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INFLUENCE OF SLAVERY ON SLAVEHOLDERS.

THE influence which the institutions of a country and the character of the people mutually exert on each other, operating reciprocally as cause and effect, is always a subject of curious and interesting enquiry. The character of the people is the cause of the establishment and continuance of the institutions, and is in return formed, modified, and rendered permanent by them. So peculiar an institution as slavery, cannot be without great influence of some kind or other, upon the character of those among whom it exists. Its withering and debasing influence on the slaves is undenied and undeniable, and has extended its baneful effects to the whole race to which they belong. But this is not the object of our present enquiry. Our enquiry is into its effects on those by whose power and will it exists—on slaveholders. Of its origin we need not speak. It is sometimes said we inherited it from the mother country, but it is forgotten that if we had not chosen to retain the inheritance, we were at liberty when we became an independent nation to take some measures to dispossess ourselves of it. And alas! that this has not been done, shows that with the inheritance descended also the character and principles adapted to it.

What then is slavery, and what are its natural effects on slaveholders?

Let us take a survey of the southern portion of this country. We behold two distinct races of men inhabiting the same soil, and in some of the states nearly equal in numbers. These two races are marked by a difference of color, but this is their least distinction. The one race we behold in

of the cause. Yet how often has the abolitionists met this smile and this sneer. But he heeds them not. The greatness of the principles he is endeavoring to establish, and the importance of the objects involved in them, are all absorbing to his mind, and he is not discouraged. Let us then go on and endeavour to arouse the slumbering consciences, and awaken the sympathy of all who come within our influence; and when a correct moral feeling is established here, through us it will extend to the South, and slavery will be no more.

## LETTER TO A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL

*To the Rev. ———.*

REV. AND DEAR BROTHER,—I rejoice to hear you say, that in my views and feelings on the system of American slavery, you agree with me. In your mind, it is clear and certain, that it is a system of rebellion against God—involving fraud, adultery, and murder, the violation of every tie which binds man to man, and earth to Heaven. This system, you declare, ought immediately to be broken to pieces, and scattered on the winds. But with these declarations on your lips, you censure me for exposing *in the pulpit* its various deadly tendencies, and for urging on the hearts of all who heard me, the claims of the enslaved upon their sympathy and assistance. You tried to give point and effect to your censure by repeating in my ears the declaration of the Apostle Paul: “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” You exhorted me as a preacher of the gospel, to imitate the Apostle to the Gentiles, and give myself up exclusively to the salvation of souls.

I do not feel myself at liberty to disregard either your censure or exhortation. With you, I bow reverently and gratefully to the authority of the Bible. If, in the matter before us, you are sustained by that authority, it is mine promptly, cheerfully, and fully to obey you, as the messenger of Heaven. But I am greatly a stranger to your character, if you can blame me for examining the basis of

your appeal, before I yield to its intended influence. Nay, I feel assured that you will join with me in endeavoring clearly and certainly to ascertain the *meaning* of the Apostolic declaration, which you wish me to heed.

You understand the Apostle to confine his attention, as a christian teacher, to a very small circle of topics; comprehending only the more commanding doctrines of the gospel. Among these, you suppose that the divinity of Christ, and the atonement by His blood, claimed a place peculiarly prominent. From these he never allowed himself so widely to depart, as to introduce to the church subjects so far removed from the vitals of Christianity, as the evils of servitude and the claims of the slave. You blame me for not imitating the example of the Apostle, and excluding from the lessons of instruction I may give, the doctrines of abolitionism. But after making the declaration, which you quote, did the Apostle exclude such topics from *his* discourses? In answering this question, so manifestly fair and appropriate, you will eagerly embrace such conclusions as the Epistle itself, which contains the declaration in question, forces on our convictions. Read the Epistle, my brother, and see over what a large field the Apostle allows himself to expatiate! What a variety of objects catch his attention, and employ his powers! In one place he forces on your loathing eye the incest of a member of the Corinthian church, and the shameful neglect of his brethren to subject him to christian discipline; in another, he points out to you the limits within which you may have intercourse with flagrant sinners. Here he exposes and condemns the conduct of such christians as had law-suits before heathen courts; and there he enters freely upon the discussion of the subject of marriage. With one breath he disposes of the difficulties which might embarrass his christian brethren, when invited to partake of food which had been "offered in sacrifice to idols;" and the next, he employs in asserting the claims of the christian teacher to a competent support; and the third, in enforcing upon females the importance of their appearing *veiled* in religious assemblies. Nor does he overlook the condition and the duties of those who were under the bonds of servitude. *He points them to the basis of freedom, to which the gospel had raised them.* But I need not swell the list of topics to which in one connection and another he directed the

attention of his readers. It is very certain, that by the declaration to which you refer, the Apostle *did not* intend to exclude from his discourses such things as you blame me for discussing. What, then, did he mean? A fair question, which is entitled to an appropriate answer.

Permit me, my brother, to remind you, that when the Epistles to the Corinthian church were written, "excellency of speech and of wisdom" were generally thought to consist in the subtleties of a hair-splitting philosophy, and in artificial rhetoric. Such acquisitions, in a city like Corinth, remarkable for its wealth and luxury, would naturally be held in high estimation. What multiplied hints have we in the epistles, with which we are now more especially concerned, that for the Corinthian church such glittering baubles had strong attractions! Apollos, educated as he had been at Alexandria, seems as the head of a party, to have been preferred to Paul on account of the charms of his rhetoric. With these thoughts in your mind, mark what the Apostle disclaimed, in opposition to the course he pursued, as described in the declaration which we are now to dispose of. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with *excellency of speech or of wisdom*, declaring unto you the testimony of God." What did he then? "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." What *ever* distinguished the Gospel from systems of human philosophy and heathenish superstition, the Apostle here presents under the description of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. In the first place, then, *I understand him to affirm, that in what ever he did, he acted in subserviency to the progress of the Gospel.* He had not aimed at Corinth to distinguish himself as a philosopher or rhetorician. He had not exerted himself to accumulate gold or brighten his reputation. Secular designs he had none to promote. A higher object engrossed his powers. To build up the church of Christ, and thus subserve the best interests of his fellow-men, was the sole end of his solicitude and toil. To nothing, which had a bearing, near or remote, adverse or friendly on such an end, could he be indifferent. Even the veil for a woman's face became here a matter of deep interest—too important to be overlooked in a pastoral letter.

I understand the Apostle to affirm, in the second place, *that he was anxious to present, and illustrate, and enforce*

*every lesson of instruction he might give, in the light of the peculiarities of the Gospel.* On whatever subject he might dwell, he did not choose to speak as an economist, or politician, or philosopher. A higher character he sustained. The various relations of those with whom he had to do, he contemplated in a more solemn light. *To his eye, the truths of the Gospel shed their lustre on every thing.* And what his eye saw, his tongue and pen could not but choose to describe. Whatever he might exhibit, he was "determined" to hold up in the light which shone from the face of the crucified Savior. Was he constrained to expose the guilt of the church, in allowing a gross fornicator to keep his place at the communion table? Who, taking his position *at the foot of the cross*, could adequately estimate that guilt? What motives to "purge out the old leaven" pressed upon their inmost spirits, when they remembered that "Christ their passover was sacrificed for them!" Would the Apostle dissuade his brethren from such intercourse with idolaters, as might be the occasion of apostacy to weaker members of the church? With what resistless force must his tender appeal have reached their hearts, when he admonished them, that through their "knowledge the weak brother" might "perish, *for whom Christ died!*" Would he persuade "servants" to maintain their allegiance to their Savior, whatever opposition they might meet with from their masters? How appropriate and powerful is the argument he urges,—"*Ye are bought with a price; BE NOT YE THE SERVANTS OF MEN.*" Thus, whatever truth he might be called to present, he was determined to present it as a christian minister, betaking himself to Jesus Christ and Him crucified for arguments and illustrations.

Will you say, my brother, that I have lost sight of the example of the Apostle, either in introducing or disposing of the subject of slavery in my religious discourses? You cannot say so. Have I dwelt upon it as an economist, or politician, or philosopher? Have I sought applause as a rhetorician? Have I courted popularity for money or a name? No. Had I been guilty in any of these respects, I should have escaped the odium and reproach which, with no very sparing hand, have been measured out for me. No; it was because on the subject of slavery "I determined not to know any thing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified,"

that I have been reviled and slandered. I have presented the slave as a *brother*—the child of our common Father; redeemed by our Savior, and entitled to all the benefits suited to such high relations. This is “the head and front of my offending.” What if I were to gather a congregation of southern slaves around me, and expound and enforce for their benefit the direction of Paul, “Ye are bought with a price; *be not ye the servants of men!*” should I not preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified?

You remind me, that it is my appropriate business, as a preacher of the gospel, *to toil for the salvation of souls.* Your admonition I receive with humility and gratitude. Be it my privilege while I live, thus to labor. But may I pause, and dwell upon the meaning of your language? In what *must* the salvation of souls consist? In such fears, and hopes, and joys, as however they may agitate us, fail to reduce us to our proper places in the moral system, to which we belong? Then were the Scribes and Pharisees saved; for they seem to have had no lack of such feelings. Does it consist in maintaining, without reproach, a profession of religion, or in activity in such enterprises, as have the patronage of the church, with which we may be connected? Then were the wretches saved, who the Savior declares devoured widows’ houses, and for a pretence made long prayers! They were full of missionary zeal;—“compassing sea and land to make a proselyte.” *To be saved, we must come into conformity with the relations we sustain to God and our neighbor.* Short of this we may have our fears, and hopes, and joys, our religious professions and enterprises. Short of this, we may make high pretensions, long prayers, and many proselytes. Short of this, we may employ with wonderful success a thousand so-called soul-saving expedients. But short of this, *we cannot be saved.* Short of this, what could we do in that world of eternal harmony, where every thing finds and keeps its proper place? *The devourers of widows’ houses here, must receive damnation hereafter.* Alas! what then must become of those who MAKE WIDOWS, and then DEVOUR THEM AND THEIR CHILDREN in the midst of the American churches? What must become of their apologists, however ingenious and grave they may be? What, my brother! have you a system of soul-saving, which inspires men with the hope of Heaven,

while they refuse heartily to *own every human* creature as a brother? A system of *piety*, which leaves men below the level of humanity! Can you make *saints*, who *fall short of being MEN*? Out upon such saints. Away with such piety. It makes any creature, who is deceived by its lofty pretensions, "two fold more the child of hell," than it found him. I have heard of some "young converts," who would not join a church that treated men *as men*, according to their moral worth! If prejudice, the most insane and cruel, could not be humored, and factitious distinctions maintained;—if they must take their place at the communion table, by the side of their poor brother, of another complexion, their offended dignity would turn away, and stand aloof from the Savior's "little ones!" I have heard of a church, which suited its arrangements to such views and feelings, and bowed before the giant prejudices of its young converts; and gloried in its shame, by baptizing its anti-christian expedients by the name of *efforts to save souls!* Out, I say, upon such notions of salvation. Romance for reality! Animal feeling for christian principle! False philosophy, for "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Are you the man, my brother, to talk of saving those, whose hearts are too hard and narrow to admit the common sentiments of humanity! Alas, this piety, both un-human and inhuman, what mischief has it not done wherever it has been countenanced in the church of God! What! Is God, our Savior, to be honored with *human sacrifices!* Human nature to be placed a bleeding victim on the altar of Piety! Men, women, and children to be offered by thousands to Moloch in the midst of the monuments of Christianity, without admonition or rebuke! Nay, ministers, and elders, and deacons, "binding the sacrifice with cords unto the horns of the altar!" And we, preachers of the Gospel, in the midst of these abominations, must close eyes, ears, and lips, and keep to our proper business of saving souls! Are we thus to convince gainsayers! And extend the triumphs of the Cross! And bring the whole family of Adam into one dear brotherhood!

Let me entreat you to study your Bible. Mark the course which prophets and apostles, with the Savior at their head, pursued. Did they throw the mantle of religion over the chain of servitude and the scourge of oppression? When?

Where? How? That thing they never did. In language, the most pointed and emphatic, they exposed the hypocrisy of those pretenders, who tried to unite the love of God with hatred of man. They applied the edge of the most cutting irony to the fat hearts of such religionists. They levelled their dreadful blows at the king on his throne and the priest at the altar. Wealth, renown, refinement, furnished no shield for the guilty. And were they not intent on the salvation of souls? Yes; indeed they were; *and they employed the only appropriate means.* Who, now, is to occupy the places which their ascent to heaven has left vacant? If the ministers of the gospel refuse to catch their mantle, on whose shoulders shall it fall? If the pulpit may not be employed in exposing and rebuking popular iniquity, what is it good for? Shall we leave the guilty to work out their own reformation, while we, — *keep ourselves to the business of saving souls!*

Look again, my brother, to those models, to which every christian minister is bound to conform himself. Did they take the side of the oppressor against the oppressed? Did they court the rich and despise the poor? Did they look on unmoved while the strong crushed the weak. Never. Of the victims of popular prejudice and violence they were the friends and advocates; and this at the hazard of reputation and of life. When did they refuse "to consider the poor?" to raise up the down-trodden? Were they not "eyes to the blind and feet were they not to the lame?" The cause which they knew not, were they not forward and thorough to search out? Did not our Savior appropriate the Gospel especially to the poor—to the poor, to whom His heart and His arms were ever open? And must we see the poor, driven from the Cross, robbed of the Bible, plundered—not of their "ewe lambs," but of their wives and children, insulted, polluted, murdered with impunity, and keep our hearts and our tongues still? Must we see churches, built up by fraud and filled with adultery, without uttering a syllable! And religious teachers claiming for American slavery the stability and the sanctity of a christian institution! and quoting texts from the Old Testament and the New to justify man-stealing! and spitting their venom in the faces of the friends of human freedom! Must we see all this and much more, and keep as cold and silent as the

grave! And why? For the sake of saving souls! Then let us take the priest on his way to Jericho, for our model. He was, probably, intent on making proselytes. Full of missionary zeal, how could he pause to pity and help the poor sufferer, whom the thieves had left "half dead?" He could not come down from the work of saving souls to relieve a wounded, bleeding body! *His piety suffocated his humanity!* and along he stalks "on the other side." Say, my brother, are we to tread in his footsteps? Certainly we are, if our priestly obligations are inconsistent with "considering the poor!"

My brother, have you tasted the "blessedness" of "considering the poor?" Do you recognize in them the form and face of your final judge? Be not deceived. Mistake not sickly sentimentalism for christian principle. Study the description which, in the 25th of Matthew, our Savior gives of the final judgment. What think you of that stranger, hungry, ragged, oppressed, and exhausted by disease, whom He, there, exhibits as His representative? Can you turn away from his crushed frame and broken heart, under the pretence that this is required by your official obligations! The ministers of Christ, too much engaged in soul-saving to sympathize with their suffering Lord, to vindicate His rights, to relieve His necessities! *Hypocrisy, my brother, lurks in every such pretence.* I charge you, affectionately yet solemnly, in the light of "Jesus Christ and him crucified" plead the cause of the oppressed. "Cry aloud and spare not." As thyself in bonds, remember the bound. Enlist the church in the cause of holy freedom. Give heaven and earth no rest till "every yoke is broken and the oppressed are free." Then shall salvation, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb, gladden the face of all the earth. "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward."

*Oneida County, N. Y., June, 1836.*