in life, and still enables us to maintain our post at the helm of our little barque, we trust that we may be allowed once more to speak a few words to them in his name, to whose bounty we owe all that we have, and by whose grace we are all that we are. But it is time to drop our figure, and speak in simpler, less allegorical language.

It has been, then, our wont, and we may add our privilege, to address at the beginning of each opening year a word of exhortation to our spiritual readers; and though, for many reasons, we would gladly discontinue the practice, yet as it will doubtless be looked for by many of our friends, we will endeavour once more to press through the crowd of objections, and lay before them some truths which we mutually profess, and of which we have, we trust, alike felt the power and preciousness. In so doing, we shall seek to follow the spirit and example of the apostle in those memorable words—words to be deeply borne in mind by all who speak or write in the name of the Lord: "Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith ye stand." (2 Cor. 1:24.) If, then, we seem to speak with any authority or decision, it is not as if we thereby sought to claim dominion

over any man's faith or any man's conscience. Indeed, such a claim would not only be altogether contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, but to the very nature of faith and the existence of a good conscience; for faith is the gift of God, and a good conscience is one that is purged by the blood of sprinkling, and made tender in the fear of God, neither of which blessings can we bestow. But, as an instrument in the Lord's hands, we may lead where we may not drive, and help faith where we may not domineer over it. If the Lord, in his providence and grace, has put us into a position where we can in any way be a witness for himself and his precious truth in this evil day, when the shades of night seem fast gathering and settling down over the professing church, he has laid us thereby under the deeper obligation to be faithful to our trust. This is inseparably connected with being one of God's witnesses whether by tongue or pen; for if any be called to be ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, it is required in them that a man be found faithful; (1 Cor. 4:1, 2;) and if any one, as a special favour be allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so must he speak, not as pleasing men, but God who trieth the hearts. (1 Thess. 2:4.) In this spirit, however grievously we may have from time to time failed, through the infirmity of the flesh, have we sought to conduct our periodical; and in this spirit do we now seek once more at this opening season of the year to address our friends. In so doing, it is our desire to consider ourselves but as an instrument in the Lord's hands for their spiritual profit. We are deeply convinced of this truth that as no man has any more than the Lord gives him, so no man is any more than the Lord makes him. Whatever good, then, is done by us or by any other, the Lord does it all. "Of his own we give him" whatever we give in providence or in grace, for, as bought with a price, neither we nor ours are our own, but his. Nor will he own or bless any word or work but what proceeds from his own grace. All light, life, and power, all knowledge and wisdom, all unction, dew, or savour, all usefulness and profitableness to the church of God flow out of the fulness of the risen and glorified Son of God as the golden oil into the golden pipe as seen in vision by the prophet; (Zech 4:12;) and their communication or their suspension wholly depends upon his sovereign will. Never did we more labour under a sense of our own helplessness, unfitness, and inability than at the present moment, and never did we more feel our need of special and immediate help to enable us to execute the task that lies before us. Let not the word "task" surprise our readers. If it is our privilege to address them it is not the less our burden, and this from various causes. One we have already named—our miserable helplessness and inability to all that is good. Another is that we have to instruct others when we need heavenly instruction ourselves; to encourage the tried and exercised, the doubting and the fearing, when we ourselves want all the encouragement that the Lord can give us; and to comfort the cast down when we ourselves are often waiting for the consolation of Israel. But the question may rise to some of our readers' lips, "Have you not light? Cannot you walk in it? Have you not knowledge? Can you not use it? Have you not a pen? Cannot you employ it?" Alas! no. Through the goodness of the Lord, indeed, we both know what we believe and in whom we believe, but we are completely dependent on him for the exercise both of our faith and of our knowledge. It is not in the things of God as in the departments of sense and reason, in which a certain fixed standing may be obtained and maintained. In language, in science, in the knowledge of a business or a profession, in mechanical skill, and the various applications of human

ingenuity, a fixed position may be obtained, and the subtle brain, or practised eye, or ready tongue, or skilful hand can at once set to work and execute the desired task. But not so in the things of God. There grace reigns sovereign and supreme; there the active mind, the ready tongue, the skilful hand, all alike fail, waiting, like the becalmed ship, a speeding gale to set them in motion. To the exercise of our mere natural abilities on mere natural objects we may say, "Your time is alway ready:" but faith, being wholly dependent on the Lord for its being and exercise, has to wait, like its Lord, till its time is fully come.(John 7:6.) This longing then for divine help is one part of our burden. Another is the solemn weight of the things themselves with which we have to be exercised in our minds, and to bring before our readers out of a believing, feeling heart. The things of God are not to be tampered with by unhallowed hands, or trifled with by a light and vain mind. They are not matters of speculation and theory, of learned discussion and argumentative reasoning, but of faith and experience, of gracious knowledge and obedient practice. In our day we are beset either with error, venting forth its subtle arguments and proud reasonings against all that a child of God holds most dear, or with truth, held, if not in unrighteousness, at least in a light, worldly, trifling spirit, where not altogether bought and sold as so much merchandise for a piece of bread. And what is the consequence? That what is so easily got and so loosely held is as lightly relinquished when any difficulty is to be met on its behalf, or any sacrifice made in its defence. How evidently was this brought to light in the late controversy respecting the Sonship of the blessed Lord. At the first sound of the trumpet proclaiming his true and eternal Sonship some started up as opponents, full of bitterness and wrath; others faltered and wavered as trees shaken by the wind, as if not knowing what they believed or in whom they believed; others disguised their real sentiments under a cloud of words which might be taken either way; and others shifted from side to side, holding first with one and then with the other as best suited their worldly interests. How few seemed to have had any real, vital experience in their own bosom of a truth so clearly revealed in the word of God, so rich with every spiritual blessing, so precious to all who believe in the only-begotten Son of God. Our own experience and our observation of others have fully convinced us that our only preservation against the winds of error which are blowing on every side, our only safety amidst the perils and evils which daily beset us from without or from within, is a personal, experimental knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. To make this truth known to our souls with a divine power that we may be firmly established in it and experimentally realise and enjoy its heavenly blessedness, is the grand object of the ministry of the gospel. How clear upon this point is the testimony of the apostle: "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

(Eph. 4:11-16.) It will detain us but a few moments to examine the meaning of these words, for they are full of divine instruction. As, then, there is but one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all the mystical members of Christ, so the risen and ascended Lord gives servants unto his church, whether, as in former times, apostles, prophets, and evangelists, or as now, pastors and teachers. But for what purpose? For the perfecting, or maturing, of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying, or building up of the body of Christ. But when are the saints matured, the work of the ministry performed, and the body of Christ built up? When the saints by these means come to a unity of faith and of a knowledge of the Son of God, so as to be no more children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, but are grown up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ. But if this be the work of the ministry, and if the saints are to be perfected or matured thereby in faith and love, surely it cannot be done by men drunk with a spirit of error, or by waverers and falterers on the very foundation doctrines of our faith, or by trimmers and timeservers, or by those who crouch for a piece of silver or a morsel of bread. The living stones of our spiritual Zion are not to be built up by such hands as these. The only ministry which the Lord sends, and the only ministry which as sent by him he owns, is one of truth and power; not a cold, dry, and marrowless creed, a mere repetition of set phrases and orthodox expressions, but one which gushes forth in a living stream out of the heart and mouth of the preacher, as fed by that well of water in him which is ever "springing up into eternal life." (John 4:14.) But how can this living spring either rise or flow unless the truth has been made precious to his soul, and he has tasted, felt, and handled of the word of Life?

He cannot, indeed, command it; for who can give himself or communicate to others a blessing like this? and we often sigh for the want of it; but with this life and power, this vital stream of heavenly truth, should our pages be impregnated if they are to be made a blessing to the church of God. They should come month by month into the hands of our readers as if bringing to them a message from the Lord. Sometimes they should instruct, sometimes encourage, sometimes rouse and stir their sleeping graces, sometimes warn and admonish, sometimes draw up their affections to things above, sometimes cast a light upon their dubious path, and sometimes drop a word of consolation into their troubled breasts. These are great things to do; but if our little work do none of them, of what benefit is it to the church of God? It is not sent forth by us as a record of tea meetings and anniversary gossip, a sort of religious newspaper, gathering up all the tales of the churches, and sounding forth all the wondrous doings of the ministers in terms of praise which one would think must be as fulsome to them as it is ridiculous to others. Such is not and never was our object in carrying on our monthly labours. Nay, let our right hand forget its cunning; let the pen drop from its grasp before we prostitute it to such unworthy, such worldly purposes. Our aim and desire, however we may fail in its execution, is to be able to say with the apostle, "We are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." (1 Cor. 3:9.) But if we are to be "labourers together with God," we must labour in his strength and for his truth. Indeed, we trust we may truly say that as a Christian, as a minister, and as an editor, our aim and desire are one and the same—to know, enjoy, and experience the

liberating, sanctifying power of truth in our own heart, and to be made the happy, honoured instrument of communicating the same blessings to others. Indeed, what else have we really to live for, as the shades of evening will soon be closing in on our path? Grievous indeed would it be were we with advancing years to decline from the truth, either from its profession or its power, for which we earnestly contended when young. It would speak but little for our experimental knowledge of it, or for our faithfulness to what we know and have so long professed.

But it is time to proceed to the more immediate object of our Address which is, as our wont, to drop a few words of counsel and exhortation to those of our readers who are willing to listen to a voice which is not now for the first time sounded in their ears. They will be prepared by what we have already said to see what will be its main drift, and that it is once more to dwell upon and enforce those truths which are alike precious both to them and us.

But as these precious truths all cluster round the Person of Jesus, shall we not do well to put at its very head and front that name which is above every name, and which to every believing heart is, when experimentally made known, "as the ointment poured forth?" The glorious Person of our gracious and adorable Lord is, indeed, the foundation of all our faith, the ground of all our hope, and the object of all our love. If he is "the Way," to walk in him is to tread safely and surely, and not to walk in him is to be out of the path altogether: if he is "the Truth," to know him is to know the truth in its purity and power, and not so to know him is to be a prey to every lie of sin and Satan, and to every meteor-like error which dazzles the eyes of a professing generation with delusive light; if he is "the Life," to live upon him and unto him is to have life eternal in the bosom, and not so to live is to abide in death. So if he be our "Sun," (Mal. 4:2; Ps. 84:11,) to be enlightened with his rays is to walk in the light of his countenance, and to receive out of his fulness no gladdening beam, is to grope for the wall like the blind, and to grope as if we had no eyes. If he be our "Refuge," we shall from time to time run into him, and be safe; (Prov. 18:10;) and when we cannot do this, shall feel ourselves exposed to every fear and every foe. So with every other gracious attribute, or glorious perfection, or covenant character of the blessed Lord, all centre in his divine Person as a continual object of faith and love. Thus the faith of a believer's heart has day by day to be looking unto, leaning upon, and cleaving to the Lord of life and glory, as now sitting at the right hand of the Father. And as here is faith's chief work, so, here is faith's chief conflict: for every natural faculty of body and mind, every sensual lust and propensity, every thought and affection of the carnal heart, everything that we meet with in the world without or the world within: in a word, all that the apostle calls "the course of nature," (James 3:6) all, all are opposed to a life of faith in the Son of God. Into what darkness, then, of mind, hardness of heart, carnality and carelessness, doubt and fear, unbelief and infidelity, do we naturally and necessarily fall when we listen to their suggestions, and take our eyes off the adorable Lord as our only hope and help. Our evidences immediately get beclouded, and our right hand as if palsied. Religion, true religion, we seem to have none; or just so much light left as to see what vital godliness is, and just so much life left as to feel our want of it and long to be possessed of it. Thus we find sometimes by painful and sometimes by pleasurable, sometimes by bright and sometimes by dark, sometimes by joyful and sometimes by

sorrowful experience the blessedness not only of there being such a gracious and glorious Mediator, Advocate, Friend, Husband, and Brother within the veil, but the blessedness of a living faith in him, and the miserableness of the want of it. Memory, too, will sometimes retrace with various feelings the past, and cast its searching glance over days gone by. And what does it gather from the sad retrospect? All that which now gives us pain in the reflection sprang from that wandering from the path which will ever fill a believer with condemnation and guilty shame, from giving heed to the flesh and taking the eyes off the Lord. Whatever thing once said or done now grieves the mind and furnishes food for painful reflection or humble confession, we can clearly see arose from turning our eyes away from Jesus to fix them, as the hymn says, "on self or something base." The eye got darkened when it was turned away from the only true Light; and the heart grew cold and dead when it strayed from the only true Life. The conscience became hard when it got away from the melting rays of the only true Sun of righteousness; and the affections wandered after idols when they were not fixed on things above, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God. Now all this sad declension from the life and power of faith paved the way for the entrance of temptation, the hour of Satan, the strength of evil lusts, the prevalence of pride, covetousness, and worldly-mindedness, and for every slip, stumble, fall, or backsliding of which we have ever been guilty since we knew the truth in its power. For with the declension of faith—which declension arose from taking the eyes off the Lord, there was the declension of every other grace of the Spirit. Godly fear, a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death, rose less high in the soul; prayer declined in power and earnestness; reading the word was not so diligently pursued; the preached gospel was not attended with the same power; spirituality of mind much decayed; and, above all, love, that mainspring of the soul, that influencing motive to every good word and work, grew cold. And as grace declined in power, the flesh grew in strength; as faith waxed weak, unbelief waxed strong; as the new man was not put on, the old man was not put off; and as sin was not resisted unto blood, it strove hard to regain dominion. Thus the clasps and rivets of the heavenly armour got loose; and though not altogether put off, yet the weapons of our warfare were not handled as before. The girdle of truth had got slack, and no longer tightly embraced the loins, or gathered up the loose garments from entangling our feet; the breast-plate of righteousness hung too loosely round the neck; the feet were but ill shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; the helmet of salvation was half falling off the head; the shield of faith was weakly and badly held; the sword of the Spirit drooped in the hand as in a night-mare dream: and prayer, which should have kept all the weapons clean and bright and fit for immediate use, was almost fallen asleep, like a weary sentry. And what was the consequence? That the enemy gained great power over us, and, but for the Lord's grace, would have ruined us, body and soul, in name, fame, and reputation, sucked our very life-blood, and then cast out our carcase to the scorn and obloquy of a triumphant world.

Well, then, may we be ever turning the eyes of our faith to that ever-living and adorable Son of the Father in truth and love, who, though enthroned in highest bliss, still looks down from his radiant glory on his poor, tried, tempted, exercised family, the suffering members of his mystical body here below. We have a race to run, a race that will tax all our strength: and how can we run so that we may obtain, unless by looking unto Jesus as the Author

and Finisher of our faith? (1 Cor. 9:24; Heb. 12:1, 2.) We have a battle to fight—the good fight of faith; and how shall we come off more than conquerors, except by his grace who alone can teach our hands to war and our fingers to fight? We have to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ: to suffer trials, temptations, and afflictions for his name's sake; to wrestle not against flesh and blood only, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. We have to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts; to mortify the whole body of sin: to overcome the world: and, amidst a thousand fears, to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Well might we faint and sink at such a prospect, if all this work of faith, patience of hope, and labour of love were to be done or sustained in our own strength. But we learn by the very difficulty and number of these trials and sufferings to look to the Lord and to the Lord alone, that his strength may be made perfect in our weakness. This is having the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in him who raiseth the dead. Thus, whether we view the past, the present, or the future, what has been done and suffered, or what remains to do and suffer, in all things are we instructed to look to and hang upon the Lord that we may be able feelingly to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." (Isa. 45:24.) Thus to look and thus to live is to live a life of faith on the Son of God; and thus not to look and thus not to live is to have a religion without life or power, truth or reality, happiness or holiness, fruitfulness or usefulness, salt or savour, conflict or victory, present grace or future glory. How many are wearying themselves to find the door; how many are compassing sea and land to make one proselyte; what exertions from the press, what strivings from the pulpit to make men religious. And yet, for the most part, what a beating of the air: what a threshing of chaff: what a feeding on wind and following after the east wind! (Hos. 12:1.) What a sowing much and bringing in little; what an eating and not having enough: a drinking and not being filled with drink: a clothing but there is none warm; an earning of wages and putting it into a bag with holes. (Hag. 1:6.) What talk and stir about religion! And yet how few know the way to the city: how few enter the strait and narrow gate: how few really find the Lord, or rather are found of him. Amidst all this crowd of busy, active, bustling religionists, the eye of faith may descry here and there a, few solitary individuals, sorrowfully plodding their weary way, struggling hard with trials and temptations, doubts and fears, sins and sorrows, but without any strength or wisdom or righteousness of their own to overcome any of them; and yet, amidst them all, looking upward till their eyes sometimes fail for some visitation of the Lord's favour, some revelation of his Person, some application of his blood, some manifestation of his love. These alone know the secret life of faith and prayer, for in answer to their cries and sighs to these the Lord manifests himself as he doth not manifest himself to the world; and every manifestation of his Person and work, love and blood, grace and glory raises up and strengthens that faith whereby they look unto him and live upon him. They can thus enter into the meaning of his words: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me. Because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:18, 19.) And as they find that this life cannot be maintained except by continual communications out of his fulness, they learn the nature and necessity of abiding in him, according to his own words: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no

more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. (John 15:4, 5.) The great secret in religion—that secret which is only with those who fear the Lord and to whom he shows his covenant, (Psalm 25:14) is first to get sensible union with the Lord, and then to maintain it. But this union cannot be got except by some manifestation of his Person and work to our heart, joining us to him as by one Spirit. (1 Cor. 6:17.) This is the espousal of the soul, (Jer. 2:2,) whereby it is espoused to one husband as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Cor. 12:2.) From this espousal comes fellowship, or communion with Christ: (1 Cor. 1:9:) and from this communion flows all fruitfulness, for it is not a barren marriage. (Rom. 7:4.) But this union and communion cannot be maintained except by abiding in Christ; and this can only be by his abiding in us. "Abide in me and I in you." But how do we abide in him? Mainly by faith, hope, and love, for these are the three chief graces of the Spirit, which are exercised upon the Person and work of the Son of God. But as a matter of faith and experience, we have also to learn that to abide in Christ needs prayer and watchfulness, patience and self-denial, separation from the world and things worldly, study of the Scriptures and secret meditation, attendance on the means of grace, and, though last, not least, much inward exercise of soul. The Lord is, so to speak, very chary of his presence. Any indulged sin; any forbidden gratification: any bosom idol; any lightness or carnality; any abuse of the comforts of house and home, wife and children, food and raiment; any snare of business or occupation; any negligence in prayer, reading, watching the heart and mouth; any conformity to the world and worldly professors; in a word, anything contrary to his mind and will, offensive to the eyes of his holiness and purity, inconsistent with godly fear in a tender conscience, or unbecoming our holy profession, it matters not whether little or much, whether seen or unseen by human eye—all provoke the Lord to decri the soul the enjoyment of his presence. And yet with all his purity and holiness and severity against sin, he is full of pity and compassion for those who fear and love his great and glorious name. When these sins are felt, and these backslidings confessed, he will turn again, and not retain his anger for ever. When repenting Israel returns unto the Lord his God, with the words in his heart and mouth: "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously;" then the Lord answers: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." (Hosea 14:4, 5.) Then, under the influence of his love, Israel cries aloud: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:18, 19.)

Dear friends, there is everything in Jesus, everything in the gospel of his grace to strengthen and encourage our fainting hearts. Trials and temptations, griefs and sorrows, will ever strew our path here below; but in them all the Lord will still make his promise good: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." May we, then, still go on looking and longing, fighting and battling, sighing and crying, waiting and watching, believing and hoping, cleaving and loving, sorrowing and rejoicing,

repenting and confessing, doing and suffering, until the Lord fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, dear brethren, what can we more say than to commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified?

But we feel that we should not fitly close our Address unless we made some reference to that sad calamity which, in the Providence of God, has fallen upon the cotton manufacturing districts in Lancashire, and in which, doubtless, many of our dear brethren and sisters in the Lord are now participating. We shall make upon it no political reflections, but confine ourselves to its religious aspect. On this we may observe:

That we must accept it as a *visitation* from the Lord. Whatever be his purposes, and no doubt he will bring good out of this evil, it is for the present a very heavy affliction. But is there not a cause? Plague, sword, and famine do not come unsent. They are the Lord's messengers. Does he not say, "Shall there be evil"—that is, not moral evil, but calamity, "in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6.) And is not famine one of the Lord's "four sore judgments?" (Ezek. 14:21.) Whether, then, corn famine or cotton famine, it is of the Lord, and his hand should be seen and acknowledged in it. Not to speak of the causes which have brought down his heavy hand across the Atlantic, scourging men by their own sins, was there no cause why Lancashire should suffer by this cruel, bloody, and fratricidal war? Let Lancashire answer, and, above all, the Lancashire churches. Have they not much declined from the power of truth and fallen into coldness, barrenness, and death? Trade has been good, wages high, and work abundant: and all this prosperity may have produced its usual result, leanness and barrenness of soul. But the Lord has laid on them his heavy hand. Poverty, a thing almost unknown, has entered the door, and with poverty, famine and want. It will be, then, a rich mercy—a mercy well worth all their present sufferings, if the Lord should by this heavy infliction revive his work in the churches of truth. But though we thus speak, we feel much sympathy with them in their present distress, and have desired to manifest it in the most effectual way—sending relief. And here we must render to the Lord a tribute of thankful praise for having so stirred up the hearts and opened the hands of his people through the whole country, to send relief to their distressed brethren. They have made us, to a large extent, the almoners of their bounty: and though our stewardship has entailed with it much labour and more responsibility, we thankfully accept the office and feel honoured by the trust and confidence reposed in us. The whole land has been stirred to its inmost depths by this calamity; and two things must call forth admiration and, we must add, thankfulness to God as the Giver of all good—1, the unexampled display of benevolence all through the country, as tested by the sums from all parts and all parties, from all ranks and stations, whether high or low, sent to the sufferers; and 2, the signal patience displayed by the unhappy sufferers themselves. We could not pass this subject by as now engrossing universal attention; and we shall, therefore, only add the expression of our earnest desire that the Lord will put a speedy end to this cruel war, and that out of it a blessing may eventually come, for which eternal praise and glory shall

redound to his name.

Brethren, pray for us.

Your affectionate and sincere Friend and Servant,
THE EDITOR

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January, 1864

Nothing, as a visible record of the lapse of time, more sensibly reminds us of the passing away of life; nothing, among the ever-changing aspects of surrounding nature, more vividly brings before our eyes the certainty of death than the close of each succeeding year. *The end of the year!* What a funeral knell is in the very sound! What a warning emblem of the end of life! As the year was born, so were we; as the year had its joyous spring, its glowing summer, its fruitful autumn, so had we our merry boyhood, our aspiring youth, our sober manhood. And now what lies before us? The corpse of the departed year. For several weeks we saw it gradually droop. We marked its daily decline, until its last hour struck, and in a moment it became a thing of the past. So shall we, when our appointed time comes, droop, decline, and die; our body will fall into its native earth, as the past year has sunk into its grave, and we, like it, shall go hence and be no more seen.

But besides this striking emblem of death, presented to our view by the dying year, there is something in the very season at which the year dies which is peculiarly fitted to remind us of our own mortality. The dark and gloomy days; the rapid setting in of night; the mists and fogs which lower over the earth: the general death and decay of nature, lately so bright and fair; the frost which chills our blood, or the storm which beats against our windows; the melancholy musings which often fall upon our spirit at this season of the year, as if prompted by, and in unison with the wintry scene, all tend vividly to bring before us the solemn conviction that our life here is but a shadow, a dream, a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. In this musing mood, which is not altogether without its chastened calm or its profitable influence, we look back through the year now for ever gone, and seek perhaps to recall more vividly to our mind some of those circumstances in it which have left a deep and abiding mark on our memory.

1. Our first thoughts turn to *the memory* of those personal friends, or *beloved relatives*, whose well-known faces we shall see no more, whose familiar voices will never again sound tenderly in our ears. Have not some of you, dear readers, been spoiled during the year now past of one or more of your most cherished household treasures? Our very monthly Obituary testifies that there lines will meet the eye of many a weeping widow, of many a mourning husband, or bereaved parent. Tears are due to the memory of the departed. At the grave of Lazarus, Jesus wept. Grace does not forbid the tear, but it bids us "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." Would you wish the dear departed back? Would you, if you could, recall them to life? Even if there were no hope in their end, must we not still bow to the sovereignty of the almighty? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Why, then, tear open the wound by dwelling too long or too deeply on the irrevocable past?

2. But we may have been spared these cutting strokes. Death may not have come into our home and torn away that beloved head of the family, that tender wife, that idolised child, whose absence has made the Christmas season so mournful a blank. Still the last enemy may have made an inroad into our midst, the effects of which we shall long deeply and increasingly feel. He may, as in our own peculiar case, have *come into* our church, and borne away members with whom we had been long united in church fellowship. They are gone, and have left us still to struggle on in the wilderness. But though we would not wish them back, for they are with Christ, which is far better, yet we miss their presence in the house of prayer and at the Lord's table; we miss their prayers, so simple and fervent, their kind words of sympathy and affection, their friendly intercourse, or their forcible example.

3. Our thoughts then, perhaps, turn to those dear and highly-valued *servants of God* whom we knew personally or by favourable report, whom he has taken home to himself, and we wonder how their places can be supplied. We think of their widowed churches and scattered flocks, and feel what an almost irreparable loss a faithful and experienced servant of God is to his church and congregation. Dark is the cloud that hangs over Zion. Men of sterling, experimental truth, sound in the faith, godly in life, able ministers of the New Testament, are fast passing away. Some the Lord is taking home to himself, and others he is laying aside by sickness or infirmity. But look where we may, how few do we see raised up to take their places. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart." Meanwhile error abounds and spreads; and many are deeply infected with it, who, from prudential motives, keep it at present out of sight, or disguise it under a form of sound words.

4. Nor, whilst in this musing mood, in harmony with the season, does busy memory forget the various incidents which have more or less strikingly marked the past year as regards our *own personal experience* of sorrow or joy, affliction or consolation. Mercies as well as miseries strewed the path—a hundred mercies to ten miseries, were faith allowed to make up the reckoning, and strike out unbelief's figures. Illness may have laid us on the bed of affliction; but, were there no mercies here? Did no kind hands nurse the body? Did no kind words cheer the spirit? Were no prayers offered up on our behalf by Christian friends: no solicitude for our recovery; no desire that the affliction might be blessed to the soul? Was there no secret support given on the bed of languishing; no submission granted to the will of God; no faith drawn forth on the word of promise; no sweet hope in the Lord of life and glory; no love to his dear name? Nor was recovery denied, or the blessing of returning health and strength refused to prayer, or the willing mind rejected to give time and strength and what remained of life more unreservedly to the Lord and his people.

5. Other trials may have marked our path, *such as church troubles*, the heaviest of all next to those which more peculiarly touch the soul's own immediate interests. But even these, we trust, though they sorely tried the mind, will be found eventually to work for good to those who love God and desire to walk in his fear. There are few keener tests of men's spirits than the way in which they bear themselves in those strifes and divisions from which few churches are exempt. Nowhere is more manifestly seen the difference

between the spirit of wrath and the spirit of meekness, the spirit of strife and the spirit of peace, the violent, contentious, unforgiving spirit of some, and the forbearing, forgiving, and yet firm and faithful, spirit of others. Thus, even by these painful things, grace is tried, the approved made manifest, and the thoughts of many hearts revealed. (1 Cor. 11:19; Luke 2:35.)

6. Nor let us forget, dear friends and brethren, amidst our many rich and unspeakable mercies, that eminent favour of the *maintenance of divine life* in our breast. O what have we not done to quench the sacred flame? With what sacrilegious hands have we piled dust and rubbish on God's altar! What unbelief, what infidelity, what earthliness and worldly-mindedness, what pride and covetousness, what abounding evils of every shape and name have worked in our carnal mind to bring forth fruit unto death. How these and a thousand other evils, too base to name, would have effectually damped, if not destroyed, the life of God in the soul, had it not been maintained by Him who first gave it. But how sweet the promise, how sure its fulfilment. "Because I live, ye shall live also." The various revivals, then, and renewals of the life of God in the bosom, those seasonable helps by the way, those refreshings from the presence of the Lord, those gracious visitations whereby he preserves our spirit, have been some of our choicest past year's mercies; for where would our soul not have been without them? Into what depths of carnality would it not have sunk? Under what loads of darkness and death would it not have been buried? The sweetness and delight sometimes felt in the word of God, as the eyes of the understanding were enlightened to see, and faith was raised up to mix with the divine testimony; the life and liberty, access and power enjoyed in secret prayer; the rays and beams of divine light which sometimes shone upon the glorious truths which are the very foundation of our most holy faith; the meltings of heart felt before the throne, under a sight and sense of our cruel sins and of the Lord's goodness and mercy; if a minister, seasons of enlargement, of boldness and faithfulness in handling the word of life; if a hearer, blessings communicated under the ministry, to make the soul revive as the corn and grow as the vine—to have been thus, as if miraculously, kept alive in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, was not mercy here? Has 1863 passed away and left none of these mercies to be thankfully recorded? Does not the Lord say to us, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" (Jer. 2:31;) and must we not answer, "No, Lord; thou hast not been thus to us during the year now past?"

7. But is it not a mercy also to have been in any way *kept from evil that it should not grieve us*; to have been in any measure preserved tender, circumspect, simple and sincere; to have brought no distressing, overwhelming guilt upon our consciences by giving way to unseemly lusts; to have caused no grief to the dear children of God by open inconsistency? We are deeply conscious of many wanderings of heart, much inward backsliding from the Lord, many infirmities of the flesh, much darkness of mind, coldness of affection, and deadness of frame; but to have been kept from conscience-wasting sins is no small mercy, when we feel ourselves tempted to them on every hand.

8. To have been *preserved from the abounding errors* of the day, and still to hold the truth with firm and steady hand; to have walked in any measure separate from that loose, ungodly profession which so marks the present day;

to have enjoyed any union and communion with the real saints of God; and to have loved and cleaved to them as the excellent of the earth—has 1863 left no such testimonies in our favour, which we wish to bear in mind, not with the boasting pride of the self-righteous Pharisee, but the thankful acknowledgment of our deep indebtedness to superabounding grace?

But your path may have been one of deeper trial, more painful exercise, and more severe temptation, than that which we have thus sketched out. Be it so. Then if your afflictions have been greater, greater have been your consolations; if your miseries have abounded, your mercies have superabounded. You have been further and deeper in the wilderness, but have gathered more manna; have felt more of the storm, but have seen more of the sun; have had more fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, but have known more of the power of his resurrection. Thus are we even. You who have gathered much, have nothing over; we who have gathered little, have no lack.

We have struck, then, the keynote of our Address:—the Old Year and the New; for as we have taken the departed year as the emblem of death and decay, so will we now take the New Year as the emblem of life and resurrection. For as the departed year is but a shadowy emblem of death, so death itself, with all its gloomy accompaniments, is really but the shadow of a shade. Has not the Lord destroyed death and him who had the power of death, that is, the devil?" (Heb. 2:14.) Has he not "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel?" (2 Tim. 1:10.) If death then be "destroyed" and "abolished," it can have no real substance; and if it have no substance, it can have no shadow. But it often casts, you will say, a very gloomy shadow over our feelings. It is true; but why? Because we are not raised out of its shadow into the light of the Lord's countenance. That there is something naturally appalling in death, all must admit, for it is what all must feel. The very surroundings of the grave have in them something terrible to nature. The coffin, through whose lid we almost seem to see the pale corpse in its last shroud; the open grave into whose mouth we look as its dark and chilly bed: the earthy smell of the damp mould on which we stand, as if it breathed the very odour of death: the mourners in their weeping or subdued agony: the falling of the clods when all is over, the last prayer uttered, and every other sound stilled, and nothing now remains but to bury the dead out of sight;—all these trappings of death, like the dark hearse and the funeral pall, speak so strongly to our natural senses, that to look through them, and beyond them, needs a special net of faith. Apart, too, from these sights and scenes of woe, in which most of us have taken a perhaps never-to-be-forgotten part, there are internal causes why death casts at various times over the mind a chilling gloom. Unbelief, darkness of mind, guilt of conscience, the doubts and fears with which most are exercised; the natural apprehension of death, the innate love of, and clinging to life: the strong ties of flesh and blood, perhaps a young wife or little family for whom there is but slender provision; peculiar circumstances in business which need all the activity and skill of personal management, and without which wreck and ruin seem imminent: the place at present occupied in the church of Christ, with its binding claims; the desire to live a little longer for the glory of God and the good of his people—who can enumerate the thousand bonds which knit the heart to life, and produce a natural shrinking from death? But why

else the need of Jesus on a dying bed? Who needs the support of everlasting arms but the sinking? Who wants the rod and the staff, but the traveller through the valley of the shadow of death? It is but reckless insensibility, or bold, presumptuous confidence, veiled under the name of strong assurance, which looks death in the face without shrinking, unless the Lord himself whisper, "It is I; be not afraid."

But how mercifully and graciously are these very exercises of mind overruled for spiritual good, and what a profitable influence do they often produce upon the heart. To die daily is a needful part of Christian experience. To have the loins girt, and the light burning, and to be waiting for the Master's return, is the most fitting posture of a disciple of Christ. We are especially warned to "take heed to ourselves, lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon us unawares." (Luke 21:34.) It will be then our wisdom and mercy "not to sleep as do others, but to watch and be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation," in the sweet confidence that "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." (1 Thess. 5:8, 10.) If he died for us that we should live together with him, he is "our life;" and so far as he is our life, the life which we now live in the flesh will be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. There is no other way of dying to sin, to the world, to the things of time and sense, and of living unto God. The deepest convictions may still leave us under the power of sin: the heaviest trials stir up only rebellion and fretfulness; the most distressing temptations only toss us up and down like the locust; and the acutest griefs cause only the sorrow of the world which worketh death. But one believing sight of the Son of God, one discovery of the King in his beauty, one manifestation to the soul of his Person and work, grace and glory, at once lifts it up to himself; and thus, whilst faith is in active exercise, bears it up above the world and all its sorrows as well as joys, its carking cares as well as all its passing vanities. To have a blessed revelation of Christ to the soul, and to enjoy union and communion with the Son of God, is the one grand secret of vital godliness.

But if it be so, and to this all the saints of God set to their seal, how is this personal, experimental knowledge of Jesus, this union, this communion with him, this living faith in his Person and work, to be maintained alive in the heart? O! Here is the grand fight of faith. On this narrow ground the hostile armies meet. Here unbelief, infidelity, guilt, doubt, and fear; pride, lust, and covetousness, rebellion, murmuring, and fretfulness; coldness, carnality, and death; sloth, torpor, and fleshly ease; enmity, filth, and devilism; darkness, desertion, and despair: here are they all ranged in their different regiments, but all under one flag—the black flag; and under one commander—the prince of hell. How slippery the ground with blood! What advancements, what retreatings, what hopes, what fears, what cruel wounds, what horrid sights, what faintness of heart, what almost certainty of defeat! What, O what can the soul do but look up to the Captain of its salvation and implore his help? Who can save but He upon whom help has been laid, as one that is mighty? Timid soul! Is not this look, this cry, the very look, the very prayer of faith? The battle is not thine, but the Lord's: and is not he even now thus teaching thy hands to war and thy fingers to fight?

Now, as we are brought to this point, we see and feel our need of "the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." We beseech you, then, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation from one who is indeed the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints; and yet one who earnestly desires your spiritual profit.

Our Lord is risen from the dead, and was thereby declared to be the Son of God with power. (Rom. 1:4.) And we, too, who believe in his name and have vital union with him, are risen with him; for God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Col. 3:1; Eph. 2:6.) But what is our evidence of this? How do we know we are indeed risen with Christ? By the communications of his grace; by the work and witness of his Spirit; by the discoveries of his Person; by the faith which lays hold of him; by the hope which anchors in him; and by the love which flows out towards him. What but a living Christ will do for a living soul? He is "the resurrection and the life;" so that "he that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die." (John 11:25, 26.) Let us not, then, tarry among the tombs. Why seek we the living among the dead? He is not here; he is risen.

On this ground, then—the ground of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, would we address a few words to those living souls who are risen with Christ, and are setting their affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Let us, then, not in a spirit of dictation, but of brotherly love and affectionate counsel, drop a few words that may seem suitable to the present occasion. We assume that your soul is exercised on the weighty matters of eternity, that you are not settled on your lees or are at ease in Zion, still less have a name to live and are dead. To such we have no message, except it be a word of solemn warning, to consider in what a perilous position they stand. But to those whose souls are in any measure alive unto God, and who are willing to receive a word of exhortation from us, we would, in the love and spirit of the gospel, address such counsel as we would desire to lay up in our own heart for our own profit and direction.

1. The first point to which we would direct your thoughts is—the *claim that the word of God has upon our study and attention*. We live in a day of great outward religious profession, and yet of bold and rampant infidelity. Thus we are surrounded as if by two fires. On one side is the professor with the Bible in his hand, but with no one word of grace or truth in his heart; on the other stands the infidel with the Bible under his feet. But this would not so much matter to us, or at least would not be so dangerous, if we could merely look on as spectators, or pass indifferently by them, as we get through a crowd without troubling ourselves about what has collected it together. This, however, we cannot easily do; for our own heart is too much like a city without gates or walls, lying as it were open to every attack; and there is a traitorous party within, who are at league with every assailant without; so that had not the Lord built for himself a little citadel in the very centre of the city for his own habitation, we should long ago have been sold into the hand of our enemies. Where, too, these foes cannot prevail by open violence, they seek to overcome by subtlety and craft. Thus sometimes formality would persuade us to be satisfied with the mere letter of truth, with the bare

doctrines of grace, without so much seeking and longing after the power; sometimes infidelity would urge us to give up both letter and power together. Difficulties also and objections sometimes present themselves which we cannot dismiss, and yet cannot answer. Reasonings, either from our own mind or accidentally met with in books or conversation, similarly force themselves upon our thoughts, the tendency of which is either to confuse our judgment, or assault and overthrow our faith. Thus we get puzzled and perplexed, envying the simple faith of those tender-hearted children of God who believe with all that childlike, confiding trust, which we so admire in them, yet cannot attain to ourselves. Amidst all this conflict of thought we see and feel how life is fast passing away; the things of time and sense slipping from under our feet: the world a scene of vanity and trouble; sin everywhere running down the streets like water; and, alas! what is worse, running through our own heart, ever grieving and defiling our conscience. How deeply, amidst all this conflict and confusion, this hubbub of voices without and within all clamouring to be heard, we want a strong prop on which the soul may firmly lean, a directing light to shine before the feet: and as none can give us any help in this dark path, where "we often grope for the wall, like the blind, and grope as if we had no eyes," we feel our urgent need of some strong and friendly hand to guide us right and bring us safely through the tangled maze. This we find, and find only in the word of God, as made life and spirit to the soul by Him who graciously inspired it. How safe, how sweet it is, after such restless tossings to and fro as we have described, to rest in the sure word of promise, and to take refuge in the two immutable things—the word and the oath, in which it was impossible for God to lie. (Heb. 6:18.) What a debt of gratitude, then, do we owe to the God of all grace for the gift of his holy word, to be to us this light, this prop, this guide. And how do we best show our appreciation of, our gratitude, for this divine gift? By binding it close to our heart: by searching it daily, as for hid treasure: by studying it, and seeking to penetrate into its inmost mind and meaning, pith and marrow, spirit and power: not scuffling over it as a schoolboy over his task, or some drudge over her work: not reading it with a listless eye and wandering mind, glad enough to close its pages, and put it back on the shelf: but feeding upon the milk and honey, the meat and marrow, and sipping the cheering wine with which the Lord of the house has furnished his table. The longest life, the most unwearied search, the deepest study of the Scriptures would leave us but learners still. How, then, can we expect to understand them, penetrate into their holy wisdom, have our heart and conscience brought under their influence and power, see their beauty and connection, feel the impress of God's authority in them, be cast into their heavenly mould, and believe, admire, and adore the voice of the Lord speaking in them to our inmost soul, unless we take some pains to make them our bosom friend and counsellor? Take the word of God out of our hands and heart, and we wander in shades of thickest night.

2. Connected with this daily study of the word of God, we should earnestly desire *to be well established in the truth as it is in Jesus*. How many in a profession of religion are "ever learning, and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth;" whilst others, scarcely less numerous, are "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Not a novelty can show its face in the religious world: not a daring novice or presumptuous wretch broach an old heresy under a new name: not a vile or damnable error

can come flying abroad on the wings of the wind, but some are caught by and entangled with it. And who are sometimes the very first to entertain it, hug it to their breast, and move earth and hell to spread it? Why, some of our old Calvinistic professors, men and women who have sat under the sound of truth for years. These are "the unstable souls" whom erroneous men "lie in wait to deceive," and whom they love to beguile; especially if they have a little of this world's goods to fill their purse or gratify their pride. But what a lamentable sight it is to see old professors, who ought to be pillars of truth, rocking to and fro under the gusts of error, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind; or hurled headlong into the very slough of some damnable doctrine. And why? Because they were never rooted and grounded in the truth by the teaching and testimony, work and witness of the Holy Ghost. How needful, then, if we would escape such an awful downfall, it is to be well established in the truth: for these winds of error often blow with great violence, and from most unexpected and dangerous quarters. We need, then, ever to be drinking wisdom at the fountain head; to be ever looking unto the Lord for his special teaching, and to get all that we have immediately from him. The Lord Jesus of God is made unto us wisdom, (1 Cor. 1:30,) and he communicates it by his Spirit and grace. We shall find, therefore, more and more that all our wisdom is in him and from him; and that every divine truth which he makes known with power to the soul testifies of him, and centres in him. His glorious Person, as Immanuel, God with us, is the object of our faith; and from him, as the glorious Sun of righteousness, every ray and beam of divine truth is shed abroad in the heart. He illuminates the written word with the beams of his glory; he is the sum and substance of every doctrine, the ground and centre of every promise, and the life and power of every precept. His divine Sonship, his finished work, his atoning blood, his justifying obedience, his death and resurrection, his ascension and glorification, his present advocacy and intercession at the right hand of the Father, his royal government, his universal presence and power, and his second coming in the clouds of heaven, all form the food of faith, without which it droops and languishes, and loses its activity, energy, and power. How needful, then, to be well established in the truth, that it may be our meat and drink, and we be daily living in the realisation, if not the sweet enjoyment of it. But this will not be our abiding experience until deep necessity has made us feel how destitute before God, how needy before man, how naked before our enemies, how unable to live, how unprepared to die we are without a vital interest in, without an experimental knowledge of the truths of the everlasting gospel. What darkness there is in the mind, when the light of truth does not shine into the heart! What confusion in the thoughts when there is no clear view, no believing apprehension of the grace of the gospel; what unbelief when the Person and work, love and blood, presence and power of the Lord Jesus are out of sight! But as the precious truths of the everlasting gospel are brought near, and we, seeing light in God's light, embrace them in faith and affection, for faith works by love, they become the very food of our soul, our hope, our all. God did not send his dear Son to bleed and die for poor lost sinners that they should trifle with his bleeding, dying love, nor with their own immortal souls. God did not raise him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, that men should speculate and argue about doctrines in the letter, or neatly arrange them into a creed to be carried about in a pocket-book, or be hung up in the vestry like an old almanack. God did not send apostles and prophets to

proclaim a glorious gospel, nor did he reveal it as with a ray of light in the Scriptures of truth, nor does he now raise up his own servants to preach the word of life, that some should oppose it, others despise it, and others hold it in unrighteousness. The sun breeds maggots in a dung-heap, and draws up fever and pestilence from the noisome marsh; but the sun was not created for that purpose. So God sent his dear Son to save a chosen race, and that he might have a people in whom he should be eternally glorified. There will be maggots in dunghill hearts, there will be pestilent doctrines in churches and congregations; but this is the abuse, not the use of gospel light. How bound then we are by every sweet constraint of his love to believe in his name, to look unto him, to live on him and unto him! But they cannot be enjoyed without another blessing, to which we would next call your attention.

3. *A spirit of prayer and supplication given and maintained by the God of all grace.* There is the closest and most intimate connection between every grace in the soul and the spirit of prayer in the breast. Indeed, the life of God in the believer's bosom sinks and rises, ebbs and flows in exact proportion to, in thorough unison with the incoming and outgoing of the Spirit of grace and supplication. Faith and prayer go hand in hand to the throne, mutually strengthening each other in their advance to the mercy seat. The more I have of the spirit of faith, the more I have of the spirit of prayer. Faith eyes the blessing, prayer pleads for its enjoyment; faith strengthens prayer to ask; prayer enables faith more firmly to believe; and their union brings the mercy into personal possession: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark 11:24.) When Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed; when Moses let down his hands, Amalek prevailed. (Exod. 17:11.)

But as this spirit of faith is easily damped, for even Moses, the man of God, could not hold up his hands long at a time, it will be our wisdom and mercy,

4. *To avoid these things, which we know, from past experience, weaken faith and hinder prayer.*

Entanglement in worldly matters, beyond what is absolutely necessary is one of the surest hindrances to the life of God which can well come across our path. Some of the family of God are so circumstanced in business or in their daily employment that they must necessarily have much to do with the world. But this will be neither their temptation nor their sin if they are not entangled in, nor overcome by its spirit. Joseph in the court of Pharaoh, Daniel as the first of the three presidents to whom a hundred and twenty princes gave their accounts, maintained not only their worldly position, but their divine grace. It is not then being *in* the world, but *of* the world in which the danger lies. Keep the world at arms' length, and it will not hurt you; allow it to embrace you, and you will soon yield to its seductive influence.

But, *worldly professors* are almost more dangerous than the world itself. Six days the world may claim your body, even though it may not entangle your heart. But the Lord's day is all for the soul. What then? Must we lose the Lord's day too? Must we sacrifice that day of days to the same worldly company and carnal spirit which have made the heart sigh and groan all through the week? Shall they follow us into the house of prayer, dodge us up

and down in the chapel, haunt us in the vestry, and rob and plunder us in the very street? And yet, what are many places of worship but mere worldly assemblies? In dress, in deportment, in the merry faces, in the absence of all reverence and solemnity, in the levity of the pulpit, in the carelessness and listlessness of the pew, in the vain conversation before and after service, what difference is there between the sermon in the chapel and the lecture in the Mechanics Institute? Even when separate from such abominations, in places of clear doctrinal, experimental truth, there is often much to grieve the spirit, if not altogether to entangle the heart of the child of God. Keep separate, then, ye who value your own souls' good, from those worldly professors who are ever to be found where truth is preached. You will soon discover them by the way in which they will be felt to rob and plunder your soul. If you have heard with a little real feeling, and if your heart is softened and melted under the word, and your soul is in the sweet enjoyment of a blessing, or at least solemnised and impressed with the weight of eternal things, you will be robbed before you have gone a hundred steps, if you drop into conversation with one of these thieves. Take then as much care of your blessing as you would of your purse in a London crowd: be as wary of your discourse as a modest female is of hers in a railway-carriage full of men. The Lord's day is yours and the Lord's; have it and keep it all to yourselves. His presence is worth having, his blessing worth cherishing, his love worth enjoying. Don't barter all these choice mercies away for a little chit chat, even though your chatty friend sit in the same pew, praise the same sermon, and extol the same minister. And remember that the Lord's day does not end with the services. How sweet to go to bed with the savour of the day of the Lord on the spirit, and to lie down in the enjoyment of that rest of which the Sabbath is but a feeble type!

But we shall weary you with our long and prosy advice. Much, therefore, must be left unsaid which might well afford subject for our Address. But we cannot close without adding that we esteem it a favour and a privilege that we are again allowed to open the year with this friendly greeting to our numerous readers; and if we have, in so doing, rather seated ourselves in the teacher's chair, forgive us this wrong. We have only laid before you such things as we have ourselves proved the value of; and we desire to take to ourselves, if the Lord would enable, all the advice which we have given to you. The blessing of God, which maketh rich, rest on our pages; the eyes of the Lord be upon us for good from the beginning of the year to the end of the year; and as we trust we desire his glory and his people's good, may he not deny us the continual request of our lips.

Brethren, pray for us.

Your affectionate Friend and Servant,
THE EDITOR

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January, 1865

It is part of the wisdom of God in a mystery that he has seen fit to intrust the ministry of the gospel to men of like passions with their fellow men. (Acts 14:15; Eph. 3:8, 9; 1 Thess. 2:4.) In this he displays both his sovereignty and

his grace; his sovereignty in choosing the vessel, his grace in filling it with his hid treasure. And as this is true of the greatest and highest, so is it true also of the least and lowest of the servants of God. None are more, none are less than God makes them to be. Whatever they possess of light or life, grace or gift, experience or utterance, unction or power, knowledge or wisdom, usefulness or acceptability, their sufficiency to every good word and work is wholly of the Lord, wrought in them by that one and the self-same Spirit who divideth to every man severally as he will. (1 Cor. 12:4-11; 2 Cor. 3:5, 6.) This, as it stops all boasting in the strong, gives all encouragement to the weak. If any are strong in faith, clear in knowledge, ripe in judgment, deep and rich in experience, well instructed to understand, well enabled rightly to divide the word of truth, bold and faithful in testimony, ready and powerful in utterance, and blessed with abundant success in their work, to them may be addressed, to quell all exaltation of self, all despising of others, Paul's pregnant question: "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. 4:1.) If, on the other hand, any be weak in faith, deficient in knowledge, feeble in gift, bound in utterance, limited in usefulness or acceptance, and feeling, from a sense of these things, the heavy burden of the ministry and their own insufficiency, are ready to faint in the work, to them are suitable Christ's words: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" and Paul's response, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor. 12:9.) Thus, whether they are strong or whether they are weak, minister to hundreds or minister to scores, are known and esteemed through the length and breadth of the land or are hidden in corners, sovereignty and grace equally determine the standing and position of every minister of Christ.

But there is another view of the question not less worthy of consideration by all the sent servants of Christ—the *obligation under which grace lays them* to seek the glory of God and the good of his people. As bought with a price, and therefore not their own, but the Lord's; (1 Cor. 6:19, 20;) as graciously brought under the constraining influence of the love of Christ, and therefore bound not to live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again; (2 Cor. 5:14, 15;) as set in an honourable and conspicuous place in the mystical body of Christ, that they should have a care for their fellow-members, and seek their spiritual profit, not their own glory or advantage, (1 Cor. 12:7, 18, 25) the servants of God are bound by the strongest ties, the ties of the atoning blood, dying love, and effectual grace of the Lord Jesus, to study to show themselves approved unto God, to preach the word boldly and faithfully, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine, knowing that the time is not to come, but even now is come, when men will not endure sound doctrine, but are turning away their ears from the truth, and are turned unto fables. (2 Tim. 2:15; 4:2-4.)

Now what is true of those who labour for the profit of the Church of God with their tongue is true also, in good measure, of those who labour for the same end and in the same spirit with their pen. We say "in good measure," for we by no means intend or wish to place the tongue and the pen on the same level. The preaching of the gospel, as the special ordinance of the Lord, (Mark 16:15) stands apart by itself, and claims the just pre-eminence over

every other means of edifying the body of Christ. (Eph. 4:11, 12.) It is the especial display both of the wisdom and of the power of God by "the foolishness of preaching," as men deem it, "to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 2:18-25.) The ministry of the gospel is a divinely appointed means of communicating faith, (Rom. 10:17) and through the means of faith thus given to become the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. (Rom. 1:16.) Writing cannot stand upon this foundation, nor rise to this level, for it has not the same divine appointment, and therefore does not inherit the same promised blessing. And yet few who fear God, and have derived benefit from the works of good men, would wish to deny that writing has, in the hands of the blessed Spirit, been made an instrument of edification to the Church of God only second to the ministry of the preached word. Indeed, in some respects the works of men of God have been made of greater and more enduring service to the Church of Christ even than their words, as being both more widely spread and more enduringly permanent. Whatever abundant blessing in their day rested upon their ministry, Bunyan and Owen would have been now mere names, if so much, Hart and Huntington but traditions, had not these men of God been writers as well as preachers. But by means of their writings the light and knowledge, grace and gifts, which were blessed to their generation are also blessed to ours, and will be handed down to our children's children when we shall have passed away.

Assuming, then, that writing, when the Holy Ghost inspires the pen, is an instrument of edification to the Church of Christ only inferior to preaching, when the Holy Ghost inspires the tongue, does not this conclusion follow, that those whose place and calling it is to write should as much seek the glory of God and the profit of his people as those whose place and calling it is to preach? If the ministry of the gospel were not a divine institution, it would be an act of presumption to be tolerated neither by God nor man that a sinner, even a saved sinner, should stand up publicly to instruct, comfort, warn, and rebuke his fellow-sinners and fellow-saints. But the special ordinance of God and the power with which, as such, he himself clothes it, make what else would be an act of presumption an act of willing service for the minister and of blessing for the hearer. To be thus owned and blessed to the family of the living God; to be the honoured instrument of communicating light, life, liberty, and love to those for whom Christ died; to set forth the Person and work, blood and righteousness of the Son of God, and, by thus exalting his worthy name, to advance his kingdom and endear him to believing hearts; this is, or should be, the aim and object, the reward and crown of every servant of Christ, whether tongue or pen be the instrument employed.

If these views be correct, in harmony with the word of truth and the experience of the saints, may not a writer, let him be only the editor of a fugitive and fleeting periodical which may die to-morrow and leave no trace behind—may not even a writer who occupies so temporary a position, yet who feels the life and power of God in his soul, and who seems, in the providence and by the grace of God, called to the work of the pen, equally labour to the same end and in the same spirit, equally seek the glory of God and the good of his people, equally desire to set forth the same gospel, exalt the same dear Redeemer, and find his main reward in the blessing of God upon his labours? Or, to bring the preceding train of thought into a

narrower compass, and direct it more clearly and closely to our present subject, may not even we, without presumption, address a few words at the opening of another year to our numerous readers, as seeking their spiritual profit? So far as we are taught by the same Spirit, have one faith and hope, feel the same love, and are of one accord, of one mind with the living family of God, we may look not on our own things only, but also on the things of others. (Eph. 4:4, 5; Phil. 2:2-4.) And if in this spirit, at the opening of another year, we seek to lay before our spiritual readers a word of counsel or of exhortation, giving them no other advice than we feel willing to take ourselves, and laying no other burden on them than we desire ourselves to bear, may it not be a word in season to both writer and reader? And surely these are not days when no friendly counsel is required, no keen reproof needed, no instrumental stirring up of the graces of the Spirit in the hearts of God's people wanted. All who have any good measure of divine light and life, of gracious discernment, of daily experience, of almost continual exercise about themselves or others; all who know for themselves the power, the reality, the blessedness of that kingdom of God which is within us, and are struggling often through a sea of trials, afflictions, and temptations to find and enjoy in their own bosom that secret of the Lord which is with them that fear him; all thus taught, thus led, thus exercised, see and cannot but see, feel and cannot but feel at what a low ebb vital godliness everywhere is. It is with this as with many other matters of practical observation. The outward appearance may seem fair and good until the thing itself, as it really stands, is measured by a proper standard, or put to some searching, practical test. So long, then, as we are content to measure ourselves by ourselves, and compare ourselves with ourselves, (2 Cor. 10:12,) our profession may appear fair and good. But how does it stand when examined by the searching, practical test of the word of God? Take, for instance, the ministry, we will not say of the day, but even of many whom we desire to esteem for their work's sake. Where is the preceptive part of the gospel brought forward, and insisted upon as we find it declared in the words of our Lord, and in the epistles of the New Testament? Where is doctrine so set forth as to have an experimental bearing upon the inward life, and a practical influence on the outward walk? Where is experience traced out, not only in its inward feelings, but in its outward fruits? Now in Scripture doctrine is never held forth in what we may call its dry form. It is always blended either with an experience of its power, or with a declaration of its practical fruits. Thus, for instance, we are declared to be "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," but it is "through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:2.) How graciously blended here is the doctrine of election with the experience of the blood of sprinkling and the practice of obedience. And so experience in the word is never held up as a mere matter of feeling, that is, mere abstract feeling as dissociated from all effects and fruits, but is blended either with some practical influence on the heart, or some gracious fruit in the life. And are not churches as faulty, in some of these respects, as ministers? How many of our Baptist churches can "suffer the word of exhortation?" (Heb. 13:22.) What an outcry there would be of "legality" if any minister of truth were to exhort husbands, wives, and children, masters and servants, severally and specially, as Paul exhorts them. The ministers may preach Paul's doctrine with the utmost clearness, and Paul's experience of law and gospel in its depths and heights with the greatest acceptance; but may they preach Paul's practice with the same faithfulness

and with the same favour? If this be so, and we leave it to our readers to judge for themselves whether our words are true or false, is not that one thing a sufficient evidence that vital, practical godliness is with us all, for we put ourselves among the number of the defaulters, at a low ebb? If, then, we speak these things and bear this testimony, it is not, we trust, from a spirit of bitterness, or censoriousness, or spiritual pride, or fleshly holiness, or self esteem under a garb of humility: it is not from monkish austerity, or self-inflicted seclusion, or narrowness of mind, and absence of what are called large and liberal views; it is not from want of charity, or of allowance for human infirmity; from dimness of eye to see, or slowness of foot to march on with the advance of society and the times, that a conviction has been lodged in our breast how low the life of God for the most part is in churches and individuals. So far from this being the case, we can say for ourselves, and we believe for many others, that we would not shut ourselves up in a narrow corner and make all we can see from thence our spiritual horizon, or draw a kind of magic circle round our feet, inside which all is light and life, outside which all is darkness and death. On the contrary, we are too glad to see and welcome the grace of God in ourselves and others not to hail with joy every appearance of divine life. As he who is lost at night on a lonely moor welcomes the first streak of light in the eastern sky; as the sailor whose ship is on a sandbank gladly marks the rising tide which he hopes will bear her off, so all who truly fear God hail with joy the dawns of divine light and the springings of heavenly life, whether in themselves or in others. So without putting light for darkness and darkness for light, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, we may look around and see, and as we see gratefully acknowledge, that there are still golden candlesticks amidst which the Lord walks, and still stars in his right hand. There is a love of sound experimental truth in many churches. The glorious doctrines of grace are not wholly hid in a corner. In many places there is a good spirit of hearing, and in our own connection especially there has not been for many years a greater desire for men of truth, or greater difficulty in obtaining their services. Thus though we cannot but feel, and must, as feeling it, declare our conviction that vital godliness is almost everywhere at a low ebb, yet it gladdens our eyes and hearts to see and thankfully acknowledge that all is not ebbled out, that though on every side wide and deep are the mud banks, yet between runs in a scanty stream the river of the water of life. God has a people yet in this land, bless his holy name, whom he loves, and who both love and fear him. And though these be, for the most part, but men that sigh and cry for all the abominations they feel within and see without, yet have they a mark set upon their foreheads, known and recognised by the Lord, and known and recognised by each other. (Ezek. 9:4.) It is to such we write. It is for such we labour. It is with such we wish to live, and with such to die. We have no union with the dead, be they dead in sin, or dead in a profession. "The living, the living," these are they, and only they, who "shall praise God" here or hereafter. "Death cannot celebrate him" on earth or in heaven; and "they that go down into the pit" of error or of perdition "cannot hope for his truth," (Isa. 38:18, 19) for it is hidden from them, either in its purity or in its power.

Will, then, the living among our readers; will those who have received not merely the truth, but the love of the truth; will those who, for want of clearer and higher evidences, can only say they "desire to fear God;" (Neh. 1:11;)

will those who, deeply convinced of their lost and undone condition, are seeking to realise the fulness of salvation in their own breast, bear with and listen to a fellow-traveller in the way, who, with all his sins and infirmities, would wish to deceive neither himself nor them? And if he do not come with soft and honeyed words, according to the fashion of the day, as if the gospel had no other voice or sound but, "Peace, peace,"—peace at any price, peace at any rate, peace in every state, however worldly, carnal, or covetous in which churches or individuals may be sunk, let it be borne in mind that there is a coming "with a rod" as well as "in the spirit of meekness:" (1 Cor. 4:21:) and that, so far as we are true soldiers of Christ, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:5.) In this spirit, then, the spirit of faithfulness and love, let us seek to address ourselves to the hearts and consciences of those who are willing to receive a few words from us in the simplicity of truth.

It is but too evident that we cannot be mixed up with the profession and the professors of the day without drinking, in some measure, into their spirit and being more or less biassed by their example. In this we too much resemble the chosen people, of whom the Holy Ghost testifies: "They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols, which were a snare unto them." (Ps. 106:35, 36.) We can scarcely escape the influence of those with whom we come much and frequently into contact. If these be dead, they will often benumb us with their corpse-like coldness; if light and trifling, they will often entangle us in their carnal levity: if bitter and censorious, they will breathe into us a measure of their condemning spirit: if angry and quarrelsome, they will provoke us to wrath in word or feeling; if worldly and covetous, they may afford us a shelter and an excuse for our own worldliness and covetousness. Nothing but being well weighed with trials and afflictions, and bowed down with burdens and exercises, yet finding in and by them the life of God maintained with some power and vigour in the heart, will keep us from being corrupted by these evil communications. But as few escape their influence, let us simply state what we believe to be, if not the only, yet the safest way to obtain deliverance from a path to walk in which will surely sooner or later, bring sorrow and grief to every living soul.

1. Now the first step out of a wrong path is to *see and feel that it is wrong*. The carnal professors of the day see nothing wrong, nothing amiss, nothing inconsistent in their conduct or spirit. They have no inward checks of conscience, no keen reproofs from the word, no trembling fears about their state before God, no solemn apprehensions of the Majesty and presence of the heart-searching Jehovah, no believing views of the Person and sufferings of Christ, no desire to know and do the will of God from the heart. But where there is divine life, where the blessed Spirit moves upon the heart with his sacred operations and secret influences, there there will be light to see and a conscience to feel what is wrong, sinful, inconsistent, and unbecoming. These convictions may for a time be resisted. Sin is of a hardening nature, and we may for a while be so caught in the net, and so held down by it, that our very struggles against it, may end only in fuller and further entanglement. How

few, for instance, see their own covetous spirit till they find themselves so entangled in it that they fear they shall be utterly given up to its dominion, and yet cannot deliver themselves from it. How often when brother falls out with brother, or a spirit of strife and division gets into a church, every attempt at reconciliation, every effort after peace fans the flame instead of extinguishing it. How, again, we may sink into a cold lifeless state, neglect reading the word, and have a relish for the throne of grace, till our very profession seems to stink in our own nostrils as well as of others.

Now where there is divine life in the soul, the Lord often sets his hand as it were a second time to revive his work upon the heart. The snare is broken either by his providence or his grace. By some affliction or trial the heart is made tender to receive the word, even if it be a keen reproof, for "to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet," and there is that yearning after the Lord which nothing can satisfy but the manifestations of his pardoning love.

2. If this simple sketch meet the experience of any of our spiritual readers, let them next suffer from us the word of exhortation, as couched in the words of the apostle: "*Make straight paths for your feet*, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed." (Heb. 12:13.)

We read in the word of truth of those "who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths." (Prov. 2:13, 15.) And as we read their character in the word, so do we also read their end: "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel." (Ps. 125:5.) Such warnings have their place not only in the word, but in the heart that is made tender in the fear of God; nor are they put away as if we stood so firmly and strongly in the right road that there could be no danger of our ever making a crooked path for our feet. On the contrary, surrounded as we are with a crooked generation, professing and profane, whose ways we are but too apt to learn; beset on every hand by temptations to turn aside into some crooked path, to feed our pride, indulge our lusts, or gratify our covetousness: blinded and seduced sometimes by the god of this world, hardened at others by the deceitfulness of sin; here misled by the example, and there bewitched by the flattery of some friend or companion; at one time confused and bewildered in our judgment of right and wrong, at another entangled, half resisting, half complying, in some snare of the wicked one, what a struggle have some of us had to make straight paths for our feet, and what pain and grief that we should ever have made crooked ones. But there is one mark of a crooked path which will ever stand both as a warning and a direction to those who fear God. "They have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace." (Isa. 59:8.) It is this want of finding peace in the crooked path which alarms and terrifies those who are possessed of a living conscience, and often summons up against them a whole host of doubts and fears lest they be deceived altogether. These convictions and these fears plainly and clearly show them their sin and folly in leaving the paths of uprightness to walk in any crooked way; and as the Lord is pleased sometimes by terrible things in righteousness, sometimes by laying affliction upon their loins, sometimes by his keen reproofs under the word preached or applied in secret, sometimes by a startling stroke in providence, to make them know and see that it is an

evil thing and bitter to forsake the Lord their God, repentance is wrought in the heart, with self-loathing and self-detestation, issuing in humble and honest confession. This is the first step to return, for with this confession comes the forsaking of every evil way; and to this confession and forsaking, the promise of mercy and forgiveness is annexed. (Prov. 28:13: 1 John 1:9.) When, then, the mercy and goodness of God are thus inwardly felt and realised; when a view by faith of the suffering Son of God manifests at one and the same time the dreadful nature of sin, and the way, the only way whereby it is freely put away; when the superaboundings of grace over the aboundings of inward and outward evil make the soul at once tremble and rejoice,—tremble at the floods of sin, rejoice at the overflowings of the higher tides of grace above them all, then there is a making of straight paths for the feet, and that which was lame and so turned out of the way become healed.

3. Closely connected with this is the affectionate counsel before God and man. This Paul's exercise: "And herein do I exercise myself, to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." (Acts 24:16.) There is no greater blessing than a conscience purged by the blood of sprinkling; and few greater miseries than a conscience loaded with guilt. As the one enables us to look up, so the latter compels us to look down before God and man. Nothing inconsistent or unbecoming may have appeared in our walk and conduct, and yet the silent monitor may make the tongue falter, the knee tremble, and the countenance be dejected. Here, then, is the main exercise, first to obtain, secondly to maintain a conscience so sprinkled by atoning blood as to be void of offence toward God; and then to walk so tenderly in the fear of God, in that sincerity and godly simplicity, in that uprightness of conduct, in that circumspectness in life which shall preserve us from giving just cause of offence to, or putting a stumbling-block in the way of our fellow-men, and thus follow out that comprehensive precept: "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." (1 Cor. 10:31, 32.)

4. Our next word of counsel shall be that which the Lord himself gives to the virgin of Israel: "*Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps; set thine heart toward the high way, even the way which thou wentest.*" (Jer. 31:21.) To look at the past is often a blessed encouragement for the future. If we are travellers in the way Zionward, we shall have our various waymarks. A conspicuous call, or a signal deliverance, or a gracious manifestation of Christ; a promise applied here, or a marked answer to prayer there; a special blessing under the preached word; a soft and unexpected assurance of an interest in the blood of the Lamb; a breaking in of divine light when walking in great darkness; a sweet sip of consolation in a season of sorrow and trouble; a calming down of the winds and waves without and within by "It is I, be not afraid"—such and similar waymarks it is most blessed to be able to set up as evidences that we are in the road. And if many who really fear God cannot set up these conspicuous waymarks, yet are they not without their testimonies equally sure, if not equally satisfying. The fear of God in a tender conscience, the Spirit of grace and supplications in their breast, their cleaving to the people of God in warm affection, their love for the truth in its purity and power, their earnest desires, their budding hopes, their anxious fears, their honesty and simplicity making them jealous over themselves lest

they be deceived or deluded, their separation from the world, their humility, meekness, quietness, and general consistency often putting to shame louder profession and higher pretensions—these and similar evidences mark many as children of God who cannot read their title clear to such a privilege and such a blessing. But whether the waymarks be high or low, shining in the sun or obscure in the dawn, the virgin of Israel is still bidden to "set them up," and to "set also her heart toward the high way, even the way by which she came."

5. This, then, shall be another word of counsel, that we should be ever *setting our heart toward the high way*. Christ is the way, there is no other. "I am the way" stands written in letters of beaming light at the head, in the middle, at the end of the path to guide the child, to nerve the man, to sustain the father. The first ray of light which beams on the soul to guide it heavenward shines from the Person and work of Jesus: should it wander, by this it is brought back: should it faint and stagger, by this it is held up and held on, the eye still turning, the feet still moving, the heart still yearning towards the way, the only way out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of confusion into clearness, out of restlessness into quietness, out of bondage into liberty, out of sorrow into joy, out of trouble into peace—in a word, out of hell into heaven. Blessed be God, not only that Jesus should be the way, but that the dear Redeemer said himself, in the days of his flesh, "I am the way;" for as these his own blessed words drop with power into the heart, they raise up such a faith in him; (John 6:47;) such a looking unto him, even at times from the very ends of the earth; (Isa. 45:22;) such a coming out of all the rags and ruins of self to take hold of and hide ourselves in him; (Isa. 27:5; Ps. 17:8; 143:9;) such a cleaving to him with purpose of heart; (Acts 11:23;) such a hanging upon him, (Isa. 22:24,) that, by the gentle attractions of his Spirit and grace, (Song 1:4; Jer. 31:3; John 6:44,) he is received and walked in at every step heavenward. (Col. 2:6.)

And now our limits as well as the fear of wearying our readers warn us to draw to a close. Yet would we still press a few more thoughts on their notice, seeking to condense them as much as we can; and if our words of counsel assume a preceptive form, those to whom they are addressed will kindly bear in mind that we do not mean thereby to imply any power in us or them but that of grace to put them into practical execution.

6. *Keep yourselves separate* from the shallow, light, loose profession of the day. Beware of resting on those shallow evidences whereby so many are built up, from both pulpit and press, on an insecure if not unsound foundation. Rest on nothing short of God's own testimony in your conscience, and the witness of his Spirit to your spirit that you are his child. Hate that spirit of levity, whether in the pulpit or in the pew, which is not only death to every gracious, godly feeling in the soul, but which would turn the most solemn truths of our most holy faith, the very sufferings of Christ himself, into an entertainment for the carnal mind. Abhor that loose profession, that ready compliance with everything which feeds the pride, worldliness, covetousness, and lusts of our depraved nature, which so stamps the present day with some of its most perilous and awful characters.

7. *Choose for your companions*, and let them be few in number, the humble,

sober-minded, exercised, tender-hearted, spiritual children of God; those whose company and conversation you find to do you good and to leave a sweet savour on your spirit: whose life and conduct approve themselves to you as becoming the gospel; whose walk in the church and before the world is evidently under the influence of grace; and with whom you feel you can live and die in the close and firm union of brotherly affection and love.

8. *Learn to bear and forbear patiently* and meekly with the infirmities of Christian brethren. There is a time in our Christian life when we want to set everybody right and make everything square. But we begin to find after a while that we cannot set our own selves right, nor make our own spirit and conduct square with the word of truth. This conviction, forced increasingly upon us, makes us less keen to see the mote and more willing to take out the beam; less desirous to condemn others, more willing to condemn ourselves; less sure of the sins of our friends, more certain of our own. Besides which we sooner or later learn that it is one thing to wink at our brethren's sins, another to bear with our brethren's infirmities. We see that we naturally differ from one another, and that though grace changes the heart, the natural disposition is rather subdued by it than altered. Thus our natural tempers, stations and occupations, education, and bringing up, modes of thought and feeling, views of men and things, family and business connections, prejudices and prepossessions, besetments and infirmities, our very knowledge and experience of the truth of God, our various stages in the divine life, our afflictions, trials, and temptations, and many other circumstances which we cannot now enumerate, all so widely differ that you can scarcely find two Christians alike, each having his own peculiar infirmities. As, then, we expect others to bear with our infirmities, let us learn to bear with theirs, loving them for the grace that we see in them, and thus "with all lowliness and meekness with long-suffering, forbear one another in love." (Eph. 4:2.)

9. *Expect a path* of increasing rather than diminishing *tribulation*. Lay your account with a daily cross within or without, with bodily afflictions, sharp trials, and painful conflicts. Anticipate no easy road in providence or in grace, in the church or in the world, in the family or in the business, in your dealings with sinners or in your dealings with saints. God means to make us thoroughly sick of this world and of everything in it, that, wearied and worn out with trials, temptations, and conflicts, we may find all our rest in himself, and thus, as through much tribulation we enter into his kingdom of grace, so through much tribulation we may enter into his kingdom of glory.

10. And yet, amidst all your tribulations, seek ever to *hang upon the faithfulness at God to his promises*. With all your exercises, doubts, misgivings, and fears, you cannot deny that he has been a good God to you, both in providence and grace. You have for many years watched his hand in both, and can bear testimony that he has never failed you in the hour of need, and that though he has deeply tried you, yet he has hitherto proved faithful to every promise he has spoken upon your heart, or enabled you to believe and plead. Are not these so many pledges that he will never leave you nor forsake you even to the end?

"Trust him; he will not deceive us,

Though we hardly of him deem;
He will never, never leave us,
Nor will let us quite leave him."

"Brethren, pray for us." We present you with our New Year offering. Accept it in love. Weigh it in the balances of the sanctuary. Compare it with the word of truth and the experience of the saints; and whilst you pardon all in it that is amiss, as savouring of human infirmity, receive in the spirit of meekness what is commended to your conscience as a suitable word of counsel or encouragement. And join your supplications with ours, that if we be still spared to continue our monthly labours, our services may be accepted of God, and be made a blessing to an increased number of his people.

Your unworthy, but affectionate Friend and Servant in the path of
tribulation,
THE EDITOR

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January, 1866

From almost the very commencement of our editorial labours we have attempted, at the opening of each successive year, to address to our gracious readers some words of friendly and affectionate counsel. The season itself seems to call for some such friendly greeting, some such affectionate recognition of the ties which have so long bound us together. Without scrupulously or superstitiously observing "days, and months, and times, and years," few of us altogether pass by so marked an epoch as the dawning of another year upon our path without some acknowledgment of it both to God and man. When we open our eyes on the first morning of the year, we almost instinctively say, "This is New-year's day." Nor is this, at least this should not be, all the notice we take, all the acknowledgment we make of that opening year of which we may not see the close. When we bend our knees before the throne of grace, we mingle with thankful acknowledgment for the mercies of the past year, both in providence and in grace, earnest petitions for similar mercies to be experienced and enjoyed through the present. Last evening witnessed our confessions of the many, many grievous sins, wanderings, backslidings, and departings from the living God during the year now gone; this morning witnesses our supplications for grace to hold up our goings in his paths, that our footsteps slip not through the year just come. Tears are most suitable at the burial of the dead; hopes and desires at the birth of the living. The past year was the departed sire, worn out with age and infirmity; the present year the new-born babe in the arms of the smiling nurse. It is still, however, mid-winter. To-day, the first of the present year, differs little in outward appearance from yesterday, the last of the past. But the thoughtful, prayerful mind takes little notice of wintry skies. It feels that the old, worn-out year has sunk into its grave, with all its trials and afflictions, and that a new year has come in its place, with its new hopes and new mercies; and if it bring new trials, yet that the promise still stands, that new strength will be given to meet and overcome them. Refreshed and strengthened at the throne by such or similar communings with the God of all our mercies, we go down to meet our families, and are at once greeted on

all sides with, "I wish you a happy new year," a greeting which we as warmly and affectionately return. Almost every friend, well-nigh every acquaintance that we meet with in the course of the day, greets us with the same kind wish. Now in all this there may be a great deal of formality, lip service, and traditional usage; but there may be also a good deal of sincerity, kindness, and affection. We are not, surely, so shut up in miserable self as to have no desire for the health and happiness, the temporal and spiritual welfare, of our families, our friends, or even our acquaintances. And if we desire their good, we need not be backward or unwilling to express it in a few words of friendly greeting. "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted;" "Be pitiful, be courteous;" "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," are precepts imbued with all the spirit of the gospel, and may be, indeed, should be, attended to without the least sacrifice of that faithfulness which becomes those who would daily walk in the fear of the Lord. There may be a form of kind words as well as "a form of sound words;" (2 Tim. 1:13;) and as we may use the latter in perfect harmony with the doctrines of the gospel, so we may use the former in perfect harmony with the spirit of the gospel.

But we would hope that there is something better between our spiritual readers and ourselves than kindness and courtesy, and something warmer than the mere expression of mutual friendliness and affection at the opening of another year. We are not, at least by this time we should not be, altogether strangers to each other. In one point an editor, if not in others, much resembles a minister; his readers know much more of him than he can know of them. In the case of every sound and settled minister, his views of divine truth, his mode of setting it forth, his gifts natural and spiritual; his peculiar line of things in which and in which alone he is at home, or at all clear and strong, his very defects and infirmities, are all open to the view of, are all fully understood by, his intelligent and gracious hearers. A minister of any real weight and power, of any long standing and general acceptability, when permanently fixed over a church and congregation, gradually forms his own body of hearers. Those who cannot hear him, or at least, not to profit, gradually drop off, and there remains a congregation which receives his ministry, sees as with his eyes, drinks into his spirit, and is united to him in love and affection. He stands to them in time as a father to his children; and the tie being cemented by mutual affection, he becomes enabled and warranted to speak to and deal with them in a way which would not be consistent, nor indeed tolerated, in a strange minister, or a transient supply. Now, an editor cannot hope to attain a position so honoured as this, for he has not either the same divine commission,—the ministry being the ordinance of God, or the same authority and influence; nor has he that personal knowledge of his readers, or they of him, which the pastor has of his people, and therefore cannot gain that same amount of esteem and affection. And yet he may, nay must, if he be of any use at all to the church of God, attain a position in which his words may possess a weight and power not much inferior, and in some respects, much more advantageous. How much wider is his field, how much larger his congregation; how his words can enter houses where his person would be rejected, and be read by foe as well as received by friend. The influence which the thoughts and opinions of others exercise over us often escapes our own notice. The power is so subtle, the effect often so gradual, and in its operation so blended with the workings of

our own mind, that we can hardly distinguish between the influence and its effects, between what is another's and what is our own. And if this hold good in ordinary matters, how much more so in the kingdom of grace. Truth, we mean thereby divine truth, has a wonderful power and influence over the mind, wherever the eyes, ears, and heart have been opened to see, hear, and believe it. It carries with it its own evidence, and shines in the light of its own testimony. To know the truth and experience its liberating, sanctifying power; (John 8:32; 17:17;) to receive the love of it: (2 Thes. 2:10;) to be taught it by an unction from the Holy One; (1 John 2:20, 27;) to be of it, and to know that we are of it; (1 John 3:19;) for it to dwell in us, and for us to walk in it; (2 John 2:4;) these are some of the peculiar marks of the living family of God; and if so, without them no minister, no book will be received by, or be acceptable to them. But where they find this truth, and it is commended to their consciences, there they will find an influence and a power, and that acting for their spiritual good.

But two things are specially needful for this active influence,—elements we may call them of spiritual weight and power.

1. The first element of this influence must be *confidence*. If we cannot trust a man either in private or public life, of what use or value can he be? From the errand boy to the bank director, from the little maid who runs with a letter to the post-office to the prime minister who holds the reins of government, confidence is the foundation of all the daily transactions of life. If without a large measure of mutual confidence between man and man, society itself could scarcely hang together, how much more is mutual confidence needed between men in those matters which relate to our soul's welfare and peace? But confidence, as Lord Chatham once said in his place in Parliament, is a plant of slow growth. And as it grows slowly, so it may slowly decline or suddenly fall. To a man in business credit is everything. What exertions will he make to obtain it; what sacrifices will he endure to maintain it! But shall the children of this world esteem loss of credit almost worse than loss of life? and shall the children of light be careless and indifferent to the loss of their Christian reputation? How careful, then, should be every minister, and every editor who professes the doctrines of our most holy faith, neither by word nor work to impair the confidence reposed in him. He should be as tremblingly alive to avoid everything to shake that confidence as a banker to prevent a run upon his bank. Nay, much more so; for the one may merely cause a temporary pecuniary loss, but the other permanent injury to the cause of truth and to his own happiness and usefulness. No man is more despised, no man more justly despicable, than a time-serving minister. A shifting, time-serving editor is, in our judgment, scarcely less despicable. As there always have been and always will be religious parties, every party naturally, almost necessarily, if of any extent, seeks some recognized organ of opinion by which it may act and speak. Our desire and aim are, and always have been, to represent no party—or at least that party only which possesses and professes sound experimental truth, and sterling vital godliness. If we have any weight or influence, this is the secret of it, that we express what our spiritual readers believe and feel. We do not lead them, nor do they lead us. We are friends and brethren, not master and servants, nor servant and masters. It is the truth in the love and power of it which unites us—that secret, mysterious, invisible, and yet powerful bond which knits together as

with ties of adamant all who see eye to eye, and feel heart to heart in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. But as contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, we may be considered to speak for many who have not the opportunity, or perhaps the ability, to speak for themselves. Because we do this, freely and simply putting forth from time to time what God, we hope, has taught us, and because what we thus write or insert expresses the views and feelings of many private Christians and of many ministers, we may be considered rightly or wrongly the organ of a religious body. "The Standard men" has become almost a word of reproach. Be it so. But let all know that as we allow no man to have dominion over our faith, so we exercise dominion over the faith of none. But even were it so that we do virtually represent a large body of Christian men and ministers, to be the free, unfettered, independent organ of a party is one thing, to be the tool of a party is another. A man, be he minister or editor, who will suffer himself to be the tool of a party, merits the end of all tools—to be thrown aside as useless and worthless when worn out, or the job is done. Dear readers, if we have not your confidence, we are no fit editor for you. If you read what we write or what we insert with any suspicion, either of the genuineness of the article itself, or of our motives in bringing it before you, throw the book aside; you will get no profit from it; the secret suspicion that is working in your mind will poison the whole to you. But if you feel so far a confidence in us as an editor both as to what we write and what we insert, that we would not willingly deceive you or ourselves, for due allowance must be made for human weakness and infirmity, it imposes on us the greater obligation not justly to forfeit it, but rather seek to maintain and increase it to the utmost of our power.

2. The second element of weight and influence is *solid profit*. You may trust us so far as not to doubt our sincerity of purpose, or even our ability of performance: and yet derive little profit from our labours. Should this be the case, where or with whom the fault may lie, it is not for us to inquire, much less decide; but if you do not profit by our pages, do not read them. "In all labour," says the wise man, "there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury." (Prov. 14:23.) Judge for yourselves whether what we bring before you be the fruit of labour or the talk of the lips. If the former, it will feed and profit; if the latter, it will starve and rob you. In earthly matters, in the daily transactions of life, profit is the spring of business, the reward of labour, the soul of industry, sustaining and cheering all who live by the sweat of the brow or the sweat of the brain. Profit, in a higher sense of the word, is the strongest spring, as it is the sweetest reward, of all preaching, of all hearing, of all writing, of all reading, of all labour in the service of God and his word and truth. But what is profit, that is, spiritual profit? Let us seek to answer this question, and thus make it the chief purport of our present Address.

By profit, in a spiritual sense, we understand everything which enriches the soul, that is, makes it "rich toward God;" (Luke 12:21;) communicates to it durable riches and righteousness, causes those who love the Lord to inherit substance, and fills their treasures. (Prov. 8:18-21.) This is profit. Of this profit, of these treasures, Wisdom, that is Jesus, as of God "made unto us wisdom," (1 Cor. 1:30,) holds the key. Wisdom, therefore, cries aloud, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth

understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her." (Prov. 3:13-15.) And again: "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it." (Prov. 8:10, 11.) But as the fruit of this wisdom is to make us wise unto salvation, and as it is the free gift of God to those who feel their need of it, (James 1:5) we have to cry and seek for it, but shall not cry and seek in vain. "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." (Prov. 2:3-6.) Few, however, seem to know, few to prize this heavenly wisdom, this divine teaching, this unction or anointing from the Holy One which teacheth all things, and is truth and no lie. Forms and ceremonies content some, a name to live satisfies others; a sound creed, with a tolerably consistent life, is enough for this professor, the approbation of men, the flattery of his own heart, are sufficient for that. But O the insufficiency, the emptiness, the deceptiveness of all these forms and shadows, when we are made to see and feel who and what we are; when our poverty comes upon us like an armed man; when our miserable destitution, nakedness, beggary, and thorough insolvency, with all their attendant wants and woes, stare us in the face; when we stand before the throne of the Most High without a rag to cover us, a refuge to hide us, or a plea to avail us. It is this view of ourselves within and without, this sinking down before God as the great Searcher of hearts, this deep and feeling sense of the pitiable state into which sin, original and actual, has brought us, which, in the hands of the blessed Spirit, opens our eyes to see what alone can profit us. One beam of divine light shining into the soul is enough to show us not only what we are, but what alone can do us any good. One drop of the unction from the Holy One falling upon the lids is enough to open the eyes to see in whom all salvation is, from whom all salvation comes, and thus for ever to chase away those idle dreams, those vain delusions, those deceptive hopes in which thousands be as in the midst of the sea, or upon the top of a mast. By hunger we learn what is true food; by thirst, what is pure water, wine, and milk; by want, what is kind charity; by cold and nakedness, what are warmth and clothing; by pitiless storms and beating rains, what are house and home, refuge and shelter. That, then, which feeds, warms, relieves, clothes, shelters, comforts, blesses, and saves the soul is that alone which profits it. Everything else, every other substitute, is but a stone for bread or a serpent for a fish; (Matt. 7:9, 10;) the dream of a hungry man who eateth and awaketh, and his soul is empty; (Isa. 29:8;) ashes for food, and a lie in the right hand for substantial truth; (Isa. 44:20;) the vine of Sodom and the fields of Gomorrah for the best wine that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak. (Deut. 32:32: Song 7:9.)

But where or whence shall we get this solid, substantial food, this wine that maketh glad the heart of man, this oil that maketh his face to shine, this bread which strengtheneth man's heart? (Ps. 104:15.) Is it not all in Jesus?—the risen, the ascended, the glorified, and glorious Son of the Father in truth and love? He alone is the bread of life to feed us: (John 6:48;) the water of life to give us drink; (John 7:37;) his justifying righteousness is our only

acceptable dress: (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:6; Phil. 3:9;) his atoning blood our only redemption and remission of sins; (Eph. 1:7;) his word and promise our only hope: (Rom. 4:18-21; 2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 6:18-20;) his sympathy and compassion as our great High Priest on his throne our main support; (Heb. 4:15;) and his ability to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him our chief encouragement. But how are we to obtain this food, this shelter, this peace, this support, this strength and consolation? We see, clearly see, that it is not in us, and we see, clearly see, in whom it all centres. But to get at it, to draw it down into our own breast, to feed on the bread, to drink the milk and wine, to enjoy the peace, the rest, the quiet, the calm security, the deliverance from all foes and fears; to have the earnest and foretastes of eternal bliss, the sweet assurance of all sin pardoned, all backslidings healed, every crooked thing made straight and every rough place made plain; to have all bondage, distance, darkness, guilt, and apprehension fully removed, and to walk in the light of God's countenance as freely accepted in the Beloved—how shall these heavenly blessings be realised as our happy portion? Only as the blessed Spirit takes of the things of Christ, reveals them to us, gives us faith to believe in the Son of God, and by this precious faith to receive every mercy and blessing out of his fulness. We thus see that before we can preach to profit, write to profit, and, we may well add, hear or read to profit, we must know and feel these three things:—1. A deep sense of our own emptiness, poverty, and destitution. 2. A view by faith of the Son of God as containing in himself all the treasures of grace and glory. 3. A communication by the blessed Spirit of some of these glorious riches feelingly and experimentally to our heart. In the transactions of business and daily life, profit is something real and tangible. It is not a set of account books or a balance sheet, a heap of bills or a row of figures, which at the end of the year shows the trader where he stands that he terms profit, but a real, solid, substantial addition to his income or his capital, to his necessaries or his comforts, to the support and education of his family, to his honourable standing in business, to the increase and enlargement of his connection. It is this solid, substantial character stamped upon profits which makes them so sought after and so valued. And similarly, it is the misery of losses, and carrying on a sinking, unprofitable business which furrows the brow with care, fills the mind with gloomy anxieties, and embitters to thousands every day of their lives. Now take this parallel into the things of God. The profit of the soul is, or should be, as solid, as real, tangible, and substantial as the profit of business. The soul trades as well as the body; there is a business, a daily business, carried on in the closet as well as in the counting-house, at the throne of grace as well as behind the counter. The soul has its gains and losses, its receipts and payments, its account books—its waste book, journal, and ledger, the first for wasted time and opportunities, the second for the sins of each day, the third for the transgressions set down in the long debt book of memory during many years. But when the books are opened, a glance at their contents, for we need not sum up the totals or make a balance sheet, shows us our entire insolvency and total bankruptcy. Where then the profit if the whole be loss? Here, as we close the books in despair, and look upward as if without help or hope, a Friend above meets the eye who has beforehand paid every debt, and bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Col. 2:11.) Is there no profit here? What! No profit in his precious blood which

cleanseth from all sin: no profit in his righteousness which justifies from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses? Why, it is all profit. This made David say: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." (Ps. 32:1-2.) It is this which makes Jesus so suitable, so precious to those who believe, that in him we are blessed, already blessed, "with all spiritual blessings;" that "in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" that "in him we have obtained all inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." And why? "That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ,"—not in ourselves, not in our good words or good works, not in our account books, but in Christ. (Eph. 1:3-12.) To set forth, to exalt, and hold up to believing eyes and hearts this glorious Christ, whether by tongue or pen, is to speak to profit, for in him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" (Col. 2:3;) and as these treasures are opened and their precious contents revealed, the believing heart becomes enriched by the communication of them through the blessed Spirit. Now we believe that none but the living family of God know, or care to know, for themselves anything about this spiritual profit. In fact, none but they have truly learnt that first element of divine teaching which makes us at all concerned about profit or loss. Our blessed Lord said, and his words touch this point to the very core: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26.) Thus there lies a deep and weighty matter at the foundation of the whole question about profit and loss—that I have a soul to be saved or lost. What then shall I give in exchange for my soul? for what am I profited if I gain the whole world and lose that? This deep conviction of a soul to be saved or lost lies at the root of all our religion if it be of God. Here, on one side, is the world and all its profits and pleasures; its charms, its smiles, its winning ways, its comforts, its luxuries, its honours, to gain which is the grand struggle of human life; there, on the other, is my solitary soul, immortal in a mortal body, to live in death, through death, and after death, aye, for ever and ever, when the world and all its pleasures and profits will sink under the wrath of the Almighty: and this dear soul of mine, my very self, my only self, my all, must be lost or saved. Everything then which I gain to the injury of my soul is positive loss, everything which I lose to the benefit of my soul is positive gain. Here is my measure, here my scale of loss and profit. My conscience keeps the account book in which the entries are made. There is a page on each side for debtor and creditor, a "To" and a "By." Against every sin, every idle or foolish word, every wandering glance, every infidel, unbelieving, unchaste, rebellious, fretful, murmuring thought, every proud, selfish, careless, carnal, worldly movement or desire, against all coldness, darkness, deadness, barrenness, prayerlessness, and the whole crop of earthliness there is a "By." But on the opposite page over against these numerous entries, these long, long sums there stands a "To." Every gleam and glimpse of divine light, every sweet season in prayer, every visitation of the Lord's presence and power which preserves the spirit, every gracious promise or encouraging invitation, every soft word or gentle touch, every kind whisper, every rising hope, in a word, everything which warms, cheers, melts, and raises the soul up from earth to heaven is a blessed "To:" for all are placed to our account as so many earnest and, as it were, prepayments

of the infinite riches of the Son of God as made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Now the main work of the ministry is to unfold this question of profit and loss, and examine, so to speak, the account books of the family of God. Every living hearer brings his account book with him, and as he sits before the man of God he finds his accounts examined and entered into. The servant of the Lord enters first into our losses, and shows what we are by nature and practice, by sin original and actual, bringing against us debt after debt and bill after bill, conscience meanwhile not merely owning the truth of every charge, but secretly whispering, "Aye, and a thousand sins twice told which you have not mentioned and cannot, dare not mention," until down the poor soul sinks almost into despair, like a tradesman poring over his books in a very cold sweat of agony at the prospect of immediate ruin to crush him into the dust. But now the man of God opens the other side of the page, and holding up to view the Person and work, blood and righteousness, of the Lord the Lamb, not only shows every sin forgiven, every charge met and paid, every debt discharged, and full acceptance for the whole sum given; but, the blessed Spirit bearing his inward testimony, by describing the work of grace, proves to the soul's joy that it has an interest in the finished work of the Son of God. As then he shows that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, and that where sin abounded there grace did much more abound, and this is received and believed, it raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill to set him among princes, and to make him inherit the throne of glory.

This preaching is to profit, not like much in our day, a "subverting of the hearers" by perverse disputings and erroneous doctrines, (2 Tim. 2:14; 1 Tim. 6:5,) but a building of them up on their most holy faith. (Jude 20.) This sound, searching, experimental preaching, and, we may add, writing, for we may include both, communicates to the soul solid good, for it enters into the conscience, God's special domain, sometimes wounding, sometimes healing, but always, as owned and blessed of the Spirit, making it alive and tender, and thus fostering the fear of God as its choice treasure. By it, as a message from God, faith is strengthened, hope enlarged, love drawn forth, humility, meekness, brokenness and contrition of spirit produced or renewed; by it sin is made exceedingly sinful, and though the light which it casts into the heart, and perhaps upon some passages of the past life is sometimes almost too great to be borne, yet in that very light, and by the working with it of divine Life, there is wrought a repentance, a godly sorrow, a self-loathing, a solemn casting oneself down before the Lord's feet, which though painful is felt to be profitable. Is not God's teaching to profit? (Isa. 48:17.) Is not Scripture "given by inspiration of God," that it may be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works?" (2 Tim. 3:10-17.) Does not Paul declare that in his preaching at Ephesus "he kept back nothing that was profitable," and that by so doing he was "pure from the blood of all men?" for "he shunned not to declare unto them all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:20, 26, 27.) Are we not also told that "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man (that is, not every man universally, but every one of those to whom it is given) to profit withal?" (1 Cor. 12:7.) If we are "God's building," is it not that our bodies may be the temples of the Holy Ghost? if "God's husbandry," that we may be "fruitful in every good word and

work?" (1 Cor. 3:9, 5:20; John 15:1, 2, 8.)

Measure then, by this scale, all whom you hear, and all that you read. Let this be your simple question,—“Does it profit me? This ministry, this book, this company, this connection, this person, do I get real soul profit from them? How stands my account book? What says my conscience? Do I not know, do I not feel when I lose and when I gain, when I fall among thieves and am left half dead, and when the oil and wine are poured in, and I am bound up and healed? Why then should we encourage thieves and robbers? for such all are who enter not by the door into the sheepfold, (John 10:1) whether in the ministry or out of the ministry. Will a banker keep a dishonest clerk, or a draper a thieving assistant? Are we then to encourage dishonest men, ministers or not ministers, erroneous books, and time-serving publications, when once our eyes are opened to see who and what they are, and that the truth in its real vitality and power is not in them? When we could only see men as trees walking, there was an excuse for some degree of unsteadiness and vacillation. Our natural kindness disposed us to think and hope well of almost all who made a profession of truth; our conscience would not permit us to speak against them, or separate ourselves from them. But, when we have learnt by repeated and painful experience how hurtful their company or example has been to us, are we still to take them to our bosom and associate with them? Are we to give our ears to erroneous men, and our eyes to erroneous books, if we know anything of truth in its purity and its power? Are we to give our company to those who by their inconsistent conduct, carnal conversation, worldly conformity, light and trifling ways, vain presumptuous confidence, and utter want of everything gracious and spiritual in heart, lip, and life, can only rob and plunder our soul of every grain of tenderness, meekness, and godly fear? Do not sit under a ministry which starves or injures you. If we cannot find books which do profit us, let us read nothing but the blessed word of God: if we can find no simple, humble, spiritually minded child of God to walk with, let us rather walk alone, and commune with our own heart on our bed and be still.

With many of us life is fast ebbing away. Of some who read these pages, it may soon be said, “There shall be time with him no longer.” God’s judgments are abroad in the land. He has smitten us with a most terrible stroke in this fearful cattle plague, of which we have seen the beginning; but who can tell the end? It may be soon with us in the words of the prophet, “The fields shall yield no meat: the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.” (Hab. 3:17.) So intimately bound together are all the links of society that this calamity, which neither we nor our fathers knew, strikes not only the immediate sufferers, but all who have themselves and their families to maintain. Closed markets, a general paralysis of business, the greatest risk and uncertainty in all buying and selling, even in keeping stock, must be the greatest loss, if not positive ruin, to many; and food at famine price is real want to most, and a serious injury to all. Nor is this all that we may greatly fear or painfully feel. A visitation of cholera is generally expected by medical authorities in the ensuing summer; and who can tell when and where it shall begin, and when and where it shall end? How dark, too, and gloomy are the signs of the times! We have lost a veteran statesman who, with the support and confidence of almost all political parties, and endowed with a wonderful union of sagacity and

firmness, held the helm of government during a most trying period, and, humanly speaking, preserved us from the misery of being even now at war. Popery is advancing at a rapid pace, and all the more surely as the eyes of most seem blinded to its progress. A large number of the clergy are Papists at heart, and by accustoming their congregation to Popish ceremonies are gradually paving the way to a fuller development of Papal doctrines and observances. In the House of Commons, any motion which tends to expose its practices or check its progress is so coughed down, or laughed down, or counted out, that few members have the moral courage to speak in favour of it or support it. Ireland has just escaped the breaking out of a wide-spread conspiracy, which, but for the good hand of God, might have issued, as others have done before, in a fearful massacre of the Protestant population, avenged as it would have been by a fearful retribution.

When we turn from the world to the church, little that is pleasant or hopeful meets the eye. The Lord is taking home or laying aside his servants, and few seem raised up in their place to blow the trumpet with a certain sound, stand on the battlements of Zion, or feed the flock of slaughter. In churches there is much strife and division, little conversion work going on, and a general apathy seems to brood over most congregations, even where sound doctrine is preached and experimental truth contended for.

But it is time to draw to a close. Through mercy, all is not thoroughly or totally dark. The Lord has always had, ever will have, a seed to serve him. Thus, with all these fearful and gloomy prospects we hope, nay, fully believe, that he has still a goodly number of those who fear and love him in this land. For them we labour, to them we here address ourselves; and if the God of all grace be pleased to crown with his blessing, through the present year, what may drop from our pen or appear in our pages, to him in his Trinity of Persons and undivided Unity of Essence must be ascribed all the praise, and honour, and glory.

Your affectionate Friend and Servant,
THE EDITOR

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January, 1867

How sensibly does each recurring year remind us of the flight of time. Ever rolling onward, like a mighty river, and bearing us on its broad and rapid bosom, Time, Time, that mysterious, inexplicable, and inexorable course of nature which we call by that name, hurries us unceasingly on, willingly or unwillingly, to that vast and boundless ocean of eternity into which it flows, and in which it is absorbed and lost. We did not launch ourselves on this mighty, outspread, and ever-flowing stream, but when reason dawned found ourselves already floating on it. And as we know not the beginning, so we thought little of the end of the voyage. Amidst the sports and tears of childhood, the studies and play of boyhood, the airy dreams and rising passions of youth, or the soberer pursuits of advancing manhood, most of us spent our days heedless of the flight of time and regardless of our nearer advance each day to eternity. Life and time were so linked together with us

that they seemed as if but one. We did not know, or if we knew it, the idea was at once thrust aside as an unwelcome intruder, that they really were so distinct that with us it might soon cease to be time, but that with us life would never cease to be. But the Lord, who had purposes of grace towards us, and cared for and loved us more than we cared for and loved ourselves, would not suffer us ever so to live as those who have no hope and are without God in the world. He who had chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and launched us at the appointed season, without our consent or knowledge, on the river of time, that it might bring us into the ocean of eternity, there to dwell for ever in his presence and in the enjoyment of his love, would not allow us to remain ever destitute of that eternal life which he had given us in his dear Son, and which consists in knowing him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. He was, therefore, pleased, by a special act of his sovereign grace and divine power, to quicken our souls into spiritual life: and though his dealings have been so various with us, both in Providence and in grace, that no fixed standard can be set up, or rigid lines drawn, which shall embrace every case, for "he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," yet this at least we may say of them that they all have been ways of mercy and truth, and have all tended to one and the same point and been directed to one and the same end—to manifest and glorify himself in our free and full salvation, to reveal to our heart and enshrine in our affections the Son of his love, and thus make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. This, at least, we may say is our chief end and aim to realise and enjoy, though in many points we may seem much to come short, and though, through the power of temptation and unbelief, we may still have many painful trials to exercise both our faith and our patience.

If, then, according to our figure, Time is a river, and we being embarked on it are now floating down on its bosom, it may be well every now and then to examine what are the hopes and prospects of our voyage coming to a happy end. The course of the river is winding and tortuous; the banks are sometimes as if out of sight, and at others well nigh meeting; the stream deep and rapid; the channel full of hidden rocks; the crew for the most part heedless of danger, and more bent on pleasure and amusement than disposed to watch or work; and few on board seem to be alive to the perils of the voyage, or anxiously looking to its end. That it must end we all know, but when and how we know not. Will the end be soon? Will the end be happy? When it comes, will it find us prepared to meet so solemn an event? These are questions which may well exercise our thoughts and lead our minds to earnest prayer and self-examination how matters stand personally with ourselves. With some of us, either through advancing age or the inroads of sickness and debility, the vast ocean appears almost in sight, and its waves are already seen rolling and whitening in the dim horizon. When once we meet its swellings, and they begin to toss up and down our frail bark, and wash over the deck as if they would swallow us up alive as those that go down into the pit, the reality of our faith and hope will be proved, and it will be made manifest whether our profession of religion has been only a name to live, or the effect and fruit of a vital work of God upon our soul. How rich a mercy will it then be to have our evidences so clearly brightened, our faith so enlarged and strong, our doubts and fears so fully dispelled, and our soul so blessed and favoured with the smiles and presence of the Lord that when death comes we may have nothing to do but to die.

But though the whole work is of his grace, and we shall have nothing and enjoy nothing at that solemn hour but what he may freely give, (for without him we can do nothing,) yet it will be our wisdom and mercy to attend to the Lord's own words beforehand, whilst life and health and opportunity still admit. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." (Luke 12:35, 36.) In another place, also, how graciously does he bid us "take heed to ourselves lest at any time our hearts be over-charged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon us unawares;" and how he urges it on our consciences: "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (Luke 21:16.) Nothing is more easy, as nothing is more common, than self-deception in a point where self-deception is eternal ruin. The most suspicious of men are least suspicious here. The keen eye which scrutinises every appearance of fraud without never turns its gaze to examine what fraud there may be going on within; and he who suspects everybody never suspects himself. When the pocket is threatened, scarce any precaution is considered enough to meet the danger. Bolts and bars, iron shutters and safes are bought, and a whole army of police and watchmen paid to guard against suffering, loss of property by force, and every check that ingenuity can devise has been invented to guard against loss of property by fraud. But what care or precaution is taken, what anxious days or watchful nights are spent, lest the violent assaults of sin or the subtle deceits of Satan should rob us of our own soul? Nay, so willing are most, to be plundered of that precious jewel, to lose which is to lose their all, and so desirous to be deceived in that very, we may almost add that only thing whence recovery is impossible, that they pay men on purpose to rob and deceive them; so that he who robs them most unblushingly, and defrauds them most thoroughly and successfully, carries off as his reward in pay or popularity the highest prizes of his profession. We do not say that all this huge mass of robbery and deception is done of wilful, deliberate purpose, either of the robber or the robbed, the defrauder or the defrauded; for the word of truth declares of "seducers and evil men" that they are "deceiving and being deceived"—first "deceived," so as to believe their own lie, and then seeking by deceit to impose that lie on others. (2 Tim. 3:13.) But to deceive, to lull asleep, to proclaim "peace, peace," where there is no peace, to sew pillows to all armholes, is to every discerning eye, beyond all doubt or question, the busy trade and active employment of hundreds of men and ministers who, knowing nothing themselves of the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit or the work of faith with power, rest themselves, and easily persuade others to rest also, in a form of godliness whilst they deny the power thereof. The Lord has solemnly and repeatedly warned us against all such thieves and robbers. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt. 7:15, 16.) Yes, by their fruits we may know them; for where do we see in them those "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God?" Where do we see in them or in their followers that separation from the world, that fear of God, that tenderness of conscience, that humility of soul, that brokenness of heart and

contrition of spirit, that spirituality of mind and conversation, that holiness of life and consistency in walk and conduct which are the scriptural marks and fruits of vital godliness?

But besides fixing our eyes on others and weighing them in the scales of the sanctuary, which is often necessary in order to guide our own feet and determine our own conduct, do we not need also to take special heed to ourselves, and well and carefully put into the same unerring scales our own religion, lest we, though in a different way, should fall into the same awful trap of Satan? Many see others wrong who do not see themselves wrong, and, like David, unmercifully cut off a tripping neighbour whilst they tenderly spare a stumbling self. But the Lord has given us a solemn warning to take heed to *ourselves*. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21.) We need no other testimony to convince us that many who are buoyed up by false hopes from themselves, or by others, will find themselves fearfully mistaken, and, concerning faith, will make awful shipwreck. Few of the barks which we now see spreading their sails on every side will make a happy voyage. Most will go down at that spot where the river flows into the sea, and Time and Eternity meet. How will it fare with us? Amidst so many wrecks, shall we escape the general disaster? All whose eyes rest on these pages will not see God nor behold his face in righteousness.

But how rare it is to hear any warning voice raised from the pulpit or the press against the evils and the perils of self-deception. How rare to find in any sermon, preached or published, a close, searching word addressed to the heart and conscience of those who profess to have received the truth. The wicked are warned, and the dead in sin cut off with no unsparing hand; seekers are encouraged still to press on; the cast down comforted; and the doctrines of grace boldly and faithfully proclaimed. But where are we warned against the danger of self deception, of a graceless profession, of having only a name to live, of resting on shallow, imperfect evidences, and of coming short at the last of eternal life? But these are the very points on which living souls are usually most exercised, and in which they find and feel that danger chiefly dwells. It is quietly assumed that all who profess to have received the truth are real believers, and that their very reception of the truth is an evidence of divine life. But this quiet assumption is guilty of two evils. It passes, 1st, over the very spots in experience where the living family are usually most deeply tried: and, 2ndly, plasters with untempered mortar a wall which is ready to fall, and which should rather be pulled down. As a proof of this, just cast your eyes around, and if you are at all connected, as most probably you are, with a place and people professing the truth, you will not have far to look. In our churches and congregations we have scores of what we may term common believers. They like to hear the truth: they are warmly attached to the minister and his ministry, and if attacked, will boldly defend both it and him. Their life is for the most part consistent, and their seat never vacant. They support the cause, when then can afford it, liberally and ungrudgingly; interest themselves and are often very useful in the Sunday School: take in and regularly read the "Standard," and other religious books: have their private and family prayers, and rarely miss the prayer meeting. Besides this, on the strength of a few evidences, their general blameless character and conduct, and the standing which they have long

maintained in the congregation, they have, perhaps, been received into the church, and have sufficient light and knowledge of the things of God to maintain in it a creditable and what is called honourable position. And yet with all this, which looks so well and promising outwardly, there is that wanting inwardly without which the whole of their profession is vain. Here is the fatal secret. It may be all summed up in one short sentence. *They are destitute of divine life.* And thus their religion is that of a bell or a bugle—"a thing without life giving sound," a mere noise, a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. With all their profession, all their good qualities, their amiableness, their consistency, their liberality, their support of the cause, their zealous attendance on the means, and their many excellent points, for which we cannot but esteem and admire them, they fall short in that very thing which to have is eternal bliss, and which to want is everlasting woe. The Holy Ghost has never quickened or regenerated their souls. They have everything but the one thing, lacking which they lack everything worth having, and possess nothing worth possessing; and thus as dead before God are as far from the kingdom of heaven in present grace and future glory as the swearer or the drunkard.

Our language may seem harsh; but we would confidently appeal to your own experience and judgment, you who know divine realities by divine teaching, whether our description be not true, and whether you yourself, in your inmost mind, do not feel that you can at this moment lay your hands on several, if not many, to whom it applies to the very letter. But what pulpit, what book warns such as these against the perils of their present profession? We see them everywhere in our chapels, forming, perhaps, a large part of the congregation, sheltering themselves under a sound doctrinal ministry; and yet it cannot escape the notice of any discerning eye that they are, at present at least, out of the secret of vital godliness. Indeed, some of them are sufficiently honest to acknowledge it. But how often do we find a ministry which refuses them shelter under its wings, which deals honestly and faithfully with their case, which seeks to fasten a word of conviction on their consciences, and to drive them out of all false refuges? "We must not cast down or distress the little ones," would be, probably, the answer to our charge. "If we were to be always as you, perhaps, would have us, warning our hearers against self-deception, and pointing out how far a person might go in religion and yet be nothing, we should make 'the heart of the righteous sad,' and discourage the lambs. We are bidden to preach the gospel, and comfort the people of God. If any others take comfort to whom it does not belong, that is not our fault." But is faithfulness no part of your ministry? Should you not by manifestation of the truth commend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God? If you warn the sinner, should you not also warn the professor? You should not willingly deceive any: but may you not help many to deceive themselves?

But there may be a good reason, perhaps, for all this want of faithfulness. Are you yourself ever exercised about your own state and standing? Are you ever tried in your own soul about the reality of your own religion? Do you ever fear whether you may not be deceived *yourself*? Are you never cast down or exercised by the deficiency that you find in yourself of gospel grace and gospel fruit? Do you never see and feel in your own case how far you might go as a preacher, and an earnest, accepted, and, perhaps, popular

preacher too, and yet in the end fall short of eternal life? Perhaps were you more exercised yourself upon your own religion, it would add point and edge to your ministry in this very important particular. You would not let people off, nor let them in so easily. You would not suffer them to shelter themselves so quietly under your ministry, or slip into the church with so little difficulty. Nor is your objection of much weight, if of any, that you would distress the little ones if your ministry were more searching. Allow that a little more point and edge sharpened up your ministry, and that a few pinches of fresh salt added to it made some sore consciences smart, and some wounds more acutely sting, would that impair its efficiency, or diminish its value and acceptability to the family of God? Some who had been slightly healed might cry out as the old wound was ripped open, and some of the timid and tried might quake and tremble with fear; but would that hurt the one or the other? Your keen, sharp strokes would not hurt or even touch the life of God in their soul, but would bring it more to light by cutting away its fleshy surroundings. You had better send the little ones groaning home than rejoicing in a false peace. They will have to groan and sigh more than ever you can make them do, before they will get what they want, and without which they will never be satisfied. And surely there never was a day when a searching, discriminating ministry was more needed, and, we may add, more generally opposed. But the more it is kicked at, condemned, and cried down as legal, the more it shows the necessity there is for it. Let us seek, indeed, to remove from it every just ground of blame. The warning voice need not, indeed should not, be mingled with any bitterness, harshness, censoriousness, cutting words, or violent expressions. Some seem to think there can be no faithfulness without personality or violence. But this is a mistake in the opposite extreme. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Anger and personality, wrath and bitterness, sneers and irony, attacks on character, and imputations of motive, names and places, direct or unmistakable allusions, are all foreign to the whole character and spirit of the gospel. Love to the souls of men, tenderness and kindness of manner and expression, earnest desires for the word to be received in a spirit of affection, pressing point after point home on the conscience firmly and yet gently, so handling the knife that whilst it cuts out every diseased part it leaves the healthy and the sound uninjured and rather benefitted; an unwillingness to inflict too much pain, yet a fixed determination to do what is to be done thoroughly and unflinchingly—such and other marks will show the workman who rightly divides the word of truth, and takes forth the precious from the vile.

But the question may spring up in the mind of some of our readers: "This may be all very true and very good, but what has it to do with the Annual Address?" May we not in our turn ask: "Are not these thoughts, these exercises, these inquiries suitable to the present occasion?" The commencement of a New Year forms, as it were, a suitable standpoint whence to look back as well as look forward, to look without as well as within, at ourselves and at others, and take a general survey of the church and the world. We have just emerged out of the year that is gone and stand on the threshold of that which is come. Past, present, and future we may scan with rapid glance. Few who have any serious, solemn thoughts about eternity; few whose religion is a reality, and not a mere name or notion; few who live in some habitual recollectedness of the presence and power of God;

few whose hearts have been touched by his finger and thus made tender before him, pass by the first day of the year without some spiritual acknowledgment of it. In their secret approaches to the throne, in their family worship, at various moments through the day, the commencement of the New Year will be a subject of prayer or meditation with many who fear God, and yet who would abstain from any legal or superstitious observance of days and months, and times and years. Why should not, then, we embrace the opportunity afforded us by our Annual Address to look back as well as forward, without as well as within, to the state of the churches as well as the state of our own souls? We are not ever to be treading the wheel or tugging at the oar of this world. There is something higher and holier to be attended to, something to engage our earnest thoughts, anxious cares, and warmest affections besides and beyond the shop or the farm, the counter or the counting-house, the bench and the loom, the wife and the children, the cupboard and the pantry, the sweat of the brow or the toil of the brain. We boast of our freedom; but what is our freedom worth if we can never get our neck from under the chain of business, and may never indulge ourselves with some quiet rest from life's carking cares and this world's gnawing anxieties? God has mercifully given us a day in every week on which to rest and pause amidst the cares, the business, and the whirl of life. Well may we say that God has given it us, for such a boon to man and beast never would have been either given or taken by man. And thankfully do we accept what he has graciously given. But for the ever-recurring Lord's Day, but for the rest of body and soul then given, but for the services of the sanctuary, the assembling of ourselves in the house of prayer, the blessedness of a preached gospel, and the revival of our spirit under these means of grace, how soon should we become as if crusted over with a thick coat of carnality and worldliness. But as a soiled dove escapes to some quiet and secluded spot where she may bathe her plumage in the rivulet, preen her wings, and regain what she has lost in the smoky town of her purity and strength; so the soul, soiled with the dust and smoke of the week, gladly embraces the Lord's Day with its rest and quiet, that it may bathe itself once more in the fountain opened for all sin and uncleanness, renew its strength, and enjoy some of those gracious revivings of faith and love whereby it may mount upward in heart and affection to where Jesus sits at the right hand of God.

If circumstances admit, why, then, should not we take the opportunity of the new-born year to gather up our thoughts from the din and the dust of life? Under the old dispensation, the commencement of the civil year (for the Hebrews had a sacred or ecclesiastical year beginning at a different period*) was celebrated by the blowing of trumpets, and was, therefore, called "the Feast of Trumpets." The first two days of the year were kept with peculiar solemnity. There was to be a holy convocation, or a calling of the people together, a complete cessation from all servile work, and particular sacrifices to be offered. (Lev. 23:24, 25; Num. 29:1-6.) God would not suffer them to enter upon the new year without some solemn reference to his service and worship. They were a holy people, separated from all the nations of the earth as the Lord's peculiar treasure, and they were to be perpetually reminded of the presence of God in their midst as their special privilege and happiness. They were not then to commence the year for themselves, but for God. The silver trumpets blowing through the camp aroused their sleeping bodies, and called up their listless minds to remember that they were about to enter upon

a new year. On that day they met together in holy convocation; on that day all servile work was laid aside; on that day the burnt offering sent forth its sweet savour unto the Lord, the meat offering of flour mingled with oil was presented, and the sin-offering slain to make atonement. Is there not some instruction couched for us in all this? And may we not enter upon the new year with some sense of the gracious hand which has led us through the past, and on which we desire to lean, that it may guide us safely through the present?

* The civil year, that is, the year according to which all contracts, agreements, &c., on worldly business were calculated, commenced on the first day of the month Tisri, corresponding to our September 16; but the sacred or ecclesiastical year, according to which all the great festivals were determined, commenced with the month Nisan, corresponding to March 16.

We know not what the present year may bring forth, either as regards our private or public interests. We seem on the eve of important events, if not of troublous times; and we know not how far they may personally affect us. The past has been a most eventful year. The very visible heavens have themselves seemed almost out of course. Our cattle have been afflicted with a mysterious and most fatal disease, of an infection unparalleled for subtlety of communication, and great losses have been sustained.* Nor has the danger ceased, for though mercifully much mitigated, the disease still lingers in our coasts, and breaks out in different places, to show that the Lord's outstretched hand still hangs over us. Cholera has swept away its thousands in the eastern part of the metropolis, and heavily visited other parts of the land. The crops, when ready for harvesting, were ruined in the field by a continuance of drenching showers: and the potato disease, in more than its usual virulence, has much added to the calamity. In the north, heavy floods have destroyed much valuable property, and been attended with sad loss of life. The oldest of us can scarcely remember such a storm as fell on the commercial world on that Black Friday, (May 11th) when the great discount house, which was popularly supposed to be as firm as the Bank of England, stopped payment. The crushing weight with which the general collapse of credit fell on other houses, and the far-reaching calamity which spread, in consequence, all through the country can never be fully known; for in these commercial disasters, though the rich seem most to suffer, yet the shock, as in an earthquake, reaches all classes, and spreads itself through the whole of society in the waste of capital, the diminution of credit, the dearness of money, the breaking of contracts, the suspension of great works, the throwing out of employment of large masses of the labouring population, and the general depreciation of property. Directly or indirectly, therefore, all suffer under these revulsions. When, too, as in the past year, such heavy blows fall simultaneously on the agricultural and commercial world, the disaster becomes intensified; and we doubt not that many of our readers, in one or other of these large interests, have had a bitter taste of the losses of 1866, and enter with crippled resources on 1867.

* It is calculated that about 300,000 cattle have died or been slaughtered, of which the actual money value could not have been much less than £4,500,000 (four millions and a half), besides all the contingent loss of milk, butter, cheese, manure, &c., as some of our readers know by their own painful

experience.

What an eventful year has it also been on the Continent. Events now pass so rapidly before our eyes that, as in travelling by rail, the scene is all come and gone before we can gather up its character or fully understand its features. One campaign sufficed to lay prostrate in the dust one of the greatest powers of Europe—the Austrian Empire, and thereby to accomplish two results, both of which at one time seemed a visionary and hopeless dream—a free Italy and a united Germany. Pent up in our little Isle, we think little of the struggles and sorrows of the Continent. Twenty-five millions of Italians and sixty millions of Germans are to us but drops and units. The grinding tyranny of Austria in Italy, its firm support of all the iniquities of the Papacy, and its stern, cruel repression of all civil and religious liberty, as it little concerned us, we seemed little to think about or care for. We who cannot bear a thread to tie our own hands, can look and see other nations bound hand and foot with comparative indifference. It would be out of place to dwell at any length on this subject, but we cannot forbear remarking that two more important events could scarcely signalise any one year. Italy is now free to the Adriatic. The last Austrian soldier has left Venice, the last French Zouave has quitted Rome. For the first time since A.D. 1494, when the French king, Charles VIII., crossed the Alps and entered Florence and Rome in triumph, the soil of Italy is untouched by the foot of a foreign soldier. Italy, under French or German yoke for more than three centuries and a half, is now free from sea to sea and shore to shore. But with freedom to Italy comes the downfall of oppression, both civil and religious. The temporal power of the Papacy has already virtually, if not actually, fallen. The year 1866 has seen what prophecy, according to most interpreters, has long pointed to—a fatal blow at the usurped power enthroned on the City of Seven Hills. Rome has now virtually changed its sovereign and belongs to Italy, not to the Pope. What is hidden in the mystic womb of time, what great issues will flow from this mighty revolution, none can foresee: but we may be sure that matters will not end here. We have elsewhere expressed our opinion that the downfall of the Pope's temporal power does not involve any diminution of his spiritual authority, and indeed may only for a time increase it. But the blow which God has struck at the Pope's temporal power is a pledge, and perhaps a beginning of the blow which, in his own time, he will deal at his spiritual. The spiritual power and authority of the Papacy may rise to a great height; and in this country, as so many good men have predicted, it may yet establish for a short time its throne. But Babylon is already judged. Her day will come, and all her pride, her pomp, and her power, and all who rejoice in it, will go down into the pit.

We have given our pen a somewhat loose rein, but standing on the edge of the year now come, we could not but cast a glance over that which is gone, particularly as it will be an epoch memorable to the end of the world. Nor are we so shut up within the bounds of our red covers as never to take a look at the outer world. We are still in it, though we hope not of it, and may consistently watch and trace the hand of God in the great movements to which we have already alluded, as well as in those minute matters which more nearly concern us in providence and grace.

But now let us look forward as well as backward. The year before our eyes

may hold in its bosom events which may deeply concern us, and affect us more sensibly than those of that which is past. We know what is past, but we know not what is to come. What personal, what family, what providential trials may await us, we know not. Sickness may attack our bodies, death enter our families, difficulties beset our circumstances, trials and temptations exercise our minds, snares entangle our feet, and many dark and gloomy clouds make our path one of heaviness and sorrow. Every year hitherto has brought its trials in its train; and how can we expect the present to be exempt? What then? Shall we sit down and wring our hands at the prospect of anticipated trials? Shall we go forward to meet them, or wait till they meet us? Anticipation is often worse than the reality, and for this simple reason, that no strength or support is either promised or given for trials of our own forecasting. "As thy days," (not "as thy fears,") "so shall thy strength be." "Hitherto," said Samuel, "hath the Lord helped us;" but the Ebenezer ("the stone of help") was the memorial of a battle won, not of a battle in prospect. The well-known and often-sung lines,

"He that hath help'd me hitherto,
Will help me all my journey through,"

well express the hope and confidence of a believing heart. If, indeed, we are his, whatever our trials may be, his grace will be sufficient for us. He who hath delivered, can and will deliver; and he who has brought us thus far on the road, who has so borne with our crooked manners in the wilderness, and never yet forsaken us, though we have so often forsaken him, will still, we trust, lead us along; will still guide and guard us, and be our God, our Father, and our Friend, not only to the end of the year, if spared to see it, but to the end of our life. May he bring us very near to himself; may his fear be ever alive in our heart; may he hold up our goings in his paths, that our footsteps slip not; may he keep us from evil, that it may not grieve us; and may he constrain us, by every constraint of his dying love, to live to his praise, that we may glorify him in our body and spirit, which are his. Blessed with his presence, we need fear no ill; favoured with his smile, we need dread no foe; upheld by his power, we need shrink from no trial; strengthened by his grace, we need apprehend no suffering. Knowing what we are and have been when left to ourselves, the slips that we have made, the snares that we have been entangled in, the shame and sorrow that we have procured to ourselves, well may we dread to go forth on this year alone; well may we say, "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence;" and may we not add, "For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." (Exod. 33:16.) May we be thus manifested as those who have found grace in the Lord's sight; and as a peculiar people, zealous of good works, may we be separated from all the people, profane or professing, who think and act otherwise, that are upon the face of the earth.

Such is the desire and prayer for himself and for every one of his gracious readers, of

Their affectionate Friend and Servant,
THE EDITOR

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January, 1868

To enjoy a sense of the goodness, mercy, and love of God in our own bosom, to glorify the Lord in our body and spirit, which are his, and to serve his cause and people, to the best of our ability, in our day and generation, are the only objects for which we, if indeed heirs of the kingdom, should really desire to live. Strong, indeed, with most of us are the natural ties which bind us closely to the present life. An instinctive cleaving to life for its own sake, a natural shrinking from death as something terrible to the flesh, family ties and affections, especially when the very maintenance, or, if not the maintenance, yet the comfort and protection of wife and children seem much to depend on our continuance here,—these and other bonds and fetters of a similar nature, into which we need not now enter, chain the greater part of us fast to earth. Often also, through darkness of mind, deadness of spirit, coldness of affection, absence of the Comforter, who alone can dispel the gloom which, from time to time, gathers over the soul, we feel as if we were utterly unfit to die, and that we need some special breaking in of light, life, liberty, and love, and some powerful application of the blood of sprinkling to our conscience, to make us willing, yea, desirous to depart, and leaving for ever this wretched world of sin and sorrow, to lay down the body of death under which we often groan, being burdened. Still, with all these allowances, which we are obliged to make for the weakness and infirmities of the flesh, we say again that the only objects really worth living for are the enjoyment of a sense of God's favour and love, to live to his honour and glory, and to be instruments in his hand of advancing his cause, ministering to the wants, temporal and spiritual, of his people, and doing what good we can to the bodies and souls of our fellow-men. In thus specifying what should be the three main objects of our present life, we, of course, do not intend to lay down thereby any exact rigid definition of gracious desires or instrumental usefulness. It will be sufficient for our purpose to present them as a general representation of what a Christian should desire to have, to do, and to be.

But if such are, or should be, the main objects for which life is desirable to all who truly fear God and believe in his dear Son, much more should they be so to those who are called to stand forth in a more prominent position in the church of God than private believers. The servants of God who stand in the forefront of the battle, as they need special grace and special gifts to do the work to which God has called them, so should they, above all other men, desire to walk in the light of his countenance, to live to his praise, seek his glory, advance his cause, proclaim his truth, minister to his people, and abound in every good word and work.

And if so, such also should be the desire of all who, like ourselves, occupy a kind of ministerial position as employing the pen in the service of God and the furtherance of his truth. This is a reading age; and as books are cheap, largely read, and easily procurable, the press has come to embrace a wider circle and to possess a greater influence on the public mind than any other medium of communication. As the great tidal wave of the world necessarily affects the minor tide of the church, so that it ebbs and flows with it, the

religious press, like the worldly press, has spread itself in all directions, and exercises an influence scarcely inferior to that of the pulpit. Works, therefore, written by gracious men, whether living or dead, may be viewed as exercising a ministry of their own, running, as it were, parallel to that of the pulpit, and in harmony with it, but possessing the advantage of penetrating into places, and speaking on occasions where the voice of the living preacher cannot come, as well as of being accessible at all times, lying silently and unobtrusively on the table or the book-shelf, ready to be taken up or laid down at pleasure, and, if we have well chosen them, our trustiest friends and wisest counsellors, who will always tell us the truth without fear and without flattery.

Among such trusty friends and counsellors we would fain be numbered. Without our seeking or desiring such an important and responsible position, we find ourselves occupying a place of great trust, if not of great usefulness. Month after month, and now year after year, we have an opportunity of speaking as if face to face to a large number of the people of God. What appears in our pages, either from our own pen or that of others, addresses itself to a living family, who receive what is thus submitted to them because they believe that, for the most part, it bears upon it the stamp of sincerity and truth, and is in harmony with the Scriptures and the teaching of the blessed Spirit in the heart. Our monthly visitant comes to them sometimes with a Sermon of a departed servant of God; and if it consist of but fragments of the actual discourse, still it speaks the same language and breathes the same spirit as when it issued from his lips. Sometimes it comes with a gracious Experience of the dealings of God with one of his living family, which would otherwise have been buried in oblivion; and thus fulfils the promise that "there is nothing secret that shall not be made manifest, neither anything hid that shall not be known and come abroad." Sometimes it comes as a Letter written to a friend, out of the fulness of a broken or rejoicing heart; and as such it speaks in our pages to other hearts as well as to that of the private correspondent. Sometimes it records in an Obituary the experience of a dying saint, and thus testifies to the goodness and faithfulness of God in those solemn moments when to nature heart and flesh fail. Sometimes the Editor lays before his readers his Meditations on various important points of truth, or seeks to unfold the Scriptures as they seem opened to his mind. And once in the year, in the opening month, our little work comes before them bearing on its first pages an Address to the spiritual readers, in which the Editor addresses them with the familiarity of a friend, and yet tenders them such affectionate counsel as he would desire himself to act upon and follow.

God works by instruments; and if he has seen fit to employ the hand which now traces these lines for his own glory and his people's good, the more solemn is the trust, and the greater the responsibility. "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful;" and if any one has reason to believe that to him there has been entrusted a stewardship of the mysteries of God, unfaithfulness to that trust, that is, wilful unfaithfulness (for allowance must be made for human infirmity), must be a great and crying sin. Of course, no steward, however unfaithful, would acknowledge his own unfaithfulness; as no minister, however erroneous, would own himself to be in error. He must, therefore, be judged by his actions; and if these will bear the test of

examination, confidence will be reposed in him in exact proportion to his presumed ability, for that, of course, is a necessary element of trust, and his proved faithfulness. But if this confidence be reposed in him, how careful should he be not to injure it by carelessness, presume upon it by assuming undue authority, lower and lessen it by making slips and mistakes, or abuse it to the exaltation or advantage of self, instead of seeking the honour and glory of God. These things press upon our mind, so that, whilst, on the one hand, we feel willing to labour with our pen, especially as that is now our chief ministerial employment, on the other our path becomes increasingly difficult in proportion to the extent and variety of our labours, the circulation and influence of our periodical, and the felt responsibility of our position. But hitherto we have found that as our day is so our strength has been, that all our wants have been freely supplied, that meal has not failed in the barrel nor oil in the cruse; and that should the Lord say to us, as to his disciples, "Hast thou lacked anything?" we must answer. "Nothing, Lord, except a larger measure of thy grace for ourselves, and a larger measure of blessing upon our labours for others."

But enough of this. If any have received instruction or consolation from our labours; if what has appeared in our pages has strengthened their faith, encouraged their hope, or drawn forth their love; if any light has been cast upon a dark path, any confirmation of truth received, or exposure of error in which they were nearly entangled; any reproof or rebuke less keenly, but not less effectually felt because administered by a secret voice; any stirring up or recovery from sloth and indifference; any brokenness of spirit, true penitence, and godly sorrow for sin produced; any backsliding healed; any gracious renewal or revival of the good work within effected; in a word, if any real, solid, and abiding profit has been communicated to any of our readers by our labours on their behalf, let them show their thankfulness to God as the Author, and to us as the instrument, by bearing us up before the throne of his grace, that he would bestow upon us that spiritual and experimental knowledge of his truth, that heavenly wisdom and judgment, that holy boldness and faithfulness, that zeal for his glory and desire for his people's good, which, if granted, would be both our and their best reward. And, indeed, we doubt not that many such prayers have been and are put up by those who esteem and love us for truth's sake, and that those petitions have been answered in the Lord's granting to us those supplies of his grace, without which we should be but sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

We have rather dropped our thread in thus speaking of ourselves and our little work; but as this is not a frequent offence with us, we trust that it will not be counted a great one, especially in an Address to our spiritual readers, when, laying aside the reserve and gravity of an editor, we speak as a friend and brother, from heart to heart, and do not tie ourselves to that orderly arrangement of thought and expression which such articles as our Meditations seem to require.

We laid down, then, in the opening of our Address, three main objects of our life here below. These were the enjoyment of a sense of the goodness, mercy, and love of God, a living to his honour and glory, and a serving of his cause and people to the best of our power. Now let us see whether, from this text, we cannot preach our New Year's Sermon; or, rather, without the formality

of a sermon, make it so far the theme of our Address as to gather our thoughts round it, and thus give them that unity which may preserve them from wandering and confusion.

1. We laid down, as one of the chief objects of the present life, a desire to enjoy more of the goodness, mercy, and love of God in our own bosom. There may be, and, doubtless, are some, if not many, blessed exceptions; but, as a general rule, the living family of God in our day do not walk much in the light of his uplifted countenance. They have, indeed, their favoured moments, when, for a short time, the clouds seem to part, and gleams of sunshine to break in through the sky. In reading or hearing the word, their hearts are sometimes melted and softened, faith raised up and drawn forth on the Lord of life and glory, whilst hope casts forth its anchor, and love mounts upward to him who sits at the right hand of God. At such seasons their fears are removed, their doubts dispelled, their evidences brightened, their darkness, guilt, and bondage lightened and removed, and their souls made happy in the Lord. But clouds return after rain. Earthborn vapours rise from below, clouds gather from above, and the sky soon becomes almost if not altogether as much overcast as before. Then comes on the whole train of doubt, fear, and misgiving, relieved, indeed, by sweet remembrances of past favours and by a more steadfast cleaving to the word of promise, but, for the most part, depressing the mind, and attended with a good deal of the spirit of bondage. In this state of mind they usually have a great many sermons preached to them. Some tell them that they ought not to doubt and fear, that by so doing they are living below their privileges, that they should believe in Christ and take God at his word, that these doubts and fears are very dishonouring to God, that they should not indulge in them nor make a religion out of them, but should rejoice in the Lord in the full assurance of faith. Such preachers, like Job's friends, are partly right and partly wrong. It is wrong to doubt and fear after the Lord has blessed the soul with a sense of his mercy and love. These doubts and fears should not be encouraged, or set up as evidences; they do dishonour God and rob the soul. All this is quite true. But can these kind friends tell them how to get rid of these doubts and fears in such a way as shall ease the conscience, remove darkness from the mind, and satisfy them with the smiles of God and the witness of a sprinkled and peaceful conscience? Alas! no. Here they fall, and are, therefore, as miserable comforters as ever Job's friends were. The faith which they would have them exercise is a mere natural, notional faith, and the confidence to which they would urge them is mere presumption. Such a faith as they teach, preach, and, we suppose, possess, or they would not press it so on others, is a faith that does nothing for its possessor. It does not work by love, nor purify the heart, nor overcome the world, nor triumph over death and hell, nor bring into the soul atoning blood, dying love, or pardoning mercy. It leaves the soul just where it found it, and does it as much good as the priest and Levite did the Samaritan who had fallen among thieves, and lay in the road, stripped, wounded, and half dead.

We and you, dear readers, no more hold with unbelief, doubts and fears, darkness and bondage, than these men do; for we know that they are our greatest hindrances, and the worst of thieves and robbers. If a man has a disease or a complaint which sticks to him closer than the collar of his coat, if it troubles him night and day, if it makes his life a burden, if he expects to

carry it to his grave, does he love it, does he enjoy it, does he make health and strength out of it? Say "Yes," or "No," ye afflicted ones in body. Is it not the same with doubts, fears, and unbelief? They are our soul disease, our inward complaint; and to make our religion out of them would be like making health out of a disordered liver, a consumptive constitution, a paralysed limb, an asthmatic complaint, or a nervous affliction. Now, suppose that our doctor, when we sought his advice upon any one of these or similar afflictions, should say, "Be well; be well; don't be ill; don't be ill; shake off your complaint. Only believe you are well, and you will be well." "Ah, but," replies the patient, "I am no better by believing I am well, when every feeling, every pain, every suffering in my poor body tells me how ill I am. I am only deceiving myself by believing I am well when I am really ill; and you must be very ignorant both of my complaint and my symptoms not to see how ill I am, and I fear you are equally ignorant of the right remedy. We leave to the judgment of our readers the application of the figure to the physicians of no value, who prescribe for the complaints of the family of God.

But because these miserable physicians understand neither malady nor remedy, is there no cure? "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" Does not the Lord himself say, "I am the Lord that healeth thee?" How blessedly does the Psalmist speak: "Who healeth all thy diseases." And what a gracious promise is that: "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord; because they called thee an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after." (Jer. 30:17.) But what is this remedy? Is it not the very thing which we have laid down as one of the great objects of life—an enjoyment of the goodness, mercy, and love of God in our own soul, under a sense of pardoned sin, and a full and free acceptance in the Beloved? What but some breaking in of the light of his countenance, and some discovery and manifestation of the love and mercy of God can dispel the darkness of our mind, thaw the hardness of our heart, remove guilt from our conscience, and, animating us with new life, bring us out of that deadness of soul which seems one of our worst complaints? Here we see the wisdom of God in allowing his people to be so buffeted by sin and Satan, so plagued and worried by temptation, so exercised by unbelief, infidelity, enmity, jealousy, doubt, and fear, so shut up and fast bound by chains, often of their own making. ("Hast thou not procured this to thyself?") Is it not that they may despair of all other salvation out God's salvation, and find no remedy for sin but in the blood and righteousness of the Son of God? Is it not that they may enjoy no rest, peace, or comfort but what the Lord himself is pleased to give; and thus be experimentally taught the necessity of ever looking to him, and hanging upon him for a smile from his face, a word from his lips, a touch from his hand, a manifestation of his presence, and some intimation of his favour?

Those who look thus to the Lord, under the strong pressure of inward exercise of soul, will not look in vain. Some turn in providence, most unexpected and yet most suitable and acceptable, will sometimes make them feel, if not say, "I am poor and needy: yet the Lord thinketh upon me;" and this intimation of the Lord's remembrance of them will melt their heart into a persuasion of his favour toward them. Sometimes they will be favoured with a special season in prayer, when, viewing by faith the glorious Mediator on his throne of grace, and drawing strength and virtue out of his fulness,

they come forth with free and holy liberty into the light of such a day as the sweet Psalmist of Israel describes—"a morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds." (2 Sam. 24:4.) Sometimes in reading the word in private, light breaks in upon its contents; authority and power, majesty and glory seem stamped upon it as the word of the living God; faith is raised up and drawn forth upon the gracious truth revealed in that special portion of it, so as to embrace it in love, and thus become mixed with it, and this enlarges, comforts, and sensibly edifies and profits the soul. Sometimes, without any particular application of the word, or any special light on or life from any passage, there flows into the soul a peculiar sense of the divine reality of the truths of the gospel and the mysteries of our most holy faith. Their weight, their importance, their eternal and imperishable nature, their purity and holiness, as contrasted with this sinful world and the worse sinfulness of our own wretched nature, their sweetness and blessedness, their suitability to our wants and woes, the glorious wisdom of God shining forth in them, and especially his grace, mercy, and truth in the Person and work of the Mediator, are brought into the heart with a peculiar weight and power. In this way God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6.) And what is the effect? The spirituality of mind which such divine impressions communicate, the earnest prayers which they produce, the heavenly affections which they kindle, and the blessed lift which they give us out of darkness, deadness, and earthly mindedness, are all so many convincing testimonies of the reality and power of a religion which comes from God. This is not a building on the sand, for it brings the soul unto, and lays it upon, cements it to, and gives it vital union with the Rock. To build on doubts and fears, on convictions of sin, on deadness and coldness, darkness, barrenness, guilt, and bondage, is to build upon the sand, and almost worse than sand, for it is to build upon a bog. The very reason why "the Lord trieth the righteous," and why he suffers them to be tempted with unbelief and every other form of evil, is to beat them off the sand and the bog, and make them embrace the Rock for want of a shelter. That ministry, therefore, which would encourage a religion built upon doubts and fears would be to preach unbelief as the way instead of faith, put infirmities in the place of blessings, make a knowledge of sin as clear a testimony of interest in Christ as a knowledge of salvation, and elevate guilt, bondage, darkness, and condemnation into the room of pardon, deliverance, love, joy, peace, and every other fruit of the Spirit.

II. But is there no other effect of those visitations which preserve the spirit? Do they not produce an earnest desire to live to the praise, honour, and glory of God, which we have laid down as the second great object of a Christian's life? It is "the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, which teacheth us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." It is because "we are not our own, but are bought with a price," that we are to "glorify God in our body, and in our spirit, which are his." It is "the love of Christ which constraineth us because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. 5:14, 15.) Wherever the grace of God is, it constrains its partaker to desire to live to his honour and glory. But he soon finds the difficulty of so doing. Such is the weakness of the

flesh, the power of sin, the subtlety of Satan, the strength of temptation, and the snares spread on every side for our feet, that we can neither do what we would, nor be what we would. Before we are well aware we get entangled with some idol, or drawn aside into some indulgence of the flesh, which brings darkness into the mind, and may cut us out some bitter work for the rest of our days. But we thus learn not only the weakness of the flesh, but where and in whom all our strength lies. And as the grace of the Lord Jesus, in its suitability, in its sufficiency, and its superaboundings, becomes manifested in and by the weakness of the flesh, a sense of his wondrous love and care in so bearing with us, in so pitying our case, and manifesting mercy where we might justly expect wrath, constrains us, with a holy obligation, to walk in his fear and to live to his praise. We have felt the bitterness of sin, the misery of being left to our own will and way, the danger of temptation, the craft and power of Satan, and what poor, helpless, vile, and depraved creatures we are in ourselves; and a mingled sense of our misery and the Lord's mercy, of the greatness of our sin and the fulness of his salvation, of our multiplied, aggravated, and unceasing transgressions and his pity, compassion, and loving-kindness to poor penitent, self-abhorring, broken, and confessing transgressors, accompanied with views at times of his bleeding, dying love, compels every gracious feeling of the soul to arm itself as it were, against that dreadful enemy—the sin that dwelleth in us.

It may be the work of years to teach us these simple elements of vital godliness; and it is our mercy if we learn them at all and are not eventually found amongst those who are ever learning and yet are never able to come to the knowledge, that is, the saving knowledge, of the truth. O the pains which the Lord takes with his dull, ignorant, stupid, obstinate, wayward pupils. How it is "line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little." How he has sometimes to drive, sometimes to draw, sometimes to beat his truth into us by strokes of his chastising hand, and sometimes gently and quietly to drop it in when he has unsealed the eyes to look up to him, and opened the ears to receive instruction from his lips. We are such strange creatures. We are willing and more than willing to be taught of the Lord, for we are continually, in all sincerity of heart, begging him to teach us; and yet we do not like his way of teaching when it crimps the flesh. We feel earnestly desirous to live to the honour and glory of God; and yet when to do so demands some sacrifice of money, or ease, or comfort, or reputation,—still more when it seems to require the plucking out of a right eye, or the cutting off of a right hand, then we draw back and rebel that there is not a more easy and pleasant way for the flesh. And yet, perhaps, if we are enabled to make the sacrifice required by the word and our own conscience, there is a sweetness to our spirit mingled with the bitterness to the flesh. It is almost with these bitters to the flesh as Mr. Hart speaks of repentance:

"Nor is it such a dismal thing
As 'tis by some men named.
A sinner may repent and sing,
Rejoice, and be ashamed."

It, perhaps, has been a call to make a sacrifice of a little money in possession or in prospect; and after a stout battle between a liberal spirit and a covetous heart, the better principle prevailed. Now, when the victory has been gained,

do we not often find that what has been given is but little missed; and the good it has done to the cause of truth, or to any of the Lord's poor and needy children, is an ample compensation for having overcome the opposition of a covetous spirit, and the crying out of the old man as he had a nail or two driven into his miserly fist? But soon, perhaps, as he dies hard, and writhes under the crucifying nail, there will come forth a cry from us, or some one connected with us, "Spare thyself. Why, if you go on like that, you will rob your wife and family, and bring them to beggary. There is this and that bill to be paid, and you know how hardly money is got, and how swiftly gone." But some kind providence turns up, and then drops the head into the dust, with a "Lord, I am vile, and thou art good. Pardon my covetous, unbelieving heart. O let me never doubt thee again." So, if a little of our good name or fame, or darling respectability must be parted with, the flesh soon begins to cry out, and cannot endure the shame of the cross. But how soon the Lord can so break in upon our heart with a sense of his goodness, mercy, and love as to make us feel even unworthy to suffer shame for his name's sake, and count it an honour to endure his reproach.

We need not pursue the subject further. Our readers' own experience will supply them with abundant instances both of the weakness and wickedness of the flesh and the superaboundings of grace; and they will agree with us that both misery and mercy, all that we have seen and felt of the evil of sin and all that we have tasted, felt, and handled of salvation, all that we know of self, and all that we know of the Lord, call upon us and constrain us, as with one voice, to walk in his fear, live to his praise, and seek to glorify him with our body and spirit, which are his.

III. And with this desire will certainly follow a willing readiness to serve the Lord's cause, help the Lord's poor, sympathise with them in their afflictions and trials, and manifest to them our esteem, affection, and love.

In what other way can we manifest the truth and reality, the life and power of our religion? Men will judge us, and rightly judge us, by our works, not by our words; by our fruit, not by our leaves; by our Christian spirit, meekness, quietness, humility, sincerity, disinterestedness, readiness to serve rather than to rule, and general willingness to bear and forbear, to seek others' advantage, not our own, and do what good we can to the souls and bodies of our fellow-men.

But our limits warn us that we must draw near to a close. Suffer us, then, to drop a few words as to our monthly publication, and our desires and labours in connection with it. The Lord, as we before said, works by instruments, and usually mean and despised instruments, that the power and glory may be more distinctly seen to be his own. Now, if he be pleased to use our little monthly work as an instrument for his people's good and his own glory, how abundantly will it reward us for all the toil, care, anxiety, and responsibility of conducting it which falls to our share. Our desire is to make it as instructive, as edifying, and as profitable as we can to the Lord's living family. We wish, therefore, to avoid all strife and contention, all doubtful disputations, all gossip, slander, and news-mongering, all flattery and time-serving, all dry and merely notional discussion of points of doctrine which usually leads to endless dispute and vain jangling, and every other thing

which feeds the flesh and starves the soul. We would come, month after month, simply, quietly, and unobtrusively, without loud knock or noisy ring, and lie by the side of the Bible and the hymn-book, speaking the same language, breathing the same spirit, attended with the same power, bedewed with the same influence, and producing the same effect. As the apostle speaks of himself and his fellow-ministers as "labourers together with God" (1 Cor. 3:9), so would we desire to be engaged in the same blessed work of labouring with God in the building up of his people on their most holy faith. But as the Lord will not work by anything but his own blessed truth, and that only as impregnated with his Spirit and grace, it makes us to be ever on the watch to use our spiritual senses in spreading our table with such wholesome, nourishing, and savoury provisions only as he will own and bless. As caterers for the Lord's family, we have carefully to weigh, examine, smell, handle, turn over, and taste the meat set on the table. If short in weight, if tainted with error, if fly-blown, if too much underdone or too much overdone, if not sufficiently salted and seasoned, if not juicy nor savoury,—in a word, if it lack that indescribable relish and flavour which all know who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and found his word and eaten it, unto the joy and rejoicing of their heart, it will not feed the living family. This, therefore, lays upon us much beyond the mere labour of reading communications, or even writing what we put forth of our own. We have to select, among many sermons, letters, pieces, and obituaries, those which seem to bear the right stamp, and carry with them some evidence of having in them the breath of life. Similarly in what we write ourselves, we have to seek for the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit, to instruct and guide us line by line, and then attend it with power and savour to the hearts of the people of God. Thus ours is no common task, no mere mechanical employment, no such work as a clerk in a counting-house does, reading, ticketing, docketing, selecting and putting in right order paper after paper, that each may come in its proper place; that A. B. may have the pleasure of seeing his long piece inserted, as he generally requests, "in our next number;" and C. D. his explanation of a passage, which he believes none but himself has been hitherto favoured to understand: and E. F. his Obituary of a Sunday-school scholar, which he has sent besides to half-a-dozen other magazines: and G. H. his Experience of, perhaps, 100 or 200 pages, in close and scarcely legible writing: or J. K. his Poetry, of 300 or 400 lines: and all, perhaps, highly offended, because sometimes want of room, and more frequently want in them of the main thing, prevents their appearing in our pages.

We have, indeed, much reason to be thankful for the way in which all our wants have been supplied; for the valuable and experimental letters of saints, living and departed, which have been forwarded to us; for the interesting and edifying Obituaries, which surviving friends and relations have recorded, and thus enabled us to insert; and for the various accounts which have been sent us of the personal dealings of God with some of his favoured children. We would also raise a humble acknowledgment of his goodness and mercy to us, personally, in enabling us still to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints; and, amidst many difficulties and hindrances, strengthening us still to labour in that particular field in which, with but little help except from himself, we have now for many years endeavoured to serve the cause of truth and the good of his people.

In his strength, not our own, we desire still to labour: and, standing as if amidst the tombs of so many departed friends and brother ministers, and not knowing how soon we may be numbered among them, to have it made manifest in our own conscience and in that of others that to enjoy a sense of God's goodness and mercy, to glorify him in our body and spirit, which are his, and to serve his cause, truth, and people, are the main objects of our private, ministerial, and editorial life.

Brethren, pray for us.

Your affectionate Friend and Servant,
THE EDITOR

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January, 1869

How wide, how unspeakably wide, is the difference, how great, how infinitely great, is the contrast, between the spiritually-minded child of God, whose portion is above and whose heart and affections are in heaven, and the carnally-minded worldling, whose portion is below and whose heart and affections are on earth! This difference between them, both in its cause and in its effects, in its source and in its streams, is from God himself; and that is the reason why it is so wide, deep, and permanent. Its foundation was laid in his own fixed purposes, in the eternal good pleasure of his will, before the foundation of the world, was brought to light in time in the first promise given after the fall, and has had its manifestation and fulfilment in a greater or less degree in the experience and life of every believer from that day to this. Innumerable are the inhabitants of the earth; almost equally numerous and diversified are the classes, ranks, pursuits, and occupations of society; but amidst these crowds of men and this diversity of station, there are really two and but two different families, two and but two distinct seeds, who are as separate now in the mind and sight of God as ever they will be when time shall be swallowed up in eternity. It is true that this separation of the church from the world, of the clean from the unclean, of the living from the dead, of the children of God from the children of the wicked one, is often not so distinct and clear to our eyes as it is in the eyes of God, and as it should be in accordance with his revealed will. And yet we may say that to reveal this eternal line of separation as a vital truth in doctrine, to bring it forth in its various fruits and consequences into living experience in the heart, and to produce as well as enforce it in all godly practice in the life and conduct of all the saints of God, is the grand aim and object of that Holy Spirit under whose divine inspiration the Scriptures were written, and by whose gracious operations and influences they are made effectual unto our salvation and sanctification. And contrariwise to confuse, to obliterate, to nullify, and, if possible, to dig down and remove this divine barrier between the church and the world, either in doctrine by the denial of truth and the promulgation of error, or in experience by slighting, despising, or misrepresenting the work of God upon the soul, or in practice by setting aside the precepts of God and substituting the ordinances of man, has ever been the aim and object of Satan and his agents from the day on which the first stone of this eternal wall of separation was manifestly laid on earth. Cain and Abel, the first murderer

and the first martyr, stand in the very front of our Bibles as permanent types and representatives of these two seeds, and if now less prominent than they have been at various stages of the world's long history, they are nevertheless in the mind of God no less distinct. No language can be more plain or express than the testimony of God to this point in his holy word. Hence we learn that it was he himself who put the distinction between the two seeds; and the separation and enmity which were then thus laid and made between them have both subsisted in all the strength of their original constitution from that day to this, and will subsist until the end of time.

It is natural enough, and perfectly consistent with the words of the first promise, that this doctrine should provoke the enmity of the carnal mind; but to those who know and understand the Scriptures by divine teaching, to those who have received the love of the truth that they may be saved thereby, it is a point beyond all dispute or question, not only from the testimony of the word, but from the witness of the Spirit in their own consciences, and the verdict of their own long and well-tried experience, both in its pains and in its pleasures. They know that it was the special grace of God which quickened them when dead in sin, and that it was his word spoken to their hearts with a divine power which called them out of the world that they might be a peculiar and separate people. To this point tended all their convictions, anxiety, and distress of mind on account of sin; for by this work of the Lord on their consciences, the bands which held them fast to sin and to the world that lieth in wickedness were cut asunder, and with them it was, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." (Gen. 19:17.) As then, by this divine work on their conscience, and as in obedience to this call they came out of the world and became separate from it, they found him faithful to his promise, that he would receive them and manifest them as the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Under the shinings in of his blessed presence when his love was first shed abroad in their heart, they knew what it was to set their affections on things above, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God. The world was dead to them and they to the world; the power and dominion of sin were broken; lust and covetousness were under their feet, and they could run the way of God's commandments with an enlarged heart.

But as they are still in the body; as they are encompassed by many, and some of them new and peculiar temptations; as snares of various kinds, and many of them very suitable and attractive to the flesh, are ever spread for their feet, they did not for the most part continue long in this blessed state. Sin began gradually to revive, being only stunned and not killed, and grace in proportion to decline. They had not yet learnt how to fight the great battle, and knew little of either the necessity or the use of spiritual weapons and of putting on the whole armour of God. The craft and strength of Satan as an angel of light, and the weakness of the flesh against the subtlety and power of his temptations, were much hidden from them. Need we wonder, then, that they were soon drawn aside and went, if not outwardly, yet inwardly astray; left their first love, and with it lost the spirituality of their mind, the tenderness of their conscience, and the warmth and fervour of their gracious affections? Now, what was the consequence of this declension? That they gradually sank more and more into carnality, barrenness, and death. And

this was often much helped by surrounding circumstances and the peculiar position in which they were placed. With some, the increasing cares and anxieties of life in this day of incessant struggle and competition in every trade and profession, in order to obtain an honest livelihood; with others, the daily pressure of a large and engrossing business; with others, the domestic ties of a young and growing family, taxing well-nigh all their time and strength, and absorbing too much of their thoughts and affections; with others, the complying too readily with the worldliness of their own relations, some of them, perhaps, very near and dear in nature's bonds, or immediate members of their own family. To these frequent and more obvious snares which entangle the feet of so many, we may add neglect in constantly reading the Scriptures and giving themselves to continual prayer and meditation; slackness in waiting upon the Lord in the ordinances of his house; or accustoming themselves to sit under the ministry of the word as a mere exercise of the intellect or approbation of the judgment, without personal, diligent self-examination, and a spirit of prayerfulness before, in, or after the time of hearing, or anxious earnestness to profit by it either by falling under its keen edge when used as a sword, or embracing the truth in faith and affection as commended to the conscience. Many and various, indeed, are the means whereby the soul gets robbed of its spiritual strength, and loses the warmth and fervour of the divine life; but no one cause is more dangerous than the want of self-denial in the hour of temptation, and of strength to resist, even unto blood, striving against sin. How many have been gradually entangled in evil by not resisting the first approaches and allurements of sin, and have either brought a reproach upon the cause by some outward fall, or if preserved from that fearful disaster, have sadly destroyed their own peace and brought death and bondage into their souls. And even where there has been much outward circumspectness of life, in how many cases has a spirit of slumber come over the soul, bringing with it numbness of conscience, coldness of affection, and a general deadness, stupidity, and lethargy of mind! We have long marked and observed these things, as well as have had some experience of them in our own bosom; and as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man, so we doubt not many of our readers see eye to eye and feel heart to heart with us in what we have thus far laid before them.

It has, therefore, struck our mind that we might do our spiritual readers, to whom we as usual, address ourselves at the opening of the year, some useful and acceptable service if we took up this subject at greater length, and availed ourselves of the present opportunity to bring before them some such word of free and friendly counsel, admonition, reproof, or encouragement as the Lord might enable us to communicate and they might feel disposed to receive from us in his name and fear. In so doing we may have to touch upon some sore spots, to probe some deep and painful wounds, to use language that to some may seem harsh and severe, and to draw so narrow a line of separation between the living and the dead as may cause some to fear on which side they stand for time and eternity. But we shall endeavour, we hope, in the fear and as in the sight of God, to keep closely to his inspired word, tread, as far as we see and know them, in the footsteps of the flock, and bring forth nothing but what has been not only well weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, but also been tried and proved in the faith and experience of our own heart.

Good men in all ages have had to lament and lift up their voice against the evil to which we have alluded in our opening sentences—the breaking down of the barrier which God has set up between the church and the world; but never, perhaps, was the warning voice more needed than now; and glad should we be if it were more frequently and loudly sounded by those who stand on the battlements of Zion. The setting up of this barrier by the hand of God in his eternal counsels was not only an act of infinite grace but also of infinite wisdom. It was intended not only to rescue his chosen family from the depths of the fall, that they might be eternal trophies of his superabounding grace, but also as a means to preserve them in their time state from the path of the destroyer. He knew to what temptations they would be exposed in their pilgrimage through life, what snares would be laid on every side for their feet; he knew all the strength of sin and all the weakness of the flesh. He, therefore, cast up in the word of his lips a highway, a way of grace and truth, of faith and love; a way of holiness, in which the redeemed should walk, and on which no lion or unclean animal should be found. By his grace he sets their feet in this way, and they find it to be, though a strait and narrow path in which there is no room for the flesh, a way of light and life, of union and communion, of love and godly fear; for it is the kindness of their youth, the love of their espousals when Israel is holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase. (Jer. 2:2, 3.) Now as long as they are walking on the king's highway they are safe, for he is their sun and shield, giving them present grace and the prospect of future glory. (Ps. 84:11.) But immediately that they are drawn off it, they get upon unholy ground, the permitted domain of sin, Satan, and the flesh, and thus losing the felt presence and guidance of the Lord, often stray further and further till they wander on the dark mountains as lost sheep without a shepherd.

Many, very many, are here, and amongst them no small number who neither see nor feel where they are nor what they are; for it is a part of the very nature of the malady, like a heavy sleep or a bodily lethargy, to blind the eyes, stupefy the senses, and benumb the conscience. It was so with Ephraim of old. He was "broken in judgment" (Hosea 5:11) and, therefore, could not form a right judgment of his own state or standing. "Strangers devoured his strength and he knew it not; yea, grey hairs were here and there upon him, yet he knew it not." (Hosea 7:9.) Nay, even when at last he saw his sickness and felt his wound, he took wrong courses to have it healed, going to those who could not heal him nor cure him of his wound. (Hosea 5:13.) He had joined himself to idols; and as his punishment God had said, "Let him alone." (Hosea 4:17.) One of the worst features of the Laodicean church was that she said she was "rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing; and knew not that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Rev. 3:17.) We shall not be surprised, then, nor discouraged if our words meet with little or no acceptance in the eyes of those who do not see into what a state they have been brought by the subtlety of Satan, the power of sin, and the weakness of the flesh. Yet in the hope that the Lord may bless a word of admonition to those who have ears to hear, we shall, with all boldness, and yet, we trust, in a spirit of tenderness, love, and affection, speak freely the thoughts of our heart upon a point which has often exercised, and still almost daily exercises, our own spirit.

The communication of divine life to the soul is the greatest of all blessings, as containing in its bosom every other blessing. Thus it is the fruit of election: "Whom he predestinated, them he also called:" the sure pledge of justification: "Whom he called, them he also justified:" and the anticipation of eternal glory: "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." It is sovereign in its first communication: "The Son quickeneth whom he will;" free in its reception: "Freely ye have received, freely give;" unquenchable in its nature: "Many waters cannot quench love:" eternal in its duration: "I give unto my sheep eternal life;" and unalienable in its possession: "I will never leave them nor forsake them." But it is subject to change: "Because they have no changes, they fear not God;" sometimes sinks very low: "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps;" sometimes mounts very high: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name." But all its changes depend upon the movements of the Lord upon the soul: "Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong, thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled" (Ps. 30:7): and, therefore, whether it be high or low, must be resolved into the sovereign good pleasure of God.

But our present object is rather to treat of the life of God in the soul in its declension and decay; and to make the subject more clear, as well as to restrain our own pen from wandering, we shall consider it under three heads:

I. *Its causes.*

II. *Its symptoms.*

III. *Its cure.*

I. In considering its causes, we may observe that we have already pointed out some of the more prevalent, and it is, therefore, needless to repeat them. But there are others of scarcely less magnitude, on which we have not yet touched.

Amongst them, we feel compelled to name *the prevailing ministry of the day.*

Looking, then, at it without personality or without wishing to give needless offence, there are two features in it which have much struck our mind as showing a lamentable deficiency. These two features are, 1, *a want of power*, and, 2, *a want of searching discrimination.*

1. Nothing in the ministry can make up for want of power. It may be perfectly consistent with truth. It may be unexceptionably clear in doctrine, sound in experience, and not defective in enforcing consistent practice. But, with all this, it may have the fatal defect of want of power; it may lack that peculiar savour and blessed influence, that indescribable life, penetrating authority, and heavenly weight, which rest upon the ministry of the word, when the Lord the Spirit speaks in and by it through his sent servants. It is said of the first preaching of the word: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." And what was the blessed effect? "Great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4:33.) They preached with great power, and great grace flowed from it and through it. Of his own ministry, Paul thus testifies: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." (1 Cor. 2:4.) And, to what end and effect? That "the faith of his

hearers should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." He elsewhere testifies that the gospel which he preached "came to his hearers, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. 1:5.) And the effect was that those who received the word of God which they heard of him, "received it not as the word of men, but as the word of God, which effectually worketh in those that believe." (1 Thess. 2:13.) Where this blessed power attends the word, there for the most part the life of God in the soul grows and thrives; for in it there is milk for babes and meat for men: in it there is instruction for those who are seeking the way Zionward, reproof for the disobedient, admonition to the simple and sincere, encouragement to the poor and needy, healing balm for the broken in spirit, consolation to the afflicted, and a word in season to the soul that is weary. But where this indescribable life, savour, and power are deficient in the ministry, a spirit of slumber creeps gradually over the hearers; deadness and barrenness in the pulpit produce deadness and barrenness in the pew; the souls of God's people are starved for want of food; and the necessary consequence is that a general sickliness and languor spread themselves over the church and congregation, attended with the decline and decay of every grace.

One of the worst features of this prevailing disease is, that those who are most deeply affected with it see and feel it least. It creeps for the most part over the soul so insensibly, and its influence is so slow and gradual, that, to use a strong expression, it paralyses as it spreads. The Scripture, therefore, compares it to a deep sleep, which we know comes gradually on and gets heavier and heavier, till every sense is locked up in forgetfulness and insensibility. "The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes." And upon whom was this deep sleep come? "The prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered." They who should have kept the people awake had fallen asleep themselves: and the watchmen on the walls slumbered with the inhabitants of the city. And this with the enemy at the gates. (Isa. 29:10.) It is also compared to the insensibility of the drunkard, who keeps drinking on till buried in drunken sleep. He does not feel when he is struck or hurt; and even when for a moment roused from his drunken fit, seeks again his cups and drowsy intoxication. "They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick: they have beaten me, and I felt it not. When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." (Prov. 23:35.)

2. But there is another no less lamentable want, as it seems to us, in the ministry of the day. It is not as *separating*, *searching*, and *discriminating* as it should be. There is a close connection between a powerful and a searching ministry, though they do not always meet in the same man and the same ministry. But, as a rule, wherever there is power in the preached word there is separation in it; for nothing so takes forth the precious from the vile, nothing so separates the living from the dead, nothing so blows away the chaff from the wheat as a ministry attended with the power of God. And as a separating ministry must needs try the living family of God (for the dead feel it not), so it will be ever to them a separating, penetrating, and often keenly-piercing word, especially if they have tender spots and sore places. What a description does the Holy Ghost give us of the word of God in the hands of the Spirit, as searching the heart to its lowest depths and most secret corners and recesses! It is "quick," that is, as the word means, a "living," not a dead

word, but a word full of, and, as such, ministering life; and "powerful," for the power of God attends it; and "sharper than any two-edged sword," for that can only pierce the body, but this goes further, for it "pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit," thus discriminating between what is natural and what is spiritual; nay, more, penetrating through and dividing joint from point, and, by breaking the bones, reaching their inmost "marrow," and thus becoming "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12.) Now, may we not be allowed, with all simplicity and godly sincerity, not wishing to give needless offence, and yet not shrinking from the cross, to compare this description of a powerful, searching, separating ministry with the ministry of the day, and to ask ourselves, be we minister or no minister, whether one resembles the other? We are not any man's judge. To his own master he standeth or falleth. But these are weighty matters, and if the general deadness and lethargy of the churches be at all traceable to the want of power in the pulpit and of a searching ministry, it behoves those who would be right before God to examine how far they stand clear in this matter.*

* Our dear friend, the late W. Tiptaft, was very strong on this point in his last illness, and used often to quote the words, "The blood of souls stains deep."

3. But as we are upon this point, we cannot forbear noticing another feature in the ministry which much fosters the spirit of slumber which has so much come over the churches, and that is, the *setting up of a low standard* of experience for church membership; the consequence of which is not only to flood the churches with doubtful characters, but to lay down as positive marks of grace what at best are but feeble symptoms of the life of God. "We must not discourage the weaklings" is the cry; "we must preach, Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." But not to discourage the weaklings is often to encourage the hypocrites; and to be always bringing forward comfort may be giving poison instead of medicine. An honest-hearted child of God loves a searching ministry. He does not want smooth things, for he dreads false comfort, and would sooner carry his burden than have it taken off, or go off the wrong way. Those who are ever calling out for encouragement often want to be encouraged in their sins or, at least, in their carnality and death. What they really need is to be thrown down rather than built up, wounded rather than healed, sent groaning home with an arrow in their conscience to make them roll on their bed in distress and anxiety rather than cry peace to their souls when there is no peace. It is a false rest when they rest upon the encouraging testimony of the preacher rather than upon the testimony of God in their own consciences.

But we will not further dwell upon this point; we have said enough for those who have ears to hear, and too much for those who would close their ears against any word that might search and condemn them.

II. And now for a few words on the *symptoms* of this widespread epidemic, and let those who desire to fear God search and see whether they find in themselves any prevailing symptoms of this general complaint.

1. Out of numerous others, one of the first marked symptoms is a *declension of the spirit of prayer* in the soul. When the Lord first pours out the Spirit of

grace and of supplications, it usually rises to a greater height than at any subsequent period. It would not be fair, therefore, or even just to ourselves if we measured our present spirit of prayer by what it was in days gone by. Those early days cannot be recalled. They were the days of our spiritual youth, and can no more return than the springtime of life to those who are advanced into the autumn of their years. But even if not tried by this standard, are we sensible of any manifest or marked decline of the spirit of prayer that has lately come upon us? Is it less earnest than it was? Is less sensible access found to the throne of grace? Is prayer and supplication felt rather as a burden, a task, a duty, a something that ought to be done, than a sweet privilege, a blessed mercy, a wondrous door through which the soul may pour forth its complaints, confessions, desires, longings, and breathings before the Lord? If the spirit of prayer has sensibly declined in our breast, it is a mark of having fallen into a spirit of slumber, or that we are held in some snare of sin or Satan.

2. Again, how is it with us as to *reading the word of God*? Is it done as a task, a performance, a duty to which conscience urges, and yet from which inclination draws back? And is this an habitual feeling? for we must not judge by occasional seasons of coldness and deadness, as the most lively Christians are subject to them. But as a general state of things, is the word of God dead, dull, and dry, and as such read with little interest, pleasure, or profit? Then are we fallen asleep, or sunk into carnal security. But contrariwise, is the word of God highly prized as a friend and companion in our secret retirements? Is there every now and then new and sweet light cast upon it? Does it open itself at times to our enlightened understanding as containing fresh and fresh treasures of heavenly truth? Does it touch our heart with admiration and love to him of whom it so blessedly testifies; soften and melt our spirit into meekness and contrition; raise up our affections to things above; loosen the hold of sin and the world; and bringing before us the things which are not seen as eternal realities, deaden and kill us to the things which are seen as the mere passing shadows of the day?

3. Another symptom of that spiritual declension of which we are now speaking is a growing *numbness of conscience*, rendering it less sensitive to the evil of sin, and to the danger of departing from the Lord. The fear of God in a tender conscience is a special new covenant gift and grace (Jer. 32:40), is our choice treasure (Isa. 33:6), and a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death. (Prov. 14:27.) It brings into the heart a holy reverence of God's name and a deep sense of his glory, majesty, presence, and power; it bows down the soul before him in humility and self-abasement; fills it with hatred of sin and earnest longings and desires after holiness: is attended with contrition and godly sorrow, and produces meekness and quietness of spirit, submission, resignation, and patience. It is, therefore, our chief safeguard against the approach of evil; makes us watch our words both to God and man, to be circumspect in our movements, upright in our actions, cautious in our ways, and consistent in our life. But this grace of the Spirit, like other graces, has its growth and its decrease, its seasons of strength and of weakness, its times of activity and vigour, and of languor and decline. Now, when this grace of the Spirit declines in vigour, it loses in the same proportion its keenness of sight, its sensitiveness of feeling, and its strength of voice; and it is surprising how low it may sink in the soul, till it seems at

times almost lost out of sight; its eyes closed, its quickness in hearing the voice of God gone, and its voice reduced to a faint whisper. What, then, is the consequence? The snares of death are now departed from, for the fountain is not springing up with its living waters to keep the soul alive unto God and the conscience tender in his fear. This is the very opportunity for which the carnal mind has been looking and longing; for it hates and is weary of the restraints which grace puts upon it, and wants that indulgence and food which it can get only by sin. Now, then, is the time when the watchman has fallen asleep, for the master thief, the besetting sin, to enter in and prowl about the city; and he soon lets in his fellow thieves, until the whole gang of them fall to work to rob and plunder. The mind becomes filled with all manner of evil; secret lusts begin to work and to be indulged rather than resisted; all sorts of worldly schemes and contrivances for self-advancement or self-gratification occupy the thoughts; pride, covetousness, and worldly-mindedness make sad head, and the man, so to speak, is but a shadow of what he was. His tenderness seems gone, and with it the life and power of his religion; till little is left but the form, except that now and then there are revivings and awakenings just enough to show him where he is and whence he has fallen.

How many, even of those who truly fear God, are here, or have been, for perhaps there are very few of the living family of God who have not had, at some period of their lives since they were called by grace, some personal and experimental knowledge of the path which we have thus traced out. These are the best judges how far our words are words of truth—not mere fancy sketches, but a description of deep and weighty realities, and matters of daily exercise and life-long remembrance. Much that daily passes in our own bosoms, or that has exercised our minds before God we can never speak of or confess to men; but a word from others will sometimes touch the secret spot. And thus those of our spiritual readers who, through grace, have been brought out of this state of slumber in which they were once held into, as it were, a new and revived life of faith in the Son of God, will be best able to set to their seal how far our description is true, or our words contain needful cautions and salutary counsel.

III. But now let us attempt to show the *cure* of this prevailing malady, or rather the way in which it is brought about, with its fruits and effects.

1. The usual beginning of a revival of the soul from this deep sleep, as well as the means of its accomplishment, is a *stroke of affliction*. God has a chastening rod laid up in reserve for those of his family who depart from him; and sooner or later he brings it down upon their backs. Thus sometimes he sends a long and painful illness, or a distressing bereavement, or a severe family affliction, or some cutting stroke and heavy reverse in providence; and working, by his Spirit and grace, in and with these stripes of his hand, he awakens the soul out of its sleep. The eyes are now opened to see, and the ears to hear, the heart to understand, and the conscience to feel. And what a sight meets the astonished view—at times almost more than the soul can bear, for it seems as if the end would be hopeless despair. Now it begins to see where it has been, the sad state into which it had fallen, the snares and temptations in which it had been held fast, and the grievous state of carnality and worldliness into which it had gradually sunk. Nothing wrong might have

been observed by man in the outward conduct; but each heart knoweth its own bitterness. There the root of all backsliding lies and the soul well knows that God looketh to the heart, and if that is not right before him, nothing is right. Under, therefore, his afflicting hand it sinks, at times, very low, until its very hope seems almost removed as a tree. But as this is the work of God, and the means whereby he is bringing the soul out of its state of barrenness and death, he most kindly and graciously comes to its help; and the way he does it, for the most part, is this:

2. He revives *the spirit of prayer* which had sunk very low; and with this revival comes power to confess those sins and backslidings which lie with the chief weight on the conscience. None but those who have passed through such or a similar experience can know how the soul thus dealt with abases itself in humble confession before the Lord; nor can even they describe its self-loathing and self-abhorrence, the low place it takes, the earnest longings and anxious desire for a word of mercy and pardon from his gracious lips, or how it looks up to his gracious Majesty again and again, by night and by day, for a sense of his manifested love and favour. The soul is not asleep now; its deadness is gone, its coldness and barrenness removed, and it now is truly and really alive unto God. This is a reviving as the corn when the rain comes after a long season of drought, or a growing of the vine in the spring after the dreary days of winter, when there was nothing visible but the naked stem. (Hos. 14:7.) There is thus almost a returning to the days of its youth, and a renewal of the former life of God in the soul.

3. Now, coupled with this, as, in answer to prayer, the Lord draws near in the manifestations of his grace, there is also a *revival of faith* in the Person and work of the Son of God, and that of a simpler and clearer nature than before. Never does the suitability of Christ, or the riches of his grace, appear so great as to a soul awakened out of the spirit of slumber again to look unto him. How it wonders at and admires his long-suffering patience, his kind and tender forbearance, his wondrous grace in bearing so long with such base returns for all his goodness and mercy! How it admires and adore his glorious Person, sees and feels the efficacy of his most precious blood and righteousness, and the sweet secrets of his dying love! How tender is now the conscience of sinning against such mercy and such love! What a bitter and evil thing is sin seen and felt to be! What a discovery there too, of the hidden corruption of the heart, of the danger of being entangled in any secret snare, and that a separation of spirit from the world and worldly things! Never till now did the soul seem truly and really to repent of sin with that godly sorrow which needs not to be repented of; never were there more earnest desires after holiness, spirituality of mind, and communion with God and his dear Son. Never was the word of God more open to the enlightened understanding; its inspiration, wisdom and truth more clearly seen, or its power on the heart more deeply felt. Never did eternal realities lie with greater weight and power upon the mind, and never did the things of time and sense appear more light, transitory, and vain. The soul now says to itself, "Let me never sin again against such goodness and mercy; let me never again drop into carnality, worldliness, and death." But still seeing and feeling more than ever the strength of sin and the weakness of the flesh, and knowing, painfully knowing, what it is to be left to self, it begs of the Lord to keep it as the apple of his eye, to hold it up in every slippery place, that it may not slip

or fall; to shine upon it continually with the beams of his love, and ever to water it by his Spirit and grace. It desires ever to walk in his fear and live to his praise, to know his will and do it, and be found fruitful in every good word and work.

But we will not enlarge upon these points, as we have said enough upon them and perhaps too much for the generality of our readers, as we have been describing what may be to them a strange and unknown path. But we write for the spiritual, for those who know divine things by divine teaching, for we seek and desire their profit. It is not often that we can get what we may call a little close talk with our spiritual readers, or press those points home upon their consciences which often press upon our own. It is in writing as it is in conversation. How much of our intercourse with the people of God in conversation is upon mere outside matters and subjects in which there is not much heart and conscience work! What little close talk! What little coming into the real heart of the matter—those bosom secrets of true religion and vital godliness which we most feel before God! How we play upon the surface, skim the mere outside, talk at a distance upon divine matters, without that close getting into each other's hearts and consciences, or coming into those spots where the secret springs of all our spiritual life really lie. What poor, cold work, for the most part, what is called religious conversation is! How unedifying, disappointing, and deadening, rather than reviving, refreshing, and strengthening the soul by mutual intercourse, and creative of love and union by having nourishment ministered by the joints and hands of members holding the Head! (Col. 2:19.) In our intercourse even with the real people of God, how rare are the seasons when we so see eye to eye and feel heart to heart that spirit melts into spirit, and the communion of saints leads up to fresh communion with God! It is with a desire thus to edify and profit the souls of our readers with whom we can converse only by pen and not by mouth, that in this opening year we meet and greet them affectionately with our Address. Receive it, dear friends, in the spirit in which we hope it is written and sent to you. It is meant for your good. We have, perhaps, touched upon a few sore spots and made some of you wince. But if we have wounded, it is that you might be cleansed of their filth and gore by the application of precious blood: and if we have somewhat rudely or roughly pulled away the veil and shown you your guilty shame, it is that you might see and know more of the robe of righteousness which is put upon those that believe.

We do not, we dare not, write flattering words to please the dead. Our mission, our errand, our ministry is to the living, and especially to those among them who are tried and exercised with temptations and afflictions whereby their soul is kept alive unto God. Let the dead bury their dead. Let the flatterers go on with their flatteries, deceiving and being deceived, building up their walls and daubing them with untempered mortar. We are bidden not to be a partaker of other men's sins, which we should be if we wilfully sanctioned such men and such things. Our desire is to be found faithful to the position in which we are placed, and to edify and profit the living family of God. Commending you, whom grace has made and manifested to be such, to his wise and safe keeping, who alone can bless the writer or reader, and asking for your prayers upon our labours in your service, we are, dear Friends in the Lord,

**Your affectionate Friend and Servant,
THE EDITOR**