

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.

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### SPECIAL WORDS TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

WE are always most forcibly reminded of the rapid flight of time when called, at the close of the year, to write the preface of another volume of the GOSPEL MAGAZINE.

Other thoughts, however, may likewise well possess us.

First, each year may naturally bring with increased vividness a sense of our own mortality. As years increase, and as we see our correspondents and readers dropping off one by one, how well may it say to us, as with trumpet-tongue, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live."

It is immensely difficult, dear reader, to realize our own dying condition; but this want of realization does by no means interfere with the fact! It is a fact, nevertheless! The saying may hold good, "Men count all men mortal but themselves," but men—all men—are mortal, notwithstanding!

"We spend our years," says the Psalmist, "as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Psa. xc. 9, 10).

This, by the preface of the Psalm, is attributed to Moses. In like manner does the man after God's own heart write, "Behold, Thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before Thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. Surely every man walketh in a vain shew; surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them" (Psa. xxxix. 5, 6).

"He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them!" What can be more true? Personally we are amazed, especially when at any time called for a little season to visit the great London, to see how men bring their every thought and energy to bear upon the accumulation of wealth; and yet they do so in the face of a fact which none dare attempt to gainsay—"and knoweth not who shall gather them!"

It is in vain that they are reminded, morning by morning, by the closed shutter, the vacant seat in omnibus or train, the lengthy list of "deaths" in the papers they so eagerly scan, that this and that one so well known, and with whom they were personally so familiar, are gone the way of all the earth! The announcement—stubborn and real and undeniable as it is—serves but to supply material for passing comment; speedily the theme is changed, and men plunge again into the din and the dazzle of business life, as though naught had occurred, and as though they themselves were happy exceptions to the universal rule, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," (Heb. ix. 27).

But the call to write a preface is suggestive, moreover, of other considerations.

Year by year, as our readers are aware, we have expressed in these pages our deep and still deepening conviction that some great crisis is at hand! Each year only brings that crisis so much the nearer!

Apart from the impressions of those professing godliness, there appears to be a feeling of a something approaching possessing the minds of men in general. Nationally, commercially, socially, there is a condition of *unrest, uncasiness, suspicion!* A want of confidence pervades the general mind!

And how can it be otherwise? There has been a casting off the fear of God, in very many respects, in a national point of view. There has been among the great counsels of the nation a virtual setting aside the Word of God. There has been a pandering to Popery in every possible way. Her every demand has been acceded to. Under guise and pretence, Ritualism has, to a fearful extent, leavened the Church of the Reformation with Romish doctrine and Romish practices.

Moreover, the spread of infidelity, under varied forms and phases, is lamentable to contemplate. We believe that but few even of the professed people of God have anything like an adequate idea of the extensive hold infidelity has upon thousands upon thousands—aye, millions—in this so-called Christian land.

Further, there is a widespread Jesuit conspiracy at work in this so long highly-favoured country, that is sapping the dearest interests of society and our national institutions to their very foundations.

But, to our own mind at least, there is a more lamentable aspect of the times in which we live than any of those upon which we have touched; it is the strife, and the rancour, and the bitterness among those who, in many respects, have given evidence of their being really, spiritually, savingly taught of God, and who are in deed and in truth looking forward to spending eternity together! These brethren, alas! are “falling out by the way!” Oh, how sad this is!

In prospect of the days which have lighted upon us, it was said that upon the principle that the wolf drove the scattered sheep together, so Popery and infidelity would assuredly bring together men holding in common the essentials of our most holy faith. But, alas! we fail to see this prediction verified. We believe that wolves in sheep’s clothing—that is, Jesuits—have succeeded in getting in among the sheep, and they have *severed*, rather than *united* them.

Had these sheep banded together as the heart of one man, and had they united and importunately wrestled at the throne of grace, as the patriarch did on behalf of the cities of the plain, we believe that there might have been real ground of hope for Chris.endom, notwithstanding the dangers and besetments by which she was imperilled; but, alas! we fail to see this oneness of heart and this kindred importunity.

Reader, passing from these more general considerations, permit us to speak a little more closely to you as professedly a believer in our one common Head and Lord!

In looking back over our imperfect labours in connection with this Magazine during the last five to six-and-thirty years, if any measure of satisfaction is realized, it is that we have not been permitted to indulge in controversy, or yield to that spirit of acrimony which, alas! alas! is but natural to us all. When assailed, we have again and again felt a disposition to retaliate, but we thank God for keeping such disposition in check. We are thoroughly convinced that there is a vast deal more of *self* and our *poor proud fallen nature* hid under what we may be disposed to regard as “zeal for the truth” and “jealousy for God’s honour” than we are aware of.

Much as we esteem the memories of such men of God as TOPLADY and HUNTINGTON, yet where is the poor hungry and thirsty, feelingly bankrupt

sinner but must acknowledge the vast difference realized in the soul when taking down one of their volumes and reading the *controversial* in place of the *experimental* portions of them? Why is there *almost always* a savour and an uplifting of heart felt after reading HAWKER which is *not always* realized in the perusal of the works of the two servants of God aforesaid? Why? Because too often *men* and *their doctrines* and *doings* are the theme, instead of simply CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED! If *men* in the leastwise usurp the place of the MASTER, dearth, deadness, and dissatisfaction are sure to follow!

Surely it behoves the children of God well to weigh the words of the Apostle in the third chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians: "For ye are yet carnal;" and be it remembered that he was addressing himself to "the Church of God which was at Corinth, to them that were sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints;" and yet, immediately after that salutation, he says: "NOW I BESEECH you, *brethren*, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions (margin, 'schisms') among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, *my brethren*, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you." In the third chapter, before referred to, he says: "For ye are yet carnal." Why? He adds, "For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So that neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase" (verses 3-7).

How much in this epistle does the Apostle write in this selfsame strain; likewise in his epistle to the Romans it is clearly to be gathered that there were differences of opinion in regard to secondary or minor matters; that the seeing eye to eye, in all respects and in regard to minute details, belonged not to the Church *militant* state, but was reserved to her *triumphant* condition, and was to be a blessed feature of that condition. Having opened his 14th chapter to the Romans with this striking exhortation, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations," the Apostle says: "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man," he adds, "be fully persuaded in his own mind." Having continued in this strain, he says, further: "But why dost *thou* judge *thy brother*? or why dost *thou* set at naught *thy brother*? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."

Moreover, in his epistle to Timothy, full of godly counsel and caution as it is, and testifying, as the Apostle does, of the perilous times that shall mark the last days, he speaks of "doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings;" and emphatically he counsels—"foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes."

In dwelling upon these things, doubtless there are those who will charge us with *compromise*. "To our own Master we stand or fall" in this matter.

In speaking as we have done, as God is our witness, we have simply had those in view whom we believe to be the children of God, but who have allowed *non-essentials*—matters of *secondary* (and *not vital*) importance—to come in and clash with that *oneness of heart and effectual spiritual teaching*, in regard to the one "*common salvation*" (Jude 3), of which *all the Spirit-quickenened and Spirit-taught are the subjects*.

We are as ready as they to do battle with mere name or profession, with superstition or idolatry or human merit or free will, or any of the many "isms"

that would divest a precious Christ of His glory, and concede that to the creature which solely belongs to the Holy Ghost!

But this, we maintain, is a totally different thing to being engaged in "strife about straws"—little water, or much, or none at all! We shall shock some, no doubt, by such a remark. It is, nevertheless, our sober conviction, and, as we believe, a lamentable fact, that there has been more division and heart-burning among the real children of God upon baptism than upon any other subject whatever. We grieve over it, and have for years done so. It has been well said that "many make more of the *water* than of the *blood*!"

This, however, will not do. If the Lord sees fit to bring one of His children down into a felt poverty of spirit, hiding His face, allowing past evidences to be obscured, old waymarks to be obliterated, sin to strive for the mastery, the Word to be sealed, Providence to frown, Satan to assault; the shadows of evening gathering, flesh and heart-failing, as the tempter insinuates again and again and again, "How will it be with thee in the swellings of Jordan?" we maintain that a poor soul brought down into this low place and condition will want something more than mere doctrine or so-called "Church order," or "Christian fellowship" can give.

*It is a dead-lift from on high that such a poor sinner needs.* It is a "THUS SAITH THE LORD!" He waits and He wants to hear the old well-known sweet fear-assuaging voice again resounding through his innermost soul, "It is I; be not afraid!" This, and nothing less than this, will suffice to liberate his poor captive spirit. And from our heart we believe that many of the Lord's dear children are kept in this low place, in order that they should not be carried away with any of the many delusions of the day, on the one hand, or indulge in the bitterness, the backbitings, the heart-burning about party names or petty differences, on the other. As the late Mr. TRIGGS (of blessed memory!) used to say, "There was so much to do in the *home department* that they had neither time nor inclination to interfere with others."

In the death-bed scene, described by a bystander, of the late WILLIAM GARRARD, well known as "the Watchman on the Walls"—a man of deep experience and keen observation—among his last utterances were, "*Live peaceably with all men, ESPECIALLY WITH THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH.*"

This might be regarded as a voice from the tomb, and, falling from the lips of one who had preached in Leicester alone for thirty-one years, and had been in the ministry for upwards of half a century, is justly entitled to the very gravest consideration.

Reader, one word more. This may be, and probably will be, the last time we shall address you by way of preface! Perhaps before the year 1876 comes to a close our editorial labours—and with it our earthly pilgrimage—may have come to a close likewise. The Lord alone knows. The residue of the spirit is with Him! "Our times are in His hands!" Be matters in this respect as they may, we conclude this our annual address with the words we quoted upon our first venturing to write to you thirty-five and a half years ago, "See that ye fall not out by the way—ye are brethren!"

Yours to serve in the Gospel of Christ, and in the path of tribulation,

St. Luke's, Westminster, Nov., 1875.

THE EDITOR.