

evident, since in preaching the gospel they would either absolve or condemn the world.

You are sensible that a conditional assertion is, if the condition be fulfilled, a *positive* assertion.

As, for instance, if you say to me that if my eyes are open I see the light, if my eyes *be* open it is saying that I *do* see the light. And thus, if I say to you, that if you repent of your sins you shall be forgiven, it is saying if you *do now* repent you are already forgiven.

*This* was the *absolution* which Christ intended. He told his disciples upon what conditions sins would be remitted. He charged them to preach this to the world. He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Ghost," that they might not err in their doctrines, and that they might be qualified to preach, and then he said to them, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted," to confirm the certainty of the doctrine which he had commanded them to declare.

It is to be remarked that the Apostles were to preach a *new doctrine*, and many would not believe that sins would be *forgiven upon repentance*; or, that they would be retained by unbelief; and others might doubt of the certainty of it. The Saviour tells them to declare it, and that whosoever sins they *thus remit* shall be remitted, and whosoever sins they *retain* shall be retained.

That this was the *only* absolution which the Apostles *did give we must conclude*, since this was the absolution which the Apostles did give. We find it declared throughout their writings, that he that believeth and is baptized, or, so believeth as that he is sanctified, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.

And, indeed, it would be a great undertaking to attempt to select *one in ten* of the instances in which the Apostles fulfilled their commission of forgiving and retaining sins by declaring this.

But it may be asked, if persons are *forgiven by God in consequence of faith in Christ*, with what propriety did Christ say to his disciples, "*Whosoever sins ye forgive?*" I answer, with the strictest propriety; because the doctrine of forgive-