

priesthood was arrogating to itself Divine prerogatives. In the Jewish Church this assumption on the part of man was regarded as blasphemy. And Christ approved this view of the case, vindicating His own right to say "Thy sins be forgiven thee" by working a physical miracle, which appealed to the eyes of the onlookers, and proved that He was God, and therefore, according to their own teaching, had the Divine right and power to forgive sins, Matt. ix. 1-7. Thus Judaism and Christianity, in the person of Christ, teach that God alone can forgive sin, and that it is blasphemy on the part of mortal man to presume to do so. The translation in our Authorized Version, and its common interpretation, contradict this teaching; whereas the translation and interpretation here given are in perfect accord with the teaching of Judaism, Christ, and His apostles. It takes away all apparent Divine sanction of priestly assumptions, and establishes the right of all mankind to freedom of access to God through Christ, who alone can forgive sin. Who, for a moment, looking the matter squarely in the face, can imagine that God created and Christ redeemed the race of man, and then placed their eternal salvation in the hands of a few of their fellow-sinners, liable to all the ignorance, prejudice, and partiality of fallen humanity? Such a preposterous idea, if established, is enough to damn the whole Christian system, and to afford grounds for impugning the character of God Himself.

This commission, thus translated and interpreted, is in perfect accord with the teaching of Christ and His apostles, and it places simple, practical, and important duties before the Church in all lands: to identify sin; not let it alone, but prevail against it until it is vanquished. The weapons to be employed in this warfare are the Pentecostal tongues of fire, so powerful in apostolic times, when no blasphemous assumptions marred the simplicity of the Gospel, or hindered the onward march of the Church; whose great work was then, and is now, "To open men's eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me," Acts xxvi. 18. This will indeed be "proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound," Isai. lxi. 1, and the most practical way of carrying out the commission of the risen Lord: "Whose soever sins ye let alone, they are permitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye prevail against, they are vanquished."

This is humbly submitted to the honest criticism of all lovers of the truth, with the earnest prayer that the Holy Ghost may guide us into all truth.