

## PART IV.

## CHAPTER I.

The influence of the American Church on Slavery.

THERE is no country in the world where the religious influence has a greater ascendancy than in America. There is no country where the clergy are more powerful. This is the more remarkable, because in America religion is entirely divorced from the State, and the clergy have none of those artificial means for supporting their influence which result from rank and wealth. Taken as a body of men, the American clergy are generally poor. The salaries given to them afford only a bare support, and yield them no means of acquiring property. Their style of living can be barely decent and respectable, and no more. The fact that, under these circumstances, the American clergy are probably the most powerful body of men in the country, is of itself a strong presumptive argument in their favour. It certainly argues in them, as a class, both intellectual and moral superiority.

It is a well-known fact that the influence of the clergy is looked upon by our statesmen as a most serious element in making up their political combinations; and that that influence is so great, that no statesman would ever undertake to carry a measure against which all the clergy of the country should

unite. Such a degree of power, though it be only a power of opinion, argument, and example, is not without its dangers to the purity of any body of men. To be courted by political partisans is always a dangerous thing for the integrity and spirituality of men who profess to be governed by principles which are not of this world. The possession, too, of so great a power as we have described, involves a most weighty responsibility; since, if the clergy do possess the power to rectify any great national immorality, the fact of its not being done seems in some sort to bring the sin of the omission to their door.

We have spoken, thus far, of the clergy alone; but in America, where the clergyman is, in most denominations, elected by the church, and supported by its voluntary contributions, the influence of the church and that of the clergy are, to a very great extent, identical. The clergyman is the very ideal and expression of the church. They choose him, and retain him, because he expresses more perfectly than any other man they can obtain, their ideas of truth and right. The clergyman is supported, in all cases, by his church, or else he cannot retain his position in it. The fact of his remaining there is generally proof of identity of opinion, since, if he differed very materially from them, they have the power to withdraw from him, and choose another.

The influence of a clergyman, thus retained by the free consent of the understanding and heart of his church, is in some respects greater even than that of a papal priest. The priest can control only by a blind spiritual authority, to which, very often, the reason demurs, while it yields an outward assent;

but the successful free minister takes captive the affections of the heart by his affections, overrules the reasoning powers by superior strength of reason, and thus, availing himself of affection, reason, conscience, and the entire man, possesses a power, from the very freedom of the organization, greater than can ever result from blind spiritual despotism. If a minister cannot succeed in doing this to some good extent in a church, he is called unsuccessful; and he who realizes this description most perfectly has the highest and most perfect kind of power, and expresses the idea of a successful American minister.

In speaking, therefore, of this subject, we shall speak of the church and the clergy as identical, using the word church in the American sense of the word, for that class of men, of all denominations, who are *organized* in bodies distinct from nominal Christians, as professing to be actually controlled by the precepts of Christ.

What, then, is the influence of the church on this great question of slavery?

Certain things are evident on the very face of the matter.

1. It has not put an end to it.
2. It has not prevented the increase of it.
3. It has not occasioned the repeal of the laws which forbid education to the slave.
4. It has not attempted to have laws passed forbidding the separation of families and legalizing the marriage of slaves.
5. It has not stopped the internal slave-trade.
6. It has not prevented the extension of this system, with all its wrongs, over new territories.

With regard to these assertions it is presumed there can be no difference of opinion.

What, then, have they done?

In reply to this, it can be stated,

1. That almost every one of the leading denominations have, at some time, in their collective capacity, expressed a decided disapprobation of the system, and recommended that something should be done with a view to its abolition.

2. One denomination of Christians has pursued such a course as entirely, and, in fact, to free every one of its members from any participation in slaveholding. We refer to the Quakers. The course by which this result has been effected will be shown by a pamphlet soon to be issued by the poet J. G. Whittier, one of their own body.

3. Individual members, in all denominations, animated by the spirit of Christianity, have in various ways entered their protest against it.

It will be well now to consider more definitely and minutely the sentiments which some leading ecclesiastical bodies in the church have expressed on this subject.

It is fair that the writer should state the sources from which the quotations are drawn. Those relating to the action of Southern judicatories are principally from a pamphlet compiled by the Hon. James G. Birney, and entitled "The Church the Bulwark of Slavery." The writer addressed a letter to Mr. Birney, in which she inquired the sources from which he compiled. His reply was, in substance, as follows:— That the pamphlet was compiled from original documents, or files of newspapers, which had recorded

these transactions at the time of their occurrence. It was compiled and published in England, in 1842, with a view of leading the people there to understand the position of the American church and clergy. Mr. Birney says that, although the statements have long been before the world, he has never known one of them to be disputed; that, knowing the extraordinary nature of the sentiments, he took the utmost pains to authenticate them.

We will first present those of the Southern States.

### 1. The Presbyterian Church.

#### HARMONY PRESBYTERY, OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

Whereas, sundry persons in Scotland and England, and others in the north, east, and west of our country, have denounced slavery as obnoxious to the laws of God, some of whom have presented before the General Assembly of our church, and the Congress of the nation, memorials and petitions, with the avowed object of bringing into disgrace slaveholders, and abolishing the relation of master and slave: And whereas, from the said proceedings, and the statements, reasonings, and circumstances connected therewith, it is most manifest that those persons "know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm;" and with this ignorance discover a spirit of self-righteousness and exclusive sanctity, &c., therefore,

1. *Resolved*, That as the kingdom of our Lord is not of this world, His church, as such, has no right to abolish, alter, or affect any institution or ordinance of men, political or civil, &c.

2. *Resolved*, That slavery has existed from the days of those good old slaveholders and patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (who are now in the kingdom of heaven), to the time when the apostle Paul sent a runaway home to his master Philemon, and wrote a Christian and fraternal letter to this

slave-holder, which we find still stands in the canon of the Scriptures: and that slavery has existed ever since the days of the apostle, and does now exist.

3. *Resolved*, That as the relative duties of master and slave are taught in the Scriptures, in the same manner as those of parent and child, and husband and wife, the existence of slavery itself is not opposed to the will of God; and whosoever has a conscience too tender to recognize this relation as lawful is "righteous over much," is "wise above what is written," and has submitted his neck to the yoke of men, sacrificed his Christian liberty of conscience, and leaves the infallible word of God for the fancies and doctrines of men.

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#### THE CHARLESTON UNION PRESBYTERY.

It is a principle which meets the views of this body, that slavery, as it exists among us, is a political institution, with which ecclesiastical judicatories have not the smallest right to interfere; and in relation to which, any such interference, especially at the present momentous crisis, would be *morally wrong*, and fraught with the most dangerous and pernicious consequences. The sentiments which *we* maintain, *in common with Christians at the South of every denomination*, are sentiments which so fully approve themselves to our consciences, are so identified with our solemn convictions of duty, that we should maintain them under any circumstances.

*Resolved*, that in the opinion of this Presbytery, the holding of slaves, so far from being a SIN in the sight of God, is nowhere condemned in his holy word; that it is in accordance with the example, or consistent with the precepts of patriarchs, apostles, and prophets, and that it is compatible with the most fraternal regard to the best good of those servants whom God may have committed to our charge.

The New School Presbyterian Church in Petersburg, Virginia, November 16, 1838, passed the following:

Whereas, the General Assembly did, in the year 1818, pass a law which contains provisions for slaves irreconcilable with our civil institutions, and solemnly declaring slavery to be sin against God — a law at once offensive and insulting to the whole Southern community.

1. *Resolved*, that, as slave-holders, we cannot consent longer to remain in connexion with any church where there exists a statute conferring the right upon slaves to arraign their masters before the judicatory of the church, and that, too, for the act of selling them without their consent first had and obtained.

2. *Resolved*, that as the Great Head of the Church has recognized the relation of *master and slave*, we conscientiously believe that slavery is not a sin against God, as declared by the General Assembly.

This sufficiently indicates the opinion of the Southern Presbyterian Church. The next extracts will refer to the opinions of Baptist Churches. In 1835, the Charleston Baptist Association addressed a memorial to the Legislature of South Carolina, which contains the following:

The undersigned would further represent that the said Association does not consider that the Holy Scriptures have made the fact of slavery a *question of morals at all*. The Divine Author of our holy religion, in particular, found slavery a part of the existing institutions of society, with which, if not sinful, it was not his design to *intermeddle*, but to leave them entirely to the control of men. Adopting this, therefore, as one of the allowed arrangements of society, he made it the province of his religion only to prescribe the reciprocal duties of the relation. The question, it is believed, is purely one of political economy. It amounts, in effect to this, "*Whether the operatives of a country shall be bought and sold, and themselves become property, as in this State; or whether they shall be hirelings, and their labour only become property, as in some other*

*States.* In other words, whether an employer may buy the whole time of labourers at once, of those who have a right to dispose of it, with a permanent relation of protection and care over them, or whether he shall be restricted to buy it in certain portions only, subject to their control, and with no such permanent relation of care and protection. *The right of masters to dispose of the time of their slaves has been distinctly recognized by the Creator of all things, who is surely at liberty to vest the right of property over any object in whomsoever he pleases. That the lawful possessor should retain this right at will, is no more against the laws of society and good morals, than that he should retain the personal endowments with which his Creator has blessed him, or the money and lands inherited from his ancestors, or acquired by his industry; and neither society nor individuals have any more authority to demand a relinquishment, without an equivalent, in the one case, than in the other.*

As it is a question purely of political economy, and one which in this country is reserved to the cognizance of the State governments severally, it is further believed that the State of South Carolina alone has the right to regulate the existence and condition of slavery within her territorial limits; and we should resist to the utmost every invasion of this right, come from what quarter and under whatever pretence it may.

The Methodist Church is, in some respects, peculiarly situated upon this subject, because its constitution and book of discipline contain the most vehement denunciations against slavery of which language is capable, and the most stringent requisitions that all members shall be disciplined for the holding of slaves; and these denunciations and requisitions have been re-affirmed by its General Conference.

It seemed to be necessary, therefore, for the Southern Conference to take some notice of this fact,



which they did, with great coolness and distinctness, as follows:

THE GEORGIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

*Resolved unanimously*, that, whereas there is a clause in the discipline of our church which states that we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of *slavery*; and whereas, the said clause has been *perverted* by some, and used in such a manner as to produce the impression that the Methodist Episcopal Church believed *slavery* to be a *moral evil*; —

Therefore *Resolved*, that it is the sense of the Georgia Annual Conference that *slavery*, as it exists in the United States, *is not a moral evil*.

*Resolved*, that we view *slavery* as a civil and domestic institution, and one with which, as ministers of Christ, we have nothing to do, further than to ameliorate the condition of the slave, by endeavouring to impart to him and his master the benign influences of the religion of Christ, and aiding both on their way to heaven.

On motion it was *Resolved* unanimously, that the Georgia Annual Conference regard with feelings of profound respect and approbation the dignified course pursued by *our several superintendents*, or bishops, *in suppressing* the attempts that have been made by various individuals to get up and protract an excitement in the churches and country on the subject of *abolitionism*.

*Resolved*, further, that they shall have our cordial and zealous support in sustaining them in the ground they have taken.

SOUTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE.

The Rev. W. Martin introduced resolutions similar to those of the Georgia Conference.

The Rev. W. Capers, D. D., after expressing his conviction that "the sentiment of the resolutions was universally held, not only by the ministers of that conference, but of the whole South;" and after stating

that the only true doctrine was, "it belongs to Cæsar, and not to the church," offered the following as a substitute:

Whereas, we hold that the subject of slavery in these United States is not one proper for the action of the church, but is exclusively appropriate to the civil authorities,

Therefore *Resolved*, That this conference will not intermeddle with it, further than to express our regret that it has ever been introduced, in any form, into any one of the judicatures of the church.

Brother Martin accepted the substitute.

Brother Betts asked whether the substitute was intended as *implying that slavery, as it exists among us, was not a moral evil?* He understood it as *equivalent to such a declaration.*

Brother Capers explained that *his intention was to convey that sentiment fully and unequivocally;* and that he had chosen the form of the substitute for the purpose *not only of reproof some wrongdoings at the North,* but with reference also to the General Conference. If slavery were a *moral evil* (that is, *sinful*), the church would be bound to take cognizance of it; but our affirmation is, that it is not a matter for *her jurisdiction*, but is exclusively appropriate to the *civil government*, and of course *not sinful.*

The substitute was then unanimously adopted.

In 1836, an Episcopal clergyman in North Carolina, of the name of Freeman, preached in the presence of his bishop (Rev. Levi S. Ives, D. D., a native of a free State), two sermons on the rights and duties of slave-holders. In these he essayed to justify from the Bible the slavery both of white men and negroes, and insisted that "*without a new revelation from heaven, no man was authorized to pronounce slavery WRONG.*" The sermons were printed in a pamphlet, prefaced with a letter to Mr. Freeman from the Bishop of North Ca-

rolina, declaring that he had "listened with most unfeigned pleasure" to his discourses, and advised their publication as being "urgently called for at the present time."

"The Protestant Episcopal Society for the advancement of Christianity (!) in South Carolina" thought it expedient to republish Mr. Freeman's pamphlet as a *religious tract!*\*

Afterwards, when the addition of the new State of Texas made it important to organize the Episcopal Church there, this Mr. Freeman was made Bishop of Texas.

The question may now arise — it must arise to every intelligent thinker in Christendom — Can it be possible that American slavery, *as defined by its laws*, and the decisions of its Courts, including all the horrible abuses that the laws recognize and sanction, is considered to be a right and proper institution? Do these Christians merely recognize the relation of slavery in the abstract, as one that, under proper legislation, might be made a good one, or do they justify it *as it actually exists* in America?

It is a fact that there is a large party at the South who justify not only slavery in the abstract, but slavery just as it exists in America, in whole and in part, and even its worst abuses.

There are four legalized parts or results of the system, which are of especial atrocity.

They are,

1. *The prohibition of the testimony of coloured people in cases of trial.*
2. The forbidding of education.

\* Birney's Pamphlet.

3. The internal slave-trade.

4. The consequent separation of families.

We shall bring evidence to show that every one of these practices has been either defended on principle, or recognized without condemnation, by decisions of judicatories of churches, or by writings of influential clergymen, without any expression of dissent being made to their opinions by the bodies to which they belong.

In the first place, the exclusion of coloured testimony in the church. In 1840, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church passed the following resolution: — "THAT IT IS INEXPEDIENT AND UNJUSTIFIABLE FOR ANY PREACHER TO PERMIT COLOURED PERSONS TO GIVE TESTIMONY AGAINST WHITE PERSONS IN ANY STATE WHERE THEY ARE DENIED THAT PRIVILEGE BY LAW."

This was before the Methodist Church had separated on the question of slavery, as they subsequently did, into Northern and Southern Conferences. Both Northern and Southern members voted for this resolution.

After this was passed, the conscience of many Northern ministers was aroused, and they called for a reconsideration. The Southern members imperiously demanded that it should remain as a compromise and test of union. The spirit of the discussion may be inferred from one extract.

Mr. Peck, of New York, who moved the reconsideration of the resolution, thus expressed himself: —

That resolution (said he) was introduced under peculiar circumstances, during considerable excitement, and he went for it *as a peace-offering to the South*, without sufficiently re-

flecting upon the precise import of its phraseology; but, after a little deliberation, he was sorry; and he had been sorry but once, and that was all the time; he was convinced that, if that resolution remain upon the journal, *it would be disastrous to the whole Northern church.*

Rev. Dr. A. J. Few, of Georgia, the mover of the original resolution, then rose. The following are extracts from his speech. The italics are my own: —

Look at it! What do you declare to us, in taking this course! Why, simply, as much as to say, "We cannot sustain you in the condition which you cannot avoid!" We cannot sustain you in the *necessary conditions* of slave-holding; one of its *necessary conditions* being the rejection of negro testimony! If it is not sinful to hold slaves, under all circumstances, *it is not sinful to hold them in the only condition, and under the only circumstances, which they can be held.* The rejection of negro testimony is one of the necessary circumstances under which slave-holding can exist; indeed, it is utterly impossible for it to exist without it; therefore it is not sinful to hold slaves *in the condition and under the circumstances which they are held at the South, inasmuch as they can be held under no other circumstances.* \* \* \* If you believe that slave-holding is necessarily sinful, come out with the abolitionists, and honestly say so. If you believe that slave-holding is necessarily sinful, you believe we are necessarily sinners; and, if so, come out and honestly declare it, *and let us leave you.* \* \* \* We want to know distinctly, precisely and honestly, the position which you take. We cannot be tampered with by you any longer. We have had enough of it. We are tired of your sickly sympathies. \* \* \* If you are not opposed to the principles which it involves, unite with us, *like honest men,* and go home, and boldly meet the consequences. We say again, you are responsible for this state of things; for it is *you* who have driven us to the alarming point were we find ourselves. \* \* \* *You* have made that resolution absolutely necessary to the quiet of the South! But *you* now revoke that resolution! And you

pass the Rubicon! Let me not be misunderstood. I say, *you* pass the Rubicon! If you revoke, you revoke the principle which that resolution involves, and you array the whole South against you, *and we must separate!* \* \* \* If you accord to the principles which it involves, arising from the necessity of the case, stick by it, "though the heavens perish!" But, if you persist on reconsideration, I ask in what light will your course be regarded in the South? What will be the conclusion, there, in reference to it? Why, that you cannot sustain us as long as we hold slaves! It will declare, in the face of the sun, "We cannot sustain you, gentlemen, while you retain your slaves!" Your opposition to the resolution is based upon your opposition to slavery; you cannot, therefore, maintain your consistency unless you come out with the abolitionists, and condemn us at once and for ever, or else refuse to reconsider.

The resolution was, therefore, left in force, with another resolution appended to it, expressing *the undiminished regard of the General Conference for the coloured population.*

It is quite evident that it *was undiminished*, for the best of reasons. That the coloured population were not properly impressed with this last act of condescension, appears from the fact that "the official members of the Sharp-street and Ashby Coloured Methodist Church in Baltimore" protested and petitioned against the motion. The following is a passage from their address: —

The adoption of such a resolution, by our highest ecclesiastical judicatory, — a judicatory composed of the most experienced and wisest brethren in the church, the choice selection of twenty-eight Annual Conferences, — has inflicted, we fear, an irreparable injury upon 80,000 souls for whom Christ died — souls, who, by this act of your body, have been

stripped of the dignity of Christians, degraded in the scale of humanity, and treated as criminals, for no other reason than the colour of their skin! Your resolution has, in our humble opinion, *virtually* declared, that a mere physical peculiarity, the handiwork of our all-wise and benevolent Creator, is *primâ facie* evidence of incompetency to tell the truth, or is an unerring indication of unworthiness to bear testimony against a fellow-being whose skin is denominated white. \* \* \*

Brethren, out of the abundance of the heart we have spoken. *Our grievance is before you!* I you have any regard for the salvation of the 80,000 immortal souls committed to your care; if you would not *thrust* beyond the pale of the church *twenty-five hundred souls in this city*, who have felt determined never to leave the church that has nourished and brought them up; if you regard us as children of one common Father, and can, upon reflection, sympathize with us as members of the body of Christ, — if you would not incur the fearful, the tremendous responsibility of offending not only one, but many thousands of his “little ones,” we conjure you to wipe from your journal the odious resolution which is ruining our people.

“A Coloured Baltimorean,” writing to the editor of *Zion's Watchman*, says: —

The address was presented to one of the secretaries, a delegate of the Baltimore Conference, and subsequently given by him to the bishops. How many of the members of the Conference saw it, I know not. One thing is certain, *it was not read to the Conference.*

With regard to the second head — of defending the laws which prevent the slave from being taught to read and write — we have the following instance: —

In the year 1835, the Chillicothe Presbytery, Ohio, addressed a Christian remonstrance to the presbytery of Mississippi on the subject of slavery, in which they specifically enumerated the respects in which they con-

sidered it to be unchristian. The eighth resolution was as follows: —

That any member of our church, who shall advocate or speak in favour of such laws as have been or may yet be enacted, for the purpose of keeping the slaves in ignorance, and preventing them from learning to read the Word of God, is guilty of a great sin, and ought to be dealt with as for other scandalous crimes.

This remonstrance was answered by Rev. James Smylie, stated clerk of the Mississippi Presbytery, and afterwards of the Amity Presbytery of Louisiana, in a pamphlet of eighty-seven pages, in which he defended slavery generally and particularly, in the same manner in which all other abuses have always been defended — by the word of God. The tenth section of this pamphlet is devoted to the defence of this law. He devotes seven pages of fine print to this object. He says (p. 63): —

There are laws existing in both States, Mississippi and Louisiana, accompanied with heavy penal sanctions, prohibiting the teaching of the slaves to read, *and meeting the approbation of the religious part of the reflecting community.*

He adds, still further: —

*The laws preventing the slaves from learning to read are a fruitful source of much ignorance and immorality among the slaves. The printing, publishing, and circulating of abolition and emancipatory principles in those States, was the cause of the passage of those laws.*

He then goes on to say that the ignorance and vice which are the consequence of those laws do not properly belong to those who made the laws, but to those whose emancipating doctrines rendered them ne-



cessary. Speaking of these consequences of ignorance and vice, he says: —

Upon whom must they be saddled? If you will allow me to answer the question, I will answer by saying, Upon such great and good men as John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Bishop Porteus, Paley, Horsley, Scott, Clark, Wilberforce, Sharpe, Clarkson, Fox, Johnson, Burke, and other great and good men, who, without examining the Word of God, have concluded that it is a true maxim that slavery is in itself sinful.

He then illustrates the necessity of these laws by the following simile. He supposes that the doctrine had been promulgated that the authority of parents was an unjust usurpation, and that it was getting a general hold of society; that societies were being formed for the emancipation of children from the control of their parents; that all books were beginning to be pervaded by this sentiment; and that, under all these influences, children were becoming restless and fractious. He supposes that, under these circumstances, parents meet and refer the subject to legislators. He thus describes the dilemma of the legislators: —

These meet, and they take the subject seriously and solemnly into consideration. On the one hand, they perceive that, if their children had access to these doctrines, they were ruined for ever. To let them have access to them was unavoidable, if they taught them to read. To prevent their being taught to read was cruel, and would prevent them from obtaining as much knowledge of the laws of Heaven as otherwise they might enjoy. In this sad dilemma, sitting and consulting in a legislative capacity, they must, of two evils, choose the least. With indignant feelings towards those, who, under the influence of "seducing spirits," had sent and were sending among them "doctrines of devils," but

with aching hearts towards their children, they resolved that their children should not be taught to read, until the storm should be overblown; hoping that Satan's being let loose will be but for a little season. And during this season they will have to teach them orally, and thereby guard against their being contaminated by these wicked doctrines.

So much for that law.

Now, as for the internal slave-trade. The very essence of that trade is the buying and selling of human beings *for the mere purposes of gain*.

A master who has slaves transmitted to him, or a master who buys slaves with the purpose of retaining them on his plantation or in his family, can be supposed to have some object in it besides the *mere purpose of gain*. He may be supposed, in certain cases, to have some regard to the happiness or well-being of the slave. The trader buys and sells *for the mere purpose of gain*.

Concerning this abuse the Chillicothe Presbytery, in the document to which we have alluded, passed the following resolution: —

*Resolved*, That the buying, selling, or holding of a slave, *for the sake of gain*, is a heinous sin and scandal, requiring the cognizance of the judicatories of the church.

In the reply from which we have already quoted, Mr. Smylie says (p. 13): —

*If the buying, selling, and holding of a slave for the sake of gain*, is, as you say, a heinous sin and scandal, then verily three-fourths of all Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, in the eleven States of the Union, are of the devil.

\* \* \* \* \*

Again: —

To question whether slave-holders or slave-buyers are of the devil, seems to me like calling in question whether God is or is not a true witness; that is, provided it is God's testimony, and not merely the testimony of the Chillicothe Presbytery, that it is a "heinous sin and scandal" to buy, sell, and hold slaves.

Again (p. 21): —

If language can convey a clear and definite meaning at all, I know not how it can more plainly or unequivocally present to the mind any thought or idea, than the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus clearly and unequivocally establishes the fact that slavery was sanctioned by God himself, and that buying, selling, holding, and bequeathing slaves, *as property, are regulations which are established by himself.*

What language can more explicitly show, not that God winked at slavery merely, but that, to say the least, he gave a *written permit* to the Hebrews, then the best people in the world, to *buy, hold, and bequeath, men and women*, to perpetual servitude? What, now, becomes of the position of the Chillicothe Presbytery? \* \* \* Is it, indeed, a fact, that God once gave a written permission to his own dear people ["*ye shall buy*"] to do that which is in itself sinful? Nay, to do that which the Chillicothe Presbytery says "is a heinous sin and scandal?"

God resolves that his own children may, or rather "*shall,*" "*buy, possess, and hold,*" bond-men and bond-women, in bondage, *for ever.* But the Chillicothe Presbytery resolves that "*buying, selling, or holding, slaves, for the sake of gain, is a heinous sin and scandal.*"

We do not mean to say that Mr. Smylie had the internal slave-trade directly in his mind in writing these sentences; but we do say that no slave-trader

would ask for a more explicit justification of his trade than this.

Lastly, in regard to that dissolution of the marriage relation, which is the necessary consequence of this kind of trade, the following decisions have been made by judicatories of the church.

The Savannah River (Baptist) Association, in 1835, in reply to the question,

Whether, in a case of involuntary separation of such a character as to preclude all prospect of future intercourse, the parties ought to be allowed to marry again?

answered,

That such a separation, among persons situated as our slaves are, is *civilly* a separation by *death*, and they believe that, in the sight of God, it would be so viewed. To forbid second marriages, in such cases, would be to expose the parties, not only to stronger hardships and strong temptation, but to *church censure*, for acting in obedience to their masters, who cannot be expected to acquiesce in a regulation at variance with justice to the slaves, and to the spirit of that command which regulates marriage among Christians. *The slaves are not free agents*, and a dissolution by death is not more entirely without their consent, and beyond their control, than by such separation.

At the Shiloh Baptist Association, which met at Gourdvine, a few years since, the following query, says the *Religious Herald*, was presented from Hedgman church, viz.

Is a servant, whose husband or wife has been sold by his or her master, into a distant country, to be permitted to marry again?

The query was referred to a committee, who made the following report; which, after discussion, was adopted:

That, in view of the circumstances in which servants in this country are placed, the committee are unanimous in the opinion that it is better to permit servants thus circumstanced to take another husband or wife.

The Reverend Charles C. Jones, who was an earnest and indefatigable labourer for the good of the slave, and one who, it would be supposed, would be likely to feel strongly on this subject, if any one would, simply remarks, in estimating the moral condition of the negroes, that, as husband and wife are subject to all the vicissitudes of property, and may be separated by division of estate, debts, sales, or removals, &c., &c., the marriage relation naturally loses much of its sacredness, and says:

It is a contract of convenience, profit or pleasure, that may be entered into and dissolved at the will of the parties, and that without heinous sin, or injury to the property interests of any one.

In this sentence he is expressing, as we suppose, the *common* idea of slaves and masters of the nature of this institution, and not his own. We infer this from the fact that he endeavours in his catechism to impress on the slave the sacredness and perpetuity of the relation. But, when the most pious and devoted men that the South has, and those professing to spend their lives for the service of the slave, thus calmly, and without any reprobation, contemplate this state of things as a state with which Christianity does not call on them to interfere, what can be expected of the world in general?

It is to be remarked, with regard to the sentiments of Mr. Smylie's pamphlet, that they are endorsed in the Appendix by a document in the name of two Pres-

byteries, which document, though with less minuteness of investigation, takes the same ground with Mr. Smylie. This Rev. James Smylie was one who, in company with the Rev. John L. Montgomery, was appointed by the synod of Mississippi, in 1839, to write or compile a catechism for the instruction of the negroes.

Mr. Jones says, in his "History of the Religious Instruction of the Negroes" (page 83): "The Rev. James Smylie and the Rev. C. Blair are engaged in this good work (of enlightening the negroes) systematically and constantly in Mississippi." The former clergyman is characterized as "an aged and infatigable father." "His success in enlightening the negroes has been very great. A large proportion of the negroes in his old church can recite both Williston's and the Westminster Catechism very accurately." The writer really wishes that it were in her power to make copious extracts from Mr. Smylie's pamphlet. A great deal could be learned from it as to what style of mind, and habits of thought, and modes of viewing religious subjects, are likely to grow up under such an institution. The man is undoubtedly and heartily sincere in his opinions, and appears to maintain them with a most abounding and triumphant joyfulness, as the very latest improvement in theological knowledge. We are tempted to present a part of his *Introduction*, simply for the light it gives us on the style of thinking which is to be found on our south-western waters:

In presenting the following review to the public, the author was not entirely or mainly influenced by a desire or hope to correct the views of the Chillicothe Presbytery. He hoped the publication would be of essential service to others as well as to the presbytery.

From his intercourse with religious societies of all denominations, in Mississippi and Louisiana, he was aware that the abolition maxim, namely, *that slavery is in itself sinful*, had gained on and entwined itself among the religious and conscientious scruples of many in the community, so far as not only to render them unhappy, but to draw off the attention from the great and important duty of a householder to his household. The eye of the mind, resting on slavery itself as a corrupt fountain, from which, of necessity, nothing but corrupt streams could flow, was incessantly employed in search of some plan by which, with safety, the fountain could, in some future time, be entirely dried up; never reflecting, or dreaming, that slavery, in itself considered, was an innoxious relation, and that the whole error rested in the neglect of the relative duties of the relation.

If there be a consciousness of guilt resting on the mind, it is all the same, as to the effect, whether the conscience is or is not right. Although the word of God alone ought to be the guide of conscience, yet it is not always the case. Hence; conscientious scruples sometimes exist for neglecting to do that which the word of God condemns.

The Bornean who neglects to kill his father, and to eat him with his dates, when he has become old, is sorely tortured by the wringings of a guilty conscience, when his filial tenderness and sympathy have gained the ascendancy over his apprehended duty of killing his parent. In like manner, many a slave-holder, whose conscience is guided, not by the word of God, but by the doctrines of men, is often suffering the lashes of a guilty conscience, even when he renders to his slave "that which is just and equal," according to the Scriptures, simply because he does not emancipate his slave, irrespective of the benefit or injury done by such an act.

"How beautiful upon the mountains," in the apprehension of the reviewer, "would be the feet of him that would bring" to the Bornean "the glad tidings" that his conduct, in sparing the life of his tender and affectionate parent, was no sin!  
\* \* \* Equally beautiful and delightful, does the reviewer

trust, will it be, to an honest, scrupulous and conscientious slave-holder; to learn, from the word of God, the glad tidings that slavery itself is not sinful. Released now from an incubus that paralyzed his energies in discharge of duty towards his slaves, he goes forth cheerfully to energetic action. It is not now as formerly, when he viewed slavery as in itself sinful. He can now pray, with the hope of being heard, that God will bless his exertions to train up his slaves "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" whereas, before, he was retarded by this consideration — "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Instead of hanging down his head, moping and brooding over his condition, as formerly, without action, he raises his head, and moves on cheerfully in the plain path of duty.

He is no more tempted to look askance at the word of God, and saying, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy," come to filch from me" my slaves, which, "while not enriching" them, "leaves me poor indeed?" Instead of viewing the word of God, as formerly, come with whips and scorpions to chastise him into paradise, he feels that its "ways are ways of pleasantness, and its paths peace." Distinguishing now between the real word of God and what are only the doctrines and commandments of men, the mystery is solved, which was before insolvable, namely, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart."

If you should undertake to answer such a man by saying that his argument proves too much, — that neither Christ nor his apostles bore any explicit testimony against the gladiatorial shows and the sports of the arena, and, therefore, it would be right to get them up in America, — the probability seems to be that he would heartily assent to it, and think, on the whole, that it might be a good speculation. As a further specimen of the free-and-easy facetiousness which seems to be a trait in this production, see, on



page 74, Vol. I., where the Latin motto *Facilis descensus Averni sed revocare, &c.*, receives the following quite free and truly Western translation, which, he, good-naturedly, says, is given for the benefit of those who do not understand Latin, — “It is easy to go to the devil, but the devil to get back.”

Some uncharitable people might, perhaps, say that the preachers of such doctrines are as likely as anybody to have an experimental knowledge on this point. The idea of this jovial old father instructing a class of black “Sams” and young “Topsys” in the mysteries of the Assembly’s Catechism is truly picturesque!

That Mr. Smylie’s opinions on the subject of slavery have been amply supported and carried out by leading clergymen in every denomination, we might give volumes of quotations to show.

A second head, however, is yet to be considered, with regard to the influence of the Southern church and clergy.

It is well known that the Southern political community have taken their stand upon the position that the institution of slavery shall not be open to discussion. In many of the slave States stringent laws exist, subjecting to fine and imprisonment, and even death, any who speak or publish anything upon the subject, except in its favour. They have not only done this with regard to citizens of slave States, but they have shown the strongest disposition to do it with regard to citizens of free States; and when these discussions could not be repelled by regular law, they have encouraged the use of illegal measures. In the published letters and speeches of Horace Mann the following examples are given (p. 467). In 1831 the Legislature of Georgia

offered five thousand dollars to any one who would arrest and bring to trial and conviction, in Georgia, a citizen of Massachusetts, named William Lloyd Garrison. This law was approved by W. Lumpkin, Governor, Dec. 26, 1831. At a meeting of slave-holders held at Sterling, in the same State, September 4, 1835, it was formally recommended to the governor to offer, by proclamation, five thousand dollars' reward for the apprehension of any one of ten persons, citizens, with one exception, of New York and Massachusetts, whose names were given. The *Milledgeville (Ga.) Federal Union* of February 1st, 1836, contained an offer of ten thousand dollars for the arrest and kidnapping of the Rev. A. A. Phelps, of New York. The Committee of Vigilance of the parish of East Feliciana offered, in the *Louisville Journal* of Oct. 15, 1835, fifty thousand dollars to any person who would deliver into their hands Arthur Tappan, of New York. At a public meeting at Mount Meigs, Alabama, Aug. 13, 1836, the Hon. Bedford Ginress in the chair, a reward of fifty thousand dollars was offered for the apprehension of the same Arthur Tappan, or of Le Roy Sunderland, a Methodist clergyman of New York. Of course, as none of these persons could be seized except in violation of the laws of the State where they were citizens, this was offering a public reward for an act of felony. Throughout all the Southern States associations were formed, called Committees of Vigilance, for the taking of measures for suppressing abolition opinions, and for the punishment by Lynch law of suspected persons. At Charleston, South Carolina, a mob of this description forced open the post-office, and made a general inspection, at their pleasure, of

its contents; and whatever publication they found there which they considered to be of a dangerous and anti-slavery tendency, they made a public bonfire of, in the street. A large public meeting was held, a few days afterwards, to complete the preparation for excluding anti-slavery principles from publication, and for ferreting out persons suspected of abolitionism, that they might be subjected to Lynch law. Similar popular meetings were held through the Southern and Western States. At one of these, held in Clinton, Mississippi, in the year 1835, the following resolutions were passed: —

*Resolved*, That slavery through the South and West is not felt as an evil, moral or political, but it is recognized in reference to the *actual*, and not to any Utopian condition of our slaves, as a blessing both to master and slave.

*Resolved*, That it is our decided opinion that any individual who dares to circulate, with a view to effectuate the designs of the abolitionists, any of the incendiary tracts or newspapers now in a course of transmission to this country, is justly worthy, in the sight of God and man, of immediate death; and we doubt not that such would be the punishment of any such offender in any part of the State of Mississippi where he may be found.

*Resolved*, That the clergy of the State of Mississippi be hereby recommended at once to take a stand upon this subject; and that their further silence in relation thereto, at this crisis, will, in our opinion, be subject to serious censure.

The treatment to which persons were exposed, when taken up by any of these Vigilance Committees, as suspected of anti-slavery sentiments, may be gathered from the following account. The writer has a distinct recollection of the circumstances at the present time,

as the victim of this injustice was a member of the seminary then under the care of her father.

Amos Dresser, now a missionary in Jamaica, was a theological student at Lane Seminary, near Cincinnati. In the vacation (August 1835,) he undertook to sell Bibles in the State of Tennessee, with a view to raise means further to continue his studies. Whilst there, he fell under suspicion of being an abolitionist, was arrested by the Vigilance Committee whilst attending a religious meeting in the neighbourhood of Nashville, the capital of the State, and, after an afternoon and evening's inquisition, condemned to receive twenty lashes on his naked body. The sentence was executed on him, between eleven and twelve o'clock on Saturday night, in the presence of most of the committee, and of an infuriated and blaspheming mob. The Vigilance Committee (an unlawful association) consisted of sixty persons. Of these, twenty-seven were members of churches; one, a religious teacher; another, the *elder*, who but a few days before, in the Presbyterian church, handed Mr. Dresser the bread and wine at the communion of the Lord's Supper.

It will readily be seen that the principle involved in such proceedings as these involves more than the question of slavery. The question was, in fact, this, — whether it is so important to hold African slaves that it is proper to deprive free Americans of the liberty of conscience, and liberty of speech, and liberty of the press, in order to do it? It is easy to see that very serious changes would be made in the government of a country by the admission of this principle; because it is quite plain that, if all these principles of our free government may be given up for one thing, they may for another, and that its ultimate tendency is to destroy entirely that freedom of opinion and thought which is