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### Alexander Campbell, Sermon on the Law

Alexander Campbell

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## SERMON ON THE LAW.

REQUESTS have occasionally, during several years, been made for the publication, in this work, of a discourse on the Law, pronounced by me at a meeting of the Regular Baptist Association, on Cross Creek, Virginia, 1816. Recently these requests have been renewed with more earnestness; and, although much crowded for room, I have concluded to comply with the wishes of my friends. It was rather a youthful performance, and is in one particular, to my mind, long since exceptionable. Its views of the atonement are rather commercial than evangelical. But this was only casually introduced, and does not affect the object of the discourse on the merits of the great question discussed in it. I thought it better to let it go to the public again without the change of a sentiment in it. Although precisely thirty years this month since I delivered it, and some two or three years after my union with the Baptist denomination, the intelligent reader will discover in it the elements of things which have characterized all our writings on the subject of modern Christianity from that day to the present.

But as this discourse was, because of its alleged heterodoxy by the Regular Baptist Association, made the ground of my impeachment and trial for heresy at its next annual meeting, it is as an item of ecclesiastic history interesting. It was by a great effort on my part, that this self-same Sermon on the Law had not proved my public excommunication from the denomination under the foul brand of "damnable heresy." But by a great stretch of charity on the part of two or three old men, I was saved by a decided majority.

This unfortunate sermon afterwards involved me in a seven years' war with some members of said Association, and became a matter of much debate. I found at last, however, that there was a principle at work in the plotters of said crusade, which Stephen assigns as the cause of the misfortunes of Joseph.

It is, therefore, highly probable to my mind, that but for the persecution begun on the alleged heresy of this sermon, whether the present reformation had ever been advocated by me. I have a curious history of many links in this chain of providential events, yet unwritten and unknown to almost any one living—certainly but to a very few persons,—which, as the waves of time roll on, may yet be interesting to many. It may be gratifying to some, however, at present to be informed that but one of the prime movers of this presumptive movement yet lives; and, alas! he has long since survived his usefulness. I may farther say at present, that I do not think

there is a Baptist Association on the continent that would now treat me as did the Redstone Association of that day, which is some evidence to my mind that the Baptists are not so stationary as a few of them would have the world to believe.

But the discourse speaks for itself. It was, indeed, rather an extemporaneous address: for the same spirit that assaulted the discourse when pronounced, and when printed, reversed the resolution of the Association passed on Saturday evening, inviting me to address the audience on Lord's day, and had another person appointed in my place. He providentially was suddenly seized by sickness, and I was unexpectedly called upon in the morning, two hours before the discourse was spoken. A motion was made in the interval, that same day, by the same spirit of jealousy or zealously, that public opinion should be arrested by having a preacher appointed to inform the congregation on the spot that my "discourse was not Baptist doctrine." One preacher replied, that it might be "Christian doctrine;" for his part, it was new to him, and desired time for examination. I was, therefore, obliged to gather it up from a few notes, and commit it to writing. It was instantly called for to be printed, and after one year's deliberation, at next Association, a party was formed to indict me for heresy on the published discourse. A committee met; resolutions were passed on Friday night. The next day was fixed for my trial; and after asking counsel of Heaven, my sermon was called for, and the suit commenced. I was taken almost by surprise. On my offering immediately to go into an investigation of the matter, it was partially discussed; but on the ground of having no jurisdiction in the case, the Association, resolved to dismiss the sermon, without any fuller mark of reprobation, and leave every one to form his own opinion of it. I presume our readers, without any license from an Association, will form their own opinion of it; and, therefore, we submit it to their candid perusal. A. C.

### THE SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON,

*Delivered before the Redstone Baptist Association, met on Cross Creek, Brooke County Va., on the 1st of September, 1816. By Alexander Campbell, one of the Pastors of the Church of Brush Run, Washington County, Pa.*

"The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"  
—JOHN i, 17.

"The law and the prophets were until John, since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."—LUKE xvi, 16.

#### P R E F A C E .

To those who have requested the publication of the following discourse, an apology is necessary. Though the substance of the

discourse, as delivered, is contained in the following pages, yet, it is not verbatim the same. Indeed, this could not be the case, as the preacher makes but a very sparing use of notes, and on this occasion, had but a few. In speaking extempore, or in a great measure so, and to a people who may have but one hearing of a discussion such as the following, many expressions that would be superfluous, in a written discourse, are in a certain sense necessary. When words are merely pronounced, repetitions are often needful to impress the subject on the mind of the most attentive hearer: but when written, the reader may pause, read again, and thus arrive at the meaning.—Some additions, illustrative of the ideas that were presented in speaking, have been made; but as few as could be supposed necessary. Indeed the chief difficulty in enforcing the doctrine contained in the following sheets, either in one spoken or written sermon, consists in the most judicious selection of the copious facts and documents contained in the Divine Word on this subject.

We have to regret that so much appears necessary to be said, in an argumentative way, to the professed Christians of this age, on such a topic. But this is easily accounted for on certain principles.—For, in truth, the present popular exhibition of Christianity is a compound of Judaism, Heathen Philosophy, and Christianity; which, like the materials in Nebuchadnezzar's image, does not well cement together.

The only correct and safe course, in this perilous age, is, to take nothing upon trust, but to examine for ourselves, and "to bring all things to the test." "But if any man will be ignorant, let him be ignorant."

As to the style adopted in this discourse, it is such as we supposed would be adapted to the capacity of those who are chiefly benefited by such discussions. "For their sakes we endeavor to use great plainness of speech." As the doctrines of the gospel are commonly hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed only to babes, the weak and foolish; for their sakes, the vail, of what is falsely called eloquence, should be laid aside, and the testimony of God plainly presented to view.

The great question with every man's conscience, is, or should be, "What is truth?" Not, Have any of the scribes or rulers of the people believed it! Every man's *eternal all*, as well as his present comfort, depends upon what answer he is able to give to the question Pilate of old [John xviii. 38.] proposed to Christ, without waiting for a reply. Such a question can only be satisfactorily answered by an impartial appeal to the oracles of truth—the alone standard of divine truth. To these we appeal. Whatever in this discourse is contrary to them, let it be expunged; what corresponds with them, may the God of truth bless, to those to whom he has given an ear to discern, and a heart to receive it.

#### ROMANS VIII. 3.

*"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."*

WORDS are signs of ideas or thoughts. Unless words are understood, ideas or sentiments can neither be communicated nor received. Words, that in themselves are quite intelligible, may become difficult to understand in different connexions and circumstances. One of the most important words in our text is of easy signification, and yet, in consequence of its diverse usages and epithets, it is sometimes difficult precisely to ascertain what ideas should be attached to it. It is the term *law*. But by a close investigation of the context, and a general knowledge of the scriptures, every difficulty of this kind may be easily surmounted.

In order to elucidate and enforce the doctrine contained in this verse, we shall scrupulously observe the following

#### METHOD.

1. We shall endeavor to ascertain what ideas we are to attach to the phrase "*the law*," in this, and similar portions of the sacred scriptures.

2. Point out those things which *the law* could not accomplish.

3. Demonstrate the reason why *the law* failed to accomplish those objects.

4. Illustrate how God has remedied those relative defects of *the law*.

5. In the last place, deduce such conclusions from these premises, as must obviously and necessarily present themselves to every unbiassed and reflecting mind.

In discussing the doctrine contained in our text, we are then, in the first place, to endeavor to ascertain what ideas we are to attach to the terms "*the law*," in this, and similar portions of the sacred scriptures.

The term "*law*," denotes in common usage, "a rule of action."—It was used by the Jews, until the time of our Saviour, to distinguish the whole revelation made to the Patriarchs and Prophets, from the traditions and commandments of the Rabbies or Doctors of the law. Thus the Jews called the Psalms of David *law*—John xii. 34. Referring to the 110th Psalm, they say, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever." And again, our Saviour calls the Psalms of David, *law*; John x. 34. Referring to Psalm lxxxii. 6, he says, "Is it not written in your law, I said ye are gods." Thus when we hear David extolling God's law, we are to understand him as referring to all divine revelation extant in his time. But when the Old Testament scriptures were finished, and divided according to their contents for the use of synagogues, the Jews styled them, the

law, the prophets and the psalms. Luke xxiv. 44, Christ says, "All things written in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me, must be fulfilled."

The addition of the definite article in this instance as well as all others, alters the signification or at least determines it. During the life of Moses, the words "*the law*," without some explicative addition, were never used. Joshua, Moses' successor, denominates the writings of Moses, "the book of the law;" but never uses the phrase by itself. Nor indeed have we any authentic account of this phrase being used, without some restrictive definition, until the reign of Abijah, 2d Chron. xiv. 4, at which time it is used to denote the whole legal dispensation by Moses. In this way it is used about 30 times in the Old Testament, and as often with such epithets as show that the whole law of Moses is intended.

When the doctrines of the reign of Heaven began to be preached, and to be contrasted in the New Testament with the Mosaic economy, the phrase "*the law*," became very common, and when used without any distinguishing epithet, or restrictive definition, invariably denoted the whole legal or Mosaic dispensation. In this acceptance it occurs about 150 times in the New Testament. To make myself more intelligible, I would observe that when the terms "*the law*," have such distinguishing properties or restrictive definitions as "the royal law," "the law of faith," "the law of liberty," "the law of Christ," "the law of the spirit of life," &c., it is most obvious the whole Mosaic law or dispensation is not intended. But when we find the phrase "the law," without any such limitations or epithets, as "the law was given by Moses," "the law and the prophets were until John," "if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law," "ye are not under the law but under grace," &c., we must perceive the whole law of Moses, or legal dispensation, is intended.

I say the *whole* law, or dispensation by Moses; for in modern times the law of Moses is divided and classified under three heads, denominated, the moral, ceremonial, and judicial law. This division of the law being unknown in the apostolic age, and of course never used by the Apostles, can serve no valuable purpose, in obtaining a correct knowledge of the doctrine delivered by the Apostles respecting the law. You might as well inquire of the Apostles, or consult their writings, to know who the Supralapsarians or Sublapsarians are, as to inquire of them, what is the moral, ceremonial, or judicial law. But like many distinctions, handed down to us from Mystical Babylon, they bear the mark on their forehead that certifies to us,

their origin is not divine. If this distinction were harmless, if it did not perplex, bias, and confound, rather than assist the judgment, in determining the sense of the apostolic writings, we should let it pass unnoticed; but justice to the truth requires us to make a remark or two on this division of the law.

The phrase, *the moral law*, includes that part of the law of Moses, "written and engraved on two tables of stone," called the ten commandments. Now the word *moral*, according to the most approved Lexicographers, is defined "relating to the practice of men toward each other, as it may be virtuous or criminal, good or bad." The French, from whom we have the term *moral*, immediately, and the Romans, from whom we originally received it, used it agreeably to the above definition. Of course, then, a *moral law*, is a law which regulates the conduct of men towards each other. But will the ten commandments answer this definition? No. For Doctors in Divinity tell us, the first table of the Decalogue respects our duty to God; the second our duty to man. Why then call the ten commandments "*the moral law*," seeing but six or them are moral, that is, relating to our conduct towards men? In modern times, we sometimes distinguish between religion and morality; but while we affirm that religion is one thing, and morality another; and then affirm that the ten commandments are *the moral law*—do we not, in so saying, contradict ourselves? Assuredly the legs of the lame are not equal!

A second objection to denominating the ten precepts, "*the moral law*," presents itself to the reflecting mind, from the consideration that all morality is not contained in them. When it is said that the ten commandments are '*the moral law*,' does not this definite phrase imply, that all morality is contained in them; or, what is the same in effect, that all immorality is prohibited in them? But, is this the fact!—Are the immoralities called drunkenness, fornication, polygamy, divorces on trifling accounts, retaliation, &c., prohibited in the ten precepts? This question must be answered in the negative. If it had been asked, is all immorality prohibited in this saying, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"?—we would readily answer, yes;—but it is the, so called, moral law, we are speaking of. We affirm, then, that the above immoralities are not prohibited in the decalogue, according to the most obvious construction of the words. We are aware that large volumes have been written to show how much is comprehended in the ten precepts. But, methinks, the voluminous works of some learned men on this subject, too much resemble

the writings of Peter D'Alva, who wrote forty-eight huge folio volumes to explain the mysteries of the conception of the Messiah in the womb of the Virgin Mary! And what shall we think of the genius, who discovered that singing hymns and spiritual songs was prohibited, and the office of the Ruling Elder pointed out, in the second commandment! that dancing and stage plays were prohibited in the seventh; and supporting the clergy enjoined in the eighth!! According to this latitude of interpretation, a genius may arise and show us, that law and gospel are contained in the first commandment, and of course all the others are superfluous. But this way of enlarging on the Decalogue defeats the division of the law of Moses, which these Doctors have made. For instance, they tell us that witchcraft is prohibited in the first commandment—incest and sodomy in the seventh. Now they afterwards place these vices, with the laws respecting them, in their judicial law: if then their moral law includes their judicial law, they make a distinction without a difference.

There remains another objection to this division of the law.—It sets itself in opposition to the skill of an Apostle, and ultimately deters us from speaking of the ten precepts as he did. Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him, denominated the ten precepts the “ministration of condemnation and of death”—2d Cor. iii. 7, 14.—This, we call the moral law. Whether *he* or we, are to be esteemed the most able ministers of Christ, it remains for you, my friends, to say. Paul having called the ten precepts the ministration of death, next affirms, that it was to be done away—and that it was done away. Now the calling the ten precepts “the moral law,” is not only a violation of the use of words; is not only inconsistent in itself and contradictory to truth; but greatly obscures the doctrine taught by the Apostle in the 3d chap. 2d Cor., and in similar passages, so as to render it almost, if not altogether, unintelligible to us. To use the same language of the moral law as he used in respect to the ministration of condemnation and death, is shocking to many devout ears. When we say the moral law is done away, the religious world is alarmed; but when we declare the ministration of condemnation is done away, they hear us patiently, not knowing what we mean! To give new names to ancient things, and speak of them according to their ancient names, is perplexing indeed. Suppose, for example, I would call the English law which governed these states when colonies, the constitution of the United States, and then affirm that the constitution of the United States is done away, or abolish-

ed, who would believe me? But if the people were informed that what *I* called the constitution of these states, was the obsolete British law, they would assent to my statement. Who would not discover that the giving of a wrong name was the sole cause of such a misunderstanding? Hence it is, that modern teachers, by their innovations concerning law, have perplexed the student of the Bible, and caused many a fruitless controversy, as unnecessary as that relating to the mark set on Cain. It does not militate with this statement to grant that some of the precepts of the decalogue have been re-promulgated by Jesus Christ, any more than the re-promulgation of some of the British laws does not prevent us from affirming that the laws under which the colonies existed are done away to the citizens of the United States. But of this, more afterwards.

To what has been said, it may be added, that the modern division of the law tends very much to perplex any person who wishes to understand the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians and Hebrews; insomuch, that while the hearer keeps this distinction in mind, he is continually at a loss to know whether the moral, ceremonial, or judicial law is intended.

Before dismissing this part of the subject, we would observe, that there are two principles, commandments, or laws, that are never included in our observations respecting the law of Moses, nor are they ever in holy writ called the law of Moses:—These are, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength; and thy neighbor as thyself.” These, our Great Prophet teaches us, are the basis of the law of Moses, and of the Prophets: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Indeed the Sinai law, and all Jewish law, is but a modification of them. These are of universal and immutable obligation. Angels and men, good and bad, are for ever under them. God, as our Creator, cannot require less; nor can we, as creatures and fellow-creatures, propose or expect less, as the standard of duty and perfection.—These are coeval with angels and men. They are engraven with more or less clearness on every human heart. These are the ground work or basis of the law, written in the heart of heathens, which constitute their conscience, or knowledge of right and wrong. By these their thoughts mutually accuse or else excuse one another. By these they shall be judged, or at least all who have never seen or heard a written law, or revelation. But for these principles there had never been either law or gospel. Let it then be remembered, that in the scriptures, these precepts are considered the basis

of all law and prophecy; consequently when we speak of the law of Moses, we do not include these commandments, but that whole modification of them sometimes called the legal dispensation. It must also be observed, that the Apostles sometimes speak of the law, when it is obvious that a certain part only is intended. But this, so far from clashing with the preceding observations, fully corroborates them. For if the Apostle refers to any particular part of the law, under the general terms, the law, and speaks of the whole dispensation in the same terms, without any additional definition; then, doubtless, the phrase, the law, denotes the whole legal dispensation; and not any particular law, or new distinction, to which we may affix the words, the law.

2d. We shall now attempt to point out those things which the law could not accomplish.

In the first place, it could not give righteousness and life. Righteousness and eternal life are inseparably connected. Where the former is not, the latter cannot be enjoyed. Whatever means put us in the possession of the one, puts us in the possession of the other. But this the law could not do. "For if there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by the law," (Gal. iii. 21.)—"If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." These testimonies of the Apostle, with the whole scope of divine truth, teach us that no man is justified by the law, that righteousness and eternal life cannot be received through it.

Here we must regret that our translators, by an injudicious supplement, should have made the Apostle apparently contradict himself. I allude to the supplement in the 10th verse of Rom. 7th chap. From the seventh verse of this chapter, the Apostle narrates his experience as a Jew, under the law, and then his experience as a Christian, under the gospel, freed from the law. The scope of the 10th verse, and its context, is to show what the Apostle once thought of the law, and how his mistakes were corrected. If any supplement be necessary in this verse, we apprehend it should be similar to what follows:—"And the commandment (which I thought would give me) life, I found (to lead) to death." This doubtless corresponds with the scope of the context, and does not, like the present supplement, clash with Gal. 3d and 21st. Indeed the law, so far from being "ordained to give life," was merely "added to the promise of life, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made"—"Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound"—"For

by the law was the knowledge of sin." For these reasons we conclude that justification, righteousness and eternal life, cannot by any means be obtained by the law.

2. In the second place, the law could not exhibit the malignity or demerit of sin. It taught those that were under it, that certain actions were sinful—to these sinful actions it gave descriptive names—one is called theft, a second murder, a third adultery. It showed that these actions were offensive to God, hurtful to men, and deserved death. But how extensive their malignity, and vast their demerit, the law could not exhibit. This remained for later times and other means to develope.

3. In the third place, the law could not be a suitable rule of life to mankind in this imperfect state. It could not to all mankind, as it was given to, and designed only for a part. It was given to the Jewish nation, and to none else. As the inscription on a letter, identifies to whom it belongs; as the preamble to a proclamation, distinguishes who is addressed; so the preface to the law, points out and determines to whom it was given. It points out a people brought from the land of Egypt, and released from the house of bondage, as the subjects of it. To extend it farther than its own preface, is to violate the rules of criticism and propriety. How unjust and improper would it be, to convey the contents of a letter to a person to whom it was not directed—how inconsistent to enjoin the items of a proclamation made by the President of these United States, on the subjects of the French government. As inconsistent would it be to extend the law of Moses beyond the limits of the Jewish nation.—Do we not know with Paul, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law! But even to the Jews it was not the most suitable rule of life. 'Tis universally agreed, that example, as a rule of life, is more influential than precept. Now the whole Mosaic law wanted a model or example of living perfection. The most exemplary characters under the law, had their notable imperfections. And as long as polygamy, divorces, slavery, revenge, &c., were winked at under that law, so long must the lives of its best subjects be stained with glaring imperfections. But when we illustrate how God has remedied the defects of the law, the ideas presented in this particular shall be more fully confirmed.

But we hasten to the third thing proposed in our method, which is to demonstate the reason why the law could not accomplish these objects.

The Apostle in our text briefly informs us, that it was owing to

human weakness that the law failed to accomplish these things—"In that it was weak through the flesh." The defects of the law are of a relative kind. It is not in itself weak or sinful—some part of it was holy, just and good—other parts of it were elementary, shadowy, representations of good things to come. But that part of it written and engraven on tables of stone, which was holy, just and good, failed in that it was too high, sublime, and spiritual, to regulate so weak a mortal as fallen man. And even when its oblations and sacrifices were presented, there was something too vast and sublime, for such weak means, such carnal commandments—such beggarly elements—such perishable and insignificant blood, to effect. So that as the Apostle saith, the law made nothing perfect, it merely introduced a better hope. If the law had been faultless, no place should have been found for the gospel. We may then fairly conclude that the spirituality, holiness, justice and goodness of one part of the law, rendered it too high; and the carnal, weak and beggarly elements of another part, rendered it too low; and both together became weak through the flesh. Viewing the law in this light, we can suitably apply the words of the Spirit uttered by Ezek. xx. 25, in relation to its incompetence—"I gave them," says he, "statutes which were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live."

We have now arrived at the 4th head of our discourse, in which we proposed to illustrate the means by which God has remedied the relative defects of the law.

All those defects the Eternal Father remedies, by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemns sin in the flesh. "That the whole righteousness which the law required, might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

The primary deficiency of the law which we noticed, was, that it could not give righteousness and eternal life. Now, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father, in the likeness of sinful flesh, makes an end of sin, makes reconciliation for iniquity, finishes transgression, brings in an everlasting righteousness, and completes eternal redemption for sinners. He magnifies the law, and makes it honorable. All this he achieves by his obedience unto death. He finished the work which the Father gave him to do; so that in him all believers, all the spiritual seed of Abraham, find righteousness and eternal life; not by legal works or observances, in whole or in part, but through the abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, which is by him;—"For the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus

Christ our Lord." This righteousness, and its concomitant, eternal life, are revealed from faith to faith—the information or report of it comes in the divine word to our ears, and receiving the report of it, or believing the divine testimony concerning it, brings us into the enjoyment of its blessings. Hence it is that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Nor is he on this account the minister of sin—for thus the righteousness, the perfect righteousness of the law, is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Do we then make void the law or destroy the righteousness of it by faith? God forbid: we establish the law.

A second thing which we observed the law could not do, was to give a full exhibition of the demerit of sin. It is acknowledged that the demerit of sin was partially developed in the law, and before the law. Sin was condemned in the deluge, in the confusion of human speech, in turning to ashes the cities of the plain, in the thousands that fell in the wilderness. But these, and a thousand similar monuments beside, fall vastly short of giving a full exhibition of sin in its malignant nature and destructive consequences.—But a full discovery of its nature and demerits is given us in the person of Jesus Christ. God condemned sin in him—God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up—It pleased the Lord to bruise him, to pour out his soul an offering for sin. When we view the Son of the Eternal suspended on the cursed tree—when we see him in the garden, and hear his petitions—when we hear him exclaim, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me!" in a word, when we see him expiring in blood, and laid in the tomb, we have a monument of the demerit of sin, which no law could give, which no temporal calamity could exhibit.

We sometimes in the vanity of our minds, talk lightly of the demerit of sin, and irreverently of the atonement. In this age of novelty, it is said, "that the sufferings of Christ were so great as to atone for the sins of worlds on worlds," or at least for the sins of the damned as well as the saved—that "one drop of his blood is sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world." That is, in other words, the sufferings of Christ so transcended the demerit of the sins of his people, as to be sufficient to save all that shall eternally perish. These assertions are as unreasonable as unscriptural. In our zeal to exalt the merits of the atonement—I say, in the warmth of our passions, and in the fulness of our hearts, let us be cautious lest we impeach the Divine wisdom and prudence. Doubtless, if the merits of his sufferings transcends

the demerit of his people's sins, then some of his sufferings were in vain, and some of his merit unrewarded. To avoid this conclusion, some have affirmed that all shall be saved, and none perish, contrary to the express word of God. Indeed, the transition from these inconsistent views of the atonement, to what is called Universalism, is short and easy. But I would humbly propose a few inquiries on this subject. Why do the Evangelists inform us that Christ died so soon after his suspension on the cross? Why so much marvel expressed that he was so soon dead!—so much sooner than the malefactors that were crucified with him? It might be presumed his last words solve these difficulties—"It is finished, and he gave up the ghost." From these and similar premises, it would seem that his life and sufferings were prolonged just so long as was necessary to complete the redemption of his people. We are accustomed, on all subjects that admit of it, to distinguish between quantity and quality. In the common concerns of human intercourse, sometimes the quality of a thing is acceptable when the quantity is not; at other times the quantity is acceptable when the quality is not. If a thousand slaves were to be redeemed and emancipated by means of gold, the person in whose custody they were could not demand any more precious metal than gold—when one piece of gold was presented to him, he might object to the quantity as deficient, though the quality is unobjectionable. In respect of the means of our redemption, it must be allowed that the sufferings of Christ were they. These sufferings, then, were the sufferings of a divine person—such doubtless was their quality. And a life and sufferings of any other quality, could avail nothing in effecting redemption for transgressors. If but one of Adam's race should be saved, a life and sufferings of such a quality would have been indispensably requisite to accomplish such a deliverance. Again, if more were to have been saved than what will eventually be saved, the quantity and not the quality of his sufferings would have been augmented. The only sentiment respecting the atonement that will bear the test of scripture, truth, or sober reason, is, that the life and sufferings of Christ in quality, and in length or quantity, were such as sufficed to make reconciliation for all the sins of his chosen race; or for all them in every age or nation that shall believe in him. There was nothing deficient, nothing superfluous; else he shall never see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; which would be the reverse of his Father's promise, and his own expectation. When the life and sufferings of Christ are viewed in this light, the demerit of sin appears in its true colors—

all inconsistencies vanish, and all the testimonies of sacred truth, of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, harmoniously correspond. But if we suppose that the sufferings of Christ transcended the demerit of the sins of "his people," then we have no full exhibition of the demerit of sin. Nor are "his people" under any more obligation of love or gratitude to him than they who eternally perish.

That which remains on this head is to show how the failure of the law in not being a suitable rule of life, has been remedied.

We noticed that example is a more powerful teacher than precept. Now Jesus Christ has afforded us an example of human perfection never witnessed before. He gave a living form to every moral and religious precept which they never before possessed. In this respect he was the distinguished Prophet, to whom Moses and all the inferior prophets referred. In entering on this prophetic office, he taught with a peculiarity unexampled by all his predecessors—"He spake as never man spake." The highest commendation he gave of Moses was that he wrote of him, and that he was a faithful servant in Christ's house. From the beginning of his ministry to the end of his life, he claimed the honor of being the only person that could instruct men in the knowledge of God or of his will. He claimed the honor of being the author and finisher of the only perfect form of religion; the Eternal Father attested all his claims and honored all his pretensions. Respecting the ancient rules of life, the law and the prophets, he taught his disciples they had lived their day—he taught them they were given only for a limited time. "The law and the prophets prophesied until John"—then they give place to a greater Prophet, and a more glorious law. Malachi, the last of the ancient prophets, informed Israel that they should strictly observe Moses' law, until a person should come in the spirit and power of Elias. Jesus taught us that John the Baptist was he, and that the law and prophets terminated at his entrance upon his ministry; for since that time the kingdom of God is preached and all men press into it. To attest his character, and to convince the church of his being the great Prophet, to whom all Christians should exclusively hearken as their teacher; to weaken the attachments of his disciples to Moses and the prophets, it pleased God to send down Moses and Elias from heaven; the one the lawgiver, and the other the law-restorer, to resign their prophetic honors at the feet of the Messiah, in presence of select witnesses. "Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John into a high mountain, and was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as snow, and behold their appeared Moses and Elias talking with him."

Peter, enraptured with these heavenly visitants, proposes erecting three tabernacles—one for Christ, one for Moses, and one for Elias. But while he was thus proposing to associate Christ the great Prophet, with Moses and Elias inferior prophets, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud, an indirect reply to Peter's motion—"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, *hear ye him.*" Thus when these ancient and venerable prophets were recalled to heaven, Christ alone is left as the great teacher, to whom, by a commandment from the excellent glory, the throne of the Eternal, we are obliged to hearken. That this transaction was significant of the doctrine above stated, must be manifest, when we take into view all circumstances. Might it not be asked, 'Why did not Abel, Abraham, or Enoch appear on this occasion?' The reason is plain—the disciples of Christ had no hurtful respect for *them*.—Moses and Elias, the reputed oracles of the Jewish nation, were the two, and the only two, in respect of whom this solemn and significant revocation was needful. The plain language of the whole occurrence was this—Moses and Elias were excellent men—they were now glorified in heaven—they had lived their day—the limited time they were to flourish as teachers of the will of Heaven was now come to an end. The morning star had arisen—nay, was almost set, and the Sun of Righteousness was arising with salutiferous rays. Let us, then, walk in the noon-day light—let us hearken to Jesus as the Prophet and Legislator, Priest and King. He shall reign over all the ransomed race. We find all things whatsoever the law could not do are accomplished in him, and by him—that in him all Christians might be perfect and complete—"for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

It now remains, in the last place, to deduce such conclusions from the above premises, as must obviously and necessarily present themselves to every candid and reflecting mind.

1st. From what has been said, it follows that there is an essential difference between law and gospel—the Old Testament and the New.\* No two words are more distinct in their signification than

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\* There are not a few professors of Christianity who suppose themselves under equal obligations to obey Moses or any other Prophet, as Christ and his Apostles. They cannot understand why any part of divine revelation should not be obligatory on a Christian to observe; nor can they see any reason why the New Testament should be preferred to the Old; or why they should not be regulated equally by each. They say, 'Is it not all the word of God, and are not all mankind addressed in it?' True, all the holy Prophets spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and men were the objects of their address. It is, however, equally evident that God at sundry

*law and gospel.* They are contradistinguished under various names in the New Testament. The law is denominated "the letter;" "the ministration of condemnation;" "the ministration of death;" "the Old Testament or Covenant, and Moses." The gospel is denominated "the Spirit," "the ministration of the Spirit," "the ministration of righteousness," "the New Testament, or Covenant," "the law of liberty and Christ." In respect of existence or duration, the former is denominated "that which is done away"—the latter, "that which remaineth"—the former was faulty, the latter faultless—the former demanded, this bestows righteousness—that gendered bondage, this liberty—that begat bond-slaves, this freemen—the former spake on this wise, "This *do* and thou shalt live"—this says, "Say not what *ye* shall do; the word is nigh thee, [that gives life,] the word of faith which we preach: if thou believe in thine heart the gospel, thou shalt be saved." The former waxed old, is abolished, and vanished away—the latter remains, lives, and is everlasting.

times and in diverse manners spake to men, according to a variety of circumstances, which diversified their condition, capacity, and opportunities. Thus he addressed individuals, and classes of individuals, in a way peculiar to themselves. Witness his address to Noah, Abraham, Daniel, Jonah, Paul, and Peter. Witness his addresses to the Patriarchs, the Jews, and the Christians. Again, men are addressed as magistrates, fathers, masters, husbands, teachers, with their correlates. Now to apply to one individual what is said to all individuals and classes of individuals, would, methinks, appear egregious folly. And would it not be as absurd to say, that every man is obliged to practise every duty and religious precept enjoined in the Bible. Might we not as reasonably say, that every man must be at once a Patriarch, a Jew, and a Christian; a magistrate, a subject, a father, a child, a master, a servant, &c. &c. And, certainly, it is as inconsistent to say, that Christians should equally regard and obey the Old and New Testament. All scripture given by divine inspiration, is profitable for various purposes in the perfection of saints, when rightly divided, and *not handled deceitfully.* But when the above considerations are disregarded, the word of God must inevitably be perverted. Hence it is that many preachers deceive themselves and their hearers by selecting and applying to themselves and their hearers such portions of sacred truth as belong not to them nor their hearers. Even the Apostles could not apply the words of Christ to themselves or their hearers until they were able to answer a previous question—"Lord, sayest thou this unto *us* or unto *all*?" Nor could the Eunuch understand the Prophet until he knew whether he spoke of himself or of some other man. Yet many preachers and hearers trouble not themselves about such inquiries. If their text is in the Bible, it is no matter where; and if their hearers be men and women, it is no matter whether Jews or Christians, believers or unbelievers. Often have I seen a preacher and his hearers undergo three or four metamorphoses in an hour. First, he is a moral philosopher, inculcating heathen morality, next a Jewish Rabbi, expounding the law; then, a teacher of some Christian precept; and lastly, an ambassador of Christ, negotiating between God and man. The congregation undergo the correlate revolutions: first, they are heathens; next, Jews; anon, Christians; and lastly, treating with the ambassadors for salvation, on what is called the terms of the gospel. Thus, Proteus-like, they are all things in an hour.

2d. In the second place, we learn from what has been said, that "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."—The premises from which the Apostle drew this conclusion are the same with those stated to you in this discourse. "Sin," says the Apostle, "shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." In the 6th and 7th chapters to the Romans, the Apostle taught them that "they were not under the law"—that "they were freed from it"—"dead to it"—"delivered from it." In the 8th chapter, 1st verse, he draws the above conclusion. What a pity that modern teachers should have *added to* and *clogged* the words of inspiration by such unauthorized sentences as the following: "Ye are not under the law" *as a covenant of works, but as a rule of life.* Who ever read one word of the "covenant of works" in the Bible, or of the Jewish law being a rule of life to the disciples of Christ! Of these you hear no more from the Bible than of the "Solemn League" or "St. Giles' Day." Yet how conspicuous are these and kindred phrases in the theological discussions of these last three hundred years! But leaving such phrases to those who are better skilled in the use of them, and have more leisure to expound them, we shall briefly notice the reason commonly assigned for proposing the law as a rule of life to Christians. "If Christians are taught," say they, "that they are delivered from the law, under it in no sense; that they are dead to it, will not they be led to live rather a licentious life, live as they list; and will not the non-professing world, hearing that *they* are not under the law of Moses, become more wicked, more immoral and profane?" Such is the chief of all the objections made against the doctrine inculcated respecting the abolition of the Jewish law, in respect of Christians, and also as this doctrine respects the Gentile or Heathen world. We shrink not from a fair and full investigation of this subject. Truth being the only allowed object of all our inquiries, and the sole object of every Christian's inquiry, we should patiently hear all objections—coolly and dispassionately hear, examine, and weigh all arguments *pro* and *con*.

That the first part of this objection is very natural, has been very often made, and strongly urged against the doctrine we advocate, we cheerfully acknowledge. As this objection was made against the Apostle's doctrine concerning the law, it affords a strong probability, at least, that our views on this subject correspond with his. We shall then hear how he stated and refuted it. Rom. vi. 15. "What then! Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under

grace?" Here he admits the objection, and in his answer incontestably shows that Christians are not under the law in any sense. If they were in any sense, now was the time to say, 'We are not under the law in some sense, or under a certain part of it; but in one sense we are under it, as a rule of life.' We say the Apostle was here called upon, and in a certain sense bound, to say something like what our modern teachers say, if it had been warrantable. But he admits the doctrine and states the objection, leaving the doctrine unequivocally established. He guards the doctrine against a licentious tendency thus—"God forbid!" "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" and in the subsequent verses shows the utter impossibility of any servant of God, or true Christian, so abusing the doctrine we have stated. Now whether the ancient way of guarding the New Testament, or Gospel, against the charges of Antinomianism or a licentious tendency, or the modern way is best, methinks is easily decided amongst true disciples. Not so easy, however, amongst learned Rabbis and Doctors of the Law.

But, query,—Is the law of Moses a rule of life to Christians?" An advocate of the popular doctrine replies, "Not all of it." Query again—What part of it? "The ten commandments." Are these a rule of life to Christians? "Yes." Should not, then, Christians sanctify the seventh day? "No." Why so? "Because Christ has not enjoined it." Oh! then, the law or ten commandments is not a rule of life to Christians any further than it is enjoined by Christ: so that reading the precepts in Moses' words, or hearing him utter them, does not oblige us to observe them: it is only what Christ says we must observe. So that an advocate for the popular doctrine, when closely pressed, cannot maintain his ground. Let no man say we have proposed and answered the above queries as we pleased.—If any other answers can be given by the advocates themselves than we have given, let them do it. But it is highly problematical whether telling Christians that they are under the law will repress a licentious spirit. True Christians do not need it, as we have seen: "how shall they that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And dare we tell professing Christians, as such, that the law, as a rule of life, is a condemning law? If not, then what tendency will the mere affirmation that they are under a law as a rule of life which cannot condemn them, have to deter them from living as the list. Upon the whole, the *old way* of guarding against immorality and licentiousness amongst Christians will, we apprehend, be found the most consistent and efficacious. And he that has tried the old way and the new, will doubtless say, as was said of old, "No man also having

drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith the old is better." And, indeed, every attempt to guard the New Testament, or the Gospel, by extrinsic means, against an immoral or licentious tendency, bears too strong a resemblance to the policy of a certain preacher in Norway or Lapland, who told his hearers that "hell was a place of infinite and incessant cold." when asked by an acquaintance from the south of Europe why he perverted the scriptures, he replied, 'if he told his hearers in that cold climate that hell was a place of excessive heat, he verily thought they would take no pains to avoid going there.'

But as to the licentious tendency this doctrine we inculcate is supposed to have upon the non-professing or unbelieving world, it appears rather imaginary than real. It must, however, in the first instance be ascertained whether the Gentiles, not professing Christianity, were ever supposed or addressed by the Apostle sent to the Gentiles, as being under the law of Moses. We have under the second head of our discourse particularly demonstrated that the Gentiles were never under the law, either before or after their conversion. To what has been said on this subject we would add a sentence or two. It was prophesied of the Gentiles that they should be without law till Christ came. Isai. xlii. 4. "And the isles shall wait for his law." The chief glory which exalted the Jews above the Gentiles, which the Jews boasted of to the Gentiles, was, that to them "*pertained* the adoption, the covenants, and *the giving of the law.*" They exclusively claimed the law as their own. And why will not we let them have it, seeing him whose law the Gentiles waited for, is come, and has given us a more glorious law. Whatever was excellent in their law our Legislator has re-promulgated. But shall we say that we are under the law as a rule of our Christian life, because some of its sublimest moral and religious precepts have been re-promulgated by him, who would not suffer one tittle of it to pass till he fulfilled it? As well might we affirm that the British law which governed these states when colonies, is the rule of our political life; because some of the most excellent laws of that code have been re-enacted by our legislators. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, plainly acknowledged in his addresses to them, that they were without law, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, having no hope, &c. And of them he said that "when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these *having not the law*, are a law unto themselves." But, in so saying, does he or do we excuse their sins or lead them to suppose that they are thereby less obnoxious to the wrath to come? By no means.

For we testify that even natural conscience accuses them of sin or wrong in their thoughts, words, and actions, according to its knowledge. And consequently "as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law." In so testifying, do we cherish a licentious spirit? By no means. For there stand a thousand monuments in this present world, independent of Jewish law, on which is inscribed these words, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." But one thing demands our observation, that the Apostle sent by Heaven to preach to the Gentiles, in accusing them of sins of the deepest dye, and of the most malignant nature, dishonorable to God and destructive to themselves; never accuses them of any sin which the light of nature itself would not point out, or natural conscience testify to be wrong. Hence it is that in the long black catalogue of sins preferred against the Gentiles, is never to be found the crime of Sabbath-breaking, or of transgressing any of the peculiarities of Judaism. And now what is the difference between an ancient Greek and a modern American or European who disbelieves the gospel? Under what law is the latter, under which the former was not? Was the former a sinner and chargeable in the sight of God, as well as the latter? Yes. Would not natural conscience according to its means of knowing right and wrong, or the work of the law written in the heart, condemn the unbelieving Roman as well as the unbelieving American? Most assuredly. And what is the difference? Not that the latter is under any law that the former was not under; but the means of discerning right and wrong in the latter are far superior to the former, and consequently their overthrow or ruin will be more severe. In point of law or obligation there is no difference between the unbelieving American and the rudest barbarian; though the former is polished with science, morals, &c. like the ancient Greeks and Romans, and the latter remains an uncultivated savage. They will be judged and condemned by the same law which condemned the Roman who died 1900 years ago. And the condemnation of the latter shall be more tolerable than the former, not by a milder law, but because his knowledge of right and wrong was much inferior to the former; and having heard the gospel of salvation and disbelieved it, he adds to his natural corruption and accumulated guilt the sin of making God a liar, and preferring darkness to light, because he believed not the testimony of God. This is the sole difference in respect of condemnation between the Indian and the most accomplished citizen. From these few remarks it will appear, we trust, obvious to every person who has an ear to distinguish truth

from falsehood, that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus—that they are under no law that can condemn them—that *he* who was made under the law is become the end of the law for righteousness to them—that being dead to sin, they should live no longer therein—that there is no necessity, but a glaring impropriety in teaching the law as a rule of life to Christians—that all arguments in favor of it are founded on human opinion, and a mistaken view of the tendency of the gospel and Christian dispensation—that all objections against the doctrine we have stated, as licentious in its tendency, are totally groundless. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation teacheth us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, *zealous of good works.*”

3d. In the third place, we conclude from the above premises, that there is no necessity for preaching the law in order to prepare men for receiving the gospel.

This conclusion perfectly corresponds with the commission given by our Lord to the Apostles, and with their practice under that commission. “Go,” saith he, “into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature.” “Teach the disciples to observe all things whatsoever *I* command you.” Thus they were authorized to preach the gospel, not the *law*, to every creature. Thus they were constituted ministers of the New Testament, not of the Old. Now the sacred history, called the Acts of the Apostles, affords us the most satisfactory information on the method the Apostles preached under this commission; which, with the epistolary part of the New Testament, affords us the only successful, warrantable, and acceptable method of preaching and teaching. In the Acts of the Apostles, we see the Apostles and first preachers paid the most scrupulous regard to the instructions they received from the great Prophet. They go forth into all nations proclaiming the gospel to every creature; but not one word of law-preaching in the whole of it. We have the substance of eight or ten sermons delivered by Paul and Peter to Jews and Gentiles, in the Acts of the Apostles, and not one precedent of preaching the law to prepare their hearers, whether Jews or Gentiles, for the reception of the gospel.

This conclusion corresponds, in the next place, with the nature of the kingdom of heaven or Christian church, and with the means by which it is to be built and preserved in the world. The Christian

dispensation is called "the ministration of the Spirit," and accordingly every thing in the salvation of the church is accomplished by the immediate energy of the Spirit. Jesus Christ taught his disciples that the testimony concerning himself was that only which the Spirit would use in converting such of the human family as should be saved. He was not to speak of himself, but what he knew of Christ. Now he was to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; not by applying the law of Moses, but the facts concerning Christ, to the consciences of the people. The Spirit accompanying the words which the Apostles preached, would convince the world of sin; not by the ten precepts, but because they believed not on him—of righteousness, because *he* went to the Father—and of judgment, because the prince of this world was judged by him. So that Christ, and not law, was the Alpha and Omega of their sermons; and this the Spirit made effectual to the salvation of thousands. Three thousand were convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, in this precise way of hearing of Christ, on the day of Pentecost; and we read of many afterwards. Indeed, we repeat it again, in the whole history of primitive preaching, we have not one example of preaching the law as preparatory to the preaching or reception of the gospel.

This conclusion corresponds, in the third place, with the fitness of things.\* That men must be convinced of sin by some means, prior to

\* Indeed we have yet to learn what advantage can accrue from preaching the so called "moral law," to prepare sinners for the gospel. In the nature and fitness of things it cannot prepare or dispose the mind to a belief of the gospel. The Apostle teaches us that "the law worketh wrath." This is inevitably its effect on every mind which does not believe the gospel. It irritates and excites the natural enmity of the mind against God. A clear exhibition of the divine character in the law, apart from the gospel, tends more to alienate than to reconcile the mind to God. When a preacher of the law has labored to show his hearers the immaculate holiness, the inflexible justice, the inviolate truth, and consuming jealousy of Jehovah, manifested in the fiery law, supposing the gospel kept out of view, he has rather incapacitated and disqualified their minds from crediting the gospel or testimony of the condescension, love, mercy, and grace of the eternal Father to mankind. How opposite is the divine wisdom to the wisdom of many modern scribes and teachers of the law! They preach first the law to natural fallen man, then the gospel. But He, who seeth not as man seeth, preached first the gospel to fallen man, and afterwards added the law, because of transgressions, till the seed should come. Eternal life was promised through the seed, and the law added till the seed come.

Nothing can be more inconsistent than the conduct of the law preachers. When they have echoed the thunders of Mount Sinai in the ears of their hearers almost to drive them to despair, and to produce what they call "legal repentance," then they begin to pull down the work of their own hands by demonstrating the inefficacy, unprofitableness, and danger of legal repentance. Might they not as well at once imitate the Apostles and primitive preachers—preach the gospel, which, when received, produces repentance

a welcome reception of saving truth, is generally acknowledged.— Now as the gospel dispensation is the most perfect revelation of salvation, it must be supposed that it possesses the best means of accomplishing every thing connected with the salvation of its subjects. It must, of course, possess the best means of convincing of sin. This truth, however, does not depend on mere supposition. The fact, that the Holy Spirit makes an exclusive use of it in convincing of sin, is a striking demonstration of its superior excellence for that purpose. But independent of these considerations, it must be confessed that the gospel or testimony concerning Christ affords the fullest proof of divine justice and indignation against sin—it presents the clearest view of the demerit of sin, and of all divine perfections terrible to sinners—it exhibits the most alarming picture of human guilt and wretchedness that ever was given, and on these accounts is of all means the most suitable to convince of sin. It was already observed that the eternal Father condemned sin in the person of his Son, more fully than it ever was, or could be, condemned in any other way. Suppose, for illustration, a king put to death his only son, in the most painful and ignominious way, for a crime against the government: would not this fact be the best means of convincing his subjects of the evil of crime, and of the king's detestation of it! Would not this fact be better than a thousand lectures upon the excellency of the law and the sanctions of it! But every similitude of this kind falls infinitely short of affording a resemblance of the eternal Father not sparing his Sole Delight when sin was but imputed to him. Having seen that this conclusion corresponds with the commission given by the Redeemer to his Apostles—with their practice under that commission—with the nature of his kingdom, and with the fitness of things; one would suppose that no objection could be preferred against it. But what doctrine of divine truth is it, against which objections numerous indeed, and strongly urged, and by men who profess to be zealous for the truth, have not been made! Is it the doctrine of sovereign, free, and abundant grace! No. Is it the doctrine of the natural sinfulness and corruption of all men. No, no. Against these, many objections, yea, very many,

not to be repented of? Might they not preach Christ crucified, in whom is manifested the wrath and judgment of God against sin; and his condescending love, mercy, and grace to the sinner. Might they not, knowing the terror of the Lord, persuade men by the persuasives of the doctrine of reconciliation, rather than to increase their enmity, awaken their suspicions, and work wrath in their minds, by an unlawful use of the law? But in order to this, their minds must be revolutionized; they must take up a cross which they at present refuse: and what is difficult indeed, they must unlearn what they have themselves taught others.

are urged. We must not suppose, then, that this doctrine we now maintain shall be free from objections. We shall, then, attend to some of those objections which have been made, or which we anticipate may be made against this conclusion.

It may, perhaps, be objected that there are some expressions in the apostolic epistles, which imply that the law was necessary to convince of sin, as pre-requisite to a welcome reception of the gospel: such as "by the law *is* the knowledge of sin"—"for without the law sin *was* dead." There is no authority from the original for varying the supplements in these two clauses. If it corresponds with the context or with the analogy of faith, to supply *was* in the last clause, it doubtless corresponds as well in the first clause. But we lay no stress on the one or the other; for before Christ came all knowledge of sin *was* by the law; and "the law entered that the offence might abound." For the law was added to the promise of life, because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. Now we would suppose that when the *Seed* is come, and the time expired for which the law was added, it is superfluous to annex it to the gospel, for the same reason it was annexed to the promise made to Abraham. And although it should be allowed that Christians derive knowledge of sin from the law, it does not follow that it is the best means of communicating this knowledge—that Christians are dependent on it for this purpose—nor that it should be preached to unbelievers to prepare them for receiving the gospel.

The seventh chapter to the Romans contains the fullest illustration of the once excellence and utility of the law, that is to be found in all the New Testament; and as this chapter will doubtless be the strong hold of our opponents, we shall make a remark or two on the contents of it.

In the first place, then, let it be remembered that in the fourteenth verse of the preceding chapter, the Apostle boldly affirms that Christians are not under the law. To the conclusion of the sixth chapter he refutes an objection made to his assertion in the fourteenth verse. In the first six verses of the seventh chapter he repeats his assertion, and uses an apt similitude to illustrate it. Having, then, demonstrated that Christians are not under the law, in the seventh verse of the seventh chapter he states an objection which had been made, or he anticipated would be made, against his doctrine—"If Christians are not under the law, if they are dead to it, if they are delivered from it, is it not a sinful thing?" "Is the law sin, then?" This objection against the nature of the law, the Apostle removes in the

next six verses by showing the utility of the law in himself as a Jew, under that law; and concludes that the law is holy, just, and good. To the end of the chapter the Apostle gives an account of his experience as a Christian freed from the law, and thus manifests the excellency of his new mind or nature by its correspondence to the holiness of the law; so that he most effectually removes the objection made against the law as being sin, and at the same time establishes the fact that Christians *are delivered from it*. Such evidently is the scope of the latter part of the sixth and all of the seventh chapter. We cannot dismiss this chapter without observing first, that the law, or that part of the law which the Apostle here speaks of, is what modern teachers call "the moral law." If so, then Christians are not under it; for the law which the Apostle affirms Christians are delivered from in the sixth verse, in the seventh verse he shows it is not sin; and the law which he shows is not sin, he demonstrates to be holy, just, and good. So that here, as well as in the third chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians, Christians are expressly said to be delivered from the so called moral law; and that it is abolished or done away in respect of them. We must remark again, that before any thing said in this chapter respecting the utility or excellence of the law, can be urged as a precedent for what we condemn—namely, preaching the law as preparatory to the gospel, or a law work as preparatory to genuine conversion, it must be shown that the Apostle gave this account of his experience under the law as preparative to his conversion. Otherwise no objection can be made from any thing in this chapter to the conclusion before stated. But this cannot be; for the account we have of his conversion flatly contradicts such a supposition. Previous to his conversion he was a very devout man in his own way—"touching the righteousness which was in the law he was blameless." See the account he gives of himself, Phil. iii. 4, 5, compared with Rom. vii. 7, 12; Acts xxii. 1; xxiii. 1; from which we learn that he was taught according to the most perfect manner of the law, and was a Pharisee of the strictest kind; had clear ideas of sin and righteousness; and, externally considered, was blameless and lived in all good conscience until the day of his conversion. But it was not the law; it was not a new discovery of its spirituality, but a discovery of Christ exalted, that convinced him of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and instantaneously converted him. So that nothing in his previous life or attainments, nothing of his experience as a Jew, nothing of his knowledge of sin or of righteousness by the law pre-

vious to his conversion, can be urged in support of preaching the law or a law work to unbelievers, to prepare their mind for a welcome reception of the truth.

When we shall have mentioned a favorite text of the law preachers, and considered it, we shall have done with objections of this sort. It is Galatians iii. 24. We shall cite from the 23d verse. "Before faith [Christ] came 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* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith [Christ] is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Methinks it looks rather like an insult to the understanding of any person skilled in the use of words, to offer a refutation of the use that is frequently made of the 24th verse. But let the censure rest upon them who render it needful. Every smatterer in Greek knows that the 24th verse might read thus:—"The law was our schoolmaster until Christ" came; and this reading unquestionably corresponds with the context. Now is it not most obvious that instead of countenancing law-preaching, this text and context condemn it! The scope of it is to show that whatever use the law served as a schoolmaster previous to Christ, it no longer serves that use. And now that Christ is come, we are no longer under it. We see, then, that this conclusion not only corresponds with the commission to the Apostles; with the nature of Christ's kingdom; with the apostolic preaching; and with the fitness of things: but that no valid objection can be presented against it, from any thing in the apostolic epistles.

Some, notwithstanding the scriptural plainness of this doctrine, may urge their own experience as contrary to it. It would, however, be as safe for Christians to make divine truth a test of their experience, and not their experience a test of divine truth. Some individuals have been awakened by the appearance of the Aurora Borealis, by an earthquake, by a thunderstorm, by a dream, by sickness, &c. How inconsistent for one of these to affirm from his own experience, that others must be awakened in the same way! How incompatible with truth for others to preach such occurrences as preliminary to saving conversion!

But the difference between ancient and modern conversions is so striking as to merit an observation or two. Now that the law is commonly preached to prepare men for Christ, it must be expected that modern conversions will be very systematic, and lingering in all. While preachers will not condescend to proclaim the glad tidings until they have driven their hearers almost to despair by the

thunders of Mount Sinai—while they keep them in anxious suspense for a time, whether the wounds of conviction are deep enough; whether their sense of guilt is sufficiently acute; whether their desires are sufficiently keen; whether their fears are sufficiently strong; in short, whether the law has had its full effect upon them: I say, when this is the case, conversion work must go on slow; and so it is not rare to find some in a way of being converted for years; and, indeed, it is generally a work of many months. It would be well, however, if, after all, it were commonly genuine. Contrast these conversions with those of which we read in the Acts of the Apostles, and what a contrast! There we read of many converted in a day, who yesterday were as ignorant of law and gospel as the modern Hindoos or Birmanians. To account for this we have only to consider and compare the different sorts of preaching and means, by which those were, and these are, effected.

But some may yet inquire, are unbelievers under no law or obligation by which conviction may be communicated to their minds? Or they may ask, in other words, How does the testimony of Christ take hold of them? And why do they welcome the gospel? We have already shown that there is a law written on every human heart, which is the foundation of both law and prophets, under which both angels and men exist; whose obligation is universal and eternal. It is inscribed more or less distinctly on every heathen's heart. It is sometimes called the law of nature, but more correctly called by the Apostle, *conscience*. This natural conscience, or sense of right and wrong, which all men possess in different degrees, according to a variety of circumstances, but all in some degree, is that in them which God addresses. This natural conscience is fitted to hear the voice of God, as exactly as the ear is fitted to hear sounds. This renders the savage inexcusable. For the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead, are manifested to his conscience in the natural world. Now God addresses conscience in those whom he brings to himself in a variety of ways. Sometimes even where his word is come, he speaks by awful events to the consciences of men. In this way he awakens inquiries that lead to the saving truth. Witness the jailor and his house, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles. God spake to his conscience by an earthquake, and put an inquiry in his mouth, that was answered to his salvation and that of his house. That which fits the savage to hear God's voice in the natural world, fits him, or the man of civilization, to hear his voice in the gospel, when it is sent to them in power.

Are we to preach this law of nature, then, some will inquire; or

Are we to show men that they possess this natural conscience, previous to a proclamation of the glad tidings? I would answer this question by proposing another. Am I to tell a man he has an ear, and explain to him the use of it, before I condescend to speak to him? One answer suits both inquiries. We should consider the circumstances of any people before we address them. Do we address Jews? Let us address them as the Apostles did. Persuade them out of their own law that Jesus is the Messiah. Do we address professed Christians? Let us imitate the apostolic addresses in the epistles. Do we preach to Barbarians? Let us address them as Paul preached to the Lycaonians. Speak to their consciences. Do we preach to polished infidels or idolators? Let us speak to them as Paul spake to the Athenians. Speak to their consciences.

4th. A fourth conclusion which is deducible from the above premises is, that all arguments and motives, drawn from the law or Old Testament, to urge the disciples of Christ to baptize their infants; to pay tithes to their teachers; to observe holy days or religious fasts, as preparatory to the observance of the Lord's supper; to sanctify the seventh day; to enter into national covenants; to establish any form of religion by civil law:—and all reasons and motives borrowed from the Jewish law, to excite the disciples of Christ to a compliance with or an imitation of Jewish customs, are inconclusive, repugnant to Christianity, and fall ineffectual to the ground; not being enjoined or countenanced by the authority of Jesus Christ.

5th. In the last place we are taught from all that has been said, to venerate in the highest degree the Lord Jesus Christ; to receive Him as the Great Prophet, of whom Moses in the law, and all the prophets did write. To receive him as the Lord our righteousness, and to pay the most punctilious regard to all his precepts and ordinances. “If we continue in his word, then are we his disciples indeed, and we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free—if the Son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed.”

It is remarkable how strong our attachments are to Moses as a teacher; though Moses taught us to look for a greater prophet than he, and to hearken to *him*! It is strange that three surprising incidents in the history of Moses would not arrest our attention and direct us to Christ. With all his moral excellence, unfeigned piety, and legislative dignity, he fell short of Canaan. So all who cleave to him will come short of the heavenly rest! His mortal remains, and his only, the Almighty buried in secret; and yet we will not suffer his ashes to rest in peace! He came down from heaven to give

place to the Messiah, to lay down his commission at his feet; and we will not accept it! Strange infatuation!

If Moses was faithful in Christ's house as a servant, shall not Christ be faithful as a son over his own house! Let us as his disciples believe all he teaches, and practise all he enjoins in religion and morality; let us walk in all his commandments and ordinances; and inquire individually, What lack I yet! If we are then deficient, let us say, with the Jews who disowned him, "We are Moses' disciples, but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is." But let all remember that if he that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who despised Christ as a teacher! His commandments are not grievous to his disciples—his yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from all iniquity. Let us walk worthy of him. Let us take heed lest by our conduct we should represent Christ as the minister of sin. Let us not walk after the flesh but after the Spirit; and then we shall show that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. Then shall no occasion be given to the adversary to speak reproachfully. And if any should still urge the stale charge of Antinomianism, or affirm that we lived in sin that grace might abound; did evil that good might come; or made void the law through faith; let us put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, by adorning the doctrine we profess with a blameless conduct. Let us not merely rebut such insinuations with a—God forbid! but evince, how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein.

May he that hath the key of David, who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and none can open, open your hearts to receive the truth in the love of it, and incline you to walk in the light of it, and then ye shall know that the ways thereof are pleasantness, and all the paths thereof are peace! AMEN.

### GOD IN EVERY THING.

THE intellect of man has undergone a great revolution since the development of the inductive mode of reasoning. For many centuries the dialectics of Aristotle governed the whole mental world, and kept in logical fetters the intellect of the human race; but we have happily been delivered from this thralldom, and the progress of knowledge in a very few years has been truly astonishing.

The ancients loved to speculate upon the abstract essences of spirit and matter, and the keen subtlety of their intellect peculiarly fitted them for this kind of investigation; but the moderns, wholly