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THE HOLDING OF HUMAN BEINGS IN A STATE OF SLAVERY
SINFUL.

In every case of morality the final appeal must be made to the law and testimony of God. On the question of slavery these are remarkably precise and definite. Though the abettors of slavery sometimes venture an appeal to scripture their proof is never direct, but consists generally of wire-drawn conclusions from incorrectly assumed facts, and is in most instances a taking for granted the point in question. Never was greater violence done to the sacred oracles than when they have been pressed into the service of tyrants and taskmasters to aid them in exercising cruelty and oppression. Slavery is shewn to be sinful by direct scripture testimony and by conclusions justly derived from the great principles of christian equity laid down in the sacred volume. "He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand shall surely be put to death." Ex. xxi. 16. This statute forms part of the code of laws which God has given for the purpose of securing the personal freedom and rights of men from aggression. The same precept is afterwards reiterated by Moses, and the transgressor denounced as a thief. "Then that *thief* shall die, and ye shall put away evil from among you." If theft is a violation of the divine law, then stealing a man, or selling him, or holding him in bondage violates a moral precept universally binding in all ages and under all circumstances. The Apostle says, "the law was made for MEN STEALERS." 1 Tim. i. 10. In this he evidently refers to the law given by Moses, who says, "he that smiteth his father or his mother, and he that stealeth a man, shall surely be put to death." Paul says, "the law was made for murderers

the privy council, when speaking of him afterwards one day in company, remarked, "That he was one of the stiffest maintainers of his principles that ever came before them. Others, he added, we used to cause one time or other to waver, but him we could never move. Where we left him, there we found him. We could never make him yield or vary in the least. He was the man we have seen most plainly and pertinaciously adhering to the old way of Presbyterian government, who, if he had lived in Knox's days, *would not have died by any laws then in being.*"

DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCHES.

The church has long been rent by divisions produced by false doctrines, immoral practices, and evil passions. Perhaps no schism has ever occurred, where all these causes did not exist together and unite their respective forces, in its accomplishment. Error in doctrine has always been the prominent as well as the most efficient cause. Within the present century, the work of division in the Protestant denominations has made rapid progress, and from the present aspect of the ecclesiastical horizon, there can be little doubt that for some time it will continue to advance. In tracing briefly these events and other causes, we commence with the

ASSOCIATE REFORMED CHURCH.

This body originated in a union between some ministers of the Associate church and of the Reformed Presbyterian church soon after the termination of the Revolutionary war. At the formation of the Union, those parts of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which treat of the doctrine of civil government, and others were left open for discussion. It was not many years after the consummation of the Union, that a project was introduced and carried in synod for altering the Confession of Faith, by expunging those parts of it which refer to the power of the civil magistrate *circa sacra*. On the adoption of the new Confession, as the mutilated document has been called, the Rev. Alexander Mc Coy and the Rev. Robert Warwick, seceded from the Associate Reformed Synod, in which they were joined by their congregations, several ruling elders, and parts of other congregations. They constituted a judicatory under the name of the Reformed

Dissenting Presbytery, which still exists. Thus there were four denominations instead of two. The Reformed Presbyterian church still existed, as did the Associate church, and to these were added the Associate Reformed, and the Reformed Dissenters. The largest of these was the Associate Reformed. The growth of this body was greatly promoted by the introduction of Watts' psalms into the worship of God by the General Assembly. The Associate Reformed ministers were every where zealous, about the beginning of the present century, in the defence of inspired psalmody. None other was used, or tolerated by their ministers or people.

Before the secession of the Reformed Dissenters, the peace of the Associate Reformed Church had been interrupted by the abandonment of fast days preparatory to the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Business-men in the congregation of the Rev. Dr. Mason, in the city of New York, thought that devoting three week days to religious services connected with the Lord's supper, made too great encroachment on their gains. The fast day was omitted, an introductory sermon on Friday evening, and a discourse on Monday evening were all that remained of the three days devotion, which had always been observed in the Secession church from the time of the Erskines to that of Dr. Mason. To justify this curtailment, Dr. Mason published a pamphlet in which he maintains that the sacrament of the Lord's supper is a part of the ordinary sanctification of the Sabbath, that it ought to be celebrated every Lord's day—that it is no more solemn than any other religious duty, and that the observance of a day of fasting to prepare for it, is a remnant of Popish superstition. Many ministers who remained in that body after the adoption of the new Confession, still observed the sacramental fast days, and ascribed very justly the neglect of them in the New-York and in some other congregations to a worldly spirit, and a preference of worldly gains to spiritual improvement. To this was added another source of discontent from the same quarter, and in relation to the same ordinance. Owing to a difference of opinion between Dr. Mason and a majority of his congregation on the subject of erecting a new church, he resigned the charge of his congregation. A new congregation was organized by his friends who adhered to him, and was accommodated with the use of a Presbyterian church, a part of each Lord's day. At the dispensation of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, Dr. Mason's congregation, and that of the Presbyterian Church in which they worshipped, partook of it together. This was called catholic com-

munion. Such an innovation on the order of the church gave great offence to many ministers in the south and west. It became a subject of vehement and frequent controversy in their general synod. There was not sufficient firmness to censure Dr. Mason for this violation of church order. The younger ministers who had been educated in the Theological seminary of which he was professor, generally adopted his views, both in relation to the sacramental fast and catholic communion. To justify his doings in this matter, Dr. Mason published a volume entitled "a Plea for Catholic Communion."

In this book he maintains that all those who are regenerated have a right to participate in the sacrament of the supper, and that no denomination of professors has a right to withhold the privilege of the communion table from any one who shall be adjudged in charity, a disciple of Christ. His own practice and that of those who adopted his views was to invite to the Lord's table all who were in regular standing with any branch of the church. According to their doctrines respecting the visible church, this invitation included Presbyterians, Congregationalists, the Reformed Dutch, Episcopalians, Methodists, Moravians, Lutherans, German Calvinists, and Baptists. All these, as opportunity offered, were allowed to participate in their communion. Such principles and practices effectually set aside the confession of the Associate Reformed church, which became, in all such cases, a dead letter. Such an extension of the communion of the church, bore a strong resemblance to the views of Ammonius Saccas, who, in the early ages of christianity formed a plan of bringing together into one visible society, all who professed to believe what he called the fundamental doctrines of the plan of salvation—all holding their respective peculiarities. The popularity of Dr. Mason as a preacher, the eloquence of his pen, and the indulgence of almost every error, procured for this scheme pretty extensive acceptance. It was agreeable to the lax spirit of the age, and was hailed by many leading divines in the churches, as charitable, liberal and catholic, and as calculated to soften the acrimony and allay the spirit of party strife. Those who opposed it were stigmatized as behind the spirit of the age, as contracted, bigoted, illiberal and uncharitable. But it was still resisted and very vehemently opposed, by many of the Associate Reformed. What was regarded by many as a happy device for ending all strife, became the occasion of the keenest contention, even where it is the most unpleasant, in the judicatories and among the members of the same

body. The general synod of the Associate Reformed church was from year to year a scene of most earnest and violent controversy. Added to other causes of dissention in that body was a change which Dr. Mason and his friends had introduced on the subject of Psalmody. The congregation of which he was pastor had been chiefly formed of those who were dissatisfied with the introduction of Watts' Psalms, in the Presbyterian congregation of Dr. Rogers. The father of Dr. Mason, who had been his predecessor in the Secession congregation, and the Dr. himself, for many years had opposed in their public ministrations the use of any other than inspired psalms in the worship of God. Though he and all the liberal party who were attached to him, still retained for some time the Psalms of David in their congregations, yet when officiating in Presbyterian pulpits they did not hesitate to use human compositions, contrary to the law and usage of their own church. To transgress one act was no great stride, after having set aside the Confession of Faith as a term of communion. The next step was the introduction of Watts' Psalms into Dr. Mason's congregation. Though this was done while he was absent in Europe, yet he continued their use after his return. All these departures from the usages of the church were promoted by a correspondence which had been opened with the General Assembly. But while the favor of those not of their own church was courted, and in some measure gained, mutual confidence and harmony were lost at home. Supplies for the support of the theological seminary, in which Dr. Mason was professor, were withdrawn by the presbyteries to the south and west. Every thing now indicated the approach of the dissolution of the Associate Reformed Synod. The presbyteries of the south and the synod of the west had leave to retire from the body; and thus a voluntary division took place. But even all this did not ensure peace among those that remained; as many were desirous, seeing their church was crippled, and all real distinction between it and the Reformed Dutch church was removed, that a union with that body should be sought. Delegates from both Synods were appointed and met, but, through the influence of Dr. Livingston, the aged and venerable professor of the Dutch Theological seminary, the union of the bodies was defeated. The Dutch church would not consent to any compromise—the Associate Reformed must either become merged in it or remain separate. The latter was preferred. As the leaders had resolved to break up their distinct organization and fall into some larger body, it was determined to unite with the

General Assembly, of which little more was asked than mere admission. It would, indeed, so far as terms of communion were concerned, have been difficult to assign any good reason for the preservation of an organization separate from that large body. The covenants of their forefathers had been abandoned, and the Psalms and Confessions of Faith of both were substantially the same. There were some, however, who dreaded the progress of the Hopkinsian errors in the General Assembly, and there were a few who were conscientiously opposed to the use of uninspired Psalms in the worship of God. And though a great majority of the ministers cordially approved of the measure, yet there were in many of their congregations, not a few people of influence and property, who were altogether opposed to a junction with the General Assembly. For these reasons the plan was warmly contested. The measure was sent down by the Synod to their presbyteries, in which Dr. Mason and his friends contended there was a majority, which was denied by the opposition. When the Synod came to act on the subject finally, it was carried by a large majority to dissolve the Associate Reformed Synod, and join the General Assembly. It was dissolved accordingly, and about eleven or twelve ministers and their congregations connected themselves with the Presbyterian church, reserving to their Presbyteries the right of either retaining their distinct organization, or connecting themselves with those Presbyteries of the General Assembly in whose bounds they were.

The weakening of the attachment of professors of religion to certain truths of the gospel, and forms of order appointed by Christ, and which they have long been taught to consider important, tends to diminish their faith in the whole christian system, and to relax the hold which the bonds of moral obligation have on the conscience. Hence, those who decline from a more pure to a more corrupt form of profession, deteriorate in christian morality. This maxim, of which almost every age of the church furnishes examples, was painfully illustrated in this instance. Three of the ministers who went into the general Assembly were suspended for the sin of intemperance, and one for adultery. One was refused admission into a presbytery of the General Assembly, with which he attempted to connect himself, on account of his reviling all creeds and confessions, and another who had been admitted into a presbytery was suspended for the same error. Another, who ought perhaps to have been mentioned first, was soon after this junction with the Assembly,

separated from his congregation, and his labours in the ministry ceased. The ministers, who were thus shipwrecked, had been the prominent and leading men in these transactions. The dishonour which the General Assembly incurred by the immoralities of these men, furnishes a warning to large bodies, not to countenance those who depart from purer forms of worship, in seeking a place and a name among them. To record such mournful facts is painful, but they are the doings of God's providence, and should be put on record, that all who read may be admonished to beware of making shipwreck on the same rocks.

In Philadelphia, Baltimore and New-York, there did not remain the name or the appearance of even a fragment of the Associate Reformed Church. But the ministers of the interior of the State of New-York continued to hold their separate Presbyteries, and met in Synod; in which it was resolved not to accede to the General Assembly. So that the fruits of Catholic communion and liberality are the division of the Associate Reformed Church into three separate fragments. Seeking favor abroad, by compromising truth, led, as it always does, to distraction and division at home.

Several ineffectual attempts have been made to re-unite these dissevered limbs into one body. The western and southern ministers continue to observe fast days preparatory to the Lord's Supper; and Saturday before, and Monday after, the dispensation of the Sacrament are set apart by them as days of devotion. In New-York state the only week day service connected with this ordinance is the introductory sermon, as it is called in the congregational churches from which it is borrowed. None of the western or southern ministers sing Watts' Psalms, when officiating either in their own or in other congregations; those in New-York with very few exceptions, sing human compositions, wherever the people prefer them. In the south and west none but Associate Reformed people are admitted to the communion table; in New-York state people of other denominations are admitted, according to Dr. Mason's doctrine of catholic communion. These distinctions have heretofore kept them in a state of separation from each other. All these evils, besides long and troublesome lawsuits respecting ecclesiastical property, might have been prevented by a timely and faithful exercise of the discipline of the Lord's house on those who, in violation of their vows, trampled under foot its order.

THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH.

This church, soon after the division of the Associate Reformed, experienced the distracting influence of what are called liberal and catholic views and measures. This denomination of Christians is chiefly confined to the states of New-York and New Jersey. The Confession of the Synod of Dort is their principle subordinate standard. Its doctrines even on the subject of civil government are substantially the same with those of the Westminster Confession of Faith. But the Dutch church in America have received it with explanations accomodating it in its doctrines respecting civil society, to the irreligious political institutions of the United States. All the ministers of this church are bound by a law of Synod to explain, in a regular course of lectures, one every Sabbath, the doctrines of the Heigdelburgh catechism, to their congregations. This is an excellent and well digested manual of gospel truth, and its constant exposition, in ministerial labour, was a means of preserving, for several generations, in this country, the clergy of the Dutch church from the corrupting influence of the Arminian tenets, and from other prevalent errors. But in the early part of the present century, the spurious liberality of the age, began to make inroads on their ancient and orthodox habits of thought and action. People of other denominations, among whom there were many corruptions, were allowed admission to their communion tables, particularly congregationalists and Presbyterians, and the ministers of these denominations were admitted to preach in their pulpits, and obtain settlements in their congregations. They had also a correspondence, by mutual delegation, with the general Assembly and some other ecclesiastical bodies. Their ministers and many of their people became connected with New England and other missionary societies. In adopting an English psalmody, they chose an uninspired collection, instead of the inspired Psalms, a literal version of which, in the Dutch language, they had always before employed in their songs of praise.

In the classis of Montgomery one of their ministers, Mr. Ten Eyk, for teaching Hopkinsian errors was censured by his classis, or as we call it presbytery. He appealed to the particular synod and the matter was carried up to general synod. It appeared in the progress of the discussion, to which this case of discipline gave rise, that the New school doctrines which Mr. Ten Eyk had embraced, were not confined to one minister. Some defended the views of Mr. T.

while others, like the late peace-men, in the General Assembly, did not think these new doctrines so dangerous as deservedly to incur the censures of the church. The Rev. Mr. Eltynge of the classis of Paramus, in New Jersey, published a sermon replete with the Hopkinsian errors. Other ministers who did not publish, preached the same erroneous doctrines. Attempts to arrest the progress of these corruptions by interposing the arm of discipline, produced much angry contention; but in this they ended. A fast day was appointed by the general synod, as a means of staying the progress of those errors, which the synod had not faithfulness to censure.

Against these temporizing measures the Rev. Dr. Freligh, an aged and venerable minister of New Jersey under whose care many of the clergy of the Dutch church had been educated for the ministry, raised his warning voice. In this he was joined by many others. The faithfulness of that orthodox and godly servant of Christ, excited the displeasure of the friends of error, and brought down upon him their vengeance. A departure from a minute point of order, furnished the occasion for the commencement of hostilities against him. A member of a congregation, in the neighborhood of Dr. Freligh, preferring on account of his faithfulness, his ministry, to that of his own pastor, made application and was received by the consistory into his congregation without a certificate of dismission from the congregation to which he had belonged. For this informality on the part of his consistory, or as we say session, a libel was preferred against Dr. Freligh, the Moderator, and he was found guilty by the decision of a majority of the classis. Dr. F. plead that he ought not to be made responsible for a deed of the court in which he presided, and appealed to the particular synod of New-York. There too, though his cause was zealously and ably plead by some zealous and faithful friends, his guilt was affirmed. All this hard measure was meted out to a venerable and faithful man, while errors such as those of Eltynge sapping the foundations of the christian system, were permitted to pass unrebuked. Dr. F. entered an appeal to general synod, but disheartened from the favour shewn to error, and by the progress of corruptions which he thought he saw, and which did exist, instead of prosecuting his appeal, he formally declined the authority of the synod, and withdrew from their communion. In this secession, he was joined by eleven or twelve ministers, some candidates for the ministry and about fifteen congregations. They constituted

a synod under the title of the True Dutch Reformed Church, which has now existed about fifteen years, and is increasing. The general synod of the Dutch Church, so tardy in censuring errorists, proceeded to pass a sentence of suspension on all the seceding ministers, and others who associated with them. Thus a large body of the most orthodox and pious of the church were driven out of their communion. Thus another denomination was produced by the divisive spirit of modern catholicism. The secession of the True Reformed Dutch, together with their many and faithful publications, in defence of the truth and of their measures, has given a salutary rebuke to the New School Dutchmen. There are many of them in that body, but they dare hardly avow it openly. Some, it is hoped have retraced their steps. It certainly is not very becoming in the judicatories of the Associate Reformed and Dutch churches, after all the vehement commotions by which they have been very lately agitated, to congratulate themselves boastingly on their present tranquility as contrasted with the existing troubles in the General Assembly. All these troubles and divisions among the professors of religion are painful, but the errors, disorders, corruptions and worldly carnal spirit which cause them, are incomparably more to be deprecated. "*What hast thou to do with peace so long as thou sufferest that woman Jezebel?*" Where there is peace in a corrupt body, it is the peace of the grave.

PROCEEDINGS AND ADDRESS, &c.

Greensburgh, August 1, 1837.

The Financial Committee of the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church met at Greensburgh at the call of three of the members, Messrs Brown, Crozier, and Walkinshaw. The Chairman being absent, Mr. Brown was called to the chair, *pro. tem.*

The meeting was opened by prayer. Members present, R. Brown, Wm. Adams, H. Walkinshaw, and P. Mowry. Absent, Messrs Chrystie, Crozier and Beattie.

H. Walkinshaw was appointed Clerk. The object of the meeting was stated by the chairman, to be, to devise means of raising funds for the support of the Theological Seminary located at New Alexandria; after due deliberation the committee adopted the following preamble and resolutions.