

[R921 : page 3]

I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL.

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation – to every one that believeth." – Rom. 1:16.

The gospel, the good news or good tidings, is so good and so grand, that those who really see and understand it, have no occasion for feeling shame when they tell to others all they can of its height and depth, and length and breadth.

It needs no apology on God's part, neither on the part of any of his ambassadors. In this respect it differs from all human theories which claim to be the gospel; for all schemes of human origin are necessarily imperfect, like their formulators. Of God's work alone can it be said, "His work is perfect." His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts higher than our thoughts. – Isa. 55:9.

Much is taught by those claiming to be true shepherds of God's flock which God has never authorized – much that misrepresents his character and plan. To ascertain, therefore, what is God's truth we must have some way to decide what is human theory, and what is really the plan of God, which he declares is much higher than human expectation.

Some feel bound to take some very generally received view and therefore inquire, What do the *majority* of mankind believe? But they soon find that the vast majority are heathens who have purely their own human ideas, and are entirely unguided by a divine revelation. The next inquiry is, What do those believe who accept of the Bible as a divine revelation of God's plan? When the answer comes, that those who accept the Word [R922 : page 3] of God, are divided into hundreds of sects and factions, some larger and some smaller, some older and some newer, and that these contradict each other and oppose each other on

almost every point of doctrine, while all have earnest advocates, and include among their adherents some pious, God-fearing people, the question becomes a most perplexing one – Which of these sects of Christendom is right?

Interviewing the various sects we are warmly received, and by each assured that *they* have the matter right – they have the "good tidings of great joy" and know well the great plan of the Infinite God. And then they begin to tell us, some with one modification and some with another, that the *good news* which God has declared shall be for *all people*, is really good news for only a few, and dreadful in the extreme for the vast majority. They tell us that the vast majority are to be *tortured* un pityingly throughout ages of ages – eternity; and that a "little flock" a mere "remnant" or "handful," is to be *saved from* that awful torture (whether by an election with which they have nothing to do, or whether otherwise chosen, these sects do not agree). And the eternal and monotonous service of this handful of favored ones shall be to watch their groaning, agonizing, tortured fellow beings, among them close relatives and dear friends, and the meanwhile sing praises to God for *such* a manifestation of his *love* (?) and *justice* (?). To do so, their tender feelings of sympathy and compassion would have to be *changed* to feelings of fiendish brutality – otherwise they could not enjoy *such* an eternity.

We confess that if offered our choice between the two classes, whether we would be with such a God to all eternity and hypocritically sing his praises, while witnessing such fiendish torturing of fellow creatures, perpetuated by his will and power, to gratify such horrible malignity, or whether we would choose to honestly denounce his injustice, and to share the torture, we know not which would be preferable. Surely we would a thousand times prefer to be blotted from existence, rather than share in such a carnival of horror, anguish and woe. Ah! there is no "good tidings" about that message. Not only is the joy for all people lacking, but it contains joy for none. Satan himself

would weary of such horrors and diabolic pleasures, before eternity had fairly begun.

Heart-sick, we turn from their revolting description, inquiring if *this* be the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people," *what* would *bad tidings* be, in their estimation? With confusion and a blush of shame, our friends begin to apologize for God and his plan, and finally they confess, that they do not understand it, and that their Confessions of Faith contradict their own sentiments of justice and right, that they received their ideas largely through the traditions of their forefathers, from which they only find relief in the thought, that the Judge of all the earth will do right. – Gen. 18:25.

Ah! well we know that their hearts are better, purer, more just and more Godlike, than their creeds. Thank God that it is so. But as reasonable beings why accept and teach that which their own hearts as well as the Scriptures brand as a most wicked slander and blasphemy on the character of the God they worship, and whom in spite of their false theology they love? All should see that such confusion of thought and such misrepresentation of the character and plan of God comes of the blinding influence of Satan through sects and creeds. And why blindly support the various clashing creeds which your conscience in spite of long years of training, declares unjust, ungodlike and unholy, and a libel against the all-wise and benevolent Jehovah? It is very evident that such a message is not the gospel, not the "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." It is very bad tidings – the most awful tidings which ever reached the ears of men. But thank God, this is not *his* message, *his* gospel. It originated with the great Adversary of God and men, who took advantage of man's fallen condition, selfish ambitions, etc., mixed these horrible and distorting errors with a little truth, called it gospel and placed it in the hand of Papacy, who in turn caused all nations to drink of her *mixed wine* of "*wrath*" (Rev. 18:3). Her message has intoxicated the world, taken away reason and blinded the eyes of men to the truth.

If this doctrine of eternal torment were true, it would be better far that man had never been created; for the torture of billions of beings eternally could never be compensated for by the joys (?) of others witnessing their torture, even if the numbers were reversed – if the few were in torture and the majority witnesses in glory. In fact, for those of noble mind and impulses to witness the tortures of others, would more than mar every joy; it would be *torture* to them, from which they would gladly escape in annihilation.

If such be the natural feelings of *fallen, imperfect* men, what would be the sentiments of the *perfect* man, as originally created – in the likeness of God? To worship such a God, as we have described to us by the various Christian sects, to sympathize with such a plan, and to be in full harmony with it, would require the obliteration of every impulse of love and pity, the extinction of every noble trait and feeling. The logic of such a gospel would be to prove the great Creator an arch-fiend, cruel and malignant in the extreme. And all who now are seeking nearness to God and to his spirit would need to be changed to *fiends* also, to enjoy witnessing such an awful, eternal carnival of torture.

But thank God! His ways and plans are higher, not lower than ours, and even our best minds and most just and noble hearts, need the direction and inspiration of his Word to enable us to grasp even measurably, the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of that wisdom, love and power which his glorious plan reveals. We must enter into closest sympathy, before we can see what God has wrought and praise him as we ought.

The great cloud of error which overspread the plan of God in the second and third centuries, and which deepened into a death pall under Papacy's supremacy, has been but partly cleared away since the thunder-storm of the Reformation, and nothing will scatter it fully, until the Sun of Righteousness shall be fully risen. But now in the *dawn* of that grand Day the "friends" of God are privileged to see and know

concerning his plans, that which the masses of God's professed children, blinded by the various obscuring influences and agencies of Satan – priestcraft, tradition, etc., cannot yet see.

The gospel which the apostles preached was not such *bad tidings*, and they were not ashamed of it and had no need to blush or apologize for any part of it. Nor did they keep back a part: Paul declares, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the council of God." (Acts 20:27.) In every part of it he could greatly rejoice, and of none of it was he ashamed. In all of this *whole* council of God, Paul said not one word about the everlasting torture, mental or physical, of a single member of the human family. Why? Because that is no part of God's plan. Not one creature that God has made will be tortured everlastingly. The thought is absurd in the extreme and contradictory not only to every element of the divine likeness in us, but contradictory to every testimony of God's word. The theory is supported only by creeds, formulated in the darkness of past centuries by mistaken men, who had not fully escaped from the influence of Rome's mixed wine of wrath, many of whom undoubtedly were conscientious and all of them probably much better than their creeds – much more just and benevolent than they represented God to be.

Even in the Bible this blasphemous doctrine has sought to entrench itself, putting a gloss and coloring upon certain passages, favorable to this *wrath-intoxicated* view, as for instance the misuse of the words *hell, damnation*, etc., which, with the meaning generally attached, grossly *misrepresent* the true sense of the Greek and Hebrew terms. (See TOWER for May, 1886.) They have succeeded also through hymns and commentaries and catechisms in twisting and coloring some of the parables and "dark sayings" of our Lord and certain parts of the symbolism of the book of Revelation (which book as a whole they do not profess to understand), so that under this false light these seem to favor their bad-tidings. But when the light of the knowledge of the goodness and glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ, shines into our hearts and illuminates our understanding,

it makes every parable and every symbol eloquent in the praise of divine justice, wisdom, love and power; and to form part of the "Good-tidings of great joy, which *shall* [sometime] be to all people."

Thank God, all who thus see light in his light, from his standpoint, are "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." The question then arises, Whence this light, by which we may see the glory of God, in the harmony and symmetry of his plan. If none of the various sects claiming to be the church of Christ possess it, where shall we look for it? We answer, It beams from

THE WORD OF GOD.

While the various denominations each claim to accept the Bible as the rule of faith, the fact is, that they do not do so: hence the jarring discord of their teachings on almost every doctrine.

While education and habit of thought have much to do with our way of looking at matters, yet to suppose that honest minded men, whose sole desire is to *learn* the will and plan of God could each go to the Bible, desiring to there be taught of God, and then arrive at all the dissimilar religious views we see about us, would [R923 : page 3] certainly imply one of two things: either that God's Word is not a revelation, but a deceiving enigma – a labyrinth of confusion, or else that man in his fallen condition is so wretchedly twisted, that it is impossible for him to reason with his Creator or to understand the Scriptures.

But the Lord and the Apostles as well as common sense contradict both of these views. Paul says "The holy Scriptures are able to make thee *wise*" – "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished." (2 Tim. 3:15-17.) And our Lord said, "If any man will do his [my Father's] will, he *shall know* of the doctrine" (John 7:17). Consequently we must look elsewhere for the fault, the cause of this discord of jarring sects and creeds. And if it is not the Bible that is to blame, it must be that professed Bible students *do not study it* properly.

Yes, it is here that the fault lies. Earnest, zealous, Christian men and women come to the Bible with prejudiced minds, full of creeds and theories of various sects, to which they are strongly attached by [R923 : page 4] chains of veneration, and habit, and family ties, and social ties, and fears, and pride, and spiritual laziness. They come to the Bible not to be *taught* of God, but to prove to themselves and others, that their theories or the theories of their sect ARE RIGHT. And by ignoring passages or their contexts, which do not suit their views, and by bending and straining others, each seeker generally gets what he seeks, and confirms himself in his prejudices. At the same time, thank God, he that seeketh *truth* and submits his own will, and the theories of all others, to the light of God's Word, desiring to find the truth and to discover the error, is not left in darkness, doubt and confusion, but "shall know of the [true] doctrine."

Nor should we ignore the *assistance* of any of God's children in seeking an understanding of the Scriptures, but we should give attention to them only so far and so long, as they teach and explain the Bible, in harmony with the Bible. Whenever we find a brother, a teacher, either of high or low degree, in learning or talents, ABLE TO EXPOUND and to harmonize the Bible with itself, our attention should be earnestly given; for such a one is a teacher sent of God, and we are safe so long as we prove all things by the Word of God, and accept of theories and interpretations not because of the teacher, but because of the Scriptures, which his teachings show forth and harmonize.

But religious teachers of to-day would be almost ignored, if this rule were followed, for they know little of the Bible except some passages committed to memory in youth, and some looked out for special occasions. And three-fourths of all the discourses, delivered in Christian pulpits, if examined by the average hearer in the light of the text chosen and its connections with the preceding and succeeding verses, would be found at wide *variance* and often directly contradictory of the Word of God. But satisfied with their sect, the

many "at ease in Zion" think not of *searching* the Scriptures, nor of proving or disproving the doctrines proclaimed.

As for the teachers, with many it is a business or rather a "profession" merely. They were taught in seminaries not how to search the Scriptures, but the reverse – not to study the *Bible*, nor to expect to *learn* anything from it; for if they should learn anything *new* by their search, it would of necessity be something their sect would not endorse, and hence they would come in conflict with their party and its theology and be cut off. They *are taught* the theology of the sect controlling the seminary, and are expected to know and teach neither *more* nor *less* so long as they are in its ministry. In fact, generally they are *bound* by a solemn vow to believe and teach according to the creed of the sect strictly. Why then should they urge their students to "Search the Scriptures?" Rather, like the Church of Rome their influence is exerted to restrain investigation within the sectarian limits. With the implied threat of disfellowship, they urge their ministers and students *not to search* continually for truth, but to accept the voice of their sect as *infallible*. They do not openly proclaim their sectarian infallibility and the bondage of their ministers for very shame, remembering that this was the very ground on which their founders originally *protested* against the church of Rome, claiming the right of individual judgment in the interpretation of the Scriptures – hence the name Protestants.

Were it not for this sectarian influence over the members and teachers of the sects, how quickly might all the saints who hunger and thirst after truth come into unity and harmony of spirit and doctrine – all *teachable* and all "taught of God." The Word of God would be more revered and would be "quick and powerful," while an "ear-tickling," world-serving, sect-bound clergy would be justly despised. This state of things is even now at the doors. The reason it is not more noticeable is, that the saints, the truth-seekers, are comparatively few, the *great mass* of the nominal church (all sects) being children of the world, unconsecrated, deceived by their teachers into the false

assumption that they are Christians, and that by joining the sect and adding to its numbers and wealth they are joining the real Church of Christ, whose "names are written in heaven."

Convinced then, that we must individually seek the good tidings in God's Word, let us next inquire, What is the Gospel, of which we and the apostles and our Lord need not be ashamed? –

WHAT IS THE REAL GOSPEL?

The real gospel is like a tree, it has a trunk or central part and out of this central glad tidings as branches, proceed various favors, each of which is a special additional feature of the "glad-tidings." The trunk, the primary "good tidings," is the news of our ransom: That Christ died for our sins, and thus redeemed us from sin and its penalty, death, by paying a corresponding price (1 Tim. 2:6) for Adam and all his race. And in consequence of this redemption he shall in due time *deliver all* from the dominion of sin and death into the liberty and favors of children of God, forfeited for all by Adam. The assurance which this gives is, that all that *was lost* through Adam *shall be restored* through Christ, who declares that he came into the world to seek and to save *that* which was lost.

Adam held the blessings and favors of God (life, etc.) conditionally: *If obedient*, he might enjoy life and home and divine favor forever. His failure terminated his trial, and God sentenced him to death as unworthy to ever enjoy the blessings originally offered to him. Our Lord Jesus redeemed all the race from that *condemnation*, by enduring the *death* penalty for all as the representative of Adam, and thus he provides a renewal of the original favor of life, and renews the trial, making it this time an *individual* test of worthiness or unworthiness to enjoy the divine favors everlastingly, the condition again being *obedience*.

God's plan is, to make the sinner a party to his own recovery, by arranging that an interest in Christ's meritorious sacrifice, our ransom

price, can be had upon *one condition* only, namely: The sinner must desire and strive for reconciliation with God and must recognize Jesus' *sacrifice* as the only ground for that reconciliation. In other words *faith in the ransom* is made as indispensable to the sinner's salvation from condemnation, as the *giving of the ransom*. Being thus *justified by faith* in Christ, he is granted a new trial for everlasting life, the condition of which is obedience to the extent of ability, as step by step they are directed and disciplined up to full perfection of being. Hence the importance of *telling* all men of the redemption accomplished, and the importance also of their accepting the message by faith. Everyone *believing* in him shall not be ashamed. Whosoever shall *call* for mercy and reconciliation, upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved, recovered, to that which was lost. But none can call upon the Lord without knowing of him; hence the *necessity* not only that Christ should give "himself a ransom for all," but also that it should be "TESTIFIED [to all] in due time." Compare Rom. 10:13-15 with 1 Tim. 2:6.*

*The context to the above, Rom. 10:18, will be treated in our next issue and will be shown to be in fullest accord with all the deductions of this article.

So then this message, that a ransom has been given for all, which guarantees a *restitution* of great privileges and favors once forfeited, is the very center and body of the "good tidings," and it is proclaimed in order that sinners may *believe it* and thus obtain its favor of reconciliation and a *new trial* for life. But so fallen and prejudiced has mankind become, that he is an easy prey to his great enemy, Satan, who blinds the eyes of the vast majority, so that they cannot and do not see the *simplicity* and beauty of the divine remedy for sin and its sting – death. He blinds many with superstition and degradation, many more with priest-craft and false theologies, which misrepresent and distort the plan of God; and those in a fair way to receive the light, he blinds and chokes with thorns of care and thistles of wealth, so that *few* thus far have really *heard* with unprejudiced ears this gospel of great joy, which shall yet be unto *all people*.

So then, if there be not a future time more favorable to their hearing than the present, the "good tidings" would not be "to *all* people." But the plan of God provides for *all* and the ransom covered all and the declaration is, that it "shall be to *all* people;" and this implies not only a *testifying*, but also a *hearing*. This implies [R924 : page 4] also an awakening from death of those who have not heard, and also the *binding* or restraining of Satan's power at such a time, so that all may hear of God's favor, call for the favor he provides, be reconciled to God through the death of His Son, and have *their* second or individual trial for life everlasting.

Meantime God knew of the blinding influences of the world, the (fallen) flesh and the devil, and could have counteracted them as easily during the Gospel age as in the Millennial age, but another feature of his plan made proper the permission of Satan and evil until the end of this age. *This* part of the plan constitutes an *additional* feature of the gospel or "good tidings," which applies not directly to *all people* as the other, but to a "few," a "little flock." This feature or branch of the gospel is concerning a "high calling," a "heavenly calling." It is not independent of the other "good tidings" however; quite the reverse, it *grows out of the good tidings of the ransom*, as a branch grows out of a tree trunk, and yet rests in it as a foundation. In this figure of a tree the roots illustrate the divine wisdom, love, justice, and power, which though entirely out of sight, are the real sources of every favor and blessing, which has been or shall yet be developed in the full completion of the plan of redemption. The main central branch, representing the call during the gospel age of the little flock to the divine nature, is an ingrafted branch, whose fruitage will be very choice, (the few of the divine nature), while the many natural branches, proceeding from the trunk of this tree, will represent the manifold favors and blessings of God; and the fruit from these brought to perfection will be humanity in general. As in our figure every branch, natural or ingrafted, depends upon the nourishment supplied by the root, *through the TRUNK*, so all favors are from and directly supplied to us by divine wisdom, love and power, the root which holds and

supplies all favor, and yet all comes *through the* RANSOM, which our Lord Jesus gave for all, which is the central trunk. A branch or twig, attempting to grow up out of the roots directly and not out of the trunk, we call a "sucker." It can bring no fruit to maturity and is cut off. So every one attempting to deal directly with the divine supply, ignoring the *ransom*, is cut off as a thief and a robber.

During this age the natural (favours) branches have been kept pruned off, so that they could not bear fruit until the special or ingrafted branch "of the divine nature" had brought forth its fruit – the "little flock," "the body of Christ." Their portion is that of favor added to favor, good tidings added to good tidings. Redeemed and reconciled and offered a new trial for life, like all the rest of their race, these who have heard and accepted during this age, have been invited to become joint-heirs with Christ in his glory and honor and kingdom to come, *by* which Satan will be bound, and the "good tidings" of ransom and restitution made known to all, for faith and acceptance. With Christ, their *Redeemer*, as well as their chief or head, these are now being prepared by obedience and suffering and trials of faith and patience for opening the blind eyes, unstopping the deaf ears, and lifting up the fallen, until all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest – until the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth, until all branches of divine favor, proceeding out of the *ransom* for all, shall have brought forth as fruitage a perfect race enjoying all that was lost and redeemed.

Even now amid opposition and weaknesses and discouragements, at the cost of much self-sacrifice the members of the body of Christ delight to do what they can of this work of blessing and lifting up the fallen and depraved, and thus they prove themselves worthy of the grander, glorious, and successful service as God's co-workers and ambassadors of the future.

So then we find, that the message which God has sent us, preaching *peace and life by the blood of the cross* to every one that

believeth, is indeed the central good tidings. And since it shall be *testified to all* in due time, we see, how it will be good tidings "to all people." This is the "everlasting [good news] gospel," mentioned in the symbol of Rev. 14:6. It already is being sounded forth and must during the Millennial age now dawning, reach every nation and kindred and tongue and people.

Paul says, that God declared this gospel beforehand to Abraham, in the promise: "In thee and thy seed [Christ, and his little flock of overcomers – members of his body, Gal. 3:16,29] shall *all the families of the earth be blessed*. – Gen. 28:14. This good tidings, given to Abraham, is exactly the same we here present, the blessing is the reconciliation and a second trial under most favorable circumstances for all the families of the earth, secured by God's favor *through* the ransom for all, given by Christ. The message to Abraham, of the blessing of the world, incidentally hints at the "high calling," showing the "seed" to be highly exalted as God's agency for blessing all. And Paul points out this seed, saying – "Which seed is Christ" (Gal. 3:16); and "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs [of this high honor] according to the promise." – Gal. 3:29.

When the angels announced the birth of our Saviour (though they saw not the philosophy of the divine plan of redemption and reconciliation, as God has since revealed it to his saints by his spirit) they added the Hallelujah chorus, "Glory to God in the *highest*, and on earth peace, good will toward men." They sang prophetically of the grand outcome of the message they bore, the "good tidings of great joy, which *shall be* unto all people."

This is indeed the glad tidings, and who that realizes it as such, does not feel that God's plans are higher than man's plans, and his ways higher than man's ways. With the Apostle Paul we may well with reverence exclaim, Oh, the depths of the riches both of the knowledge and wisdom of God!

=====