

1854.

A Review of the Year.

BY T. BINNEY

Authorized

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The Publisher is permitted to say, that he has obtained the Rev. T. Binney's consent to this publication, and that it is the only authorized report of his Discourse.

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EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOUR.

“A whole year.”—ACTS xi. 26.

I HOPE no one will think that I select a text like this from levity or affectation. I take it because it distinctly expresses, and, so to speak, exactly contains, the idea that I want. “We have just terminated “a whole year,” and are now at the beginning of another,—one which will *be* “a *whole* year” to many, though some, doubtless, of those now present, will see only a part of it. The year of which we have just taken leave, has been so remarkable, that the memory of many will long linger upon it, and the thoughts of all recur to it often. It may not be without result, if, in this, the first service of the new year in which such allusion could with propriety be made,* we look back on some of the events which transpired in the past—or which *began* to transpire, and are yet in progress,—the issues of which the present may witness, issues which, whatever may be the predictions of rashness, or the conjectures of sagacity, are, as yet, among those hidden and undeveloped things which slumber in the secret counsels of God.

Without further preliminary remark I advance to the business of the discourse. I propose to take a

* Sunday, January 21st.

review of the year, looking, *in three different sphere of observation*, at what may seem most memorable, most suggestive in itself or most likely to have important results.

We take, in the first place, things national and social; among these we notice two.

1st. The first in importance is the fact that last year witnessed the commencement of hostilities; our entrance, as a people, on that state of warfare which still continues, and which has already cost so much of feeling, and treasure, and tears, and blood! The year opened under threatening auguries;—a state of things had been for some time in progress which appeared to render hostilities inevitable; and a state of feeling was got up in the public mind which was impatient of delay,—or, it was attempted to be got up, and to a large extent successfully,—so that utterances were heard on all sides, both deep and loud, in favour of speedy action, as if the nation was eager to anticipate and welcome war. War was at length proclaimed; and, for the first time for forty years, a day was set apart by Royal authority for general, public humiliation and prayer. On Wednesday, the 26th of April, the sanctuaries of the land were crowded with worshippers, many of whom, whatever might be their opinions as to war in general, or as to the nature and causes of the one in prospect, felt that they were called upon to offer, and that they could offer, their supplications to Almighty God so to interpose, that even then the expected calamity might be arrested; or if not, that the contest might be short, and its issues such as should subserve and promote the cause of righteousness, truth, and liberty.

So far as things have proceeded we have more reason, I fear, for remorse and humiliation than for triumph and songs. Errors have prevailed on all sides. The nation, or the less thoughtful part of it, had been restless and reckless, and condemned the long-continued negotiations by which the war was sought to be prevented. It was again impatient when, for months, nothing positive seemed to be achieved. Active measures—advance and invasion—were (so to speak) urged, and provoked, and forced on the army; and thus a decisive and desperate step was at length taken, without, it is to be feared, any just conception of what it involved,—without sufficient forethought, or adequate preparation for possible emergencies.

There were occasions, too, when some of our public men indulged in “vain boasting,” and commemorated, by anticipation, in a grand banquet and eloquent speech, victories which have not yet been gained! There was a great deal of folly and levity, I cannot but think, in the way in which *war* was spoken of and engaged in; far too much confidence in ourselves, as if triumph with us was a matter of course; an undervaluing of what was to be opposed and met and a sort of conceited persuasion that we had nothing to do but to advance our forces by sea or land,—to show ourselves, and to appear to be in earnest,—for ships and armies, fortress and battlement, town and tower, to fall before us.

We have been rebuked and humbled. I say that, in spite of the prodigies which our armies have achieved, and with a full appreciation of the spirit and heroism which they have displayed. We have

found out that more was to be done than just to *march* to victory;—that wisdom might be wanting where muscle, and nerve, and bravery were abundant;—that want of experience, or want of thought, at home or abroad, might omit to provide for the most obvious results of war and weather;—and that even the most astonishing successes in the field may be purchased at such a price of life and blood as shall entail a long period of payment in the secret grief and continued mourning of thousands of families. The other day the following sentence was publicly made, and I am not aware that it is anything but the truth: “*A whole year*”—the exact literal expression employed—“a whole year has gone by, and, with it, some TWENTY THOUSAND LIVES, SOME FIFTEEN MILLIONS OF MONEY, and an amount of reputation not to be told in thousands of lives, or millions of pounds; yet, on this, the 2nd of January, 1855, *we are as far from our object as ever.*” Whether such be the case we will not say; but we may say *this*, that it certainly ought to be a *very great object*, and one, too, capable of being very clearly stated and easily understood, that should be worth such a price in lives and money,—thousands and millions in a few months, and *that* only the first instalment!

One thing the war has done for us, or may do. While it has filled the mind with intense admiration, and melted the heart into sympathy and tears, by the many extraordinary instances which it has furnished of all that is sublime and touching in heroism, it has, at the same time, so thoroughly stripped off the paint and gilding of the whole thing, as to exhibit war in its deformity and horrors, more nakedly and

repulsively than ever it was exhibited before. We owe this to the greater facilities which we now possess for immediate and full information from the scene of action, and to the number and ability of those who have furnished it. The pictures we have had of battles,—the actual conflict, the feelings of the combatants as described by themselves, their appearance as depicted by others,—the sights on the battle-field the day after,—the wounds and mutilations, the sufferings and the aspect of the dying and the dead,—the great hole filled with the bodies of the noble and the young,—the smart uniform, ragged and faded, or soiled and bloody, acting as a shroud to the uncoffined corpse, huddled in the crowd to such a grave!—the sufferings and destitution of the wounded; the interiors that have been shown to us of hospital tents, and of ships with their crowds of the maimed and sick,—and of hospitals themselves, and the want of appliances and attendants there; and then the circumstances of the camp itself,—underfeeding, overwork, exposure to pestilence and disease, to all that was severe and inclement—rain, wind, snow, hurricane; by sea and land destruction and death, terror and surprise from the fury of the elements; the wear and tear of flesh and spirit, clothing and courage, from long-continued labour and peril, suffering and want; the muscular and the young failing and sinking from fatigue and hunger; English gentlemen covered with dirt, vermin, and rags! There is a lesson to be learnt from all this of the real and actual hideousness of war, which, it is to be hoped, will have its effect on some of those who have been too often dazzled and intoxicated by its splendour and pageantry, its pomp and circumstance.

Nor, perhaps, may it be without its use for the *contrast* to be marked between the departure of a regiment to foreign service, and the reception on their return of its miserable remains. We were often told, in the course of last year, how this and the other company or battalion left the barracks at such an hour,—fine-looking men, in high spirits, the band playing, the colours flying, crowds of people assembled to witness the departure of the troops—cheering them with their huzzas—the “noblefellows” cheering them in return! It may not be lost, I say, on some of the community, for this sort of thing to be contrasted with what we now read on the *other* side of the picture, in accounts like these:—“On Monday last, the Himalaya arrived at Portsmouth, and, after a delay of twenty-four hours, ranged alongside the jetty, and began to unload her melancholy cargo of sick and wounded—the *stricken and mutilated remnants* of the heroes of Alma, Balaklava, and Inkermann. It must have been in itself a touching and moving spectacle, such as the sternest nature could scarcely witness without pity; * * * EYELESS, ARMLESS, FOOTLESS—*rent with shot or shell—pierced by bayonets and hacked by sabres*—they staggered on, supporting each other in their melancholy march. Still, they stood once more on that sacred soil which had sent them forth, and which might almost be supposed to throb under the feet of its returning protectors! They came; but who was there to welcome them?” [No one, it would seem, but the custom-house officers, who turned over and searched every package, and kept the poor wretches on the open jetty, where the search took place, till it was completed! The

account goes on]:—“They sat and crouched, as best they might, in the bleak January afternoon—those shivering and mutilated relics of the strong and brave; and they pondered, doubtless, with thoughts too bitter for words, on the welcome which the country, for which they had given all, extended to them. There were no ambulances—no stretchers; there was no one to care for them or to conduct them to their allotted home, until, at last, after the matter seemed almost desperate, help came in the shape of omnibuses *for those who could sit*, and stretchers *for those who could not*; and the miserable scene was thus brought to a tardy end.” These opposite facts and pictures cannot be without their effect *out of doors*, among those by whom armies are recruited; *in the Church* they should lead to mourning and lamentation, tears and prayers. “Father, who art in heaven, let *thy* kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.” O Lord, send peace in our time;—send peace for all time. “Scatter the people that delight in war.”

I shall conclude my reference to this subject by the following extract from a private letter, addressed to myself,—the letter of a Christian gentleman, a politician, and a soldier. I received it in the beginning of last month.

“You may suppose with what deep anxiety and pain I am watching the progress of this war. I am not in the least astonished either by the heroic courage of our troops, or by the ruin which our victories are bringing upon us. It is all very much what I wrote from Constantinople a year ago, and what I did my best to urge on the government in com-

municating with individual members. Not being in Parliament, I had no means of publicly resisting what appeared to be so decidedly the voice of the nation—not only to oppose the aggression of Russia by arms, if remonstrance would not avail, but to invade her Territory, deal on her some great blow, so as at once to arrest her onward course—*which people in England seemed to think would be done with facility!* I was at home on business for a short time last summer; and I confess that I was shocked and astonished, and I found that many thoughtful people had been so likewise, by the levity of spirit in which the war was undertaken—the sort of triumph beforehand, the boasting indulged in by many of the newspapers—the want of calm, serious consideration that ought to pervade a nation entering on that which is so deeply serious as war. Several friends in England said to me, ‘Pride comes before a fall.’ I suppose that they had spoken warningly, but such sentiments had been thought the result of timidity, and were disregarded. Even statesmen abroad took notice of the spirit in which the English nation were entering on the war, and prognosticated reverse. I passed a few days with an intimate friend, who was formerly First Minister of Prance, and he was as much astonished as I was at the way in which the war was anticipated in England. He was formerly much connected with our country, and he told me that he did not recognize his old friends, the English, in the unwise and inconsiderate way in which they urged rash enterprises, and pressed the government to undertake that which would probably be attended with disaster. We have had a lesson from experience

most grievous to us. Our men have manifested a courage which I do not believe that any other army in Europe would have shown; but we have lost our best soldiers, and have not obtained the object for which we encountered such danger. I trust that our rulers will not suffer themselves to be goaded on, by any popular taunts, to undertake enterprises without adequate knowledge of the difficulties to be surmounted, and the probability of success; and I hope that the public will leave the war to be conducted by those who are responsible to the nation for the manner in which it is done. *War is a doubtful game at best. I believe it to be the worst evil that can afflict a nation;* and, of course, those feel it the most whose relations are engaged in it. I had many friends in that battalion of the Guards that suffered so much. In short, I have many reasons, public and private, for considering our present position with distress and anxiety. I know what our enemies said when we engaged in the war, and I see that some of their predictions have been verified. I entertain, however, much more hope now that the government and the public are aware of our danger. I believe that the nation, once aware of peril, will display a degree of energy and self-devotion which will amount to the greatest power on earth; and that we shall make it apparent that peace, and not ambition, no object of self-aggrandizement, has been our purpose; and I trust that the nation will have learnt a lesson of modesty, and reliance on a higher than any earthly power.

“I heard from England that there is now no sale for books. ‘People read only the newspaper and the

Bible.' May the latter have more effect on us, and may we grow to be a Bible-reading and Bible-governed nation! I entertain a strong conviction that, in the heavy correction we are receiving from the hand of God, He intends a merciful and gracious chastisement. Thoughtful men in the army find peace, consolation, and calmness,—where alone they will ever be found,—on their knees, and in quiet study of the Word of God. Their friends are wounded and dying around them; and many a sermon is preached by the dying words of some man who has led a thoughtless life, but is brought at the last moment to the foot of the cross. He sends to his wife, or mother, or sister, the expression of the hope that their prayer is answered, and that he dies in peace. He has found the secret in suffering and in death, which he might never have learnt in ease and prosperity. Can we suppose that such lessons will have no effect on our national character! Individual and domestic calamity, public difficulty, and some humiliation, will, as I believe, work a good effect. When it is the will of God that peace should be restored, we may be a nation of mourners, but we shall be more fitted to bless Him for his numberless and undeserved bounties."

2nd. The other thing that distinguished the past year, of a national and social character, was the visitation of Cholera, from which, for some weeks, some parts of the metropolis and of the country suffered. We have reason to hope, on reviewing the event, that we are beginning to learn one, at least, of the lessons which such visitations are intended to teach. While I would by no means disconnect manifest *social* and *national* judgments from *moral* causes and spiritual

ends, there can be no doubt that they are to be looked at also in their *physical* relations,—the instruction they convey as to material laws, and the punishment they inflict for neglect or infraction. We have reason to hope, from the comparatively milder form in which the pestilence recently came, that preventive measures had been taken by many, and not without success. The striking feat was especially brought out, to the credit of the metropolis—the *City*, properly so called—that the plague had little or no effect within its limits, and that this, there was reason to believe, was owing, under God, to the wise and judicious system of local improvement and social cleanliness that had been established since the last visitation. A dirty community will never be either very healthy or very virtuous. Habits of filth destroy self-respect, blunt the moral perceptions, and operate injuriously on everything belonging to the religious and spiritual life. It should not be without meaning to us, as to our social habits, that the highest blessing of religion—its influence in cleansing and purifying the soul—nay, the very operation itself of the Spirit of God on the spirit of man, is set forth by the emblem of the “washing of water,” and of others connected with bodily purifications. Although it is to be admitted, that the mysteries of Cholera are not yet solved, nor all its causes and antecedents discovered, sufficient is known to convince us of the importance of certain physical appliances by which the scourge may be prevented or mitigated; and I certainly believe that there is such a connexion between habits of obedience to one set of God’s laws, and a *preparation*, to say the least, for obedience to another, that I really think you have

done not only something, but very much, towards elevating the morals and virtue of a nation, when you have got it improved in the cleanliness of its habits, and in the airiness and convenience of its dwellings. Many of God's providential lessons, in the lower departments of his acts and government, aim at the enforcement and illustration of this truth;—and he, I should think, would, as a Christian man, be but a poor learner of the lessons, who did not connect them with *higher* truths, and feel that they drew him upwards towards everything that belongs to a pure and sanctified spiritual life.

II.

We will now pass from the more general sphere of the national and the social, to what may have transpired in relation to Religion, and may have a bearing and influence on the cause of Truth, in connexion with different sections of the Church.

I only take something like important facts connected with large communities, and of these I shall only notice *two*. In passing to them, however, I would remark, that I am not without hope that the war we are engaged in, however much it is to be lamented in itself, may possibly have favourable results on the ultimate progress of Christian truth. The interference of professedly Christian nations on behalf of the Turk, and their occupancy, for a time, of the Mahommedan territory, may certainly be employed, in the providence of God, for the furtherance of ends *which they themselves do not contemplate*. The temporary intercourse of the Christian and the Musulman may break down barriers which have hitherto

existed to the preaching of the Gospel and the profession of the truth. The spiritual Church may have its sympathies awakened and its energies called forth in favour of regions, in or about which apostles travelled and martyrs bled. Nor is it to be denied, that the impulse given to the study of prophecy, however mistaken or doubtful our interpretation, may have good results on individual minds, and tell with effect in favour of Scriptural and evangelical truth. It might be noticed, too, in these passing remarks, that although, during the past year, little has resulted from the late singular movement in the Chinese mind, it is not to be concluded that nothing will come of *that* event. We were surprised, at first, by the presence of a religious and Christian element in connexion with political agitation; and we were scandalized afterwards by finding how it wrought itself into grotesque forms of ignorant superstition, if not into fraud and blasphemy. Still, there is this consideration, which should not be lost sight of—that the very extravagances into which the Chinese neophytes or pretenders fell, evinced the *power which the ideas of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are able to exert over the human mind*. It might be too much to ask if the picture presented could have been *reversed*—if a European nation, the most ignorant and superstitious of them all, could have been so taken with, and so penetrated by, the religious ideas of the Chinese, as to be tempted to create out of them a new form of faith, and to use it for nourishing political fanaticism? Western civilization, however low, might be supposed to be sufficient to have prevented *that*. But it *might* be asked, I think, whether, on the

face of the earth, there is *anything else* in the form of religion, any *other* books, or traditions, or mythologies, or rules or laws of a moral nature, which would have produced in the minds and habits of millions of men such a revolution, however disfigured by ignorance or imposture, as a few chapters of the Bible, and a few broken pieces of Christian truth, effected in China?

Without dwelling, however, on these very distant or uncertain matters, we come nearer home, and we look, first, at the very heart and centre of Christendom.

1st. In the Bomish Church, the great event of the past year was the authoritative promulgation of a new article of faith. For a long time past, the Church of Borne has been making great advances in its almost exclusive devotion to the Virgin. "Mariolatry"—the worship of a woman—has of late been more characteristic of the Apostate Church than anything else, and has been carried farther than ever it was before. For many ages it had been a disputed point, whether the Mother of Jesus was not herself born without sin—free from the stain of original corruption—the hereditary portion of the race. Opinions were divided. Learned doctors and holy saints took different sides;—some of those who denied the affirmative theory, speaking of it almost with bitterness. All this, however, was allowable, so long as the Church—in the person and through the lips of the successor of St. Peter—had not authoritatively pronounced its judgment. That judgment, we are told, had been long anxiously looked for; the faithful had been hoping, from the love they bore to the Holy Mother, that the Pope would see his way to the

affirmative of the question, and would publicly and for ever so settle the point as to change an opinion into an article of faith:—a thing which would have these two results,—it would gratify the affection of those who believed, and would compel the acquiescence or secure the damnation of those who did not. For a good while, things seemed to be approaching this consummation, though there often appeared something like unaccountable hesitation and delay. At length the courage and purpose of the Sovereign Pontiff gathered strength, and grew to the emergency. It was perceived that the time was come. It was determined “to declare the decree.” An assembly was convened of bishops and archbishops, prelates and cardinals, from all countries, to represent the hierarchy of the church, and to take part in the great ceremonial. The beginning of December was appointed for the Council; the 8th of the month, for the public announcement of the settled truth. Long before the time appointed, dignified clergy from many lands and distant nations crowded into Borne. The Pope had not only summoned a certain number, expressly and by name, but had intimated his willingness to receive any who should be moved to come of their own accord. The result was such an influx of ecclesiastics into the Holy City as had not been witnessed for many ages. For four days the assembly met, under the presidency of three cardinals. The bull that was to be promulgated was communicated to it, and every portion of it (it is said) “was frankly and acutely discussed.” It is understood, however, that the decision was not strictly unanimous;—that there were a few votes openly negative; and that some

abstained from voting, from the impression that the time had not yet arrived for the positive promulgation of the truth. These, however, counted but little in so vast a conclave, and the authority of the sovereign successor of St. Peter may be supposed to have been sufficient to silence and overrule a great many more even than they.

The following account of what took place in public, is from the pen (or pencil) of Cardinal Wiseman:—

“All was now ready, and the great day approached—a day for ever memorable in the Church’s annals—the day in which the greatest prerogative of holiness ever conferred on creature—exemption from the stain of original sin—was to be dogmatically declared, as it had been firmly believed to belong to the purest of beings, after Him who chose and fitted her to be His mother.”

The cardinal describes the assembling of the prelates on the morning of the day—the procession to St. Peter’s—the pomp and splendour with which it was invested—and the gathering together, in the ample spaces of the most magnificent of Christian temples, of a mighty multitude, the adoring spectators of the imposing ceremonial. In the course of the service, the moment approached for the event of the day. It is thus described:—

“It was a quarter past eleven when the last note of the Evangelist sounded over the shrine of St. Peter; and a silence took place such as it is difficult to imagine in a crowd of 30,000 or 40,000 persons who filled the church. Every breath was held, every nerve was strained, and attention of eye and ear was keenly directed towards the Pontiff’s throne. The venerable

Dean of the Sacred College, the Cardinal Macchi, in his 86th year, but still in enjoyment of full mental rigour, approached the steps, accompanied by a Greek and Armenian bishop as supporters and witnesses of his petition, together with twelve senior archbishops of the Western church, who were assisted at the throne by the officers of the household, who are official witnesses of such important transactions. Kneeling there, the eminent postulant, in the name of his brethren and the whole Catholic episcopate, *suppliated the Holy Father to pronounce his dogmatical definition of the immaculate conception of the ever-glorious Virgin Mary.*

“The Pontiff assented, but called upon all to join him in invoking the light and grace of the Holy Spirit at such a solemn moment. He knelt, and in his clear, sonorous, and most musical voice intoned the hymn, ‘Veni Creator Spiritus.’ The choir sang the first verse, and, according to practice, was going to continue, when the entire congregation, not only of assembled bishops and clergy, but of crowds of people, spontaneously and simultaneously, and with admirable harmony, took up the song, and with a voice loud as the sound of many waters, but one as the expression of a single heart, filled the whole Basilica with such a strain as perhaps never before struck against its golden vaults. It was grand beyond conception; it was sublime; and came nearer to the realization of what St. John heard of heavenly music than anything which he or others have ever before listened to; and it was repeated at each alternate verse with as perfect a regularity as if the whole multitude had been trained to answer the choir. But still more sublime than

this glorious strain was the silence which ensued. Standing at his throne, the Holy Father commenced the reading of the solemn decree, by which, *as Superior Pastor of the visible head of the Universal Church, as successor of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and as vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, he authoritatively and dogmatically pronounced that immunity from original sin, or in other words, the immaculate conception of the ever-blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of God, is a revealed doctrine of the Catholic Church.*

“He had, however, not proceeded far, before his tears and sobs interrupted his speech, and it was only by an effort which evidently cost him great exertion that he could make his words struggle through the tide of his emotions, and rise audible above the flood of his overpowering feelings. He succeeded, indeed, so that we had the happiness of hearing every word and syllable of that most memorable decree; but that flood of tender devotion drew after itself corresponding sentiments from the souls of others, so that scarce a dry eye was to be seen amid those who witnessed this touching scene. *The cannon’s voice gave the signal of the happy accomplishment of so many fervent desires* to the whole city, and the prolonged peals of gladness from the olden towers of Basilicas and the belfries of modern churches represented the acclaim of the earlier and later periods of unchangeable Catholicity.”

The following passage is from another writer:—
“The next ceremony was that of CROWNING THE MADONNA, which seemed to interest the mass of spectators more than the previous dogmatical declaration. The procession of bishops once more led the way to the cardinal’s chapel, where a crimson

platform had been prepared before the altar-piece, so as to allow of the Pope's ascending *to the figure of the Virgin, as depicted in the clouds on the upper part of the picture.* THE CANNON OF ST. ANGELO THUNDERED THEIR APPLAUSE AS HIS HOLINESS ATTACHED THE PRECIOUS DIADEM TO THE PAINTING." I had my self a letter from Borne, written on the 9th of December, by one who witnessed the exhibition and proceedings of the day before. After referring to, and describing them, my correspondent says, "Such are the *impious fooleries* that engross the Roman Catholic world! If any one is in danger of falling into Romanism, let him come to Rome,—that would cure him. At least, such, it appears to me, is the effect likely to be produced by a visit to this place." These words are those of a devout English Protestant, who witnessed the scene with wonder and sorrow, and turned away from it sad at heart;—sad and depressed, yet indignant withal, at the gaudy shows and arrogant pretensions of the Romish Church;—principle and taste alike offended by the pomp and the puerilities that fired the eloquence of Cardinal Wiseman, and in which *he* saw the greatness and splendour of "unchangeable Catholicity."

This "unchangeable Catholicity," with its claims, too, of unvarying uniformity, seems to be a very singular thing. Its faith, it appears, is one and the same in all ages, in spite of the endless diversity of opinion which prevails within it, and has always prevailed, and in spite of the addition of new articles to its dogmatic creed!—and it is everywhere the same, exhibiting a perfect uniformity of belief, although this very decree, so pompously promulgated, is actually refused and

prohibited from being read in some parts of the European Continent! There are ways of reconciling these facts with the profession and the theory, but into these we do not at present enter. It may be asked, however, in conclusion, what it *is* that Romanism and Romanists have really gained by the late declaration in respect to the Virgin? In our opinion *nothing* has been gained,—except in the sense in which Paul speaks of “gaining harm and loss.” The bull diminishes what little liberty of thought was left; it binds on the conscience a new dogma at the peril of damnation; it evinces, as we think, both the absence of unchangeableness, and the absence of oneness, in the Church itself; it exposes and aggravates the *idolatry* that belongs to it, the impiety which it delights to indulge and foster; and it brings out the contrast between the drivelling absurdities of mere ecclesiastics, and the actual work, rough and real, with which MEN in the world have to concern themselves. The whole thing is more likely to provoke the contempt and the opposition of earth, and to draw down (one would think) the displeasure of Heaven, and the thunderbolts of God, than anything else! The following, however, is the “gain” to the faithful, according to the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster.

“Rejoice, then, dearly beloved; again, we say, rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord, who has so graciously bestowed upon His Church so signal a blessing, whereby the piety of her children has been wonderfully excited, and their love for their Mother in heaven greatly increased.

“Rejoice that *to her freak glory hoe been given, and a new jewel to brighten the crown she wears, that we*

may hope *for new favours and graces*, FROM HER AFFECTIONATE AND POWERFUL INTERCESSION.”

Thank God, we have another “Intercessor!”—one, of whom, while it is said, on the one hand, that ‘He can save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him;’ it is said on the other, that he is the “one mediator between God and man,” and that “there is no name, given among men, under heaven, whereby we can be saved, but his only,” the name of “our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

2nd. The next thing which I notice, as having distinguished the past year, is something nearer home, something which occurred within the precincts of the English Church, and which *may*, possibly, have important results. For a long time, as you are all aware, there has been increasing among the clergy such forms of opinion and teaching respecting the nature and efficacy of the sacraments, the apostolic commission, and the powers of the priesthood, as could with difficulty be distinguished from the characteristic errors of the Church of Some. Some of these men openly disparaged the Protestant Reformation;—protested against being confounded with Protestants;—revived and taught what they called Catholic truth;—and did all they could to assimilate their modes of procedure and worship, as well as their doctrine, to what plain people took (or mistook,) for the speech and dress of the Mother of Abominations! Many of the men seemed to admit, at last, that the people were right;—they took their departure from the Church of England, and thus openly acknowledged that they found a more congenial, and a more fitting place, in that of Some. Many, however, remained, who, it was

supposed, might as well have gone,—and new advocates of the so-called Catholic truth were continually springing up,—so that, in spite of secessions, the number and the zeal of the Romanizing clergy were perpetually on the increase. Baptismal regeneration,—priestly absolution,—sacramental grace,—these, and such like matters, were their constant themes. At length, the “real presence” of the body and blood of Christ in the supper of the Lord,—in the elemental bread and wine, after there had passed upon them the act of consecration,—*this* was taught in so flagrant a form, that some were stirred up to determine to bring it to a legal test. During the last year, proceedings were contemplated, or commenced, against two individuals. One (professedly on *another* ground,) evaded the inquiry, by seceding from the Establishment, and immediately entering the Church of Borne. The proceedings against the other are still in progress, and are so far advanced that they may soon be expected to make their appearance in the Ecclesiastical Court. The case is anticipated, on all sides, with deep interest. The question must be argued, and a decision must be given, as to *what the teaching of the Church of England* is in relation to the sacrament, and in respect to what is called the *real presence*; the real presence,—that is, not the spiritual presence of Christ *at* the sacrament, as He may be present wherever two or three are met together in his name,—but the real presence of “the *body and blood* of Christ” *in* the sacrament, so that (though in however spiritual a manner) *they* are received by the faithful *then*. It is feared by some, that, on whichever side the decision may be given, a rupture will be the con-

sequence—that the one or other of the contending parties must secede from the Church. I have no great expectation of this myself. It will take a great deal, and it *ought* to take a great deal, to force any number of the English clergy to vacate their position; but I *do* expect that something will result which may greatly influence the future treatment of many important religious questions. I do not think that, in consistency with some of the formularies of the Church, a deliverance can be given in perfect accordance with the true sense of the New Testament. The very lowest interpretation that may be arrived at will, I fear, include *more* than Paul or John ever set forth as the teaching of Jesus. If this be so, the most favourable issue may lead to movements of some moment;—but if another issue were to result, and the *higher* form of Anglican opinion were to be ruled to be that which the Church teaches, it can hardly be doubted that the religious and earnest *laity* of the land would be roused to action;—that they would agitate for a revision of the Prayer-book; and that some of the clergy would be found to help them.

Let no one think that we, as Nonconformists, have nothing to do with these matters. We have to do with them *as Christian Englishmen*, We have to do with them as those who wish well to the evangelical members of another communion;—who would willingly see it,—the most influential body in the land,—freed from the vestiges of old errors which it inherits from the past, which give colour and ground for modern perversions, and which hamper and hurt the better and purer portion of its adherents. I pity any man who is so shut up within himself, or in his

own little and narrow enclosure, as to feel no interest in what is exciting the anxiety and apprehensions of good men in other communions;—things which, by possibility, may far more affect the great and general interests of truth, than any of the questions that more immediately concern himself.

Before leaving this second sphere of observation, it may be remarked, that while some clergymen, during the last year, have been so speaking of *the Lord's Supper* as to make it seem a repetition or continuance of *the Lord's sacrifice*, there have been others, most amiable and earnest men, who have been, teaching, with elaborate solicitude, what amounts to the denial of that sacrifice altogether. The whole of the discoveries of both Testaments on the subject of sacrifice is made to amount to nothing whatever *in the Christ of God*, but what is to be achieved by every *Christian*, namely, *self-sacrifice*;—the giving up of the individual will to the *Divine* will. It is a strange thing, these diametrically opposite utterances from different sections of the same body of men. In some aspects of it, sad and mournful; in other aspects, not so,—that is, when we can forget what we would willingly not remember.

As to our own Body I have nothing to say, for I am not aware of anything having occurred in it within the last year to distinguish the period from those that preceded it. There was no remarkable prosperity or disaster, no educational or other movement to demand remark. I could say much on the general state of the denomination if that were proper, but it is not so in this Discourse. There are many things amongst us much to be lamented, some

seeding to be altered or rectified, some, perhaps, to be abandoned or abjured, if we would get hold of the intelligent and devout,—really attaching them to our *churches* and our *system*, and not merely, here and there, gathering them in front of a particular pulpit, and attracting them, for a time, to individual preachers. While I say this, I am well aware that we want preachers, and must have them. We need them *always*; for, as a Body believing only in a teaching ministry, a ministry of instruction *not* a priesthood, we can do nothing without preachers. And we need them *at present*,—men of faith, simplicity, earnestness and power, as the special want of these our times. Alas! it is more easy to build chapels than to get ministers to put in them; more easy for a rich man to give thousands of pounds to erect a synagogue, than to give a son to labour as a builder in the spiritual temple! There are, doubtless, many things which may repel a man from the Nonconformist ministry; there are others, however, which might attract alike piety and power, and inspire a holy and Christian ambition. There may be some, perhaps, here, at this moment, on whom these few words may not be lost.

III.

The last sphere, to which I bring down and direct attention, is that which we occupy as a Church and Congregation; which includes this also,—that here each individual is to be the object of thought and notice to himself. In one respect, there is not much for remark here,—and in another, there is far more than I can profess to touch. As a Church, the past year wit-

nessed one thing that was interesting to ourselves; the completion of a quarter of a century,—five and twenty years,—during which we had sustained towards each other the relation of Pastor and people. In the families of the Church, nothing very remarkable occurred;—nothing, that is, of a nature to excite the attention or call forth the sympathies of the entire body. The pestilence *did* touch us, but so slightly as to be confined to a single instance, or to one family, and that neither the parents, nor grown-up children. More obvious and affecting strokes have fallen upon us *since this year began* than we felt or witnessed during “the whole year” that recently closed. *Two* of those who worshipped with us on the last day of the year have been called away, very suddenly, and under affecting circumstances. With nothing of any public moment, then, to call for remark, in the past year,—my concluding observations must bear simply on the history of the individual, and I must send each and all of you to preach this part of the sermon to yourselves. *I cannot do it. “A whole year!”*—The past year, 1854!—what occurred in it? what happened to you? what did you *do*? what did you *become*? what are you *now*, as the result and embodiment of your thoughts and feelings—your purposes and pursuits—your progress or failures—your virtues and your sins—your afflictions and your blessings; the *discipline* of Providence—the institutions of the Church—sabbaths and sacraments—solitude and society—reading and talk; all direct and all incidental teaching? What *was* it all? what did it do for you? what do you feel to have been the issue? Some of you may have had great sorrows, and great deliverances.

Some may have had deep “searchings of heart;”—religious convictions and moral awakening. Some may have fallen into great sin. Some may have been emancipated from an evil habit. Some may have been brought to trust in Christ. Some may have given themselves heartily to his service. And some may have sensibly cooled in their love and sunk in their faith, and are now “following afar off.” But it is impossible to enumerate all that might be imagined to have happened in the histories and the souls of a thousand people in the course of “a whole year.” Each must, in this, minister to himself. Let us not forget to connect with the past, the thought of the future. In “a *whole year*” what may come?—who can tell what it shall bring forth? In “a whole year” what may be *done*? How much may be lost by “a whole year’s” careless living?—how much may be gained by “a whole year’s” resolute perseverance in some good habit or useful work? Let us all strive to be real and earnest; to live and work, believe and pray, purpose and perform, like men who feel the importance of time, the greatness of life, the nearness of eternity, the grace of Christ, the fatherhood of God! May *His* blessing make the present year the holiest and best we have ever lived! If *the whole* be given to us, may the whole be spent in “walking with God;” if *part* only, may that see us in *the road* to heaven,—may the rest be spent *in heaven itself*! Amen.

