

**THIS E-BOOK HAS BEEN COMPILED FOR  
THE BIBLE TRUTH LIBRARY  
<http://www.bibletruthforum.com>**

---

**NEW YEARS' ADDRESSES**

**BY**

**J.C. PHILPOT**

## **New Years' Addresses**

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.

[return to contents](#)

**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.

[return to contents](#)

**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.

[return to contents](#)

### **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.

[return to contents](#)

**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.

[return to contents](#)

**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.

[return to contents](#)

**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.

[return to contents](#)

**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**

[return to contents](#)

**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

[return to contents](#)

**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

[return to contents](#)

**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









































































































































































































