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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; to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”—Rom. 1:16

These words like all of Paul’s words in general, are fitly spoken and are like “apples of gold in pictures of silver.” *Gospel* signifies good tell, good news, glad tidings, something to make one rejoice and be glad; it must have been something of very great importance, something far-reaching in its nature, something supremely grand and glorious, for it had wrought a most wonderful change in Paul. He had not always been of the opinion which he now expresses, for he had persecuted those of “this way” even unto strange cities, and when they were put to death, he gave his voice against them.

What had caused this change in the mind of the apostle?

Surely the gospel had not changed in its character; no, but he had become better *acquainted* with it. That is the way it ever is with the world: the better they are acquainted with the gospel of Christ, the better opinion they have of it, and the higher they value it. Paul was expecting soon to visit Rome, that imperial city, the mistress of the world, and of course if he spoke in public he wished to talk about something which he was not ashamed of, and this he declared was the thing: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” Paul proved the truth of his assertion not only by his words, but by his actions as well.

The mighty mind of Paul, in its natural sweep immense, saw THAT in the gospel of Christ which was infinitely above and beyond everything else. If he could have seen how man, through the blinding effects of pride, and superstition, would have finally come to *consider* the gospel of Christ—if he could have stood upon the orthodox platform of *our* day and have looked out upon the pile of “wood, hay, stubble,” which is built on the foundation, Christ, can any one suppose he would have been able to say he was not ashamed of it? If the “mother church,” which is proud of calling

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him her patron saint, and after whom many of her churches are named, should through some of

her dignitaries expound to him the doctrines of penance, papal succession, confession of sins to the priest and absolution, the state of the dead in purgatory, etc., can we suppose that he would indorse them and say of *them*, "I am not ashamed?"

If some one were to represent to him the doctrine of *predestination* as held by our Calvinistic brethren, and undertake to prove it by Paul's own writings in Rom. 8:29,33: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son," etc., and again in Rom. 9:15,24: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," etc., and conclude from it that God from all eternity planned to bring into being a few, favored with advantages of every sort—birth in a Christian land, surrounded by Christian influences, and upheld by Christian associations and the particular favor of God; but the *large majority* by the same eternal decree were born in the darkness of corrupt hereditary taint and association, and although they may have dim perceptions of God and truth, and may desire to know him, yet, though they may groan and strive, and turn their tear-dimmed eyes toward heaven, with untold longings, yet they shall go into a night of eternal anguish, "without one cheering ray of hope, or star of glimmering day," and the righteous from their exalted seats in glory shall look on this display of God's wisdom, and justice, and power, and praise him for this manifestation of his love.

This has its good features. It shows God's omniscience. This would be our ideal of a great God were it not that it lacks three essential qualities of greatness, viz.: mercy, love, and justice. None of these qualities would be manifested in bringing into the world billions of creatures irrecoverably damned before they were born and mocked with protestations of love.

Is it possible that any thinking man can suppose that Paul would endorse this—that *this* was what he was not ashamed of? But would he look with more favor upon the view of our Arminian brother, who should say to him: that although the decree was made as our Calvinistic brother has stated, yet the *provision* was for all to be saved, the ransom was provided for all, but the secret of it is in the words of Jesus, ye "*will not* come unto me that ye might have life." The table was spread and bountifully provided for *all*, but they "*would not* and made light of it;" not taking into account the fact that more than nine-tenths of them *never knew* that there was any supper provided for them, that is to say, that infinite wisdom decreed that a certain number only should be informed of it, and be at the table, but had it set for ten times as many as he *knew* would be there to sup, and *because* they were *not* there, consigned them to eternal torment. Acting upon this basis of reasoning, if such it is, our Arminian brethren have sent as many missionaries as possible to tell the starving millions that there is a supper provided so that the poor creatures who are fortunate enough to hear of it may come and *welcome*, but those who do not must starve.

But *this* when looked at squarely, our Arminian brethren cannot see to be very *good* news, and so sometimes they conclude (though not in a very orthodox way) that these unfortunate millions who never heard of the gospel, will be provided for “in some way or other,” (a good conviction). Can we think *this* is the gospel which Paul had in mind when he said, “I am not *ashamed* of the gospel? *Nay, verily!*”

But there is still another view that has seemingly strong scriptural support, and *this* includes all men; this surely is a free gospel and *universal*, and Paul is supposed to be *its* strong supporter, for he has given that which is the key note in the promulgation of it, viz.: “As in Adam ALL die, EVEN so in Christ shall ALL be made alive.” 1 Cor. 15:22. So our Universalist brother infers from this that in *some way*, in the hour of death, or before, or after, by some means, whether sinful or holy, everybody, everywhere shall be saved; and why not? He says, did not Christ by the grace of God taste death for *every man*? And if so did he die in vain for *any man*? But our brother of this opinion would not probably dwell with as much satisfaction upon the passage, Without *holiness no man* shall see the Lord, Heb. 12:14, and would prefer that murderers and pickpockets should occupy a separate apartment in the “many mansions.” (Here again *conviction* almost arrives at truth).

Now candidly, can we suppose that these views, which we think, in a plain-spoken way, we have fairly represented as being the views held by the churches in general, regarding the gospel, are the views held by Brother Paul when he uttered the words we have referred to? We *cannot* think so, and we *do* think that *few*, if any, who reflect are *perfectly satisfied* that either of these were the views which he held. Then do you stand back aghast and say: Can it be possible that all this is error that we have been taught so long, and that has so much seeming support from the Bible? Do you say, *impossible*? Then *which* is your choice, and which is *good news to you*? Can you walk out beneath the starry heavens at night and looking up into illimitable space among the exhibitions of infinite wisdom and power, and there alone in the presence of God lay your hand upon either one of these dogmas and say, *I believe THIS* is the gospel of Christ, of which Paul was not ashamed?

Well, my dear brother or friend, these dogmas are not *all* errors, neither are they *all* truth. Like the confederation of States, to which has been proudly attached the gospel of which Paul was not ashamed are “E Pluribus Unum,” i.e., *one* composed of *many*. We understand then that the gospel, of which Paul spoke, embraces in its scope many of the ideas held by each of our brethren to whom reference has been made, and for whose opinions we have *respect*, but we cannot think that either of them is complete alone, and we believe that *either* of the churches who think that its plan or creed is the *only* and true one, while so much at variance with the others, has done much to make the man of the world who is uninformed reject the instrument (the Bible) upon which he thinks so many *variant* tunes can be played. With force then the question recurs to us: what was the gospel or *good news* of which Paul was not ashamed? What was the great and glorious

thought connected with the gospel that he had in mind?

Paul's was a critical and calculating mind, and his inspired thoughts were stamped with that peculiarity. He "*reckons*" about his sufferings; he "*counted* all things loss," etc., etc. In this case he is "not ashamed of the gospel," *for* (the *reason* that) it is "the *power of God*," something above and beyond all human institutions, something that the world, the mind of the natural man never would have thought of, something supernatural, yes, and something from which the mind of man (if left to itself) would soon wander; and that is evidently why these truths have been torn asunder, and the different parties in the church have each taken a piece, and upon it built a superstructure of its own, much of it, the "wood, hay, and stubble," to which Paul refers in 1 Cor. 3:12. Each of these, according to our understanding, has already begun to be swept away or to be burned up, and "the day" which "shall declare it" is even *now* begun we fully believe, (vs. 13). We feel convinced that the fire which is to consume the world (of error) is even "now kindled."

But, says one, where is the disagreement? Do we not all believe that this gospel is the power of God unto salvation? (To every one that *believeth*, our Arminian brother breaks in, but he must wait a little). Well, they *say* so, but in *practice* deny it. Our Calvinistic brother says "*unto* salvation," and adds (in creed) of a *few*, and unto damnation of the many, *i.e.*, *power* to save all, will to save a few. Our Arminian brother can emphasize the *will* of God to save, but whispers the *power*, for O! *man* opposes *His* will. Our Universalist brother can declare aloud *both will and power*, and take *all* into *glory*.

Let us illustrate the difference between our brethren, and suppose three natives of some foreign land, who were totally unacquainted with the design or nature of the national emblem, "the stars and stripes," were to call at different times upon the American Consul in that land, and he was to present to one a portion of the flag as a memento, having only the *red*, at another time, to another one, a portion having only the white, and still another having only the *blue*, each might suppose that his portion represented in color the *whole*, and contend that because the representative of the nation gave it to him, he was sure that was the true color, and so of each of the others, while the fact would be that each was right in supposing that he had the true color, but erred in the supposition that he had the *only* color, when it was composed of "red, white, and blue," and that in a *specific proportion*.

Now, our Calvinistic brother sees *so clearly* that predestination is taught in the scriptures, that he *cannot* see that there is a universal salvation; and our Arminian brother sees *so clearly* that there is salvation *provided* for all, that he cannot see that there is clearly taught the doctrine of predestination and election; and our Universalist brother sees *so clearly* that *all* will be saved, that his conception of God's *Love* overrides that of His *Justice*.

But, says one, you seem to agree with each, and disagree with each; how is this? They cannot all be right and wrong at the same time. Well, not altogether right, but partly so, as in the illustration. We are glad to see that each has enough ground for his belief to awaken our sympathy and *respect*. Respect for what Paul would have been ashamed of? No, we did not say that

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Paul was ashamed of these brethren, but of the doctrines or creeds that have come to be considered the gospel.

Well, says our Calvinistic brother, is not Predestination or Election clearly taught in the Scriptures?

Yes, my brother, yes. Well, says my Arminian brother, is not *free will* as clearly taught? Yes, my brother; we so understand.

And is not *universal* salvation as clearly taught? says my Universalist brothers and we answer, we think and *believe* so.

Perhaps all of these brethren, including the Papist brother, cares to hear no more; if so, perhaps some "fool for Christ's sake" will, so we will say on and consider the last question first. We consider our Universalist brother's text, "As in Adam *all die, even so* in Christ shall *all* be made alive, 1 Cor. 15:22, as unanswerable as regards the *universality* of salvation: If there were not another text in the Bible to teach it, *that would*. It seems to us that nothing can be plainer, and for this reason other Scripture somewhat obscure must in some way harmonize with it, and so of each of the other texts quoted by our brethren as teaching the doctrines of "Election" and "Free will," or Arminianism. In the above text, we think no one would undertake to make the word "all" in the second place mean *less* than in the first, especially when the first is followed and the latter preceded by the words "*even so*." The misunderstanding seems to be as to the kind or *mode* of life. "As in Adam *all die*;" *how* do all die by Adam? To answer it correctly, first conclude how all *lived* by Adam. Not *spiritual* life, was it? *Human* life and its *continuance* CONDITIONED on obedience, was it not? Then he (and *all represented in him*) lost no more than that, and "*even so*" he (and "*all*" *represented in him*) will be made alive by Christ, the *second* Adam. But, says one, is that *all* the life we get through Christ? That is all the *universal* salvation we can *find* held out to mankind in the Bible, and *that* we think is "*very good*." God said it was, but thank God there is something *more*, but if any *wish* to stop there, God has *predestinated* to *let* them, but if they have heard of the *higher* life, and *neglected* so *great* salvation, theirs will be an irreparable loss.

Then you think, says one, that there are different *degrees* of salvation? O, yes; let us read on a little further (23d ver.): "But every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterward they that

are Christ's at His coming."

Having seen that there are orders or ranks of being, as is also shown by the apostle in the 39th verse and onward, we can see that it does not follow that because all are made alive through Christ, they will *therefore* come *finally* to the *same kind* of being, but are brought to life and take position according to "order," for "As is the earthy, such are they also that *are* earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." (ver. 48).

With this view, that there are different orders, and that *all are* brought to the restoration of what was lost in Adam, we can see how there may be a *will* in man to gain a position in any given *order*, and how there may be a selection, "Election," or "Predestination" (whichever you choose to call it) of God from among his creatures of those who are qualified or fitted for the different grades, orders, or ranks of being. He has *predestinated*, or established a *law*, that, "to those who by *patient continuance* in well doing SEEK for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life" *shall be given*. Rom. 2:7. "But unto them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil," (verses 8 and 9). Now *who* disobey? Those who *know* the truth surely. You do not consider your child as disobedient until it transgresses a known command; neither does God, for "like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Many fear him who do not know much about him, and do not know what is commanded, or whether he has commanded anything or not. Such cannot, of course, obey the truth, nor come under wrath, but will come to life (not eternal), the life lost in Adam without any will or choice of theirs. It was for this purpose that "He by the grace of God should taste death for *every man*." Heb. 2:9. And God commendeth his *love* toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Yes, "WHEN we *were enemies* we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Rom. 5:8-10.

But does some one say, very well, but Paul says here of the gospel, that it is the power of God unto *salvation* to every one *that believeth*?

Ah, but brother, now you are reaching that point in the mind and teaching of the apostle in which is embraced another rank or "order": the power of GOD UNTO; we do not imagine that the power of God is staid at all when man is brought back to the Adamic condition; that is, to a *reconciled* condition; he lost that life without previously

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knowing the nature of sin or death. True, God *told* him, but like children without experience, they disobeyed, and his posterity die for it, or because of it; whether they sin or not they all go down in death because of the sin of Adam which "taints us *all*," and come up because of the righteousness

of Christ that restores us *all*. We die on *Adam's* account, and live again on *Christ's* account. Now brought back to the Adamic condition we are reconciled to God. Well, is there anything more for us? Yes, hear the apostle again: "*Much more* being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." 10th verse. What! Saved *more*? Yes, much more by the power of God *unto* salvation. Will all men be saved *much* more? We are sorry to part company with any, but though this is a blessed *restored* condition, yet we shall have to leave on this plane those who do not believe, for this *much more* salvation is to every one that *believeth*. Now my Calvinistic and Arminian brothers stand by and see the beauty of those texts which you have had to stretch and twist so. You need not stretch them now; they are all right and *true*. "Whom he did foreknow" would be *fitted* by desire, and faith, and continuance in well doing, each and severally for the different orders, "He predestinated" them to, and so this gospel, GOOD news is the power of God *unto* salvation to every one that *believeth*—to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Why to the Jew first? ("He is not a Jew which is one outwardly," "but he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly." Rom. 2:28-29), because he *believes* first, *here*, in time to reach the *great salvation*. Dear brethren, let us *desire more*, study God's word *more*, believe more, and have the "*much more*" salvation. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath *revealed* them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." 1 Cor. 2:9-10.

J. C. SUNDERLIN.

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Jeżeli zauważyłeś błąd w pisowni, powiadom nas poprzez zaznaczenie tego fragmentu tekstu i przyciśnięcie *Ctrl+Enter*.