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**DR. BEECHER'S SERMON**

AT THE INSTALLATION OF

**REV. BENNET TYLER, D. D.**

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**The Gospel according to Paul.**

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**S E R M O N**

**DELIVERED SEPT. 17, 1828, AT THE INSTALLATION**

**OF THE**

**REV. BENNET TYLER, D. D.**

**AS PASTOR OF THE**

**SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

**IN PORTLAND, MAINE.**

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**BY LYMAN BEECHER, D. D.**

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The Gospel according to Paul. A Sermon delivered Sept. 17, 1828, at the Installation of the Rev. Bennet Tyler, D. D. as Pastor of the Second Congregational Church in Portland, Maine. By Lyman Beecher, D. D.

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JNO. W. DAVIS, { Clerk of the District  
of Massachusetts.

## SERMON.



Galatians, i. 8.

**BUT THOUGH WE, OR AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN, PREACH ANY OTHER GOSPEL UNTO YOU THAN THAT WHICH WE HAVE PREACHED UNTO YOU, LET HIM BE ACCURSED.**

No question can be more important than the question, "WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?" And yet on no subject have the opinions of men been more divided. So great has been this discrepancy, as to baffle both force and persuasion, in the attempt to produce unity; and so long continued, as to produce, with many, the conviction, that unity of belief is not obligatory, or necessary, or possible; and that for any man, amid the uncertainties of conflicting opinions, to set himself up as having discovered the true Gospel, which all must believe, or perish forever in their sins, is the height of impertinent presumption. The best which can be done it is supposed, is for every man to examine for himself, and to be, not "fully persuaded" that he is right, (a confidence, it seems, for which there is no foundation,) but sincere in his belief, right or wrong; and modestly persuaded that, possibly, he may have found out the true Gospel; attended with the charitable persuasion that those who differ from him are as capable of judging, and as honest and faithful in their examination as himself, and just as likely to be correct in their opinions. It is supposed, of course, that the difference be-

tween the true and a false Gospel cannot be great, in the estimation of God, who regards sincerity with as much approbation as truth, and will make little difference in glory, between him who sincerely believes, and him who sincerely rejects the glorious Gospel of our Lord and Saviour.

But we have not so learned Christ. It is our persuasion that God has made the Gospel plain,—so plain, that no man, who enjoys the means of knowing what it is, can preach or believe another Gospel, without preeminent guilt; and, if persisted in, inevitable and eternal destruction.

If the Gospel be not indispensable to salvation, why, by such unparalleled sufferings of the Son of God, was it provided; and why is it spoken of as the riches of the goodness of God, and offered with such importunity of expostulation, and its rejection threatened with such fearful looking for of judgment? Why is it called a light shining in a dark place, if it carry not, like the sun, the evidence of its own nature? And of what possible use is the Gospel, if it is so obscurely revealed, that he who receives, and he who rejects it, may be alike sincere, and *must* be alike in doubt as to the foundation of his hope for eternity? If those who reject the Gospel sincerely may be saved, why might not all have been saved without the Gospel; and thus the mission and agony and death of the Son of God have been unnecessary?

It will be no part of my object then, in this discourse, to construct a mantle of charity so broad as to cover alike believer and unbeliever; but rather to show what is the Gospel, so plainly, that he who embraces it may *know* that he embraces the Gospel, and that he who rejects it may *know* that he rejects the Gospel.

To accomplish this, I propose

I. To explain the difference between the law and the Gospel.

II. To inquire what the Gospel is, which Paul preached.

III. To show that the Gospel which Paul preached is the true Gospel.

I. I am to explain the difference between the law and the Gospel.

By the law is understood the moral law ; which regulates the affections, and prescribes the relative duties of the universe, and holds out, in its promises and threatenings, the good and evil which constitute the motive to universal activity in the government of God ; which in its nature is holy and opposed to all sin,—in its requirements and threatenings, just,—and in its tendencies and rewards, good :—the immutable rule of right, and spring of holy activity, and medium of universal blessedness ;—the bond of perfectness to the universe.

That there is a difference between the moral law and the Gospel, is obvious. They are called by different names, and are appointed for different ends, to be accomplished by different means. It is the object of the law to maintain the social order and happiness of the intelligent universe, by precepts, and rewards and punishments according to deeds. This is all which direct legislation proposes, or, in the nature of things, can do. It is the object of the Gospel to provide an influence which shall reclaim alienated subjects, and sustain the influence of the law in the universe of God, while its penalty is averted from those who repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

To understand the subject, just conceptions of accountable agency, and law, and moral government, are indispensable.

Accountable agency is the agency of rational beings, able to understand lawful obligations, and to obey to the full extent of divine requirement ;—so able, as that obedience is the act of the subject, in such a sense, that he deserves a reward for it ; and transgression is the act of the subject, so entirely, that he deserves the threatened punishment. Nothing short of such ability can be a foundation for moral government, attaching justice to punishment, or mercy to pardon.

The rule of moral government is law in some way intelligibly revealed. The influence which deters from transgression and excites to obedient activity, is motive, contained in

the good and evil exhibited in the rewards and threatenings of law : and the tendency of motives thus exhibited, is to produce right affections and actions. The ground of moral excitement by motive, is the desire of happiness and aversion to misery inherent in the nature of all rational beings. This desire of happiness and aversion to misery is not selfishness. A being insensible to pleasure or pain, could be moved only by force. Selfishness is inordinate self-love, which, for its own gratification, disregards and sacrifices the rights of others. But that desire of our own happiness which is consistent with the rights and happiness of others, is lawful, and is, by implication, required in the moral law ; and may be, and must be, the ground of all moral excitement by good and evil, addressed to the principles of hope and fear, by the rewards and penalties of law. That holy beings need, and are governed by such influence, is certain from the fact that such legislation, in heaven, preceded the fall of angels, and, in paradise, the fall of our ancestors ; followed, in both cases, by punishment.

The good and evil, then, which are the spring of moral activity, are contained in the rewards and penalties of law. This is the influence, and the only influence, by which accountable agents are governed. Matter may be controlled by force, without motive or choice ; but accountable agents can be governed only by law, and the influence of motives contained in rewards and punishments. Matter may as well be governed by law, as mind by force without law.

The moral energy of law depends on the relative certainty of the good or evil attendant on obedience or transgression. Uncertain rewards cannot be made as efficacious as those which are certain ; and in proportion as the certainty of punishment declines, and the hope of impunity rises, is the influence of the penalty to deter from transgression impaired ; while the *certainty* that no rewards or punishment will attend obedience or transgression, would be a perfect abolition of moral government. It may be truly said, therefore, that God cannot maintain moral government but by law ; and

cannot maintain the moral influence of law as the means of moral government, without sustaining, in some way, the influence of its rewards and penalties on the hopes and fears of his subjects. But to hold out to all subjects the certainty of pardon for all transgressions, upon the simple condition of repentance, must be, in its effects, an entire abolition of the penalty, and an utter prostration of government by law. For it is to render transgression safe, universally, upon a condition, for the performance of which the subject is taught to regard himself competent, without any radical change of character for which he is dependant on the grace of the abused lawgiver ; and which, with the confidence incident to a depraved and deceitful heart, he feels that he certainly shall comply with. It is therefore an utter abolition of the penalty ; for the believed certainty of evading the penalty by mere repentance, has, practically, the same effect as if the penalty had never been enacted, or had been publicly repealed.

It is not a subject of even momentary doubt, that pardon upon the simple condition of repentance, would break the power of every human government on earth. Let the parent say to his high-minded son, allured by temptation and driven by passion, ‘ If you transgress, you shall be disinherited ; nevertheless, I am your father, and you are able to repent, and doubtless, will repent ; and if you do, you shall be forgiven.’ Let the criminal code go out with the threat, ‘ The murderer shall surely be put to death ; provided, nevertheless, that if he shall repent, he shall not die, and no evil shall betide him.’ Would not such legislation be the consummation of folly and mischief ? Whose life or property could such a law protect ? And does God govern the universe upon principles which would fill the earth with anarchy, and turn it into a hell ? What reason can be given, why pardon, upon condition of repentance merely, should not prostrate the divine government, as, most undeniably, it would annihilate every human government on earth ?

Facts confirm this reasoning. Anarchy is always a state of intolerable evil, because a sense of accountability and the fear of punishment has ceased, and the hope of impunity becomes universal. The sale of papal indulgences, which gave a cheap impunity in sin, dissolved almost the bonds of social order, and shook to their foundation the strong governments of Europe. And when, in France, atheism superseded, for a time, the moral government of God, blotting out the hope of heaven and the fear of hell, a moral earthquake shook the kingdom; her sun was darkened, and her moon turned into blood, and the stars of her heaven fell like autumn leaves, in that great and terrible day of God Almighty. It is impossible, then, to reconcile pardon upon the simple condition of repentance, with the unimpaired energy of law. Sinful and selfish beings will not be deterred from sin, without the restraints of fear. Threatenings which carry with them the certainty of an easy evasion, contain no restraint, exert no moral power, and are as if they were not.

It is not, then, the implacableness of God, nor the conflict of justice, inexorable and blood-thirsty, with mercy, which precludes the possibility of pardon upon condition of repentance; but the laws of mind and of moral government, laws as well known and as immutable as those of the natural world. The eye cannot see without objects of vision, nor the ear hear without aerial vibrations, nor the hand feel without material contact, nor the scales gravitate without weights. And, for reasons equally obvious and equally founded in the nature of things, mind cannot be governed, accountably, without law, and rewards, and punishment; nor these be made efficacious, where pardon is offered upon conditions which render impunity in sin a moral certainty.

But were it possible for law to forgive upon condition of repentance, it possesses not the power to produce it. Reformation can be produced only by the mingled influence of hope and fear, kindness and severity. The parent who only upbraids and smites, will make his child desperate and incor-

rigible; and the prison discipline which includes privation and suffering only, never reclaims, but hardens; while justice tempered with mercy, seldom fails to reform. But the law cannot, before repentance, temper justice with mercy. It has, from its very nature, but the two influences of reward and punishment to apply,—rewards forfeited, and punishments which cannot be averted but upon condition of repentance, and therefore cannot be the means of producing it. It is on this account, said, that “the letter killeth,” and that “the law worketh wrath,” for it closes upon a world of transgressors the door of hope, and shuts them up to despair.

Besides, were the law adequate to the production of repentance, it has no power to obliterate sin, and fit the soul for heaven. Repentance implies continued defect. It does not, of itself, heal the wounds of sin, nor break entirely the power of it, nor restore the soul to moral purity. If then the perfection of angels did not prevent their fall, if the sinless integrity of Adam could be overpowered by temptation, what is the repentance of his ruined posterity, that, under the same law which failed to hold perfect spirits to their allegiance, it should recover fallen beings to purity, against the power of habit, their remaining pollution, and the multiplied temptations which assail them? If there is nothing but the power of law to make even the penitent meet for heaven, then are they also lost indeed.

This philosophy concerning the inherent impotency of law to forgive, is confirmed by revelation. It is said expressly, that “what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,” (impotent to save on account of human depravity,) “God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law *might be* fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Such being the incapacity of law, from its very nature, to maintain its own power and forgive, the Gospel must, of course, be a system of moral government, of temporary dura-

tion, designed to meet the exigence produced by transgression, for which the law could make no provision. It must be a system of moral government, none other being adapted to the nature of moral beings. It must be of temporary duration, for the law, being the perfect rule of feeling and action, need not, and cannot be permanently suspended in favor of an expedient to save transgressors. The Gospel must also make an exhibition of the divine will, as powerful to restrain from sin, and as effectual to sustain law, as the execution of the penalty; and must exert an influence to reclaim the guilty, different from the influence of law, and wholly superior. And it must possess the power of maintaining its own influence over sinful minds, while it proffers pardon upon the same condition which would have been so fatal to the influence of law. It must, of course, propose as conditions of pardon, terms which include reconciliation and reformation; and it must provide aid, without which unholy minds will never turn to God,—bestowed, or withheld, in such connexion with human endeavor or neglect, as concentrates upon effort the strong light of hope, and throws desperation upon neglect, or continuance in sin that grace may abound; and the whole must be sustained by its own peculiar rewards and most fearful penalties, as men shall accept or reject the great salvation:—a system in which mercy, and truth, and righteousness, and peace are united.

II. We are now prepared to inquire what the gospel is which Paul preached.

How is the legal difficulty removed, and that new moral influence produced, which sustains law, reclaims the transgressor, and renders pardon safe and salutary? According to the apostle, it is achieved by the death of Christ as a propitiation for sin, through faith; and is rendered efficacious by the special influence of the Holy Spirit to persuade the guilty to repent of their sins, and believe affectionately on the Lord Jesus Christ. These elements of the Gospel, ac-

ording to Paul, may be unfolded and confirmed in the following particulars.

1. The apostle taught that all men have sinned, and become alienated from God. "We have proved," he says, "both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." He means,—not only that men have been guilty of a single act of transgression; but that the entire character of loyalty has ceased; that all have gone out of the way, all together have become vile; that there are none that do good, no, not one;—that the carnal mind is enmity against God; and that they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

2. The apostle taught the impossibility of pardon by the deeds of the law. His language is unequivocal and express:—"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh living be justified." "Knowing that a man is not justified by the deeds of the law." "That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God it is evident." "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse."

3. The apostle taught that the death of Christ, as a propitiation for sin, is the event which has produced that new moral power which sustains the law, reclaims the offender, and reconciles forgiveness with public justice. The passages which teach this are many and express. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins. That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. In whom we have redemption, through his blood. For there is one God, and one mediator

between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all. When he had by himself purged our sins, [he] sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. Having made peace through the blood of his cross. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him; and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

I am aware that the language of these texts is said to be metaphorical, and to mean only the moral efficacy of the precepts and example of Christ. But between a metaphor and the idea it represents, there must be some such resemblance as to render it an obvious and a fit emblem. But what resemblance is there between ransom, propitiation, sacrifice, passover, crucifixion, blood, and death; and the calm employment, or mild efficacy of instruction? In what language of man, have they ever been selected as the symbols of instruction? Do we speak of the alumni of our colleges as ransomed from ignorance,—as bought with a price,—as redeemed? And, should their instructors fall martyrs to their industry and zeal in teaching, should we speak of them as ransomed by their blood,—redeemed by their death? Are there any examples in the Old Testament or the New, whose analogy may sustain an interpreta-

tion of terms so strange and violent? Prophets and apostles have taught us by precept, more than Christ taught; and have shed in attestation of their testimony, more blood. Are we therefore saved by their blood? Are prophets and apostles our sacrifice, passover, ransom, propitiation? This evasion of these passages is a marked and most flagrant violation of the laws of symbolical language, to which, it would seem, nothing could tempt but a philosophy too proud to be taught by heaven, and too hard pressed by revelation to escape, but by turning and rending the Bible.

4. Paul taught that men are justified by faith. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that BELIEVE are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by *faith*, without the deeds of the law. Seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by *faith*, and the uncircumcision through *faith*. The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen *through faith*. The just shall live by *faith*. For by grace are ye saved through *faith*;—not of works, lest any man should boast. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by *faith*. That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the *faith* of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by *faith*."

5. Paul taught that the faith which justifies, is an affection of the heart, a cordial reliance on Christ for pardon and eternal life. It implies a general confidence in God, his word, and providence; but has a specific reference to Christ; and is therefore called faith in Christ.

It is described as an affectionate reliance. "If thou shalt *believe in thine heart* that God has raised him, (Jesus Christ) from the dead. For with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness." It is spoken of as a duty including an affectionate

reliance. "Mary hath *chosen* that good part. *Come* unto me. *Look* unto me. *Open* unto me. But as many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." His own faith he describes as an affectionate reliance on Christ. "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." The apostle also associates faith with other christian graces, which are affections of the heart. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." He declares that, without *charity* (*love*) which is an affection of the heart, he is nothing. And as faith is something morally excellent and precious, the condition of pardon, of heaven, it must include that love, without which a man is nothing. And this the apostle affirms; "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." The efficacy of faith, too, as described by Paul, surpasses utterly the power of mere intellectual belief, and implies the strongest affection. This, he tells us, was the spring of all those illustrious achievements recorded in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews; and the spring of that cheerfulness with which the apostle himself endured the loss of all things, that he might be found in Christ. He declares expressly, that all faith which does not include love is unavailing; and, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."

The symbols of faith also imply a moral union to Christ by affection, and not mere intellectual belief in his Messiahship. It is expressed by the relations of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and friend. Do these relations include only the intellectual perception of good qualities, without affection? And the unbelief of the Jews, for which, as a nation, they were cast away, Paul describes as an affection of the

heart,—a voluntary rejection of the Messiah. “The vail was upon their *heart*.” And this is the “blindness which has happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in;” when “the deliverer out of Zion shall turn ungodliness from Jacob.” *Ungodliness* constituted the principle of their unbelief, as godliness will constitute the principle of their faith when they shall be converted.

6. Finally, the apostle taught the dependance of man upon the Holy Spirit for renovation and faith; the possibility and danger of quenching the Spirit; and continuing in sin, that grace may abound; and that the condemnation of those by whom offered mercy is rejected, will be most fearfully aggravated. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. The fruit of the Spirit is . . . faith. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the favor of God. Quench not the Spirit. We be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, ‘Let us do evil that good may come;’ whose damnation is just. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing; and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense saith the Lord. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

III. I am now to show that the Gospel which Paul preached is the true Gospel. And

1. It is a strong presumptive argument of its truth, that it is eminently a rational system.

In natural philosophy, that is rational, which accords with the laws of the material world; and in the divine moral government, that is rational, which corresponds with the principles of mind and the nature of law. And such, eminently, is the Gospel which Paul preached. It recognizes,

every where, God as a lawgiver, and man as a free agent, perverted and ruined by sin ; the law, as unable to sustain its own moral power and forgive and reclaim ; while a substitute for the execution of the penalty is announced, originating in the wisdom and emanating from the love of God ; offered on terms, and attended by aid, and guarded from perversion by moral checks, which taken together, bring upon our depraved nature powerful restraints from sin, and concentrate upon the mind an amount of motive in favor of a return to loyalty, as great as can be conceived to be possible ; and such as must have, at least, a powerful tendency to do what the apostle declares the law could not do.

The more the elements of this Gospel according to Paul are scrutinized, the more undeniable will their rationality appear. Is it not rational that God should create intelligent, voluntary, accountable beings ? Why should his benevolence be satisfied with multiplying worlds and brute animals ? Why not surround himself with moral beings, who can behold his glory, feel his goodness, obey his will and celebrate his praise ? And if it be wise and good to give being to an intelligent universe, why should it be abandoned to anarchy and misrule ? How could intelligent beings, free agents, be governed, but by the moral influence of law ? And who could legislate for the universe but God ? And what better rule of obligation than the moral law, adapted to all minds, and all worlds, and all periods of duration ? A law which discloses the relations and duties of all rational beings, to the Creator, and to one another ; and binds them in sweet fellowship, and moves them to a delightful, benevolent activity ? And if this law, as the apostle declares, is holy, just and good, and the bond of perfectness, is it not rational that its influence over moral beings should be sustained by rewards and punishments according to deeds ? In what other way can free agents be governed, and the rational and social enjoyment of the universe sustained ? Is it not rational that moral, accountable beings should be able to sin ? Is it possible by

force to prevent transgression, and not destroy accountability? Does not the ability to obey include, necessarily, the ability to transgress? Is it possible to form free agents, and set up a moral government, without bestowing on creatures the terrific capacity of transgression and desert of punishment? And have not facts evinced, though Paul had not taught it, that all men have sinned, and come under the high penalty of the violated law? But, in such a case, is not the doctrine of the apostle rational, that by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified? Would not the abolition of the rewards of law, destroy utterly their influence; and would not the remission of the penalty, upon conditions which every subject believes he certainly shall comply with, and escape punishment, equally abolish the penalty and destroy its power? Could God annihilate the attraction of gravity, and still govern the natural world by its agency? Could he at all more annihilate rewards and punishments, and yet maintain the moral government of the universe by his law?

Law, then, and rewards and punishments being indispensable to moral government, is it not rational that free agents who sin, should be punished so long as they sin, and so much as is necessary to maintain the influence of law, and the safety and happiness of the universe? Can a criminal reasonably demand exemption from punishment upon terms which shall destroy the moral energy of the government to preserve and bless the loyal? Are laws made to accommodate the disobedient, or to be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well? Still, if a way can be devised by the lawgiver, in which public justice can be maintained, and the happiness of the universe secured, and punishment be averted, and transgressors reclaimed; is it not rational that he should adopt it; seeing that punishment is inflicted, not merely because the subject deserves it, but because the public good demands it? That such a way of reconciling justice with mercy is possible, reason can never show; but if it be possible, it is entirely a dictate of reason that it should be

done. The Gospel as preached by Paul declares, that public justice and personal reformation and pardon can be united, and *are* united by the death of Christ, set forth as a propitiation for sin.

This scheme brings out new evidence, of the justice of God, who would not by the abolition of law, sport with the rights of the loyal, to save the guilty from deserved punishment; and of the goodness of God, who would not punish merely because punishment was deserved, but sent forth his own Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the world: and it discovers the mercy of God, an attribute which the administration of law could never disclose, or created mind perceive until manifested in the plan of redemption. And by thus brightening the exhibitions of the divine glory, the Gospel creates new obligations and new motives to confidence and love, heightens the sinfulness of sin, and certifies to the universe that God, though merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness, will not abandon law, or "clear the guilty." And what condescension is manifested in the condition of pardon! The lowest possible degree of true holiness, the smallest real preference for God above the world, the lowest degree of sorrow for sin, or faith in Christ arising from love, are the commencement of a moral excellence which by promised grace, shall be sustained, augmented, consummated, and endure forever.

How cheering also is the aid which the Gospel according to Paul holds forth to the ruined and helpless sinner. All who understand the law, and attempt in spirit and in truth to worship God and obey the Gospel, feel the darkness and hardness of the heart, and the stubbornness of the will, and the necessity of some energy which shall dispel the darkness, and give reality to the government of God, and quicken their dead affections into vigorous activity. And "in the reading, and especially in the hearing of the word," we are encouraged to expect the blessed efficacy of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin, and to "persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ as he is freely offered in the Gospel." It

is an assistance unmerited, which none can claim, but which God can bestow, and is willing to bestow, notwithstanding ill desert, upon the dead in sin. It is sovereign grace, which law could not bestow, or man procure: and it is rich, abundant and free; always ready; and always, when exerted, mighty to save. But, lest such exuberant mercy should create presumptuous hope, and continuance in sin that grace might abound, the desperation of our disease is disclosed,—the madness of the heart,—the certainty of self-destruction without the Holy Ghost,—the possibility of quenching the Spirit,—the *fact* that he will not always strive,—the uncertainty which attends the continuance of his agency, and the time of his departure;—all these, in letters of fire, blaze on the monitory page, to exclude presumptuous hope, and rouse the soul to immediate and vigorous action.

Thus is the Gospel according to Paul, philosophically considered, a rational system, which comes in to meet, not an imaginary, but a real difficulty in law in the way of pardon; and to solve the question, "How shall man be just with God?" A question, to which neither the starry heavens, nor pagan oracles, have returned an answer; and which the greatest of men, unenlightened by revelation, have confessed themselves unable to answer. This question Paul has answered; and in a manner which accords with the character of God as lawgiver, and with the nature of mind and of moral government; and in a way which brings out the riches of the goodness of God as merciful and just, and augments the moral influence of law; while, for purposes of reformation, it concentrates upon the heart an intensity of motive which it is utterly impossible for law to disclose or apply; increasing immeasurably the rewards of obedience and the penalties of disobedience, while it offers pardon and help on terms which awaken hope and inspire effort, and give to it a practical efficacy which justifies the apostle in calling it the power of God unto salvation.

2. The testimony of Paul himself to the Gospel which he preached as being the true Gospel, is conclusive, though we should regard him only as an honest man. He certainly possessed a mind not often surpassed in vigor and in the capacity of accurate discrimination; and he was placed in circumstances which afforded both opportunity and motive to ascertain what the Gospel was which Jesus Christ preached, and for which he "suffered the loss of all things." He saw also, and conversed with Peter and James, two of the disciples and apostles of our Lord. And it is worthy of remark, that no testimony worthy of credit has ever appeared to invalidate the testimony of Paul. Therefore what he declares to be the Gospel, comes to us, with high direct evidence, and uncontradicted.

3. The testimony of Paul is inspired testimony. He says expressly, "I certify you brethren that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after men, for I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it but by revelation of Jesus Christ." If inspiration can make a matter certain, it has stamped the seal of certainty upon the Gospel as preached by Paul. But

4. The new and living way of sustaining law, and saving sinners, by an atonement through faith, is corroborated by the concurrent testimony of the inspired volume. Patriarchs and prophets, Jesus Christ and his apostles, set forth the same foundation for pardon, and upon the same conditions.

The first promise which awakened hope in our trembling progenitor, taught him to look by faith to a deliverer whom God would raise up of the seed of the woman; and who, though wounded in the conflict, should gain the victory, and bruise the head of the adversary. The Gospel preached to Abel and embraced by him included the doctrine of atonement, and justification by faith. "By faith Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." This passage proves that worship by the sacrifice of

a victim was a mode of worship instituted by God, to whom alone it appertains to prescribe the manner in which he will be worshipped, and who always rejects uninstituted worship. It must have been appointed in such close connexion with the predicted conflict of the great deliverer who should achieve his victory by wounds and blood, as plainly indicates that the sacrifice was a symbol of the sufferings of the promised Messiah. By this sacrifice the offerer obtained witness from God that he was righteous; and Paul, writing by inspiration, declares that it was the righteousness of *faith* which rendered his sacrifice acceptable, and the same *faith* as that which he himself preached, for he refers to it as an illustration of the efficacy of the faith which he preached. But the faith which Paul preached, we know had for its object Christ and his atonement. Of course the faith of Abel, being the same as the faith of Paul, had for its object Christ and his atonement.

By the same process of reasoning we learn that the faith of Paul and the faith of Abraham were the same. "The scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the heathen by faith, preached before *the Gospel* to Abraham." The Gospel to which the apostle alludes, is the Gospel which he preached; and which, as we have seen, did most assuredly include the doctrine of the atonement and justification by faith: and he says, that this *same Gospel* was preached to Abraham. "So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham." And he says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ." Here it is said, expressly, that the Gospel which was preached to the Gentiles was before preached to Abraham; and that it announced the impossibility of pardon by law, and redemption from the curse by Christ himself being made a curse for us; and that faith in Christ was the condition of pardon.

The sacrifices in the Jewish worship also inculcated, by symbols, the necessity and efficacy of some great moral ex-

piation for sin by the shedding of blood. They were "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, and could never make the comers thereunto perfect. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Hence it is said, "before faith came, (i. e. Christ the object of faith) we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be *justified by faith*. But after that faith is come, (Christ whom the law typified,) we are no longer under a schoolmaster; for ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Here then it is plainly declared that the sacrifices of the Jewish law were typical of Christ as an expiation for sin, and the means of convincing of sin, and directing souls to seek pardon through faith in Christ.

The predictions of the Old Testament describe the Messiah as one who should die to make expiation for sin; and that pardon should be granted through faith in his blood. Isaiah has described the Messiah as "bearing our griefs, and carrying our sorrows; as wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; upon whom was laid the iniquity of us all, and by whose stripes we are healed." Daniel also predicted "that after threescore and two weeks, Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself." John the Baptist, speaking of Christ, says, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world."

The testimony of John the beloved disciple is, that God sent his Son, to be "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

This shows that the apostle understood his master to teach that his death was an expiation for sin. The same apostle says also, that he "saw in the midst of the throne a Lamb, as it had been slain ; and they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood." It seems, therefore, that in heaven, Christ is worshipped, as having redeemed them by his blood.

The testimony of Peter is, that "Christ suffered for us," and "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree ; by whose stripes we are healed ;" that "Christ also hath suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Peter also testifies, that the prophets taught the same way of salvation, by the death of Christ, which the apostles preached—and taught it too as inspired by the Spirit of Christ which was in them. "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired ; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." That is, the Spirit of Christ, or the Holy Ghost, taught the prophets the same way of pardon by the sufferings of Christ, that are now reported to you by those whom the Holy Ghost inspires to preach the Gospel to you.

The testimony of Jesus Christ himself is, that his death was indispensable to the salvation of man,—and that men can be justified only by faith in him. To his disciples he declared, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of man be lifted up. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me ;" plainly implying, that the whole reforming efficacy of his mission into the world turned upon the event of his death. When he predicted his death at Jerusalem, and was dissuaded from it by Peter, he said, "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled"—those which

my Spirit taught prophets to reveal,—“that thus it *must* be?” He speaks also of the nature of his death, not as corroborating his testimony, but as an expiation for sin. “Even as the Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” He describes the efficacy of his death, also, by symbols, appropriate to the idea of expiation, and inappropriate to that of moral instruction, or simple martyrdom. “I am the bread of life.” “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” Nearly all his instructions and his examples had been given—but these did not suffice to redeem from sin; his flesh must yet be given for the life of the world. Hence he says, “I lay down my life for the sheep:” and in the institution of the sacrament, “This is my body, which is broken for you;” and “This cup is the new testament in my blood.” Such is the account which Jesus Christ gives of his own death—as indispensable to the salvation of the world.

But why must Christ die that men might have life? His example, his precepts, and his testimony, were authenticated by miracles, which proved his divine mission. Why then must he die to prove that which was already proved? It was not necessary that Moses should die, that his precepts should have the sanction of heaven. And many of the inspired penmen did not seal their testimony with their blood. Why then must Christ die, that men might have life?

That Jesus Christ taught the doctrine of justification by faith, cannot be denied. His language is, “He that believeth, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned.” “He that believeth on the Son, hath life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” “He that believeth not, is condemned already.”

You have now before you an epitome of the evidence, that the Gospel which Paul preached, is the true Gospel. You have the rationality of the system; it is demanded by the

nature of mind, and the principles of law, and eminently adapted to sustain law, and reclaim alienated subjects. You have the testimony of Paul, regarded only as an honest man, and also as an inspired man, receiving the Gospel which he preached directly from Jesus Christ. And you have the concurrent testimony of the whole volume of revelation, patriarchs, prophets, apostles; and the testimony of Jesus Christ himself.

Upon this evidence I would remark, that the argument is the same, and is as conclusive, as that by which we prove the being of God. Our only evidence that there is a God, is found in the indications of design, contained in his works, such and so various, as exclude the possibility of accidental concurrence. But the supposition that symbols, and predictions, and patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and Jesus Christ himself, should by accident have concurred in teaching the same plan of redemption by atoning blood, and of justification by faith; and this in a way so wonderful, and, antecedent to a revelation, so improbable, and apparently impossible, would be so great an accident, as would abolish the fundamental maxim, that no effect can exist without a cause; and justify the conclusion, that all the indications of the existence of God, are accidental, and obliterate the evidence of his being.

If pardon by the atonement, and by faith, is the true system,—none but God could have discovered and taught it; and harmonized in one belief, so many minds in such different and distant ages. But if it be a cunningly devised fable, the wonders of an accidental concurrence, are immeasurably increased; for in this case, symbols, and predictions, and independent witnesses, extending through four thousand years, must, by mere accident, have concurred in teaching the wonderful plan of man's redemption by the incarnation and death of the Son of God, without any cause whatever to originate a plan so wonderful, or concentrate their testimony almost verbatim, often in the same exposition of it. When to this we

add, the notorious fact that all men are sinners;—that according to the laws of mind and moral government, as well ascertained as the laws of matter, *law* alone can neither reclaim nor pardon, more than matter can be made to move without power; that an inspired apostle asserts expressly, and often, that the law *cannot* reclaim and justify; and declares, that this legal difficulty is met and removed by the expiatory death of Jesus Christ the Son of God; and is sustained in this account, in the Old Testament and in the New, by independent witnesses, and by language which no analogy of use can expound to mean simple instruction, and which by the concentrated force of analogy does teach expiation by atonement, and justification by faith—if all this is accidental—is false reasoning—is fallacious evidence, conducting us only to a false conclusion; then may we abandon our claims to reason, and deny the possibility of evidence, both in the natural and in the moral world, and turn atheists and skeptics, and await, in calm desperation, our approaching annihilation.

#### INFERENCES.

I. Our first conclusion, in view of the past discussion is, that we know with moral certainty what is the true Gospel. By moral certainty, I mean that certainty which is the result of evidence, and cannot be fallacious without throwing discredit on all our powers of reasoning, and establishing the dominion of universal skepticism. The secular concerns of the world, move on by the guidance of such knowledge, which, if it be not as certain as demonstration, does, nevertheless, create and justify, for all practical purposes, a confidence as safe and unwavering.

I am aware that pretensions to knowledge on the subject of religion, are treated with derision, when they go to set aside favorite opinions, and to disturb the conscience, by the implication of criminal and destructive error. That, in the track of “gifted minds,” who have examined and reasoned

only to discover their past mistakes, and present ignorance, any one should pretend to knowledge, is deemed the height of arrogance.

What then is the meaning of these high pretensions to ignorance and uncertainty? Is it meant that man, half divine, almost infinite, cannot reason? That reason itself, godlike reason, is but a meteor of the night, that "guides to bewilder, and dazzles to blind"? Or is it meant that her eye is keen and comprehensive, and her decisions the basis of knowledge on all subjects of temporal interest; while sad eclipse, and disastrous twilight, have dimmed her vision, and mocked her efforts to obtain knowledge, on all the more important interests of eternity? On which horn of the dilemma will the advocates of uncertainty, choose to hang? Will it be pretended that man is not capable of knowledge, and that there is no difference between the confidence inspired by sophistry, and that which is the result of valid evidence and sound reasoning? Of what use then, is reason; and of what avail is evidence, as the means of knowledge; and what advantage has the truth above error; and what, after all, is the boasted illumination of the nineteenth century, but an accumulation of doubtful doubts?

If the subject of religion is made an exception, and reason, keen sighted every where beside, is blind here, then, by what fallacy has it come to pass, that her vision should fail just where it is most needed, and that darkness and doubt should settle down upon those subjects which respect our eternal well-being?—nay, should gather about the Bible, sent from heaven to shine as a light in a dark place;—not on the law—whose precept is as plain as the fact is of its transgression; but upon the Gospel—which alone can answer the question, 'How shall man be just with God?'—A question which Socrates could not answer, and to which the heavens, with all their hosts of suns, and stars, have sent down no reply; which no breeze has wafted to the listening ear, no breath of morning whispered; no incense grateful, of

rose or violet, indicated ; no ' smile of beauty told ' ? Yes— why has this darkness fallen upon the Gospel, *without* which, we could have known our guilt and wretchedness, but with which, it seems, no man can discover the certain means of escape ?

Why, again would we ask, can we not *know* what is the Gospel, with moral certainty ? Can there be a subject on which certainty is more urgently needed ? Did God make the Gospel obscure on purpose ? Or was he unable to make it plain ? Does he not speak of it as if it were plain, and treat his subjects as if it were so ; commanding his ministers to preach it, and their hearers to receive it, as the condition of eternal life ? And yet, is the whole to which it is possible to attain, some modest conjectures about what may be the Gospel, which shall subject to the laugh of scorn all pretensions to knowledge on the subject ?

But we need not reason in this manner, to prove what is made plain by revelation, beyond all reasonable doubt. Paul did know what the Gospel is, for he received it from Christ ; and we know what the Gospel is, which Paul preached. He did teach, that all men have sinned : that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified : that Jesus Christ was set forth a propitiation, to declare the righteousness of God, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus : that he was delivered *for* our offences : died *for* us—*for* our sins : was made a sin offering, that we might have redemption through his blood : that he gave himself a ransom for all ; tasted death for every man ; by himself purged our sins ; made peace through his blood ; by his own blood obtained eternal redemption for us : that we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ ; that he offered one sacrifice for sin ; that Christ our passover was sacrificed for us,—symbols never used to express the efficacy of legislation and example, and which refer to sacrifices in the Jewish economy, which were vicarious and expiatory, and which, as Paul declares, were the shadows or types of that

true expiation for sin which was made by the death of Christ. And he did teach, that we are justified by faith, an affection of the heart, including supreme love to the Saviour, and reliance on him for preservation and pardon. No ancient manuscript, or Improved Version, or eastern figure, or oriental custom, or Jewish opinion, or system of philosophy, or conjectural criticism can obliterate from the sacred page this testimony of Paul, sustained as it is by the testimony of Christ, and of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles.

On such evidence we rest our claims, that in preaching as the Gospel, the doctrines of the atonement, and justification by faith, we *know* that we preach the true Gospel, and do not follow cunningly devised fables.

II. With equal certainty, we know that to proclaim pardon upon any conditions whatever, without an atonement, is to preach another Gospel.

From the nature of law and of moral beings, we have seen that universal mercy, in the forgiveness of sin upon the simple condition of repentance, would be the prostration of moral government. It was the violation of the law, which created a necessity for the Gospel. It was because the law *could not* save, that God sent his Son into the world, to be the propitiation for our sins. It is because the Gospel is a system of remedial legislation, admitting of such degrees of moral excellence, as the condition of pardon, as the law could not accept, and addressing such mingled motives of justice and mercy, hope and fear, as the law could not apply, and providing such gracious aids of the Spirit, as it could not bestow, that the Gospel is described as a "new and living way," the union of "mercy and truth, righteousness and peace," and is announced as glad tidings of great joy, and is eulogised as the power of God, and the wisdom of God; the highest exhibition of legislative wisdom, and moral power, which was ever made, or ever can be made.

The Bible does certainly teach, that there was some legal difficulty in the way of pardon; and that the system which

removes it, is *the Gospel*. But if the law itself can pardon, directly, and for all sins, upon condition of repentance and reformation ; then there is no Gospel, and salvation is by the *law*, and repentance is as much a deed of law, for purposes of pardon, as perfect obedience is a deed of law, for purposes of reward, where sin has not entered.

Whatever system, then, refers us back for pardon and sanctification, to the simple principles of law, is another Gospel. But the system which denies the atonement, and justification by faith, does refer us for pardon to the principles of law, and is therefore another Gospel. It assumes the principle, that pardon upon condition of repentance, is consistent with law ; that no legal difficulty, in the way of pardon, existed ; that the law is not weak through the flesh, and can, without a mediator and an atonement, do all which is necessary to the forgiveness and the recovery of men from sin to holiness : which is in effect to declare that there is no Gospel, but that men are saved by the pardoning and reforming power of law.

This reasoning is confirmed by the decision of Paul himself. In his time, certain Judaising teachers inculcated the perpetuity of the Mosaic institution, and the efficacy of a literal observance of Jewish ceremonies to save. To refute this doctrine, he proves that all men have sinned, and that " therefore by the deeds of the law *no flesh* can be saved," and brings out the atonement, and justification by faith ; and declares " Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law. Ye are fallen from grace." It was these very men who taught justification by deeds of law, without an atonement, whom Paul denounced as false teachers, and as preaching another Gospel. All men now, therefore, who teach the doctrine of justification without an atonement, upon any condition whatever, preach another Gospel ; for, be the condition what it may, it is justification, in some form, by deeds of law. Christ, of course, becomes to such, and to all who rely on them, of none effect.

To refer men, therefore, for pardon, to the goodness and mercy of God, without a mediator and an atonement, and without repentance and reformation, is another Gospel. It is the annihilation of all moral government, and giving impunity to all possible licentiousness.

To proclaim pardon, upon condition of repentance and reformation, without an atonement, is to preach another Gospel.

To represent the natural affections, sympathies, and amiable dispositions of men, as conditions and evidence of pardon, is to preach another Gospel—for they are neither faith, nor evidences of faith. It is nowhere said, 'being justified by natural affections, and amiable dispositions, we have peace with God.' Atheists possess natural affections, and amiable dispositions; and so do many wicked men, whose vices demonstrate that they shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Those who teach their hearers to rely on moral honesty, and a faithful discharge of relative duties, preach another Gospel; for it is not said, 'whosoever shall pay his honest wages, and be a kind father, husband, and friend, shall be saved.' Honesty is not faith; domestic affections are not evidence of faith; for a man may love father and mother more than God, and in doing so, forfeit heaven.

To associate the hope of pardon with powerful talents, literary eminence, or public usefulness, is to preach another Gospel. And yet there are many, who hesitate not to canonize great orators, poets, statesmen, and the literary luminaries and benefactors of human kind, of these and other ages. The Bible represents it as a matter of great difficulty, for a man to know even his own heart; and once those were deemed fanatical, who supposed that they could discover grace in a man's countenance, voice, or movements. But in these days of illumination, the hearts of great men may be searched, and grace detected—though ages and oceans intervene—merely from the stature of their intellect, or the providential results of their labors,—prin-

ciples that, with equal efficacy, might canonize "arch angel ruined."

To represent the sincere belief of error, as a condition of pardon and acceptance, is to preach another Gospel; for it is not said, 'he that *believeth* that he is right, shall be saved,' but, he that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ. Mere intellectual belief, is no more an evangelical condition of pardon, than mere morality. Neither is the faith which justifies.

To hold up charity, as the sum of Christian graces and a sure passport to heaven, is to preach another Gospel; for the charity which is a Christian grace, is holiness of heart,—while the charity which is thus eulogised, means only a blind confidence in our neighbor's honesty, piety, and safe estate. A hard way to heaven, indeed, if we must, of course, believe our neighbors honest, and pious, and safe, as the condition of our own salvation. But where is it said, 'he that believeth his neighbor to be honest, and pious, shall be saved; and he that believeth not his neighbor to be honest and pious shall be damned'?

Those who represent rites, and forms, duly administered, and followed by a moral life, as efficacious to save, by a sort of silent, unperceived sanctification, preach another Gospel. It was such teaching, exactly, which the apostle opposed, and which he calls another Gospel,—and which is another Gospel.

Those who hold out the promise of pardon to all who believe intellectually, that Jesus is the Messiah, without reference to what is included in the term, or to any corresponding affection of heart,—preach another Gospel. Our disease is of the heart; and faith, the condition of pardon, is an affectionate reliance on Jesus Christ. But what is the efficacy of believing in a name, which means we know not what? Or of mere intellectual perception and admission of truth? The intellectual faith of devils, who confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, neither reconciled nor saved them. And how

should it save us? Correct eyesight might as well be prescribed as the condition of pardon, as a mere intellectual, undefined belief, that Jesus is the Messiah.

The omission to preach the doctrine of the atonement, and justification by faith, is to preach another Gospel. For if men encourage the hope of pardon, and do not propose the grounds of pardon, they do by implication admit the possibility, and authorise the hope of pardon by deeds of law. So they will be understood by their people; so they are understood—for, without exception, all who confide in them, expect to be justified by the mercy of God, and good works. And yet there are some who dare to take this course. With great and good men, they doubt, and have not exactly yet made up their minds, whether the doctrine of the atonement, and justification by faith, be the Gospel, or not. Therefore, lest they should offend some of their people, or be found fighting against God, they say nothing against these doctrines, and not being sure that they are true, nothing for them—but preach good morality, visit their people, attend marriages and funerals, and hope for the best. But in effect, they preach another Gospel; for Jesus Christ himself has said, “he that is not for me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad.”

III. We may perceive the reason of the practical inefficiency of the New Gospel, compared with that which includes the doctrine of the atonement, and of justification by faith.

The fact that the New Gospel is relatively inefficacious, is by implication admitted by its advocates. Fuller, who compared the Calvinistic and Socinian systems, as to their practical tendencies, says, “The practical efficacy of a doctrine, in the present age, is a subject, it seems, which ought not to be discussed, as the test of its being true. They are, almost to a man, against it.” And a Unitarian clergyman, in his reply to a gentleman of Boston, says of his letter, “It is an attempt to show, that Unitarian views are unsound, because the opposite views produce the most visible good effects.” To which

he replies, "That the argument for a system, from the character of those who hold it, is founded altogether in mistake, and is of no weight at all. This I would strenuously insist upon, popular as the notion is, it is perfectly fallacious." Hence generally Unitarians choose to compare the very obvious *good tendencies* of their system with the various bad tendencies of Calvinism, and regard a comparison of practical results, as calculated to produce spiritual pride, on the one part, and irritation on the other—and to ascribe the practical inefficacy of their system to its recent and limited operation, to peculiarity of circumstances, or to some unknown cause, which possibly may yet be discovered. We might inquire here, how the tendency of causes is ascertained, but from their effects; and of what possible utility good tendencies can be, which stop short of practical results?—tendencies to honesty, which do not produce honesty; to benevolent activity, which do not produce it? But it is rather our object to show, that the New Gospel is in its nature impotent. That from the nature of mind and law, it might be inferred, beforehand, with moral certainty, that it would be practically impotent, just as it is; and this we are able to show, reasoning analogically and experimentally, from human governments to the divine, that it must and does impair the force of law.

1. It abates the requirements of law. It teaches the subject that he is *weak*, that his heavenly Father is merciful, and does not expect nor demand perfect obedience, but will make most merciful allowances. But can laws supposed to be thus abated, maintain their moral energy on subjects, as if they were supposed to be in force? How much selfishness and pride does God most mercifully permit? How much lust, and envy, and anger, and revenge; how much falsehood, and dishonesty? Suppose our courts should expound thus the laws of this Commonwealth—'The Executive is the father of the people, he knows the weakness of unprincipled men, and does not expect them to keep the laws perfectly, but will make most merciful allowances.'—Should public

morals decline, and crimes multiply, under such expositions of law, should we be told that the tendency of such views is certainly good, much better than the old fashioned notions of strict law, and inflexible justice ; and that the fault of a relaxed morality is not owing to the system, but to some unknown cause ? And if we were thus instructed from the bench, should we believe it ?

2. The penalty for the transgression of such parts of the law as are not most mercifully given up, is also most mercifully abolished ;—by the certainty which every transgressor is permitted to feel, that he can, and certainly shall, avoid the penalty by a timely repentance ; or, according to others, who deny the atonement, by the discovery that the penalty of the law exerts its entire influence in time, and has no reference at all to the eternal state ; or, if, according to others, any should fail to repent in the present life, by the assurance that God will have mercy upon them, and apply the very best remedy which is possible, and which in the shortest possible time shall fit them for heaven.

Is it wonderful, that a law, whose precepts are given up by such an undefined license of mercy, and whose penalties are thus robbed of their power to awaken fear, should fail to exert the same practical efficacy, with that law, which Paul expounds as holy just and good ; and concerning which, our Saviour declares that heaven and earth shall sooner pass, than one jot or tittle of it shall fail ; and which, in the hand of a mediator, convinces of sin, and applies to the minds of free agents, motives to repent, powerful to the extent of possibility ?

The definiteness which evangelical views give to the inspiration and obvious import of the Bible, and the uncertainty which, in both respects, is thrown upon it by the advocates of the New Gospel, are natural and adequate causes for the practical efficacy of the one, and the relative inefficacy of the other. Let it be taught, from the bench, that some of the laws were never enacted by the proper authority, but crept in by the mistakes of printers, or the interpolations of inter-

ested persons ; that some are so old as to have become obsolete, and some so unreasonable as to justify any possible exposition but the obvious one ; and that such has ever been, and is ever like to be, the divided opinions of the courts, and of men of great legal attainments, as to what portions of the statutes are genuine, and as to the import of such as are admitted to be so ; that very little can be known with certainty as to what is law ; and that this glorious uncertainty should make the judges very modest in pronouncing authoritatively what is, or is not, law ; and should render suitors exceedingly charitable towards one another, seeing, in this twilight of legal knowledge, sincere transgression must be allowed to be about as meritorious as sincere obedience ;—and we should all believe that we all *mean* to be honest ; and that one is about as likely to be right as the other ; and that, on the whole, the laws were never intended in good earnest to be executed, but only to scare people into good behaviour, and, considering their great uncertainty, and their unreasonable severity, ought seldom, if ever to be executed :—under such expositions, judgment would be turned away backward, and justice stand afar off, and truth fall in the streets, and equity be unable to enter. None would say it was not the tendency of such expositions of law to produce such results. It is when the Bible, the law of God, is thus explained away, by those who claim to be its authorised and only enlightened expositors, and an appalling relaxation of morals is seen, that we are gravely told, that the fault is not in the system of exposition, but in circumstances, or unknown causes. But the moral impotency is in the system itself, and in nothing else. A system could not be devised, which should surpass the New Gospel, in rendering the precept of law void, and disrobing the sanctions of moral power. Most assuredly, that Gospel whose chief object and tendency it would seem to be, to persuade men that there is little danger, or none at all, in transgression, cannot be compared in its restraining and reforming power, with that in which the law urges its unabated

claims, and justice draws its glittering sword, while mercy stays the uplifted stroke, and holds out the sceptre, and God invites, and Jesus pleads, and the Spirit strives, and heaven waits, while the tempest of the coming day gathers, and lightnings blaze, and thunders utter their voices, and destruction, without remedy, cometh on.

IV. A renunciation of the atonement, and of justification by faith, is a renunciation of Christianity.

According to the New Gospel, Christianity consists in believing in one God, in one person ; in the divine mission of Jesus Christ ; the efficacy of repentance without an atonement ; the resurrection of the dead ; and rewards and punishments in a future state. But all this the Mahometan believes. Is the Mahometan therefore a Christian? If the preceding articles constitute the Gospel, he is. But we know that the Mahometan is not a Christian. It follows, therefore, that this Mahometan creed is not Christianity.

As a general fact, those who reject the atonement, refuse to worship Christ. But of those who refused to do this in the time of Socinus, he says ; “ They have the effrontery to call themselves Christians.” And Dr. Priestley says of Trinitarians, “ If you are right, we are not Christians ; and if we are right, you are gross idolaters.” And the Polish Socinian catechism says, “ Those men who do not pray to Christ, nor allow that he is to be worshipped, are by no means Christians.” Nor is there any thing invidious in our believing, and avowing the belief, that the renunciation of the atonement is the renunciation of Christianity. We no more withhold from those who do this, the Christian name, than they withhold the Christian name from us. According to our views, they reject the Gospel who reject the atonement, and are not Christians ; and according to their views, we reject the Gospel, and are idolaters, and therefore not Christians. And if they, with gross inconsistency, can so far disregard their reason and conscience, as to call idolaters-Christians, they have no right to insist that we shall do the same violence to our reason

and conscience, in admitting them to be Christians. The fact is, there is no cause for complaint on either side. To each is given liberty of conscience to judge for themselves, what is the Gospel. In this process, we come to such opposite conclusions, that if the system embraced by one is the Gospel, that embraced by the other is not. But in coming to these results, we have no desire or design to deny to our opponents the Christian name. We adopt our views of the Gospel from honest conviction—by the force of evidence which we cannot resist, and which creates in our minds moral certainty. And we cannot believe that a system, opposite to what we believe to be the Gospel, is the Gospel. Our charity cannot be stretched to such a liberality, without abandoning the sober conclusions of our reason, and the deep convictions of our conscience.

Nor do we invade or withhold the rights of those whom we cannot recognise as Christians. We do not deprive them of the Christian name; they have a perfect right to call themselves Christians, and to be called Christians by all whom they can persuade to believe them such. But they have no right to insist that we shall believe and call them Christians; for this would be, to deny to us the liberty of thinking for ourselves, and to insist that we shall judge of others according to their judgment of themselves, instead of our own; a requisition, which would annihilate all liberty of conscience. In avowing our convictions of what is, and what is not, Christianity, we exercise that liberty which is the birthright of man; and in admitting the consequences, that those are not Christians who reject what we believe to be the Gospel, we do that which is inseparable from the right of thinking and judging for ourselves:—for who can believe that one system is the Gospel, and that a system, in direct opposition to it, is the Gospel? Either the right of thinking for ourselves must be denied, or the right of inference, and speech, and action, must be conceded.

That all do in reality reject the Gospel atonement, who,

through inattention, or want of information, or manifold temptations cannot be said positively to believe it, we do not say. Theirs, possibly, may be the sin of ignorance, or of wavering and doubt. Much less do we say, that all renounce Christianity who attend the ministrations of those who deny the atonement and justification by faith. For these doctrines have been eradicated from the churches of the pilgrims, not at first, by opposing them, but by omitting to preach them; and the New Gospel has been introduced, not by the pulpit first, but by the press, and at the fireside. A cautious silence was maintained on the subject, until the more aged and evangelical portion of the congregation were gathered to their fathers, while the rising generation, uninstructed in the truth, and, by misrepresentation, prejudiced against it, were gradually initiated into the new faith. And even now, there is remaining too much recollection and belief of early biblical instruction, to render the unequivocal denial of the atonement safe. To this hour there are not a few who cannot be persuaded that their ministers reject the atonement, in the evangelical sense; for their ministers have learned to use terms, which the initiated understand in the anti-evangelical sense; and which persons evangelically inclined, misunderstand in the evangelical sense;—terms which, by one class of the audience are understood to deny the atonement, and by another to teach it. If, at times, from the pulpit or the press, the atonement is denied and ridiculed, with an explicitness which creates alarm, and these people apply to their ministers for explanation, what was said and meant, and is still believed, is taken back, and modified, and explained away, as no honest man, no Christian would dare to do. Our meaning is, that those who possess the means of knowledge, and who do, understandingly, reject the atonement, do reject the Gospel and renounce Christianity: for the Gospel is a system distinct from the moral law. Sin has prevented that mode of government, in alliance with reformation and hope of pardon. From the beginning to the end, the

Bible discloses a remedial system, through faith in the atonement. Strike out the atonement, therefore, and nothing remains but government by law. To believe in some parts of the Bible as inspired, is not of course to believe in the Gospel. The Jew believes in the Bible as a statute book. But so far as the Gospel is concerned, he is an infidel, as really, as Volney or Paine. The rejection of the atonement, therefore, and justification by faith, is a renunciation of Christianity. It is, so far as the Gospel is concerned, infidelity. And when we consider the scarcely concealed renunciation of the Old Testament, by eminent Unitarian ministers,—the alleged uninspired additions of whole chapters to the New Testament,—the interpolation, beside, of many, (and no one can tell of how many) passages,—the uncertainty which is alleged to hang over a number of the epistles, and the low and feeble inspiration ascribed to the remainder, which scarcely prevents material mistakes, and not at all false reasonings,—the falsehood, both in fact and in philosophy, which Christ himself sanctioned in accommodation to Jewish ignorance and prejudice, and the very little which he is supposed to have taught, which the light of nature had not disclosed before, and the uncertainty which attends the record of that little, from the liability of the evangelical historians, though honest and well meaning, to misapprehension, forgetfulness, and mistake,—the high eulogies pronounced upon reason and the New Gospel, as having the pre-eminence because of its supposed especial accordance with that *oracle*;—and remark too, the hostility to Christian character as the result of special renovation, and to the church, as distinguished by moral qualities, or by privileges or duties, from the body of the congregation,—and observe in Germany, where this war with revelation and with Christianity commenced, its consummation in the open and unequivocal denial of the inspiration of the Bible, attended with infidel ridicule and scorn cast on the doctrine of miracles;—and when we consider, that some in this country have been understood to avow their unqualified

disbelief in the inspiration of the Bible, and that in the community which receives the instruction, and illustrates the tendency of the New Gospel, much of the ancient implicit confidence in the Bible, as the rule of faith, is gone, and supplanted by irreverence and doubt, and, to a fearful extent, by absolute infidelity;—when we consider these things, we are prepared to meet the reaction of invidious feeling which may be provoked by the avowal, that the renunciation of the atonement is the renunciation of Christianity. We are not of the number who will stand idle and mute, while, in the name of Christ, and by his nominal ministers, the fabric of Christianity is taken down piecemeal, from the topstone to the foundation, and removed from the community, leaving behind, a cheerless infidelity.

It ought to be understood by the people,—it will be understood, that the controversy which agitates New England, respects not merely the doctrines of the Bible, but the Bible itself. To this length the same controversy has gone in Germany, with a tremendous reaction; and to the same result it is fast hastening in this country, with a reaction still more glorious to the cause of truth, and the church of God; for, though some indications of alarm, and the return of a more cautious policy appear, it is too late to stop the causes which have been put in operation. The dark waters of infidelity will scorp and defy restraint; and will roll on, sweeping away, one after another, all forms of Christianity which are not built on the rock, and leaving only two parties, those who believe in the atonement and in the Bible, and open infidels. To the churches of the pilgrims may be applied the consoling language of heaven; “For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer.”

V. This discourse provides an answer to the oft reiterated complaints of exclusion and persecution, preferred against

evangelical ministers, for refusing to hold ministerial intercourse by exchanges with those who discard the doctrines of the atonement and justification by faith. The act of exchange is, in our view, a practical expression of our belief, that the person, to whose instruction we commit our people, preaches the Gospel. But we do not believe that those who discard the atonement do preach the Gospel. And we cannot, by word or by deed, say to our people that we believe what we do not believe. The act of exchange is saying also, practically, that we consider our doctrinal differences of little consequence. But it is not true that we do consider our difference from those who deny the atonement and justification by faith, of little consequence. And we cannot, by our deeds, say to our people what we do not believe. It is a practical declaration of our belief that no injury will be done to our people and the cause of truth by the exchange. But we do not believe this, for it sustains their confidence in men who, in our view, preach another Gospel; and gives them an opportunity which they are not slow to embrace, to create and to foment dissatisfaction in our congregations with evangelical doctrines, and to form and mature conspiracies among our people for their expulsion.

We have formed our opinion as to what is the Gospel, in the exercise of those powers of mind and modes of investigation, which have conducted us to moral certainty on all other subjects. We know what the Gospel is with as much certainty, as we know any thing which depends on moral evidence; and we cannot act against what to us is moral certainty. But we are admonished, that we are fallible—may possibly be mistaken—and therefore ought not to act on our principles in a manner which shall be injurious to the *feelings*, the *reputation*, and the *interests* of those who differ from us; and that, to do so is persecution. This modest claim of Unitarian impunity in thinking for themselves, and in propagating, their opinions unhindered by us,—yea, even aided by our sanction,—would be the extinction, on our part, of free

inquiry, of liberty of conscience, and the right of self-defence. For of what use is free inquiry, provided the truth, when discovered, may not be reduced to practice? And what sort of liberty of conscience is that, which must not speak or act upon its convictions of truth and duty, unless it can be done in such a way as shall occasion, to those who may happen to differ from us, neither pain nor inconvenience? It is less than twenty years, since the advocates of the New Gospel have had courage and fidelity to avow their opinions; and a much shorter time, since they have openly enrolled themselves as a distinct denomination. And now, it seems, no one may resist their progress, or doubt their being Christians, or say or do any thing which may, even by consequence, wound their feelings, or affect their reputation or prosperity. Nay, we must not only not do any thing against them, but we must help them,—must spread over them the mantle of our charity, and ward off the suspicion of the community, and inspire their confidence in them, by giving them as ministers, all the tokens of ministerial confidence and fellowship. Yes, to maintain what they claim as their liberty of conscience, we must sacrifice our own conscience, by bearing false-witness in their behalf before the world. We are not permitted even the privilege of silence and neutrality. We must speak—speak in their favor; must say to our people and to the world, by the most expressive of all language, the language of action, that we believe those to preach the Gospel, whom we verily believe do not preach the Gospel. This is introducing popery, and passive obedience, and nonresistance, somewhat faster than we were prepared to expect. The fact is, that liberty of conscience and free inquiry cannot exist without affecting, as a consequence, the feelings, character, and interests of religious denominations. Who can be put to silence in an argument, without pain? And must we, therefore, forbear to stop the mouths of gain-sayers? What minister can inculcate upon his people the importance of truth, and the danger of error, and not affect,

by consequence, the estimation in which they will hold those who reject the truth, and propagate error? Shall we therefore preach to our people no doctrines in particular, nor attempt to root and ground them in the truth? Who can make those efforts to propagate his own views of truth, which all denominations have a right to make, are bound to make, and do make, and not affect the interests, in some degree, of other denominations?

The liberty of conscience which is claimed to propagate opinions with entire and absolute impunity of feeling, character, and interest, is a liberty quite convenient indeed for those who dread the shocks of war; but it would annihilate the liberties of all around them, and raise up a despotism, as real and as entire, as that which reigns in Turkey, or in the dominions of His Holiness.

It is alleged, that, in withholding intercourse with those who deny the atonement, we innovate upon ancient usage. What ancient usage? Did our fathers of past generations hold fellowship with those who avowed their disbelief of the atonement, in the evangelical sense of the term? Never—No such usage ever existed in this commonwealth, and, we believe, never in this world.

The true state of the case is, that while the patrons of the New Gospel were omitting to preach evangelical doctrines, and were propagating doctrines hostile to them, so far as they could do it with safety, they declined to avow their sentiments openly, and to come out, and take their ground as a new and distinct denomination; but, with a magnanimity worthy of such a cause, to avoid odium, and gain access without suspicion to evangelical congregations, they retained their name and ministerial connexion; and when, at length, after having subverted the University, and about one hundred churches, emboldened by success, and pressed by necessity, they have avowed themselves, and taken ground as a distinct denomination, as if not satisfied with their past spoliations, they insist that we shall still continue to them all their

past facilities for undermining our remaining churches, and blotting out our religion. And when we refuse to do this, and demand that they shall maintain what they have gained, and gain what they can by the vigor of their own minds, and the power of their own arguments, this they call denying to them Christian privileges,—an abridgment of their liberties,—forming against them unlawful combinations,—setting limits to free inquiry,—imposing our own opinions upon others,—and persecution, horrible persecution. But so, notwithstanding this pitiable outcry, we shall continue to persecute; for as we have once before said, the charge of persecution, and of ‘ thrusting Unitarians out of the pale of the church, is ridiculous. Have not Unitarians the privilege of forming churches of their own? And have not all denominations the right of judging for themselves what are the qualifications for membership? It is the *essence* of liberty of conscience, that Christians of similar views in doctrine and experience, should be allowed to associate for mutual usefulness and edification. It is the exercise of this right which constitutes different denominations of Christians. And if, according to the doctrinal views of the Orthodox, Unitarians cannot be received into fellowship, have they any claim upon us? Let them go to their own company, and be at peace. We do not ask to be admitted to their churches; why should they demand fellowship in ours? It is more for the peace of the religious community, that those who differ radically should separate, than that discordant materials should be pressed together in one community. If Unitarians can hold fellowship with idolaters, the Orthodox cannot hold fellowship with those, who, according to their views of truth, reject the Gospel. We have a right to judge for ourselves what is Christianity; and Unitarians have no right to insist that they will judge for themselves and for us too.\*

We have only to request of Unitarians, what we have a right to demand, that they lay aside murmurings and com-

\* Appendix to Occasional Sermons, p. 365.

plainings, and like honorable and conscientious men, come out and avow their sentiments, awarding to us, and taking to themselves, the right of fair and honorable controversy. It is preposterous to attempt unity, and hypocritical to pretend it, and dishonorable to insist upon it, and to cast odium upon others for the simple exercise of their liberty of conscience and the maintenance of their own rights. We are the pre-occupants of the soil. Our fathers have transmitted to us the faith which saved them and cheers us, and which it is our right, and duty, and purpose, to transmit to our children, and to propagate and extend till it cover the earth. If others choose to make shipwreck of this faith, they have no right to insist that we shall, or that we shall think as well of them as if they maintained instead of destroying it. They have no right to demand confidence for purposes of insidious undermining. When they assail us, we have a right to resist; and when they do not, we have a right to assail them just so far as our arguments, and activity, and influence, will avail to propagate our opinions, and supersede theirs; however much it may pain their feelings, or affect their reputation, or their interest. We are in direct opposition: what we build, they pull down; what we plant, they root up; and our bread of life, is their poison. The two Gospels we preach, are opposite and hostile; and the predominance of one, is the suppression of the other. Let our opponents remember this, and count the cost, and make up their minds to the responsibility of encountering all the odium, and enduring all the pain, and losing all the reputation, and experiencing all the hindrance and embarrassment and trouble, in holding their places, and propagating their sentiments, which the liberty of other people's consciences may be able to give them. And if their feelings are too tender to encounter all this, and their love of the praise of men is too great, and their love to truth too feeble, then let them understand that they were not born to be defenders of the faith, and that the times have no need of such help; and let them retire, and join themselves

to the more prudent band, "throughout our country," who we are assured by high authority, "are prevented from making a public avowal of their opinions, by an unwillingness to encounter opposition, and obloquy, and loss of confidence, and the power of being useful."\* And let them retreat with silent magnanimity, and not shoot poisoned arrows behind them as they flee, and send back false accusations of combinations, conspiracies, and persecutions. Let them understand what is *liberality*, and what is *liberty of conscience*; and become, in feeling and in practice, what they so ostentatiously profess; and cease to exasperate themselves and others, by imaginary injuries.

VI. To conclude, the rejection of the atonement by those who have possessed the evidence of its reality is inevitable destruction.

This is not said invidiously, or as a mere assertion, but as the logical inference of what we have proved. I may say on this subject, as the apostle said, "that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." But by all the laws of reasoning which give us certainty on other subjects, we have come to the conclusion that Paul did preach the doctrines of the atonement, and of justification by faith, as the Gospel; and that the Gospel which he preached is the true Gospel. To reject the atonement, then, is to reject the Gospel. And we know that the rejection of the Gospel is fatal. It was fatal to the Jews. It will be fatal to all who reject it now. If they shall be accursed who preach another Gospel, they also must be accursed who believe it,—for "if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch." Therefore it is said, "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him;" and, "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.—He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of

\* Dr. Ware.

how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

And now, my beloved hearers, do any of you reject the atonement, and rest your hope of heaven on other foundation than that is laid, which is Christ—the propitiation for sin, through faith? Do you rely on the goodness of God, or on the mercy of God, without personal holiness—or on repentance, without an atonement—or sincerity in error—or the simple intellectual belief that Jesus is the Christ—or on the preponderance and efficacy of your good works? How can you, how dare you? None of these are the foundations which God has laid. The evidence is plain, to moral certainty, that your foundations for eternity are laid on the sand; and that, when the rains descend, and the floods come, and beat on your house, it will fall. Reflect I beseech you on the argument; re-examine it; pray over it: and remember, that, in proportion to the certainty of its result, is the certainty of your destruction—your everlasting destruction, if you reject the doctrine of the atonement, and of justification by faith. Let parents think of this, who put in jeopardy, not their own souls only, but the souls of their confiding offspring. Let professed ministers of Christ, who reject the divinity of Christ, and neglect to preach, or preach against, the doctrines of the atonement and justification by faith,—let such ministers reflect, and tremble at the possibility, the probability, the certainty, that they will destroy both their own souls, and the souls of them that hear them.