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Poetry.

ADDRESS TO THE OPENING YEAR.

Child of ages vanish'd now,
Take the homage of a tear;
For the star upon thy brow
Glitters on thy Father's bier.

Child of promises unfailing,
Take the smile thy birthright brings;
For our bark of hope is sailing
With the gale upon thy wings.

God, the God of ages, bless thee
With a seraph's joyful flight;
And the choral earth confess thee
Herald of millennial light.

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Doctrine and Duty.

HOW SHALL WE BEGIN THE YEAR.

BY THE REV. JAMES SMITH.

Beloved friends, as the Lord has graciously spared us to enter upon another portion of time, it becomes us to ask, How shall we begin it? Much often depends on the beginning. It is important to begin well. Let us reflect. Let us enquire. Let us decide. Shall we not begin it in

Faith? This is the stay, the staff, the stimulus of the soul. Let us afresh exercise faith in God as our Father,—in Jesus as our Saviour,—in the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. Let us believe the love which God hath to us,—that "God is love." Let us take up the promises as the pledges and proofs of his love. He made them to inform us, to cheer us, to draw our love to him, and our confidence in him. He will fulfil them. He never violated a promise yet. He never will. It is impossible for God to lie, or to prove unfaithful. His throne is not more stable than his promise. Let us therefore believe the word, seek the blessings, and expect the favours. He has promised us wisdom, to understand our way; strength, to prosecute our journey; grace to subdue our iniquities; pardon, to pacify our consciences; righteousness, to justify our persons; an answer to all our prayers; and a supply of every want. Let us, therefore, enter upon the

new year taking up the promises afresh, and exercising faith in the almighty and never-changing promises. And in the prospect of the arduous duties, painful trials, determined foes, and bright prospects which are before us, say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."—*Ps. lxxi. 16.*

Shall we not begin this year also in

Penitence? How many sins we have committed! How many duties we have neglected! How many opportunities for usefulness we have lost! What evil tempers we have displayed! What fearful corruptions still work in our hearts! Let us look to the crucified One, who has borne the punishment of our sins in his own body on the tree, and let us mourn as one mourneth for his only son, and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. Sorrow, deep and pungent sorrow, for sin, becomes us. Our sins have not been of an ordinary character; they have been sins against clear light, against tender love, against solemn professions, and against repeated warnings and expostulations. We have sinned against God and against man. We have sinned amidst the uncertainties of time, and in prospect of the solemnities of eternity. Let us bow before the throne of grace, and make a frank confession. Let us go to Gethsemane and Golgotha, and have fellowship with Jesus in his sufferings. Let us earnestly entreat the Holy Spirit to produce deep compunction, and to give us the grace of repentance, that we may sorrow after a godly manner.—*2 Cor. vii. 9.* Nothing will become us more at the beginning of this new year, than deep and profound repentance for sin.

But shall we not begin this year also in

Prayer? In special, fervent, and importunate prayer? We need grace, special grace; therefore we should make use of special prayer. Our prayers have been too formal. They have been offered up too much as a matter of course. There has not been that life, that earnestness, or that importunity in them, that there should have been. God is willing to give what we want. He waits to be gracious unto us. He has promised that he will not turn a deaf ear to our prayers. But we must feel our need. We must realize our dependence. We must pray in earnest. We

must ask as if we meant it. Cold prayers will not do. Formal devotion cannot be acceptable. We must stir up ourselves to call upon God. Let us select subjects for prayer, and stick to them. Let us feel our dependence upon the Holy Spirit as the author of prayer, and seek his direct and powerful operations. Our heavenly Father is calling, "Call upon me, and I will show thee great and mighty things." Our exalted Redeemer is saying, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, I will do it." The Holy Spirit is saying, "The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Let us believe in the efficiency of prayer. Let us try and prove the power of prayer. Let us mix faith and hope with every prayer we present.

Let us begin the year by renewing our

Consecration. Let us, with deep devotion, listen to the apostle, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service: and be not conformed to this world."—*Rom. xii. 1, 2.* Let us imitate those spoken of by the prophet, "One shall say, I AM THE LORD."—*Isaiah xlii. 5.* Let us retire, let us place ourselves before the Cross, immediately under the eye of God; and there let us anew solemnly surrender our persons, property, talents, and all we command, to God and his service: there let us consecrate the whole to God, to be his, for his use, and for his glory. And let us endeavour this year to go about our business as consecrated persons, let us consider that we are set apart for God, devoted to God, and that every power is to be held sacred to the glory of God. This would be consistent. This would only be honest, for we are not our own, we are bought with a price: and should, therefore, glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are God's.—*1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.* We are not hired servants, but the absolute property of the Lord Jesus, ransomed by his blood, redeemed by his power, and placed and kept in this world for his glory.

Let us enter upon this new period of our existence in a spirit of

Watchfulness. The times are dangerous. We are surrounded by snares. We have traitors within us. We have hosts of enemies all around us. We are in an ene-