

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. XVII.—NEW SERIES.

LONDON:

W. H. AND L. COLLINGRIDGE, ALDERSGATE STREET, E.C.

1882.

P R E F A C E.

As each receding year calls for comments in a way of Preface, an additional weight and responsibility seem to devolve upon us. Upon these grounds, therefore, we take up the pen with a degree of reluctance and hesitation. Mentally we exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" No custom, habit, or experience, suffices to meet the emergency. We feel our need of special light, grace, and strength from on high to deal with matters which, at such times, present themselves to the mind in a combined or concentrated form. It is, as it were, the annual summing up. It is the business man's time of stock-taking and striking the balance for or against himself. It is the barrister taking a final glance at his brief, in order to have its prominent features at his fingers' ends as he pleads in open court. It is the judge resorting to his notes, in order to offer comments upon this and that feature of the evidence.

Now, we maintain that, in a spiritual point of view, this summarizing and commenting upon passing events becomes yet more and more difficult and more and more important, at the present crisis of the Church and the world. And why? Because, as we draw nearer, and nearer still, to the close of the present dispensation, we are reminded of the declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as that of His servants, the Apostles Peter and Paul, that most momentous were to be the features of the latter day. "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets," said Jesus, "and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

In writing to his son Timothy, the Apostle Paul testifies, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

Can there, we ask, be a truer description than the foregoing of what is going on in the present day? Verily there is a "departing from the faith and a giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils;" for anything that brings the Lord Jesus Christ into contempt, or that carnalizes His great and glorious work, must to all intents and purposes be the "doctrines of devils." What is not of the Holy Ghost must necessarily be of Satan, come it in whatsoever form it may; and hence all false doctrines or systems (whatever the pretensions to sanctity or purity) may well be declared to be the "doctrines of devils."

Now, we contend that, in the present day, in the counterfeit of a so-called religion, the Son of God is crucified afresh, and put to an open shame. Yea, He is again crucified between two

thieves! On the one hand by a system of consummate mockery; profaning His sacred name and singing and shouting of His precious blood; by antics and gestures as ridiculous as they are blasphemous. On the other hand, the divine ordinance of the priesthood is assumed, and with it the arrogating to itself a power to forgive sins to which even the Apostles themselves never made any pretence whatever. Hence there is profane mockery on the one hand, and Popish mummery on the other.

In total distinctiveness from all these vain and delusive pretensions, how solemn and all-important is the sacred testimony! Saith the Holy Ghost by the Psalmist, "Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever." Again, we read by the prophet Isaiah, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isa. xxxv. 8). Further, the Apostle exhorts his Hebrew brethren, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

What, then, shall we say of those noisy demonstrations which serve to stir up the bad passions of men, leading to breaches of the law, and, with all the boasted reformations on the one hand, stirring up the greatest possible hatred and antagonism on the other? Is this following in the footsteps or copying the notable example of the meek and lowly Jesus? We trow not.

Again, as descriptive of the times in which we live, we read by the prophet of "a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things: speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." Now, this is a very awful state of things, and runs directly counter to the utterance of the Psalmist, when he says, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities" (Psa. cxli. 5).

The divine commission with which every sent servant of the Most High is entrusted is a "Thus saith the Lord, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." And that message was from the beginning, and ever must be, uncongenial to the proud heart of poor fallen man. It is only as he is brought down by grace and power to discover his lost state and utterly helpless condition, that he is prepared to listen to and heartily receive the good tidings which the Gospel proclaims.

The Apostle Paul further counsels and cautions his son Timothy, by declaring that, "in the last days perilous times shall come. For men [saith he] shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers,

incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

We ask, can there be anything more true to the life respecting these days, in a spiritual point of view, than this—"the form of godliness, but destitute of the power"? The letter of the Word it may be, but no unction, no savour, no dew; no flowing from the heart to the heart! No sealing home in the demonstration of the Spirit!

Further, says the Apostle, "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. iv. 2-4).

Oh, how true is this testimony as regards the present day!

The Apostle Peter, moreover, testifies of another aspect of the latter times, for he says "that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter iii. 3, 4). Can there be a more truthful statement than this, as regards a vast body of mankind? Has not a large proportion of the human race drunk deeply of the cup proffered them by the arch-deceiver of souls, the chief ingredient of which is the abuse of the patience, forbearance, and long-suffering of the Most High?

Time, as well as inclination, would fail to go minutely into details as to the times in which we live. At most, we can but glance at them. From our inmost soul we believe that great events are at hand, even greater than those with which we have as yet been familiar.

There is an under-current influence and power in operation, the purpose of which is, the uprooting—yea, the razing to its very foundations—the constitution of this long and highly-favoured land. There is a wide-spread Jesuitism at work among all classes of society. The Church of England, as a national establishment, is being shaken to its very base, as preparatory to its destruction. That destruction as an establishment we believe must come, so numerous and so powerful are her traitors and betrayers, from the leading members down through all classes of her communion. But so deadly is the aim and purpose of the Romish conspiracy that it will never rest (unless divine power and authority interpose) until the very throne of England is once again brought under the Papal yoke.

In a mistaken policy, and in its antagonism against the present

Church Establishment, those outside her pale have been, with consummate shortsightedness, aiding and abetting her destruction, blinded to the fact that no sooner is the present national Church destroyed, than that of Rome, in all her tyrannizing power and Satanic hate, will usurp her place; and then woe, woe be to all that opposes, resists, or calls in question her sway or dominion!

With the page of history before them, and with the cautions and remonstrances of their own sons (ROBERT HALL, for example), it is marvellous that Nonconformists should seek by any and by every means to destroy the Church as an Establishment. With all her faults (and her best and most devoted friends will readily admit of such, for what human system is perfect?), she is still our great Protestant bulwark. Undermine it—remove it—and verily it shall be found that the consequences will prove most fatal to that blessed liberty and that sacred freedom which permits “every man to sit under his own vine and under his fig-tree, and none maketh them afraid.”

Before that destruction of which we have spoken shall have come, in all human probability, we personally shall have passed away. Hence it is not for ourselves, but for our children, and those who follow us, we thus express concern and anxiety. We tremble as we contemplate the legacy which the present generation—more particularly those in authority—are leaving to those who shall come after them. Those in authority in the Church, conscious as they may have been of her extremely critical condition, have, notwithstanding, been wont to indulge in the Hezekiah-selfishness, “There shall be peace and truth in *my* days.” By that utterance, we consider Hezekiah betrayed a culpable indifference as to the interests and welfare of after-generations.

We would, however, for the encouragement of those who shall survive us, leave on record the fact that the triumph of the Anti-christian foe, to all intents and purposes, must be—shall be—but short! The Word of the living God declares it. Moreover, the more triumphant its temporary dominion, the more terrible its destruction, for verily it is written that “her plagues shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.”

Without doubt the “great tribulation” spoken of in the Revelation is yet in the future; and the Lord lovingly exhorts His people to “enter into their chambers, and shut their doors about them; yea, to hide themselves, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.” But, (adored be His name!) whatever may be the character or extent of the sorrows and the sufferings that shall befall the world, still nothing whatever can militate against that glorious verity, “Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him.”

THE EDITOR.