

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.”

VOL. IV.—NEW SERIES.

LONDON:  
W. H. & L. COLLINGRIDGE, ALDERSGATE STREET, E.C.

1869.

## P R E F A C E.

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BELoved READER,—The closing up of another year calls for our annual word; and truly we are lost in wonder, love, and amazement, as we contemplate the boundless grace and mercy of our covenant God and Father in Christ Jesus. If *each day* and *every hour* adds to the vast list of inconceivable wisdom, love, and compassion, as so richly and blessedly displayed on the part of Jehovah in regard to His dear children, what shall we say with respect to the openings out and developments of His wisdom, love, and mercy, through a *year*; and, further, what as to a *whole life-time*? Oh, how much have we thought lately, beloved, of the exclamation of the patriarch in the grand and glorious development and unfolding of the Lord's secret but wonderful counsels as to the way by which he had been conducted, in the midst of so much that was apparently so dark, so doubtful, so disastrous and destructive; "It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die." Then again, "And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." And again, "I had not thought to see thy face; and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed." Furthermore, in the midst of blessing his sons by whom he was surrounded, in the overpowering fulness of his heart, he exclaims, whilst looking up and contemplating all the marvellous acts of his good and gracious Lord God, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord." As much as to say, "I have longed for it. I have hoped for it. I have at times believed and rejoiced in it by faith, but now I behold it, in all its rich and blessed and marvellous unfoldings." "Oh, what a God," as if he would say, "is my God, in all His wisdom, mercy, love, grace, and power."

Beloved, we are thoroughly persuaded, that, as with Jacob so with Jacob's seed, there will, in the issue and at the end, be an equally admiring and adoring view taken and acknowledged of all the way by which the Lord has led His dear children. At different stages and under various aspects, there may be—and there doubtless will be

—fear and misgiving as to the working out and the ultimate results of a course so often dark and mysterious. Many and many a time as with Jacob, so with his seed, there may be—there doubtless will be—the unbelieving utterance, “All these things are against me;” but oh, in the Lord’s wonderful way of connecting, and blending, and causing to “work together,” there will at length be the unexceptionable, the unqualified, the unwavering, the universal testimony, “He hath done *all* things well.”

“And can it be?” say some. “What, this circumstance, that untoward event, the other loss, cross, vexation, disappointment, be for my *good*?” Yes, unquestionably so. It will not—it cannot—in the leastwise militate against or contradict that blessed assurance, “We know that ALL things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” It may be asked, “But *how* can it be?” Ah, *we* know not, but *the Lord* knows. He has not forsaken the earth; His interest in His people has not in the veriest shadow of a shade diminished. He has as much at stake as ever; and, in a sense, seeing that the end of all things draweth nigh, and the final consummation of His great and glorious purposes is nearer than it ever was before; so, by comparison, He looketh on and He regardeth with acutest intensity all that is going on. Satan, “knowing that he hath but a short time,” may have “come down, having great wrath,” but Jehovah is more than a match for Satan; and, as he has commonly outstripped himself, and with all his craftiness and experience been himself taken in the net which he has spread, so will it continue to be even unto the end.

In the daily operations of this grace, beloved, there is one thing of which we are increasingly convinced: it is the simple *looking to, leaning and living upon Jesus*. That is a wonderful word of the apostle, and there is very much more in it than we are wont to consider: “As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.” Now the question is, *how* did we receive Christ Jesus the Lord? How? Only as poor, lost, helpless, sinful and undone creatures. “We had nothing to bring to Jesus” (as a poor dying one once said to us) “but sin.”

“Nothing but sin could we Him give,  
Nothing but love did we receive.”

But now, if the reader’s experience tallies with ours, he finds an ever-constant inclination and effort to come to Jesus in a less guilty, less filthy, less helpless condition. Having known the Lord, it may

be, for many, many years, the vile thought will again and again intrude itself, "But is it quite as it should be that we, after all our knowledge and experience, should have to come as poor and needy, as guilty and as helpless, as ever? Ought we not by this time to have gained a something—to possess a something—the which we can present to the Lord in and upon our approaches?" Ah, no, beloved, we believe this is all of the flesh, in its pride and self-sufficiency, and in its ever-constant efforts to *be* a something, or to *do* a something in or of or by ourselves, independent of the Lord. We, in our poor proud hearts, are seeking that it should at least be, Christ and Co., not Christ all in all; but this will not do. The Lord the Spirit will teach us effectually that it is "of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." We shall learn by little and little the reality of the mercy, and all the blessedness connected therewith, that "As we have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, So we must walk in Him;" as weak and as helpless, as guilty and as pauper-like, in and of ourselves, as ever. It must simply be, all the journey through,—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to *Thyself* I cling."

Beloved, the first and the last word in the grand economy of salvation, as far as wilderness-teachings are concerned, is GRACE. It is the first word which the Great Teacher sets before His pupil, and it will be the last word over which he will be found poring, when he is transferred from tabernacling in the body of this flesh to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. In the early stages of his spiritual career, he will be studying this great theme of grace, under the aspect of arresting grace, subduing grace, converting grace, regenerating grace, pardoning grace, peace-bestowing grace; in the advancing stages, He will be called to a familiarity with it, as supporting grace, upholding grace, forbearing grace, renewing grace, delivering grace, comforting grace; later still, he will know yet more and more of restoring grace, long-suffering grace, sustaining grace, all-conquering grace, and, last of all, victorious grace. So that, from first to last, that grand and glorious truth shall be emblazoned upon the whole page of his time-state experience, "By *grace* are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast."

Yes, indeed, dear reader, if you belong to the Lord, as you journey onwards and homewards, your song shall be—

“*Grace* first devised a way  
 To save rebellious man ;  
 And all the steps that *grace* display,  
 Which drew the wondrous plan.

“*Grace* taught my soul to pray,  
 And made my eyes o’erflow ;  
 ’Twas *grace* that kept me to this day,  
 And will not let me go.

“*Grace* all the work shall crown  
 Through everlasting days ;  
 It lays in heaven the topmost stone,  
 And well deserves the praise.”

Brethren beloved, we scarcely need remind you, that we live in eventful times—most eventful. Never, we presume, was the world in such commotion as at the present. Never, we imagine, was time so pregnant with events of such stirring character as now. But, amid all, assume whatsoever form things may, or come what will, our God can never be taken by surprise. He is prepared for every emergency. He has provided for every seeming contingency or adversity or peril to which His Church may be subjected. He still holds, and ever will continue to hold, the reins of government. He is still absolute Director, and, as absolute Controller of all events, He still “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.” “He maketh the clouds His chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind.”

Hence, beloved, we have as reasonable a right to sing, at the close of the year 1869, as at the winding up of any previous year—

“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.”

*St. Luke’s, Bedminster, Dec., 1869.*

THE EDITOR.