

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."

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PREFACE.

THE closing month of the year calls for our usual word, in a way of Preface.

It gives us another opportunity of congratulating our readers upon the great fact, and the comforting consideration, that, "having obtained help of God, they continue unto this day." Hence it behoves them and ourselves again to set up our Ebenezer, and to testify to the mercy that "hitherto the Lord hath helped us." To His great and adorable name be all the praise!

During the year which is now closing many of our beloved readers have "gone the way of all the earth." Some who read our Preface of last year are now (blessed be God!) before the throne! They are now "for ever with the Lord!" They have done with all trouble, and all trouble has done with them. They "see Him as He is," and, as well they may, are perpetually praising Him. "Their sun shall no more go down, nor for brightness shall their moon withdraw itself." "God, even their own God, wipes all tears from off all faces." "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." "The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Such, beloved, is the blessed estate of those who, "through faith and patience, inherit the promises;" but, privileged and enviable as their position may be, there is one fact which is ever a source of consolation to our own mind: it is that recorded in regard to them in the last verse of the 11th of the Hebrews: "That they without us should not be made perfect."

If "the Lord had need of *them*," He hath, likewise, equal "need of *us*," beloved, if so be we feel our need of Him, and are simply looking to and leaning upon Him as "all our salvation and all our desire." He cannot "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," until His one body, the Church, in all its varied members, are with Him where He is. This He distinctly expressed in His "I will" to His Father, in His last memorable prayer, prior to all the agonizing scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary.

Now, this blessed verity, beloved, of Christ and His people—He the Head and they the members of His one mystic body—being at home and glorified together, is indeed calculated to raise our thoughts and contemplations above the beggarly elements of this poor world, with all its distracting scenes!—its troubles, its strife, its afflictions, its sin, its death! We repeat that that "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," may well raise our thoughts and cheer our drooping souls amid all the sorrows of the way. Moreover, how stimulating and encouraging is the thought of the rapid flight of time! Oh, when we think of a whole year having passed since we last addressed you by way of Preface, how cheering is the reflection that it is not simply, as we often sing, "A day's march nearer home," but that day multiplied by 365! Hence we may triumphantly sing, "A year's march nearer home!" Oh, the satisfaction of those words: "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Considering the character of the world through which they are passing, and the "body of this death" with which they have to wage perpetual warfare, the children of God can readily understand the language of the Apostle Paul, where he declares himself to be "in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart to be with Christ, which is far better," or as the poet expresses it:—

"Nor would we have the hours more slow,
To keep us from our love."

At the same time it behoves us, beloved, to remember that, as far as this world and the time-state are concerned, it is but as it were a little moment in which we are afforded the opportunity of "showing forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light." It is now, and only now, that, in addressing our poor fellow-sinners, we can adopt the language of Moses to Hobab, his father-in-law, "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." And sure are we, beloved, that, could a regret be felt in heaven, it would be that we had so failed, whilst here on earth, to "sow beside all waters," and at all times, and in every possible way, seek to further the kingdom and glory of our blessed Lord and Master. Oh, how little at best—how utterly unworthy of a moment's consideration—is what we do, or seek to do, for Jesus! How true is that statement—

"Cold our services have been,
Mingled every prayer with sin."

The increasing marvel to us is, how the Lord can ever accept such service. Quite certain it is that Jehovah views the services as He views the servants—that is in the Person of the Son of His love, or both the one and the other would, to all intents and purposes, be rejected.

Reader, we are expected, in our Preface, from year to year, to say something about the period through which we are passing. Whatever the aspect of the times, we feel that there is a liability to dwell upon them to the exclusion—or in great measure to the exclusion—of that comfort and solace and those congratulations which are ever due to the Lord's dear people, as His adopted sons and daughters. Although under certain circumstances and in some tones of mind they may need the tender rebuke or the loving remonstrance, yet the great and gracious commission given to Peter, among his Lord and Master's last words, ought never to be lost sight of, even for a moment. "Feed my lambs;" "Feed my sheep;" thrice fell from the loving lips of his loving Lord. Striking proof this of their divine significance.

Moreover, with regard to rebuke and admonition and remonstrance, when and where necessary, the tender tone, the gentle appeal, the loving persuasion, goes far—very far—to secure the desired end and object of bringing back the wanderer to the beaten track. If the Apostle, after speaking of the desperate workings of poor fallen nature in the terms he did at the close of his first chapter to the Romans, says to the sceptic or the ignorant or the self-righteous, "Despise thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; *not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*" how much does such persuasiveness and tenderness apply to those who *have known* the Lord, and who have personally tested His loving and gracious character as "a Father pitying

His children?" Reader, it is "love that breaks the bone," even as it was a look of tender pity and loving sympathy that broke Peter's heart, and sent him out to "weep bitterly."

Never did Hart express a greater truth than when he said,

"Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,
This *dissolves* the heart of stone.

"'Tis *love* that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move;
The devils *know*, and *tremble* too,
But Satan *cannot love*."

This, then, dear reader, we would ever keep prominently in view, whilst we are, at the same time, by no means either ignorant of, nor unconcerned about, the nature of the times that have lighted upon us. We verily believe that we are in the last days. We do not apprehend, with all the wide-spread efforts which are being made for the evangelization of the world, that things will materially improve. On the contrary, we expect the days will become darker, and Christendom will become familiar with scenes and sorrows that, for painfulness and severity, shall probably exceed all that has ever befallen her. The Word of God justifies our belief in this respect; but still, even so, the Word of the Lord, under the most desperate and distressing of circumstances, shall hold good: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Oh, that the Lord the Spirit may put power into these words. It may be that when our head is laid low, and when the hand that now traces these lines shall be paralyzed in the last sleep of death, some that read what that hand now writes may be called to a trial of faith indeed—even to bonds, imprisonment, and death. Rapid as is the progress which Popery is making, we can hardly expect, at our time of life, it will have attained to such a power again in dear, but guilty, England as to vent all its deadly spleen, as in days of old, by the dungeon, the rack, and the fire: this may not be in *our* time, but (if divine love and power prevent not) it will, in all probability, be the case in the coming generation.

In proof that the spirit of Popery is what it ever was—that it is the lion still, only simply chained—is proved by a case of recent occurrence. The *Christian Standard* of November 20 gives an interesting letter from Rome respecting the conversion of a popular Roman Catholic priest. He was, in consequence, summoned before the Inquisition. His friends were greatly alarmed for his safety. He, however, was determined upon obeying the summons. Several of them accompanied him to the door, and stood in readiness to help. His escape was little less than miraculous. What he said, when in the presence of his opponents, may be gathered from his own words:—

"O you Inquisitors, Pontiffs, Cardinals, and Prelates, God speaks to you! To what have you brought the true Church! She that was so pure, so beautiful, so glorious, you have betrayed, violated, despoiled, wounded, and crucified by your doctrines, superstitions, and immorality, and sealed her tomb by your blasphemous 'Dogma of Infallibility.' Hear what God says to His suffering children—'The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.' Do you not tremble at these words? Who but Satan instigated and inflicted the tortures in this place? O, could these walls, within which

so many have been burned, speak—could this roof but echo back the cries of agony from your innocent victims, and the vaults beneath us reveal the corpses of those who have been buried alive, no other sentence of condemnation would be required.

“But the breath of God has for ever extinguished the fires of the Inquisition, and swept away your power; therefore I stand before you to-day and declare these truths, while you dare not touch a hair of my head. Yes, God has begun the work, and soon this tribunal, these walls and instruments, will be bruised under our feet, and scattered as ashes to the four winds, proclaiming to the world that the ‘Most Holy Universal Roman Inquisition’ is dead. Dead, because God has crushed it under the feet of His children.

“O ye obstinate ones, hear me! Hear one of your own brothers, who has said mass, and confessed, and preached with you. Weep not over me as ‘dead.’ I am not dead, but among the ‘living,’ and stand before you to announce the resurrection of that Church which you have tried to drown in blood. Yes, she is rising glorious as the morning light, and ignorance, superstition, heresy, and tyranny flee before her!

“Farewell, Church of my youth! Farewell, companions of my ministry! Alas! alas! it has been a ministry of destruction! O, if my word has yet any weight with you, I beseech you to open your eyes to the light—to abandon that system of darkness in which you are groping, and accept the true light which Jesus offers to you.”

Should persecution come, as we apprehend it will, here are our words, dear reader: the God who sustained in the flood and in the flame, in past scenes of trial, and in the very article of violent death, will equally sustain, under similar scenes, in time to come. Blessed be His name, “His hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor is His ear heavy that it cannot hear.” What He has been He is, and He will be to the end of time—yea, to all eternity. And, whatever the vigilance, the craft, the power of the enemy, the Church of the living God may exult in the mercy—the which nothing can affect or disprove—“Greater is He that is in them than he that is in the world.” Moreover, most certain we are that, inasmuch as Jehovah has been, and is, insulted by him “who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself as God,” the time is not distant when the Lord God Omnipotent will arise in righteous indignation, and avenge Himself of His enemies, vindicating His own glorious character, and confirming His own equally glorious truth, to the destruction and everlasting ruin of His foes, and to the recognition and everlasting security and blessedness of His own blood-bought Church and people.

“Say ye to the righteous, It shall go well with him.”

“And my people shall never be ashamed.”

“The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.”

“The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.”

“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 shall guide us safe home;
We’ll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that’s to come.”