

THE
GOSPEL MAGAZINE;

AND

Protestant Beacon.

“COMFORT YE, COMFORT YE, MY PEOPLE, SAITH YOUR GOD.”

“ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE.”

“JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER. WHOM TO
KNOW IS LIFE ETERNAL.”

FOR 1853.

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PREFACE.

TO OUR BELOVED READERS.

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

We cannot find words to express what we feel when we remember that another year is closed, and that it devolves upon us once again to address you by way of "Preface." To us it is marvellous—yea, astoundingly so.

You can know but in part our feelings on this head, because you are in ignorance of the train of events through which our God has conducted us since we were first called to address you. Suffice it, it does excite us to say, that the Lord does even to this very day give practical proof of the fact, that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

It is to our mind increasingly precious to run through the pages of the written word, and see how in every age Jehovah has illustrated and established this blessed truth.

When seven years of famine were destined to fall upon the land of Egypt, God would employ a poor Hebrew prisoner to arrange for the emergency. When Israel was to be liberated from their four hundred years' bondage, a weeping babe floating in a slender ark of bulrushes on yonder river, shall be raised up as their deliverer. When the walls of Jericho were to fall down, it was to be at the sound of seven rams' horns. When the Midianites and the Amalekites, "like grasshoppers for multitude," were to be destroyed, Gideon and his three hundred men, with their trumpets, their empty pitchers, and their lamps, shall effect it. When the presumptuous uncircumcised Philistine that day by day defied the trembling armies of the living God, was to be slain, the stripling David with a sling and a stone, shall be summoned to the battle. When a king is required for the throne of Israel, a shepherd boy is crowned. When a Naaman was to be cured of his leprosy, it shall be at the suggestion of a little captive maid. That Messiah's line should not be broken, a poor widow comes from Moab, and marries Boaz. When the Lord of life and glory is to appear clothed in humanity, a certain humble virgin "shall conceive and bring forth a Son, of whom it shall afterwards contemptuously be asked, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" And when the Gospel of the grace of God is about to be proclaimed, Jesus shall summon to his side, and instruct from his own loving

lips, sundry poor illiterate fishermen, by whose feeble instrumentality salvation shall be preached to all nations, and—

“ Loud resound from pole to pole.”

How creature-humbling, yet most God-glorifying, are these facts, based so conclusively upon Jehovah's own testimony, 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 that 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 naught things that are ; that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

To those who are accustomed to congratulate themselves upon their large measure of creature-wisdom, strength, or goodness, how extremely mortifying must be the foregoing declaration ; whereas to the truly Spirit-taught and Spirit-humbled soul, how welcome it is ! how truthful ! how precious ! So in keeping with what David felt and expressed, “ Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto ?” And Daniel, “ O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day.” And Paul, “ It is by the grace of God I am what I am.” Yea, with the one elect Church, redeemed by blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, “ Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God ; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

Beloved fellow-pilgrims, it is our privilege to congratulate you, in that you are twelve months nearer home ! Another year's sorrows, afflictions, temptations, have been struck off the list. Not one have you to meet again. They are gone, they have passed away, and that for ever ! Moreover, not only “ by the help of God do you continue unto this day ;” but “ now is your salvation nearer than when you [first] believed.” Ah, and how much nearer ! Think of ten, twenty, thirty, forty—it may be with some of you, fifty—years having rolled away since you first knew the Lord, heard his voice, and were assured of his covenant love. Oh what mercy, grace, and faithfulness, have you received at his hands since then. The subject is so vast—we dare not dwell upon it ; nor upon your or our base ingratitude and wanderings. But think how much nearer home—yea, with some how very, very near. Verily you have well nigh reached the threshold of the New Jerusalem ; and shortly you shall hear the welcome, “ Come in thou blessed of the Lord ; wherefore standest thou without ?”

It is a delightful prospect.

But with some of us, in all human probability, it is not so near, though not the less certain (blessed be God !)

To those of us who are now called to bear the burden and heat of the day, there appears yet a vast distance between us and the heavenly city. And, judging from the aspect of things, we are disposed to believe and expect that some heavy conflicts lie in our pathway. Those conflicts may perhaps be more relative than personal—possibly both. The being rooted, and grounded, and settled in covenant immutabilities, may instrumentally sustain the soul personally; whilst there shall be deep anguish, relatively, for the condition and circumstances of Zion.

That heart must be callous indeed that can even at this moment contemplate unmoved the general aspect of Christendom. If we have reached the day so long foretold, when “men’s hearts should fail them from fear, and for looking for those things which are coming upon the earth,” we cannot conceive how any rightly-influenced mind can view with indifference the disorder, and the dread, and the distrust that prevail.

Need we particularize? Need we advert again to what we have so frequently proclaimed from these pages? Need we say, that our present condition both as a country and as a Church, is but the very natural result and consequence of a deep-laid, well-digested, fatally-destructive scheme, devised by Satan, and wrought out by his too-devoted and truthful allies, the whole Popish fraternity. England’s sun set in ’29. From that day to the present hers has been a retrograde movement. She may pride herself in her achievements; vauntingly she may point to the progress of her arts and her sciences; secretly she may be exclaiming, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built?” But her prosperity is not a healthy prosperity. She has been betrayed both in Church and State into the hands of her enemies. And, in our humble view, severe judgments, and a most critical crisis, await us.

On two accounts, however, we are consoled. First, the Lord has a people in the land. They know Him; they love Him; they are jealous for his honour. And if the cities of the plain would not have been destroyed, if so be but ten righteous had been found therein, Divine forbearance will be—must be—in some degree exercised towards England, guilty as she is.

Secondly, our consolation arises from the contemplation of the glorious era that will immediately succeed the destruction of Antichrist. If the sorrows shall exceed everything that earth has ever witnessed—and we have scripture warrant to expect that such will be the case—the joys that shall follow will surpass all that earth has ever witnessed also. The triumphs of the Man of Sin will be but of short duration. For three years and a half he may succeed in slaying (or silencing) the witnesses; but their rise shall be the signal for his final and complete overthrow and destruction. And what a glorious day that when the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.

The prospect is such as to make one long to witness, and experience, and enjoy it.

Brethren beloved, with these things before us, permit us once more to urge upon you and upon ourselves, unanimity. "Let brotherly love continue." The Lord unite our hearts in one common bond. May we be living, loving subjects of the King eternal. The Lord keep us fervent and faithful, united in heart and affection; and "striving *together* for the faith once delivered to the saints." May Christ be our object and subject. Mid all fluctuations of feeling—all vicissitudes of events—all real or apparent dangers—may our heart and eye be steadily fixed on our great Alpha and Omega. Yea, may we be coming up out of the wilderness day by day, steadily "leaning upon the Beloved;" and rejoicing in the fact, that—

"This God is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable Friend;
Whose love is as large as his power,
And neither knows measure nor end.

"'Tis Jesus the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit must guide us safe home;
We'll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that's to come."

THE EDITOR.

Bonnahon, Ireland, Christmas Eve, 1853.