

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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P R E F A C E .

WE take in hand the pen to write, for the ninth time, a preface to the annual volume of the venerable GOSPEL MAGAZINE.

A peculiar sense of responsibility attaches to this Editorial duty on the present occasion. For, in the month of August last, in the unexpected providence of our heavenly Father, we were called upon to undertake the added responsibility of the Proprietorship of the Magazine. We shrank not a little from this onerous obligation, but the interests of the pure truth of God, and the powerful claims of a publication established 137 years ago for the maintenance of the distinctive doctrines of God's sovereign grace outweighed all personal considerations, and by faith we cast our heavy burden entirely upon the Lord, and He wonderfully appeared in our behalf. A few of His truth-loving people—readers of our pages—promptly and generously strengthened our hands, lovingly encouraged us, bade us not be afraid, and, in the Master's Name, placed pecuniary means at our disposal. To those faithful stewards of Christ we here gratefully acknowledge our brotherly obligations. To them the Magazine will ever remain profoundly indebted.

This change of circumstances in the history of the time-honoured Magazine has, of course, demanded much patient waiting on "God only wise" for counsel and guidance as to His will touching its future publication. From the first hour of our entering upon the Proprietorship, we realised the importance of securing the interests of the Covenant truth of God, for all time, through the instrumentality of the Magazine, and therefore decided not to retain it as private property, subject to possible contingencies. The wisest and most satisfactory plan appeared to be to place the Magazine in the hands of a thoroughly sound Trust, consisting of three members, subject to the terms of a very definitely drawn Deed, making sure—as far as legal advice could make it—that the Trustees for the time being should be responsible for the continuity of that Evangelical and Protestant teaching for which the Periodical was originated in 1766, and with which the name of its erstwhile Editor—the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady—will be ever associated.

This proposal has met with approval and confidence among those subscribers to whom it has become known. Thus, in God's good providence we have been cheered forward in our unsought enterprise,

and that stage has been reached in it when the friends of the GOSPEL MAGAZINE, at large, are invited to give it consolidation.

To place the Magazine on a firm business footing, and to relieve the Trustees of personal liability, it has been decided to raise the sum of five hundred pounds as a Maintenance Fund. Of this amount, various Christian friends—lovers of the precious doctrines of grace advocated in these columns by the venerated Dr. Doudney and Mr. George Cowell through long years—have spontaneously contributed one hundred and sixty pounds. This, their service of brotherly love and fellowship with us in our responsible labours, we devoutly view as another signal proof that the Lord approves our endeavour to maintain the Gospel of His sovereign grace, and to provide for His scattered flock “clean provender” and “green pastures.” We continue the Editorship in humble dependence on “the ability which God giveth,” and are willing to serve as one of the three Trustees. The prayers of our dear readers are asked that sound judgment may be exercised in the choice of two colleagues in the Trust—men “full of faith and of the Holy Ghost”—“prudent men, looking well to their going.” So soon as the Maintenance Fund is raised, and the Trust duly formed, it is hoped that steps will be taken to bring the Magazine within the reach of an enlarged body of Christian readers by making a reduction in its price. This, and other incidental efforts to enlarge the usefulness of our testimony of “all the counsel of God,” may well unite our hearts in petitioning the Throne of Grace and in beseeching “Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His Own will” to grant His servants “good success.” His command, addressed to faith in the hearts of His people, is—“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him”; and His “Yea and Amen” promise in Christ is—“And He shall bring it to pass.”

The field of service is thus open before us. Brethren, let us, in the Name of our God, and in the strength of the Holy Spirit, enter into it, and seek to “occupy till He come” to reap the harvest of our humble, loving labours. The year 1903 has already marked an epoch in the career of the oldest of our English Magazines. May its close witness the consummation of our hearts’ desire in the permanent establishment on the Rock of Ages of the GOSPEL MAGAZINE AND PROTESTANT BEACON.

Under the special circumstances in which he is providentially placed, the loving intercessions of God’s dear people are particularly solicited by

THE EDITOR.

Clifton, Bristol, December 1, 1903.