

But brethren, I venture to assert that the principle of expediency, when applied to the service of God in his church, is not merely unscriptural; it is not even prudent or philosophical. There is a certain class for whom everything that seems bold and independent has peculiar charms. In general, however, men outside of the church, and having no claim to religion, see through such artifice and condemn it. Practically nothing will be gained, and much will be lost. Is it a fact that the church of the first centuries gained in strength by such a course? We know she did not. There were many nominal christians added to her numbers, but the Lord did not add to the church "such as should be saved." The church, by such a course, can make infidels in abundance; but these are ready when the time arrives to "crucify the Lord afresh and put him to open shame." The victories of the church have been by her "witness-bearing"—either testifying that Jesus is Christ, or by shewing in their walk and conversation that they have been with Jesus. "Ye are my witnesses saith the Lord of hosts." "Ye are epistles of Christ, known and read of all men."

III. DUTY OF THE CHURCH, AND ESPECIALLY HER OFFICE-BEARERS, WITH RESPECT TO THE ANTICHRISTS THAT ARE IN THE WORLD.

1. I assume, as a point conceded, that we have to make war with antichrist.—Bearing the charge imposed upon us, and lying under the responsibility of ordination vows, it were better for us that we had never been born than that we should refuse to "come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

2. It is just as well too that I should mention at once the weapons which the Master has provided for us. Yes, *which he has provided*. When a general is about to lead out his armies, either for offence or defence, he does not permit each soldier to bring with him into the field whatever weapon he may be able to lay his hand upon.—The arms are provided, and if the soldier do not know how to use them he must learn. Our Lord and leader, the great captain of our salvation, has provided the weapons

with which we are required to contend against his enemies. They are not, we admit, such as commend themselves to worldly wisdom. On the contrary, the world despises them. We however, have no choice in the matter. Regarding them, the apostle, speaking for himself as well as for us, says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

3. A word as to the enemies with which we have to contend. An army may not always be made up of soldiers who wear the same uniform, or who fight under the same standard. The tribes of Israel had each some distinctive badge. But when the Amalekites or any other enemy attacked any part of the host, they could all be drawn to the defence. Just so, the church of Christ (or the church militant) is not confined to one particular denomination.—All therefore who know and love the Lord Jesus should consider that they have common foes—and these are the antichrists that are in the world. Instead therefore of firing into each others ranks—weakening and dispersing companies marshalled under Christ, they should hail each other as brethren; and severally endeavour to do Christ's work, by expelling antichrists from their midst, or by making common cause against the enemies of the Redeemer.

And now while, in accordance with the language of Scripture, I have been speaking of the office-bearers of the church of Christ as soldiers, I would, in the language of one of the world's great generals, put the question, "What are our marching orders?" And doing so, I shall endeavour to supply the answer. First,—We are not permitted to make terms with the enemy, and retire, neither party claiming the victory. Rome, in her palmy days, never would condescend to treat with an enemy on equal terms; even though her armies had suffered defeat, she scorned a compromise; she could fight again, but never could she consent to enter into a treaty until her enemy lay vanquished at her feet. Fellow soldiers, this is a part of our instructions. Christ claims the world as a part of his universal kingdom. His claim is just.