

laws, and human authority stepped into the high place of Divine. Government civil and sacred, was only another word for despotism, and the reward of righteous remonstrance was, fire and dungeon, sword and rack.

But the human mind is now measurably aroused to thought in all enlightened lands; and men are beginning to ask by what rule of heaven, of nature, or of justice, they are bound to waive all title to think and act like intelligent beings, and to tamely submit themselves to the capricious dictation of crafty politicians, and aspiring ecclesiastics. A war has begun upon the earth, that cannot soon terminate. We hear from time to time of bristling bayonets, of roaring musketry, of thundering cannon, of piles of human beings left dead on bloody fields; but these are but the external symbols of the conflict. It is a war of mind with mind! Usurpation is constrained to meet birth-right freedom face to face, and as the love of freedom can never be slain by ball or bayonet, we are shut up to the conclusion, that the end is not yet.

While we deprecate the ravages of bloody strife, we cannot close our eyes to the instruction which such scenes impart. They are impressive signs of the times. The upheavings in society tell of a mighty power beneath the surface—a power which can no longer remain quiescent, which, although again and again checked, will and must ultimately rise in its strength, and banish the last shred of despotic power from the earth. But what a solemn thought is connected with these considerations. The principles which will bring men out from systems of civil tyranny, will most assuredly also bring them out from those hoary ecclesiastical hierarchies where the intelligence is insulted, and the conscience enslaved. Of this we have evidence in the present condition of the inhabitants of Rome. French guns and swords have placed the Pontiff once more in his chair of state; but all the powers of the earth could not again place him in the affections of the people, nor lead multitudes of them to respect a religion seen to be at war with human freedom. But where will those chafed spirits find a place of repose? This is the trying question! Will they find rest in Christ, or will they plunge headlong into the dark abyss of infidelity?

These are questions which ought to lead Christians with great earnestness to the throne of grace; and religion in its simplicity and purity ought to be held up with fresh zeal to the gaze of the morally benighted.

The Pope has recently made an attempt to establish the Romish hierarchy, with all its attendant pageantry, in England. The effort has convulsed the nation; public meetings have been held in all quarters, and the doctrines of popery have received the unequivocal stamp of disapprobation. But these expressions of public condemnation have reached Oxford as well as Rome, and the emphatic voice which repudiates transubstantiation, and salvation by priests and "sacraments," when promulgated by Romanists, equally deprecates it when promulgated by high Churchmen. The people it is seen, were only winking at the monstrous obsequies of their own state church; but an occasion has arisen to give body to their honest convictions, and one long, loud utterance of condemnation reverberates through the land. Surely such signs of the times are instructive. Men are at least looking back to independence.

Time, in its undeviating onward course, has brought us to the commencement of another annual period. Yes, another year of our frail and brief existence on the earth is past. Its pleasures, its pains, its joys, its sorrows, all swallowed up in the mighty embrace of the past. How appropriate the season to calm and solid reflection.

Let us, then, briefly review the past, the unreturnable past; and see, whether on examination, our improvement has corresponded with our privileges, and whether we are furnished with a present evidence that we are "in the faith." And we would ask each reader as a first point of self-examination. Have you steadfastly honoured God in your family? If you have neglected the family altar, and retired to rest night after night without craving the divine protection to be extended to your household, if no consecrated shrine has been found within your dwelling, and no voice of prayer or praise has been heard to ascend to heaven from hearts and voices around your hearth, if the time of the offering up of the morning or evening sacrifice has been unmarked by any remembrance or acknowledgment of God, yours is a dark account. Again: have you during the past year neglected your closets? Look back reader; look back, have you faithfully, earnestly, and with joy correspondent to the magnitude of the privilege

which you possessed, entered daily into thy closet, and prayed to thy Father who seeth in secret; or has the closet been a neglected shrine? or if not totally neglected, has it been visited rather as a bribe to conscience, than as a place where you expected to meet God, and wrestle with Him for blessings promised in answer to prayer?

Again: Have you absented yourselves from the stated meetings of the church? has your voice rarely been heard in prayer within the consecrated walls of the sanctuary? Has the heart of him whom you call your pastor, and the souls of those whom ye call by the name of brethren in the Lord, been tried and pained in view of your indifference to the claims of Christ and the interests of perishing men? Look back upon all the church and prayer meetings of 1850, and tell us how often the recording angel who keeps the book of God, that must one day be opened before you, how often has he written *absent* opposite your name? Would it not, reader, be a fearful thing for you to look into that book? But it is done, it cannot be recalled: *absent! absent!! absent!!!* is inscribed upon the annals of the past, noted in the everlasting records of heaven! Do you say, that the reason of each absence is also known in heaven. Ah! yes reader, the reason is known; and if the reason shall be found to abide the fiery test of the judgment, all will be well; but if it will not, the fact that it is known, will only annex a terrible horror to the word *absent*. Now in view of time past, and eternity at hand, what says conscience about your reasons? Again: have you been diligent in discharging your pecuniary obligations? Obligations as binding as prayer and praise; the neglect of which is just as withering to the soul as the neglect of any other duty. The man who neglects to sustain the cause of God, when the thing is possible, perils his own soul as much as the man who neglects his closet; or rather furnishes as much evidence as does the prayerless soul, that he has another god besides the Lord, and that there is a radical, and, it is to be feared fatal defect in his heart. His head may be right; he may understand well the scheme of redemption, and appreciate its beauty, but what has he to do with the glory which it reveals, if he does nothing save what he is obliged to do to sustain it upon the earth? Have we all discharged our solemn obligations to God on this point?

We might speak of exhibitions of a Saviour's love; of the incentives of the truth; and the drawings and teachings of the Holy Spirit; but you remember it all! Examine yourself in its light.

We have had few revivals of religion, during the past year! What influence has this upon our hearts and lives?