

P R E F A C E .

“GOODNESS and Mercy ” have closely followed us through another year of heavenward pilgrimage and ministerial service, and a note of thanksgiving may well be raised as we stand on the threshold of the new, strange year—1909.

The tender hand of our heavenly FATHER upheld and guided us during the past year in the responsible work of conducting this venerable, truth-witnessing Publication, and of seeking to provide “clean provender ” for “the poor of the flock.” It is now upwards of 140 years since the first number of the GOSPEL MAGAZINE was placed in the hands of GOD’S dear believing people, and it is no insignificant token of His favour that the pure doctrines of free and sovereign grace, to maintain which the MAGAZINE was founded, continue to distinguish our pages and to meet with grateful acceptance among those who “know the joyful sound.” This is the more cheering, because the trend of the popular “religious ” mind at the present time favours indistinctness in doctrine and indefiniteness in belief. The “New Theology,” so-called, saps and mines the finality of JEHOVAH’S revealed Truth, and daringly ventures into the sphere of sceptical speculation and unsanctified criticism of the holy Scriptures. Nothing, we know, but the gracious teaching of the SPIRIT of POWER can bring a member of ADAM’S apostate race to submit acquiescingly to the sovereignty of the Divine will and pleasure. But there is yet on the earth, and—we rejoice to believe it will continue till the glorious appearing of the LORD JESUS—“a remnant according to the election of grace,” to whom the precious Covenant verities set forth in the written Word are as “marrow and fatness.” It is to such grace-made characters that the GOSPEL MAGAZINE aims to be of profitable service. And to the testimonies of such, assuring us that our labours and those of our beloved

helpers who contribute to our pages, have not been in vain during the past year—for which we praise Him from Whom all “increase” must come—encourage us not a little in our onerous service.

In the face of the ravages which Sacerdotalism and Rationalism are committing through the agency of the Established Church, and in opposition to the inroads which the Papacy is making on our national Protestant institutions, it is of the highest importance that a distinctive “banner” should be displayed “because of the Truth” (Ps. lx. 4). “The enemy” has indeed “come in like a flood,” but we have the Covenant promise that in such a crisis “the SPIRIT of JEHOVAH shall lift up a standard against him” (Isa. lix. 19). It is to GOD, therefore, we look for power, counsel, and blessing in our work of resisting the abounding evils of the days in which we are living. The only weapon upon which we dare rely in our warfare is “the Sword of the SPIRIT, which is the Word of GOD.” It is enough. Though the hosts of SATAN and ANTICHRIST surround “the camp of the saints,” and boast themselves of certain victory, that inspired Scripture has yet to receive its Divine fulfilment which declares of the army of the living GOD: “And they overcame him by the blood of the LAMB, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev. xii. 11).

The only PROTESTANTISM worth maintaining is that which finds its inspiration, protest, and principles in the Word of GOD. That Protestantism was boldly asserted in the first number of “THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE” (January, 1766), when the “Design” of the publication was advertised. Thus ran the EDITORIAL announcement: “We purpose to entertain our readers with religious Biography—the lives of eminently useful and pious men; and we shall first give the lives of those that were the happy instruments of the Reformation from Popery, and zealously appeared for the doctrines of the Gospel. We shall begin with the Life of DR. JOHN WICKLIFFE, who lived in the fourteenth century, and was the Morning Star and Founder of our Reformation from Popery: a

print of whom is given in the first number, and we propose to give a print in each Magazine." The Biographical sketch accompanying the portrait of WICKLIFFE in our first number thus concluded: "The number of those who believed the doctrine of WICKLIFFE is said to have multiplied like suckers growing out of a tree. They were oppressed, but could not be extinguished. Persecution served only to establish the doctrines of the Gospel that became general at the Reformation about a hundred years after. Our ancestors 'earnestly contended for the faith which was once delivered to the saints'; and it is to be lamented that the Evangelical truths embraced by the Clergy and Laity at the Reformation are so little regarded by many in this generation. May GOD open our eyes in a spiritual sense, and make us know experimentally that the Gospel is the power of GOD to our salvation through JESUS CHRIST. Amen." By the grace of GOD, our pages to-day echo that prayer, while they continue to bear witness to the same principles of the blessed Reformation. In behalf of this sacred mission the prayers and co-operation of the LORD'S truth-loving people are confidently solicited. The TRUSTEES, the EDITOR, and the monthly WRITERS unite in this request.

May increased efforts be made through the instrumentality of our venerable MAGAZINE to spread a knowledge of the precious verities of the Everlasting Covenant, and to contend more earnestly than hitherto for "the Faith of GOD'S ELECT" in these truly "perilous times," so that the Name of the TRIUNE GOD may be glorified, and the overthrow of the kingdom of SATAN be hastened.

THE EDITOR.

CLIFTON, BRISTOL,
December 1st, 1908.