

and was extended to all through faith in the atonement of Christ Jesus; it was a *free* salvation.

The word of God was not bound. The truth was to make men free. The world was enshrouded in pagan darkness, and filled with the habitations of cruelty. Vain philosophy, superstition and idolatry threw their mantle of error over the minds of men like the pall of death. But the truth of God in Christ was life, and life was the light of men. Again the mandate of God went forth upon the darkness saying, "Let there be light," and there was light. Its beamings were not confined to a mere few, but were to be given to every man that cometh into the world. True, some, yea many did not receive it, many loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil, yet salvation was pressed on them though they would not come unto Christ that they might have life.

Yet this free Gospel became fettered. The free gospel, freely proclaimed, and free in its nature, became bound, not of God, but of men. The word of God is not bound, yet it became so through the vain imagination and wisdom of men. The world had long been under the shadow of heathen philosophy. And men were chosen to bear the word of reconciliation to their dying fellow-men. To angels was not committed the ministry of the word. Angels desired to look into these things, but to them it was not given, men were chosen as messengers of the Gospel; chosen from the world, men whose minds had but recently been enshrouded in the darkness of heathen philosophy, or who had once hallowed in their minds the forms and ceremonies, types and shadows of a dispensation where they saw as through a glass darkly the glory that should follow when the day-star of righteousness should usher in the perfect day of the light and knowledge of God in Christ Jesus. The early Fathers had but just emerged from the darkness of Judaism and pagan philosophy, and did not pass beyond the twilight of the Gospel day. Past errors still hung like films over their vision, and they could not always distinguish between the false conceptions of truth that still lingered in their minds, and the true genius of the Gospel. Their theology took colouring from the false philosophy they had once believed, and it was not strange that their teachings exhibited traces of the errors of their intellect even amid the truths of the Gospel. In the main they taught Gospel doctrine, but the Christian system was but partially developed. It was as the grain of mustard seed growing up at first as a frail and feeble plant, but destined at last to become a perfect tree spreading forth its branches to the winds