

"GOOD NEWS FOR ALL."

This is the title of a four-page tract being circulated by some who we feel confident would not circulate it if they had critically examined it. Its first paragraph contains sufficient error for the purpose of our criticism. We quote:

"READER, *whoever you may be, and whatever your condition*, God loves you, and Christ is your Savior. Those who have taught you that "God will love you if you will be good," and that "Christ died for you if you will believe it," have meant well, but they were mistaken. Believing anything never makes it true, nor can disbelieving make it false. Those who have so taught have not only dishonored God by misrepresenting him, but have also thus put a stumbling-block in the way of sinners being drawn to the Savior. Love that depends on an *if* has no drawing power in it. It really does not exist, and so cannot be gospel. The truth is, that 'God *is* Love;' that is his nature; and therefore his love for all mankind, which includes you and me, had no beginning and can have no end."

Here we have a strange mixture of truth and error, a refutation of one set of errors common to "orthodoxy" and a running into error on the opposite side of the question. It is a lamentable fact that, while teaching the Bible truth, that God is love, many have erroneously presented certain doctrines in such a light as to give ground for the inference that God had no love for his creatures and that the Lord Jesus alone sympathized with men. We have nothing to say in favor of such an unreasonable and unscriptural view of the matter.

But the people so unbalanced in judgment as to get so false an idea of God are of the very class most likely to take the other extreme if helped out of this. And we cannot say that such are

greatly to be censured, for as ability for sound reasoning is partly inherited, so a predisposition to extremes and unsound reasoning is more or less the result also of heredity.

The fact, then, that the writer of the foregoing had once so extremely false a conception [R1253 : page 6] of God's character and plan as he portrays, and that a very few other men have gone to the same extreme, should lead all who never were so unbalanced in judgment to be on their guard, and to *expect* such a one to err correspondingly in the opposite direction when he comes to see that error. We are glad that the writer of the above got rid of that false, God-dishonoring view, but we regret that he has taken the other extreme.

While the quotation above contains an element of truth – and what error is so false as to be totally devoid of elements of truth? – yet, taken as a whole, it is misleading and consequently untrue. It is brim full of glaring inconsistencies and errors, put in that defiant, positive and sophistical manner which is calculated to mislead those who rely upon their own and other men's reasonings, and who neglect the Word of the Lord.

Take the first sentence: it does not at all limit the class, except that they must be able to read and must see that tract. If the reader be the most blatant atheist, whom God calls a "fool" (Psa. 14:1), or one of those wilfully wicked whom God declares are an abomination unto him, and that on such his wrath still *abides* (John 3:36), or if the reader be Satan himself, whom God repeatedly declares shall be destroyed as the enemy of God and righteousness (Heb. 2:14), all such are told that God loves them and that Christ is their Savior. Surely God has given no authority to any man to contradict him thus. We will show more at length hereafter the true character of God's love, but now we want briefly to expose other errors of this statement.

If Christ is the Savior of such as we have mentioned – the wilfully wicked, atheists, Satan – then as a matter of course they *are saved*. What are they saved *from*? From sin? from unbelief? from opposition to God and righteousness? Surely not. Every one knows that *all*, "whoever they may be and whatever their condition," are not thus *saved*. Well, then, are all saved from the penalty of sin and yet left to revel in it? God's Word declares, "The wages of sin is *death*." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Have *all* been saved from this sentence which passed upon all men? (Rom. 5:12.) Surely atheists die, and all are dying; none are yet saved *actually* from that penalty. The resurrection will be the only actual *salvation* from death.

But can we not be saved by faith, before that actual salvation of the resurrection?

Ah, yes! *we*, all who have faith, can thus reckon ourselves saved from death by faith, "saved by hope," looking forward to the reality, future. We can likewise also by faith reckon ourselves saved from sin; realizing that Christ's righteousness, the merit of his *ransom-sacrifice*, covers the unintentional sins and weaknesses of all *in* Christ – of all who "believe into him." Such can by faith think of themselves as *saved*, not only from the sins of the past and their penalty, but also from sins future; grace to help in every time of need being promised to such – grace to make gradually stronger to resist sin and weaknesses; and the grace of his own meritorious sacrifice for sins, to cover all their unintentional errors and weaknesses.

There is indeed, then, a class of whom we may speak, and who may properly speak of themselves, as *saved* (by faith and hope) now; and Christ is therefore *their Savior*. But does this include *all*, whatever their condition, as this tract asserts? Are not these at present but a small class, and therefore a peculiar people? Is it not then a serious error and a totally false statement to say as above

quoted, "Whoever you may be and *whatever* your condition," Christ is your Savior? It is totally false in every particular. It is inconsistent with reason as well as with Scripture.

The passage of Scripture which might readily be misconstrued to support the fallacious assertion in question is 1 Tim. 4:10, and it does not refer to Christ as the Savior at all. It reads, "We trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of them that believe." This passage declares that God is the Savior. He was back of all and the cause or mainspring of all that our Lord Jesus has done and will do as his agent and representative in saving men. The passage as a whole teaches that in an especial sense God is the Savior of *believers*, and consequently only believers are specially or lastingly saved; while in a general way God is the Savior of all unbelievers also. In what sense the *unbelievers* are saved is not shown in this passage; but this is clearly told in the preceding chapter. (1 Tim. 2:4.) "He desires [wills] that all men shall be saved and come into an exact knowledge of the truth." (Diaglott.) The saving here referred to is one that will enable all to come to a full appreciation of good and evil and a full opportunity of making their salvation a special and everlasting one, by becoming an *obedient believer* in the Mediator. As far as God is concerned, he provided for all, while all were yet sinners, that sacrifice for sins which saves all from the original sentence of death – extinction – and has, so to speak, turned it into a sleep – a sleep of death, from which Christ will awaken all who are in their graves and bring all to the full knowledge and opportunity of salvation.

It is because the death of Christ will save none but *believers*, specially and everlastingly, that God wills that all shall come to a knowledge of the facts, and that a Millennial age has been arranged for by God, during which ("due time") the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth, when it shall be testified to all, that "the man Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all," and that all may

be specially or everlastingly saved by believing in and obeying him.

It was because *belief* and *obedience* are necessary to a share in the merit of Christ's death, that the apostle wrote, "With the heart man believeth unto justification and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation....Whosoever shall petition the name of the Lord shall be saved." But he asks (showing that he had not taken his lessons from the little tract we criticize), "How shall they petition him in whom they have not *believed*?" for faith must precede trust and prayers, and faith comes by hearing the good tidings.

Thus, the tract is wrong again when it says, "Believing anything never makes it true," for, as we have just seen, believing in Christ, and that so fully as to accept of the proffered salvation or recovery out of sin and its penalty, is NECESSARY before the individual has any share in the salvation or the Savior. Again, "If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him;" how often has the believing of that statement made it a fact to the saints? **[R1253 : page 7]**

Such misleading tracts and sermons not infrequently becloud the minds of God's saints and incapacitate them for presenting the truth, and at the same time become stumbling blocks to sinners, who might conclude that if they are as much saved and as much loved as the saints, while yet in their sins and rebellion against God, they may as well continue *thus* in his love and salvation. "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, saith the Lord." – Isa. 5:20.

Consider another of this tract's statements: "Love that depends on an *if* has no drawing power in it." Is this teaching of heaven, or merely earthly talk, unauthorized by Scripture and unfounded so far as reason and experience are concerned? We assert that it is the

latter and will prove it: first, by Scripture, then by facts and reason. Love with an *if* in it means love that is *conditional or because of* something. Now note the conditions of God's love and Christ's love as asserted in the Scriptures, and remember that this conditional love of Christ constraineth (or draweth) us who are now his followers. – See John 10:17; 14:15,21,23; 15:10,14.

Now, for a word of reason on the subject: What is it that calls forth real, noble love? Is it not real *merit* which begets appreciation, esteem, pleasure and delight? Sometimes love is awakened by a hope or desire that such noble, beautiful, admirable qualities can be awakened or produced in a person who may have but few of these at the time – but the basis of the real love is always centered somehow upon real merit. That unreasonable, selfish, animal passion called love, which is blind to character and quality, and which has no *if* or *because* or reason, is not the real *love*, and is not at all similar to the love of God. That blind love with no *if* is what we see in the lower animals. It is displayed by the tigress, the lioness, the cat, the cow, the horse, the hen, as well as by the lowest grades of savage human beings toward their offspring. They love blindly and without an *if*, because they love selfishly – not from quality and character, but because "*it is mine!*" And thus we see that even in that sort of love, the lowest, there is a *because* and an *if*, but a selfish one. *If* it were some one else's offspring there would be no love, perhaps envy; but *because* it is theirs they hold for it this lowest form of love.

How different God's love is from this cannot be appreciated by all. Those who have only the selfish form of love are apt to think of God's love as like their own. Their reasoning is after this style: God is the creator of all mankind; he must therefore feel a selfish love for them, similar to that which fallen earthly beings feel for their offspring. As the mother would love and defend her child at the risk of her own life, no matter how undutiful, bad natured or otherwise ungainly, and as a tigress would defend her cubs, no

matter how ugly and vicious, so they think God feels a selfish love for his creatures, which, *because* he created them, will and must save every last one of them. These ask, Could God be happy if even one of *his* creatures [R1254 : page 7] should die the second death?

Others, again, attributing to God the unreasoning pride, ambition and combativeness, which are still unconquered in their own hearts, ask, Do you think that the Almighty God would let himself be beaten? Can he not and will he not coerce all into obedience and everlasting life?

It is not difficult for some to see the mistake which lies back of these questions – the mistaken view of the divine character. It is difficult for others to get any other view than that which these questions represent. They have merely the selfish or depraved-human view of love and other motives, and cannot comprehend what is above their level of thought. Only such as have the *mind* (spirit, disposition) of Christ can truly appreciate the motives and principles upon which the divine plan is being worked out; and they are greatly in the minority. Nor should we blame or despise the majority who take the depraved, earthly, selfish view, though it is our duty to point out their errors for the sake of those who have sufficiently received the mind of Christ to be able to appreciate matters from God's standpoint. A few of the humbler ones may yet learn in the present life, but for the vast majority it will require the longer and more explicit instructions of the Millennial age.

If God were moved by selfish love and ambition, as some suppose, it would extend also to the lower animals, as the same selfish spirit in depraved men embraces not only their children but all things that are *theirs*. They love *their* horses and cows and dogs and cats, and many a human life has been lost in defence of a favorite dog or horse – the selfish love for these leading sometimes to quarrels, feuds, brawls, fights and murders. If God were

influenced by this selfish love it would have plenty of room for exercise, for we must remember that he is the creator of the lower animals as truly as of man. Let us inquire then,

First. Is it true that God loves everybody, "*whatever his condition,*" whether of wilful obedience or wilful disobedience, of sin or of righteousness, of pride or of meekness? Is this true? or is it merely the extreme view of an extreme mind, and radically untrue – a misrepresentation of the truth?

Since God is best able to speak for himself on this as on other subjects, we would best inquire of him through his Word. And first let us notice that there is a general love as well as a special love. Love of the general sort we sometimes speak of as *kindness or generosity*, and it is properly exercised toward even the wretched and unlovely, if they are in such a state through misfortune or ignorance, and unwillingly. General love, then, is large-hearted generosity. And since, so far as we are now competent to judge, all men are in sin and trouble *unwillingly*, it becomes us to have and to use and to cultivate this quality of general love of all mankind; this universal good will, and readiness to do good to all men, which is signified by the word *Philanthropy*. We need not add that a *special* love of the lovely and good and true, as of God and Christ and brethren, is also proper. What we would have all notice is, that there are two kinds of love: the intense, particular love, and the general love, or *kindness*. And these *two sorts* of love (*affectionate love and loving kindness*) can be traced throughout the Scriptures in reference to the love of our Lord Jesus and also of the Heavenly Father. Let us note first a few of the many statements which show the *special* love or affection: – Mark in the following passage God's *special* love (affection) for Christ Jesus and for those who come unto him through Jesus, and Christ's special love (affection) for all who have his spirit and who are truly his followers: –

"The Father *loveth* the Son and hath given all things into his hand." – John 3:35.

"Therefore doth my Father *love me*, because I lay down my life." – John 10:17.

"When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of the world unto the Father, having *loved his own* which were in the world, he loved *them* unto the end" (John 13:1), and sent out Judas, who had a different spirit, which he did not love. Then he said to the *loved* ones remaining:

"A new commandment I give unto *you*, that ye love one another; as I have *loved you*, that ye also love *one another*." (John 13:31-34.) Then promising these *loved* ones the Comforter, even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, he adds:

"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be *loved of my Father*, and *I will love him*, and will manifest myself to him....If a man love me he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." – John 14:15,21,23.

[From these words of our Lord it would appear that he is the one whose words are contradicted by the words of the tract in question – "Those who have taught you that God will love you if you will be good have meant well, but they are mistaken." What teacher is this who undertakes to criticize the great Teacher who spake as never man spake?]

"As the Father hath loved me, *so* have I loved *you; continue ye* in my love. If ye keep my commandments ye shall *continue* in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." – John 15:9,10.

"This is my commandment, That ye *love one another* as *I have loved you*. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his *friends*. Ye are my friends, *if ye do whatsoever I command you*. Henceforth I call *you* not servants...but *friends*.....I have chosen you out of the world." – John 15:12-19.

Before leaving them our Lord prayed for those who had received God's word (John 17:14), and whom he called his friends, specially and affectionately loved, saying: –

"I pray for *them*: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for *they* are thine. And *all* mine are *thine*, and thine are *mine*....Neither pray I for these [present disciples] alone, but for *them* also which shall believe on me through their word,...that the world may believe that thou hast sent me; and hast loved *them* as thou hast loved *me*." – John 17:9-11,20-23.

Perhaps the above citations are sufficient to show, to the critical, the special or affectionate love of God for those in harmony with him; likewise the special love of Christ for the same class of "friends," and the special love that should prevail among God's children for each other in proportion as they see in each other the likeness of their Lord. For further evidence on this line see the following texts, which we will not occupy space to quote. That disciple whom Jesus [specially] *loved*. – John 19:26; 21:7,20.

Christ's special love for his church, clearly distinguished from the world. – Rom. 8:35,37; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:4; 5:2,25,28; Rev. 1:5; 3:9.

God's special love and provision for his saints as distinguished from the world. – 1 Cor. 2:9; 8:3; Rom. 8:28,39; 2 Thes. 2:16; 1 John 3:1; 4:10,11,16; James 1:12; 2:5; Heb. 12:6; Jude 21.

Special brotherly love among the saints, as distinguished from our benevolent sympathy for the world, enjoined. – 1 John 3:11,14,23; 4:7,11,12,20,21; 5:1,2.

GENERAL SYMPATHY – LOVE.

Aside from the special love or affection for those who have characters and principles of life worthy of love, there is the general love of sympathy and pity which God and Christ exercise toward all the fallen race of men as well as toward the lower creation; and this, too, God's people are to have and to exercise. While we are to love righteousness and hate iniquity and oppose it, even to the extent of refusing to fellowship with those who continue not in the doctrine of Christ. (2 John 9-11), yet we should be full of sympathy toward the ignorant as well as of pity toward the wanderers. To such an extent should we exercise this sympathy and pity, that if one who is an enemy to us, or who has done or would do us harm should come under our power, we not only should do him no harm, but if in want, we should feed him. And if he be even an enemy of the cross of Christ, whose life is spent in tearing down the faith of the Gospel, we must beware that *we* attempt to punish such, though we should be very zealous for the truth in showing up their errors – "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." While, as the Apostle directs, such should not be treated as brethren, nor granted the affectionate love and demonstration of hospitality due to brethren, yet it is not for us to bring railing accusations, against even such, nor to attempt to say what shall be their just punishment; but if these hungered we should feed them also, and if naked we should assist in clothing them.

We are ever to remember, in dealing with others and in considering their failings and errors, that we are not now competent to judge to what extent theirs may be *wilful* transgressions against knowledge and ability, and to what extent they may be due to the imperfections and unbalance of mind

and body inherited through the fall. **Therefore**, says the Apostle, judge (decide) nothing before the time, because it is written: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord;" and therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him, because thou art not competent to decide now what measure of sentence he really deserves. We are, however, competent to decide whether or [R1255 : page 7] not his conduct is moral or immoral and we should not fellowship the immoral, even though they profess to be brethren. (1 Cor. 5:11.) And we are also competent to decide whether a teacher is leaving the doctrine of Christ and preaching another gospel, or whether he is abiding in and teaching the gospel of the cross of Christ. And such as do not abide in the doctrines of Christ and the Apostles, though they be angels from heaven, we are not to recognize longer as brothers in Christ, lest our fellowshiping of them as such cause our influence to oppose the truth and favor the error and thus make us sharers in the evil being done. But we are not to harm a hair of their heads, nor even to attempt to decide what punishment will be their due. That is God's part, not ours. While we are standing staunch for the truth, we can *pity* the erring, *hope* that their error is not wilful, and leave the matter of their future reward or punishment in the hands of him who reads the motives. Our treatment of such cases is prescribed by our Lord – "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and as a publican." (Matt. 18:15-17.) As we would treat a heathen man with justice and kindness and the *love of pity*, but not with the *love of affection* due to a brother in Christ, so we are to treat such a one as has departed from the good tidings once delivered to the saints by our Lord and the Apostles, after doing our best to correct his error.

All who accept of Christ's atoning work are reckoned justified and at-one with God – freed from condemnation, freed from the [R1255 : page 8] curse. Such God owns as his children, and such we are to own and affectionately love as brethren. But when such reject the gospel of Christ and the Apostles – the gospel of forgiveness of sins by virtue of Christ's sacrifice – those who thus

pervert the true Gospel, and attempt to put forth in its stead another gospel, are no longer to be affectionately loved as God's children but are to be pitied, as all others are to be pitied who have not escaped the condemnation that is on the world. This is Paul's doctrine clearly stated in Gal. 1:4,7,9. **[R1250 : page 8]**

GOD'S LOVE AND OURS FOR THE WORLD.

That God's love and our love copied after his, as they relate to the world, are a different sort of love from what he and we bear toward the saints and all the household of faith, is very evident. Not that the love is of a different *kind* exactly, but that they are different degrees of intensity of the same quality. This is not only evident from the foregoing citations in which the *special* love of God for his children, those adopted into his family, is clearly specified, but it is manifest to **[R1251 : page 8]** all by their own experiences also. You love the whole world in the sense of pitying them all and wishing them all a better state of mind and body; but your pitying love for murderers and thieves, for the morally and physically unclean, is, or ought to be, very different from your higher and deeper love of affection for those who are well intentioned – the pure in heart.

It would as truly be an indication of your own moral uncleanness for you to love affectionately the morally polluted as for you not to love affectionately all those brethren who love righteousness. – 1 John 2:15.

God not only tells us that he loved the world, but how much he loved it, and in what way his love took shape. He did not love the sin of the world; nor were the sinful qualities of the world lovely in his sight. On the contrary, he tells us that he is angry with the wicked and that he hates evil doers. (Psa. 7:10-17; 139:21,22; Amos 5:14,15; Heb. 1:9.) He tells us to be like him in our loves and hates – to hate sin and love righteousness. He says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any

man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And again, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." – 1 John 2:15; Eph. 5:11.

This testimony is perfectly harmonious – we must, as lovers of God and righteousness, have no *affectionate* love for evil doers, though we should charitably hope that much of the evil is the result of misinformation and inherited weaknesses, and accordingly should feel and act kindly, with *pitying* love toward such as are out of the way, endeavoring to bring them to righteousness. Such is God's love for the world. He saw man's distress in sin and under its penalty, death; and his pitying love provided the ransom and opened up the way for all to return unto God and be abundantly pardoned and received back into his family and helped out of sin and death to righteousness and life. So then

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is that God, moved by benevolence, saw that some of his human creatures, if granted a trial for life, after having had an experience with sin and its results, would choose righteousness and its reward of life. Seeing such possibilities of lovable character in men, God loved the race because of the possibilities before it. This prompted the plan and action of God in all his dealings with his creatures. God determined to give Adam and each of his posterity a chance for everlasting life, after they had an experience with sin and its wages. He proposed salvation from the consequences of the sin of Adam – salvation out of sin and death. This would be second trial or second chance for life to Adam and in the sense that all his children were represented in Adam in his trial it would be the second trial or chance for all the race – though to all but Adam it would be the first individual trial.

But in order to be just and to keep his word – that the wages of sin is death, something was needed to be done to meet the penalty that was against Adam of which all men shared the affects

in that all are sinners, none being perfect or worthy of life. Would God permit his Word to be broken? Would he restore to life and favor Adam, whom he had justly sentenced to death? No. But God had taken all this into account beforehand; knowing the end from the beginning, his plans were all perfected before man's creation. He would do two things at once – he had a dearly beloved Son on the spiritual plane of existence, who was "the beginning of his creation," and the chief of all his creatures. He wanted to advance him to still higher honors and the divine nature. He would make an open display to all his intelligent creatures of how he shows favor to the obedient and humble, by testing Christ's obedience to the extremist point and then rewarding him highly – just as he had already manifested his disfavor to one (Satan) who in pride had attempted to usurp divine honors.

The redemption of man from the sentence of death would furnish an opportunity wonderfully favorable to several things: 1st, For the manifestation of the obedience of Christ and its great reward; 2nd, For the giving of another trial of life to Adam and an individual opportunity to each of his posterity; 3d, It would vindicate the law of God; and while showing his great love for men, would still maintain untarnished his absolute justice and truthfulness.

In God's due time Christ humbled himself from his higher nature and became a man, simply to carry out God's plan – to prove his full obedience and to pay man's penalty – to be a *ransom* or corresponding price for Adam, and by dying as his *substitute* to make it possible for Adam to come out of death, relieving him from the sentence of death.

Remember that the death of Christ did not change God's law. It merely removed the sentence of that law from Adam and his race, and put them under the control of Christ, the purchaser, who will discipline them and select the worthy. Thus Christ became a

hope of salvation to all men, but the author of *eternal* salvation to those only who obey him. (Heb. 5:9.) And when his Bride, the Gospel church, has been selected, and he has taken his great power, he will begin the great work of giving knowledge and discipline to all the race, and selecting those who, by hearty obedience, shall be commended as lovers of righteousness, worthy of life everlasting.

Therefore, we see that the real good news for any and for all dates from the cross – everything before that was typical, and based on the coming reality. The good news is that, in God's goodness or grace, Christ Jesus tasted death *for* us, that we might be released from our death sentence and might have a chance to obtain life everlasting, by accepting of Christ as our Redeemer, and by obeying him and forsaking sin. It is for all, in the sense that no limitations are placed upon it – none are debarred from the privilege. So far as God's part is concerned, all will be done (during the Millennial reign of Christ) that justice and love can do. The *knowledge* of this salvation and of its conditions will be clearly and fully made known to all, and whoever fails of it will have himself to blame. There would be no means of knowing whether few or many, or none, would pass the trial of the Millennial age successfully, except for God's foreknowledge. He shows that there will be some found worthy of life and some unworthy, but does not tell us the proportions of each class; nor is it necessary for us to know this. Each for himself should, as soon as he hears it, embrace the *good news* of salvation from sin and death, and by faith and obedience make the blessing his.
