

It is also true that wherever the universality of the atonement has been denied, and its saving benefits shrivelled to a small portion of mankind—the unconditionally elect from all eternity, and the rest, the great majority, of the human race, left unconditionally and eternally reprobate—there the principles of universal freedom, or even of toleration, have neither been practised nor understood, as witness the grinding and persecuting government of Calvin in Geneva and of the Puritans in Massachusetts Bay, against all reprobates. The doctrine of the Papacy which exalts one man and his delegates above all other men, assuming to possess the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to lock and unlock at pleasure, and the doctrine that the eternal blessings of the atonement are limited to the few elected from all eternity, to the exclusion of all others of the human race, are equally incompatible with the principles of equal rights and freedom among any people. But the Methodist preachers preached throughout the land that “God is no respecter of persons,” and that “Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe;” and they made the wilderness resound, from one extremity of Canada to the other, with the doctrine and song—

“Lord; I believe were sinners more  
Than sands upon the ocean shore,  
Thou hast for all a ransom paid,  
For all a full atonement made.”

With this doctrine the whole country (with a few individual exceptions) became leavened at an early period, whether connected with Methodism in Church fellowship or not, and espoused the cause of equal rights and privileges before the law by all classes of citizens, whenever opportunity offered. The doctrine of universal equality before the law was the natural result of the doctrine of universal equality before God in both creation and redemption; and with the Bible in their hands, recommending its circulation and reading among the people, early Methodist preachers desired and prayed that all classes might enjoy the rights and privileges which they claimed and exercised for themselves. It was thus that the principles of equal religious rights and liberty became grounded in the public mind of the country far beyond the nominal limits of the religious denomination that first taught them, and long before the question itself became a subject of newspaper discussion.