

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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ANOTHER PREFACE wanted! And is it possible that another year has run its rounds, and passed, with its preceding thousands, into vast eternity, one hour of which is never, never to recur? Not a solitary moment of the past can, by any possibility, return. How suggestive is the fact of, alas! our so much wasted, ill-spent, non-improved time! Well do we remember once making the remark, "If we could think more of *what* was to be done, rather than the *time* occupied in the doing, how much shorter time would appear, rather than hang heavily, as some say." We are sure that this idea is worthy our consideration.

With respect to the brevity of time, we never remember to have been more deeply impressed with it than when we contemplated the falling leaf during the recent autumn. It may, in measure, have to do with the fact that the older one gets, the shorter does time appear. Possibly this feeling arises from the multiplicity of engagements, or from the consciousness of the shortening of our tarry here. Moreover, the repeated severances of this and that one from our midst act as a perpetual reminder of our own mortality. How forcibly does the removal of one and another, both on the right hand and the left, bespeak the fact that "here we have no continuing city; this is not our rest"!

Dear reader, the more deeply this Scriptural declaration is impressed upon us, the better. Under God, it will serve, on the one hand, to lessen the weight of care and the burden of suffering and sorrow, as well as, on the other hand, stimulate us to seek to "set our affections upon things above, and not on things on the earth." In proportion as the Holy Ghost is pleased to give us to feel the vanity and the uncertainty of all things beneath the sun, in that very proportion will He condescendingly and graciously give us to value those "durable riches and righteousness" which are in-

separably connected with that "city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

When speaking of the passing times, how often have we heard the remark that, in past days, they were quite as eventful, and that men of a by-gone age were as much impressed with their significancy as those of the present day. If those of this day are concerned as to what is about to happen, equally anxious, it is argued, were those who have passed away. Admitted that, to a certain extent, such was the case, can it, nevertheless, be denied that, by comparison, changes—and mighty changes too—have taken place? And with these changes we would ask, Is there greater reverence and higher esteem for the things of God than formerly? With all our boasted progress and manifold discoveries, in various points of view, does man, as a creature, take more lowly views of himself, and does the knowledge he has attained to, and the discoveries he has made, cause him to fall before the all-wise and omnipotent Jehovah, in a becoming acknowledgment of his own utter insignificancy, as well as absolute unworthiness and creature-helplessness? The spirit of the age, as displayed in numberless ways, will readily furnish a reply to this all-important question. We contend that abundant evidence is by no means wanting to prove that the very opposite to the line of things we have laid down is the character of the age in which we live. There is, as a rule, a casting off the fear of the Lord, a setting at defiance His rule and [His authority, and a cavilling at His Word, if not a total rejection of the same.

By way of objection to this statement, it may be argued that there never was greater effort than now to circulate the Scriptures, nor was there ever more zeal in seeking to proclaim the name and fame of Jesus. Granted that, in a sense, such is the case. Against this, however, can it be denied that a spirit of compromise between the Church and the world is the order of the day? They are, in reality, as opposite as the poles. They are as distinct as the Word of the living God declares them to be. They are no more united vitally—that is, in heart and soul—than when it was first recorded in Holy Writ, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God"; "Ye cannot serve

God and mammon." "I pray not for the world," said Jesus, in His memorable prayer, "but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them. . . . They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Moreover, is there not, even in the very services of the so-called sanctuaries, an admixture of the carnal with the spiritual? Although the *divine* is as distinct from the *natural* as two opposites can possibly be, still, is not the merely human—the senses—pandered to to an extent never yet adopted? Is not Rome, in this respect, imitated, in our fashionable chapels as well as our Ritualistic churches? What was the answer recently, to the remark as to the ministry of a ROMAINE and a HAWKER, were they now living? That "they would not have a dozen persons to hear them." This reply was made by a prominent Evangelical parochial minister, who has for years taken a leading part in one of our religious societies. We repeat that there never was a day in which compromise and expediency were so marked, in regard to a profession of godliness, as now; nor was there ever a period in which "a name to live," or a mere profession of religion, prevailed as at the present time. To a very large extent, *reformation* is mistaken for *regeneration*. Without doubt, by this means, thousands are haplessly deceived, for, without that divine enlightenment which the Holy Ghost alone can impart, who can detect the absence of "the one thing needful" when, for example, a notorious drunkard becomes a sober man, the unchaste man virtuous, the liar speaks the truth, the heartless husband and the cruel father becomes a lover of his home, and a noble example of devotion to his family? How difficult, under such circumstances (for a time at least), to discover that one great want which the Lord alone can supply, when He quickens the dead sinner, gives sight to the blind, and substitutes the heart of flesh for that of stone! Time, we repeat, can alone substantiate the work, and prove whether the change is vital or not—whether of God, or of that arch-enemy who, to suit his purpose, assumes the character of "an angel of light."

We are not anxious to dwell upon what we deem the negative state of things, otherwise we could bring forward ample evidence,

from plain and most unmistakable declarations, in proof of the advance of error and wide-spread delusion, as so far outvying any previous age. When High Mass is said in our churches, and advocated, if not actually attended, by even the bishops of a professedly Reformed Church—when a very high order of Ritualism is practised in the most prominent and popular of our Dissenting congregations—who can deny the hapless declension of our times?

Moreover, solemn and most startling as have been the occurrences of late years, how very transient has been the impression that such events have made! How little is thought, or said, in regard to the earthquakes, the floods, the volcanic and other fires that have devastated vast regions, and sealed the fate of tens of thousands of human beings! Further, how little regard has been paid to the singular maladies and the strange diseases which of late years have befallen both cattle and crops!

What a rage for pleasure characterizes the times in which we live, and what a disregard of parental authority, and the counsel and remonstrance of age and experience! How are our laws set at defiance, and how very partial is the administration of justice!

Another sad feature of the times is the suicidal mania, which, alas! extends even to youth. Only too frequently boys and girls taking their own lives, and that upon the slightest provocation. What can be more awful than this regarding so lightly the life the Most High has given; or, under disappointment or mortification, sacrificing themselves, with the expressed hope, and even belief, that God would forgive them for even so presumptuous an act?

Again, the splitting of hairs and the contention about straws, upon the part of those who agree in the essentials of divinity, is a further sign—and a most sad one, too—of the profession of the day. It was prophesied by some who have gone the way of all flesh that the Papacy would play the part of the shepherd's dog, namely, drive the sheep into one corner of the field, and thus there would be greater unanimity and a closer bond. We fail, however, to see this prophecy fulfilled, notwithstanding the powerful hold the Papacy has gained upon the community at large.

With every encouragement to Popery, through every grade of society, and the wide-spreading of Jesuitism through the length and breadth of our professedly Protestant land, our noble institutions and our very national constitution are jeopardized to a most lamentable and dangerous degree. The very throne is imperilled, as far as its Protestantism is concerned. Whether a true Protestant shall ever again sway these realms is questionable.

In this our Annual Address, we have deemed it incumbent upon us to give a passing glance at these facts, believing as we do that the rapid progress and speedy development of events must lead—and that very soon—to an issue. We cannot imagine that things will long remain as they are. If we mistake not, the signs of the times indicate that the present dispensation is coming to a close. We believe that the Saturday night of the time-state is very, very near.

We wish, however, to lay great emphasis upon the fact that, whatever has happened, or may yet occur, nothing has come or can come by chance! It may appear, from the confused aspect of things, that that great and glorious truth, "His kingdom ruleth over all," is rendered questionable. By no means. Blessed be God, "the government is upon His shoulders," and "of that government there shall be no end." We rejoice in the all-consoling fact that He still "ruleth in heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; that none can stay His hand, or say, What doest Thou?" "He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."

"His purposes shall ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour."

Be the signs of the times whatever they may—dark and perilous as may be the clouds that enshroud our pathway—"nevertheless [blessed be God!] the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." His "covenant is ordered in all things, and sure." It is as certain of accomplishment as it is comprehensive in all its appointments. Hence, for the encouragement of our readers, we would say—and may they feel its force and its power when we shall have been called hence—

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take ;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.”

If wisdom and love and power have marked the divine procedure through all the stages of time up until now, be assured the Lord will not forego His purposes nor forfeit His word. No flaw shall be found in the covenant that has been gradually developed age after age, and generation after generation. He will “bring off the top-stone with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it!” The Lord Jehovah has an immensity at stake. His wisdom and His Word—His love and His power—are involved in the grand scheme of redemption, as well as in all the appointments of the natural world.

Let us then, dear reader, exult in the mercy, if we can say—

“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.

