


An Address to the Presbyterians  
of Kentucky - 1836

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**AN ADDRESS**

**TO THE**

**PRESBYTERIANS OF KENTUCKY,**

**PROPOSING A PLAN**

**FOR THE**

**INSTRUCTION AND EMANCIPATION**

**OF**

**THEIR SLAVES.**

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**BY A COMMITTEE OF THE SYNOD OF KENTUCKY.**

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**NEWBURYPORT:  
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**1836.**

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*Original Document*

• For the purpose of promoting harmony and concert of action on this important subject, the Synod do

*Resolve,* That a committee of ten be appointed to consist of an equal number of ministers and elders, whose business it shall be to digest and prepare a plan for the moral and religious instruction of our slaves, and for their future emancipation, and to report such plan to the several presbyteries within our bounds, for their consideration and approval.

- |                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| JOHN BROWN, Esq.         | JOHN GREEN, Esq.          |
| THOMAS P. SMITH, Esq.    | J. R. ALEXANDER, Esq.     |
| CHARLES CUNNINGHAM, Esq. | REV. WM. L. BRECKENRIDGE, |
| JAMES K. BURCH,          | ROBERT STEWART,           |
| NATHAN J. HALL,          | JOHN C. YOUNG,            |
|                          | <i>Committee.</i>         |

The committee would respectfully request every preacher to read this address to his congregation on some Sabbath. The object of the Synod in appointing a committee to prepare a plan, is stated to be to "promote harmony and concert of action on this important subject;" and this can only be effected by presenting the plan with the reasons urging its adoption, before every member of our Church.

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## ADDRESS.

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DEAR BRETHREN :—

The will of Synod has made it our duty to lay before you "a plan for the moral and religious instruction, as well as for the future emancipation, of the slaves" under your care. We feel the responsibility and difficulty of the duty to which the church has called us, yet the character of those whom we address strongly encourages us to hope that labor will not be in vain. You profess to be governed by the principles and precepts of a holy religion; you recognise the fact that you have yourselves "been made free" by the blood of the Son of God; and you believe that you have been imbued with a portion of the same spirit which was in "Him who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor." When we point out to such persons their duty, and call upon them to fulfil it, our appeal cannot be altogether fruitless. But we have a still stronger ground of our encouragement, in our firm conviction that the cause which we advocate is the cause of God, and that his assistance will make it finally prevail. May He "who hears the cry of the poor and needy," and who has commanded to let the "oppressed go free," give to each one of us wisdom to know our duty, and strength to fulfil it.

We earnestly entreat you, brethren, to receive our communication in the same spirit of kindness in which it is made; and permit neither prejudice nor interest to close your minds against the reception of truth, or steel your hearts against the convictions of conscience. Very soon it will be a matter of no moment whether we have had large or small possessions on the earth; but it will be of infinite importance whether or not we have conscientiously sought out the will of God and done it.

We all admit that the system of slavery, which exists among us, is not right. Why, then, do we assist in perpetrating it?

tuating it? Why do we make no serious efforts to terminate it? Is it not because our perception of its sinfulness is very feeble and indistinct, while our perception of the difficulties of instructing and emancipating our slaves is strong and clear? As long as we believe that slavery, as it exists among us, is a *light evil* in the sight of God, so long will we feel inclined to pronounce every plan that can be devised for its termination, inexpedient or impracticable. Before, then, we unfold our plan, we wish to examine the system, and try it by the principles which religion teaches. If it shall not be thus proved to be an abomination in the sight of a just and holy God, we shall not solicit your concurrence in any plan for its abolition. But if, when fairly examined, it shall be seen to be a thing which God abhors, we may surely expect that no trifling amount of trouble or loss will deter you from lending your efforts to its extermination.

Slavery is not the same all the world over; and to ascertain its character in any particular state or country, we must examine the constituents and effects of *the kind of slavery which there exists*. The system as it exists among us, and is constituted by our laws, *consists of three distinct parts—a deprivation of the right of property, a deprivation of personal liberty, and a deprivation of personal security*. In all its parts it is, manifestly, a violation of the laws of God, as revealed by the light of nature, as well as the light of revelation.

1st. *A part of our system of slavery consists in depriving human beings of the right to acquire and hold property*. Does it need any proof to show that God has given to all human beings a right to the proceeds of their own labor? The heathen acknowledge it—every man feels it. The Bible is full of denunciations against those who withhold from others the fruits of their exertions. “We unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.”\* Does an act which is wrong, when done once and toward one individual, become right because it is practised daily and hourly, and towards thousands? Does the just and holy One frown

\* Jeremiah, xxii, 13. See also James, v, 4; Lev. xix, 13; Deut. xxiv, 14, 15.

the less upon injustice, because it is systematically practised, and is sanctioned by the laws of the land? If the chicanery of law should enable us to escape the payment of our debts, or if a human legislature should discharge us from our obligations to our creditors, could we, without deep guilt, withhold from our neighbors that which is their due? No: we all recognise the principle, that the laws of the God of nature can never be replaced by any legislature under heaven. These laws will endure, when the statutes of earth shall have crumbled with the parchments on which they are enrolled—and by these laws we know that we must be judged, in the day in which the destinies of our souls shall be determined.

2d. *The deprivation of personal liberty forms another part of our system of slavery.* Not only has the slave no right to his wife and children, he has no right even to himself. His very body, his muscles, his bones, his flesh, are all the property of another. The movements of his limbs are regulated by the will of a master. He may be sold, like a beast of the field—he may be transported, in chains, like a felon. Was the blood of our Revolution shed to establish a false principle, when it was poured out in defence of the assertion, that “all men are created equal;” that “they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?” If it be a violation of the rights of nature to deprive men of their *political freedom*, the injustice is surely much more flagrant when we rob them of *personal liberty*. The condition of a subject is enviable compared with the condition of a slave. We are shocked at the despotism exercised over the Poles. But theirs is a political yoke, and is light compared with the heavy personal yoke that bows down the two millions of our colored countrymen. Does European injustice lose its foul character, when practised with aggravations in America?

Still further, the deprivation of personal liberty is so complete that it destroys the rights of conscience. Our system, as established by law, arms the master with power to prevent his slave from worshipping God according to the dictates of his own conscience. The owner of human

beings among us may legally restrain them from assembling to hear the instructions of divine truth, or even from ever uniting their hearts and voices in social prayer and praise to Him who created them. God alone is Lord over the conscience. Yet our system, defrauding alike our Creator and our slaves, confers upon men this prerogative of Deity. Argument is unnecessary, to show the guilt and madness of such a system. And do we not participate in its criminality, if we uphold it?

3d. *The deprivation of personal security is the remaining constituent of our system of slavery.* The time was, in our own as well as in other countries, when even the life of the slave was absolutely in the hands of the master. It is not so now among us. The life of a bondman cannot be taken with impunity. But the law extends its protection no further. Cruelty may be carried to any extent, provided life be spared. Mangling, imprisonment, starvation, every species of torture, may be inflicted upon him, and he has no redress. But, not content with thus laying the body of the slave defenceless at the foot of the master, our system proceeds still further, and strips him in a great measure of all protection against the inhumanity of any other white man who may choose to maltreat him. The laws prohibit the evidence of a slave against a white man from being received in a court of justice. So that wantonness and cruelty may be exercised by any man with impunity, upon these unfortunate people, provided none witness it but those of their own color. In describing such a condition, we may well adopt the language of sacred writ: "Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. And the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment."

Such is the essential character of our slavery. Without any crime on the part of its unfortunate subjects, they are deprived for life, and their posterity after them, of the right to property, of the right to liberty, and of the right to personal security. These odious features are not the excrescences upon the system—they are *the system itself*—they are its essential constituent parts. And can any man believe that such a thing as this is not sinful—that it



is not hated by God—and ought not to be abhorred and abolished by man?

But there are certain *effects*, springing naturally and necessarily out of such a system, which must also be considered in forming a proper estimate of its character.

1. Its most striking effect is, *to deprave and degrade its subjects by removing from them the strongest natural checks to human corruption.* As there are certain laws impressed upon the elements, by which God works to preserve the beauty and order of the material creation; so there are certain principles of human nature, by which he works to save the moral world from ruin. These principles operate on every man in his natural condition of freedom—restraining his vicious propensities, and regulating his deportment. The fires of innate depravity, which, if permitted to burst forth, would destroy the individual and desolate society, are thus, measurably, repressed; and the decencies and enjoyments of life are preserved. The wisdom and goodness of God are thus seen in implanting in man a sense of character, a desire for property, a love for distinction, a thirst for power, and a zeal for family advancement. All these feelings, working in the mind of individuals, (though not unmixed with evil,) combine to promote their own happiness, and the welfare of communities; and they are inferior in the good which they produce, only to those high religious principles which constitute the image of God in the soul of man. The presence of these principles only can compensate for their absence. Whenever, then, these natural feelings are crushed or eradicated in any human being, he is stripped of the nobler attributes of humanity, and is degraded into a creature of mere appetite and passion. His sensuality is the only cord by which you can draw him. His hopes and fears all concentrate upon the objects of his appetites: He sinks far down toward a level with the beast of the field, and can be moved to action only by such appeals as influence the lunatic and the brute. This is the condition to which slavery reduces the great mass of those who wear its brutalizing yoke. Its effects upon their souls are far worse than its effects upon their bodies. Character, property, destination, power, and family respectability,

are all withdrawn from the reach of the slave. No object is presented to excite and cultivate those higher feelings, whose exercise would repress his passions and regulate his appetites. Thus slavery deranges and ruins the moral machinery of man—it cuts the sinews of the soul—it extracts from human nature the salt that purifies and preserves it, and leaves it a corrupting mass of appetite and passion.

2. *It dooms thousands of human beings to hopeless ignorance.* The acquisition of knowledge requires exertion; and the man who is to continue through life in bondage, has no strong motive of interest to induce such exertion; for knowledge is not valuable to him, as to one who eats the fruits of his own labors. The acquisition of knowledge requires also facilities of books, teachers, and time, which can be only adequately furnished by masters; and those who desire to perpetuate slavery will never furnish these facilities. If slaves are educated, it must involve some outlay on the part of the master. And what reliance for such a sacrifice can be placed on the generosity and virtue of one, who looks on them as his property, and who has been trained to consider every dollar expended on them as lost, unless it contributes to increase their capacity for yielding him valuable service? He will have them taught to work, and will ordinarily feed and clothe them so as to enable them to perform their work to advantage. But more than this, it is inconsistent with our knowledge of human nature to expect that he will do for them. The present state of instruction among this race answers exactly to what we might thus naturally anticipate. Throughout our whole land, so far as we can learn, there is but one school in which, during the week, slaves can be taught. The light of three or four Sabbath schools is seen, glimmering through the darkness that covers the black population of a whole state. Here and there a family is found, where humanity and religion impel the master, mistress, or children, to the laborious task of private instruction. Great honor is due to those engaged in this philanthropic and self-denying course; and their reward shall be received in the day when even a cup of cold water, given from Christian motives, shall

secure a recompense. But, after all, what is the utmost amount of instruction given to slaves? Those who enjoy the most of it, are fed with but the crumbs of knowledge which fall from their master's table—they are clothed with the mere shreds and tatters of learning.

Nor is it to be expected that this state of things will become better, *unless it is determined that slavery shall cease*. The impression is almost universal, that intellectual elevation unfits men for servitude, and renders it impossible to retain them in this condition. This impression is unquestionably correct. The weakness and ignorance of their victims is the only safe foundation on which injustice and oppression can rest. And the effort to keep in bondage men to whom knowledge has imparted power, would be like the insane attempt of the Persian tyrant, to chain the waves of the sea, and whip its boisterous waters into submission. We may as soon expect to fetter the winds, seal up the clouds, or extinguish the fires of the volcano, as to prevent enlightened minds from recovering their natural condition of freedom. Hence, in some of our states, laws have been enacted, prohibiting, under severe penalties, the instruction of the blacks; and even where such laws do not exist, there are formidable numbers who oppose, with deep hostility, every effort to enlighten the mind of the negro. These men are determined that slavery shall be perpetuated; and they know that their universal education must be followed by their universal emancipation. They are then acting wisely, according to the wisdom of this world, when they deny education to slaves—they are adopting a measure necessary to secure their determined purpose. It is, however, policy akin to that which once induced the ruffian violators of female chastity to cut out the tongue, and cut off the hands of their victim, to disable her from uttering or writing their names. She had to be maimed, or they would be brought to justice. It is such policy as the robber exhibits, who silences in death the voices that might accuse him, and buries in the grave the witnesses of his crimes. He is determined to pursue his occupation, and his safety in it requires that he should not indulge in the weakness of keeping a conscience. How horrible

must be that system, which, in the opinion of even its strongest advocates, demands as the necessary condition of its existence, that knowledge should be shut out from the minds of those who live under it—that they should be reduced as nearly as possible to the level of brutes or living machines—that the powers of their souls should be crushed! Let each one of us ask, can such a system be aided or even tolerated without deep criminality?

3. *It deprives its subjects, in a great measure, of the privileges of the gospel.* You may be startled at this statement, and feel disposed to exclaim, “our slaves are always permitted and even encouraged to attend upon the ordinances of worship.” But a candid and close examination will show the correctness of our charge. The privileges of the gospel, as enjoyed by the white population in this land, consist in *free access to the scriptures, a regular gospel ministry, and domestic means of grace.* Neither of these is, to any extent worth naming, enjoyed by slaves, as a moment’s consideration will satisfactorily show. The law, as it is here, does not prevent *free access to the scriptures*—but ignorance, the natural result of their condition, does. The Bible is before them, but it is to them a sealed book. “The light shineth in the darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not.” Like the paralytic, who lay for years by the pool of Bethesda, the waters of healing are near them, but no kind hand enables them to try their efficacy. Very few enjoy the advantages of a *regular gospel ministry.* They are, it is true, permitted generally, and often encouraged, to attend upon the ministrations specially designed for their masters. But the instructions communicated on such occasions are above the level of their capacities. They listen as to prophesyings in an unknown tongue. The preachers of their own color are still farther from ministering to their spiritual wants—as these impart to them, not of their knowledge, but their ignorance: they heat their animal feelings, but do not kindle the flame of intelligent devotion. It has been proposed by some zealous and devoted friends of the colored race, to supply the deficiency of gospel ministrations among them, by the employment of suitable missionaries, who may labor exclusively among

them. We need not here speculate on the probable results of such a scheme if carried into effect, in a community where there is no intention to emancipate; for before there is found among us benevolence enough to adopt and execute it, on a scale large enough to effect any highly valuable purpose, the community will be already ripe for measures of emancipation. Such a spirit of kindness towards this unfortunate race as this scheme presupposes, can never co-exist with a determination to keep them in hopeless bondage. Further, there are no houses of worship exclusively devoted to the colored population. The galleries of our own churches, which are set apart to their use, would not hold the tenth part of their numbers—and even these few seats are, in general, thinly occupied. So that, as a body, it is evident that our slaves do not enjoy the public ordinances of religion. *Domestic means of grace* are still more rare among them. Here and there a family is found, whose servants are taught to bow with their masters around the fireside altar. But their peculiarly adverse circumstances, combined with the natural alienation of their hearts from God, render abortive the slight efforts of most masters to induce their attendance on the domestic services of religion. And if we visit the cottages of those slaves who live apart from their masters, where do we find them reading their Bibles and kneeling together before a throne of mercy? Family ordinances of religion are almost unknown among the blacks. We do not wish to exaggerate the description of this deplorable religious condition of our colored population. We know that instances of true piety are frequently found among them; but these instances we all know to be awfully disproportionate to their numbers, and to the extent of those means of grace which exist around them. When the missionaries of the cross enter a heathen land, their hope of fully christianizing it rests upon the fact that they can array and bring to bear upon the minds of these children of ignorance and sin, all those varied means which God has appointed for the reformation of man. But while the system of slavery continues among us, these means can never be efficiently and fully employed for the conversion of the degraded sons of Africa. Yet

"God hath made them of one blood" with ourselves; hath provided for them the same redemption; hath in his providence cast souls upon our care; and hath clearly intimated to us the doom of him, who "seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him." If by our example, our silence, or our sloth, we perpetuate a system which paralyzes our hands when we attempt to convey to them the bread of life, and which inevitably consigns the great mass of them to unending perdition, can we be guiltless in the sight of Him who hath made us stewards of his grace?

4. *This system licenses and produces great cruelty.* The law places the whip in the hands of the master, and its use, provided he avoid destroying life, is limited only by his own pleasure. Considering the absolute power with which our people are armed, it must be acknowledged that the treatment of their dependants is, in general, singularly humane. Many circumstances operate here to mitigate the rigors of perpetual servitude; and it is probably the fact, that no body of slaves have been ever better fed, better clothed, and less abused, than the slaves of Kentucky. Still they have no security for their comfort but the humanity and generosity of men, who have been trained to regard them not as brethren, but as mere property. Humanity and generosity are, at best, poor guarantees for the protection of those who cannot assert their rights, and over whom law throws no protection. Our own condition we would feel to be wretched indeed, if no law secured us from the insults and maltreatment *even of our equals.* But superiority naturally begets contempt; and contempt generates maltreatment, for checking which we can rely not on virtue, but only on law. There are, in our land, hundreds of thousands clothed with arbitrary powers over those, whom they are educated to regard as their property, as the instruments of their will, as creatures beneath their sympathy, devoid of all the feelings which dignify humanity, and but one remove above cattle. Is it not certain that many of these hundreds of thousands will inflict outrages on their despised dependants? There are now, in our whole land, two millions of human beings, exposed, defenceless, to every

insult and every injury short of maiming or death, which their fellow-men may choose to inflict. They suffer all that can be inflicted by wanton caprice, by grasping avarice, by brutal lust, by malignant spite, and by insane anger. Their happiness is the sport of every whim, and the prey of every passion, that may, occasionally or habitually, infest the master's bosom. If we could calculate the amount of woe endured by ill-treated slaves, it would overwhelm every compassionate heart, it would move even the obdurate to sympathy. There is also a vast sum of suffering inflicted upon the slave by humane masters, as a punishment for that idleness and misconduct which slavery naturally produces. The ordinary motives to exertion in men are withdrawn from the slave. Some unnatural stimulus must then be substituted; and the whip presents itself as the readiest and most efficient. But the application of the whip to produce industry, is like the application of the galvanic fluid to produce muscular exertion. The effect is powerful indeed, but momentary; and if often applied, it is exhaustive and destructive to the system. It can never be used as a substitute for the healthful and agreeable nervous stimulus with which nature has supplied us. Equally vain is the attempt to supply by the whip the deficiency of natural motives to exertion—it produces misery and degradation. Yet inadequate as is this substitute, it is the best that can be had—it must be used while the system lasts—the condition of the slave is unnatural, and his treatment must correspond to his condition. We are shocked to hear of epicures, who cause the animals on which they feast to be whipped to death, that their flesh may be more delicate and delicious to the taste. We feel it to be disgusting and intolerable cruelty, thus to inflict pain even upon a beast, merely to satisfy the cravings of luxury; and shall we excuse ourselves, if a desire for ease or wealth leads us to sanction, sustain, and assist in perpetuating a system which, as long as it lasts, must lacerate the bodies and grind down the feelings of millions of rational and immortal beings?

Brutal stripes, and all the varied kinds of personal indignities, are not the only species of cruelty which slavery licenses. The law does not recognise the family

relations of a slave, and extends to him no protection in the enjoyment of domestic endearments. The members of a slave family may be forcibly separated, so that they shall never more meet until the final judgment. And cupidity often induces the masters to practise what the law allows. Brothers and sisters, parents and children, husbands and wives, are torn asunder, and permitted to see each other no more. These acts are daily occurring in the midst of us. The shrieks and the agony often witnessed on such occasions, proclaim with a trumpet tongue the iniquity and cruelty of our system. The cry of these sufferers goes up to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. There is not a neighborhood where these heart-rending scenes are not displayed. There is not a village or road that does not behold the sad procession of manacled outcasts, whose chains and mournful countenances tell that they are exiled by force from all that their hearts held dear. Our church, years ago, raised its voice of solemn warning against this flagrant violation of every principle of mercy, justice, and humanity. Yet we blush to announce to you and to the world, that this warning has been often disregarded, even by those who hold to our communion. Cases have occurred in our own denomination, where professors of the religion of mercy have torn the mother from her children, and sent her into a merciless and returnless exile. Yet acts of discipline have rarely followed such conduct. Far be it from us to ascribe to our people generally a participation in these deeds, or a sympathy with them—they abhor and loathe them. But while the system, of which these cruelties are the legitimate offspring, is tolerated among us, it is exceedingly difficult to inflict punishment upon their perpetrators. If we commence discipline for any acts which the laws of slavery sanction, where shall we stop? What principle is there which will justify us in cutting off a twig or a branch of this poison tree, that will not, if carried fairly out, force us to proceed, and hew down its trunk, and dig up its roots? These cruelties are only the loathsome ulcers, which show corruption in the blood and rottenness in the bones of this system. They may be bound up and mollified with ointment—they may be hid-



den from the sight; but they cannot be entirely removed until there is a thorough renovation within. Our churches cannot be entirely pure, even from the grossest pollutions of slavery, *until we are willing to pledge ourselves to the destruction of the whole system.*

The voice of the civilized world has been lifted up in execration of the despot who recently dragged numbers of the unhappy Poles from their country, separating husbands and wives, parents and children. But they are his property, by the same tenure by which we hold our slaves; and has he not a right, he may exclaim, to do as he pleases with his own? Nay, the security and peace of his dominions require this cruelty. He is not willing to relinquish *the property which he inherited*; and he may tell us, and tell us truly, that it cannot be retained in safety without the adoption of these horrid measures. Can we condemn his conduct, and yet justify our system of slavery? Or can we condemn both, and yet be guiltless, if we use no efficient exertions to terminate these cruelties among us?

5. *It produces general licentiousness among the slaves.* Marriage, as a *civil ordinance*, they cannot enjoy. Our laws do not recognise this relation as existing among them; and, of course, do not enforce by any sanction the observance of its duties. Indeed, until slavery "waxeth old and tendeth to decay," there cannot be any legal recognition of the marriage rite, or the enforcement of the consequent duties. For all regulations on this subject would limit the master's absolute right of property in his slaves. In his disposal of them, he would no longer be at liberty to consult merely his own interest. He could no longer separate the wife and husband to suit the convenience or interest of the purchaser, no matter how advantageous might be the terms offered. And as the wife and husband do not always belong to the same owner, and are not often wanted by the same purchaser, their duties to each other would thus, if enforced by law, frequently conflict with the interests of the master. Hence, all the marriage that could ever be allowed to them would be a mere contract, voidable at the master's pleasure. Their present quasi marriages are just such contracts, and are continually thus voided. They are, in this way, brought

to consider the matrimonial engagement as a thing not binding, and they act accordingly. Many of them are united without even the sham and forceless ceremony which is sometimes used. They, to use their own phraseology, "take up with" each other, and live together as long as it suits their mutual convenience or inclination. This wretched system of concubinage inevitably produces revolting licentiousness. This feature in the slave character is so striking, as to induce in many minds the idea that the negro is naturally repugnant to the restraints of matrimony. From the ample and repeated testimonies, however, of such travellers as Park and Lander, who have visited this race in their native land, we learn that their character is, in this respect, in Africa, the reverse of what it is here—that they regard the marriage rite with remarkable sacredness, and scrupulously fulfil its duties. We are, then, assured by the most unquestionable testimony, that their licentiousness is the necessary result of our system, which, destroying the force of the marriage rite, and thus, in a measure, degrading all the connexion between the sexes into mere concubinage, solicits wandering desire, and leads to extensive profligacy. Our familiarity with this consequence of slavery prevents us from regarding it with that horror which it would, under other circumstances, inspire. The sacredness of the marriage rite is the bulwark of morality—the corner-stone of domestic happiness. It is the foundation on which alone the whole fabric of an organized and virtuous community can be built. On it must rest all those family relations which bind together and cement society. Without it, we might herd together like brutes, but we could no longer live together as human beings. There would be no families, no strong ties of kindred, no domestic endearments, softening the manners and curbing the passions. Selfish, sensual, and unrestrained, man would exercise his reason only to minister to the more grovelling propensities of his nature. Any set of men will approximate to this condition, just in proportion to their approximation to the practical abolition of matrimonial restraints. And certainly never, in any civilized country, has respect for these restraints been more nearly obliterated than it has

been among our blacks. Thus the working of our system of slavery diffuses a moral pestilence among its subjects, tending to wither and blight every thing that is naturally beautiful and good in the character of man. Can this system be tolerated without sin?

6. *This system demoralizes the whites as well as the blacks.* Masters are, in a great degree, irresponsible for the exercise of their power; and they generally feel that their object in possessing and exercising their dominion is their own utility, and not the good of those over whom they rule. Now, power can never be held or exercised without moral injury to its *possessor*, unless its exercise be subject to responsibility, or unless it be held *mainly* for the good of its *subjects*, *not of its possessor*. The lives of absolute monarchs furnish us with our most disgusting pictures of human depravity. Few, even of those who had been previously trained to self-control and virtue, have been able to withstand the corrupting influence of unrestrained power. And the effect is, in some measure, the same where despotic authority is possessed and exercised in a smaller sphere. No man, acquainted with the frailty of the human heart, would desire uncontrolled dominion over his fellow-men. We are sufficiently prone by nature to tyranny, and a disregard of the rights and interests of others, without having these feelings developed, cultivated, and matured by a sense of irresponsibility, and by the habit of regarding ourselves as born to command, and others as born to obey. Where a consciousness of responsibility, equality, and dependence does not check their growth, hard-heartedness, selfishness, and arrogance are, in most men, fearfully exhibited. And these odious traits of character must be peculiarly marked in those who have, from childhood, been trained in the school of despotism. The hand of one of our greatest statesmen has strikingly portrayed the demoralizing effects of this system on the minds and manners of the ruling class. "There must doubtless," says Mr. Jefferson, "be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people, produced by the existence of slavery among us. The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions—the most unrelenting despotism on the one

part, and degrading submission on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do. If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self-love, for restraining the intemperance of passion toward his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present. But, generally, it is not sufficient. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs, in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to the worst of passions, and, thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances."\* Such, according to the testimony of one who had marked its operation with a philosopher's eye, is the character which slavery forms—a character perfectly the reverse of that which the gospel requires.

We forbear to picture before you the consequences of that indolence and aversion to all manual occupations, which are necessarily engendered in youth, surrounded by a servile class, who are engaged in these pursuits. These consequences you have all seen, and felt, and deplored. Such are the evil effects to ourselves and our children of the system which we support. Thus are we made to eat of the bitter food which we prepare for others, and drink of the poisoned cup which our own hands mingled—the sword with which we unthinkingly destroy others is thus made to drink our own blood. These evils, if duly estimated, are alone sufficient to arm us with implacable hostility toward the system from which they spring. And in view of these effects, we can almost adopt the opinion expressed a few years since, on the scaffold, by one who was executed for the murder of a slave—"Slavery is a bad system; it is even worse for the master than it is for the slaves." It is a system which reminds us of the dark magic of ancient days—an art as fatal to those who exercised it as to those who were their victims.

7. *This system draws down upon us the vengeance of*

\* Jefferson's Notes on Virginia, p. 319.

*Heaven.* "God is just," and "he will render to every one according to his works." Oppression can never escape unpunished, while He who hath emphatically declared that he is the "Judge of the widow," and "the Father of the fatherless," is on the throne of the universe. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn to death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it? and shall he not render to every man according to his works?" Not a sparrow falls to the ground, we are told, without the notice of God: how much more doth he mark the abuse and oppression of a creature who bears his own peculiar image! "The very hairs of our head are all numbered"—much more are the groanings of the oppressed and sighings of the prisoner recorded, by Him who says that his name is "*Gracious*," and that his "ear is ever open to the cry of the poor and needy." The blood of Abel did not soak into the ground unheeded—it called down judgment upon the guilty man who had smitten his brother, and it drove him out a wanderer from the land of his birth—a fugitive from the presence of the Lord. But the sore cry of millions of the down-trodden has gone up to heaven from the midst of us; this cry is still swelling upward, and if there be righteousness on the throne of the universe, it must bring down vials of wrath upon the heads of all who are engaged in this guilty work. And when he cometh to execute vengeance, "who may abide the day of his coming?" Who can stand before his indignation? Who can stand up in the fierceness of his anger? We see the truth of what the prophet declares, that "the Lord is slow to anger"—but we are assured that it is equally true, that he is "great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet."

Brethren, we profess to be Christians—we reverence the holy revelation which God has given—we look to its precepts for guidance, and to its denunciations for warnings. We know that the principles of the divine dealings are the same in every age, and that what God said to those of old, when we are in similar circumstances, he saith unto us.

Listen, then, to one of the many intimations he has given us of the way in which he will punish it. "The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy; yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully, and I sought for a man among them that should stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord."\* Can we despise the instructions of the Almighty? Shall we shut our eyes and close our ears against the admonitions of the Great Judge of the earth? Shall we not arise, and "stand in the gap before him for the land, that he may not destroy it?" Though our "nest may be built on high," and "our defence be the munitions of rocks," we cannot escape, if God rise up against us: He can blast our prosperity—He can drown us in blood—He can blot out our existence and our name from under heaven.

Let us remember, too, that not only as a people, but as individuals, God will deal with us. The day is soon coming when every man's works which he hath wrought shall be tried as by fire—and we must then "eat of the fruits of our own ways."

We have now exhibited, fairly but briefly, the nature and effects of slavery. For the truth of our facts, we refer to your own observations; for the correctness of our reasoning, we appeal to your judgments and consciences. What, then, must we conclude? Is slavery a system which Christians should sanction, or even tolerate, if their efforts can avail to abolish it? The reply is often made, "*God's word sanctions slavery, and it cannot therefore be sinful. It cannot be our duty to relinquish our power over our slaves, or the Bible would have enjoined it upon us to do so.*" We will not attempt an elaborate argument against this plea for slavery—it needs no such answer. A few observations will suffice to show its utter fallacy. If the Bible sanctioned slavery, it sanctioned the kind of slavery which then existed, in the countries where the apostles preached and wrote their epistles. This was the

\* Ezekiel, xxii, 29-31.

system to which the apostles are supposed to have given their approbation—which they are supposed to have allowed their followers to support and sanction by their example. *Mark this well*—it was the *Greek and Roman slavery*, which God is said to have treated as a thing whose existence he did not condemn, as a system which his saints might, without sin, assist in perpetuating. Now it is a notorious fact, that the Greek and Roman slavery was as much more cruel than ours as the treatment with which Rehoboam threatened his subjects was more severe than that they had received from his father. Solomon, he told them, had chastened them with whips, but he would chastise them with scorpions—Solomon had made the yoke heavy, but his little finger was to be thicker than his father's loins. There was no species of misery which the system of Greek and Roman slavery did not inflict upon its unhappy victims. Masters were permitted, by the laws, to torture their slaves, to starve them, to beat them to death, and even to throw them into their fish-ponds, to give an epicurean flavor to the mullets and carp, which they were fattening for their feasts. For the breaking of a dish, or the spilling of gravy, a slave could be put to death with impunity. It was part of this system, that if a master was murdered, and the murderer was not known, all the slaves of his household were seized and put upon the rack. Their limbs were mangled and broken, and their lives often crushed out of their bodies, to extort from them the disclosure of a transaction with which they might be entirely unacquainted. Brethren, could any man insult the God of heaven worse than by declaring that he does not disapprove of such a system? Moloch, "besmeared with blood of human sacrifices and parents' tears," might permit his followers to countenance such a system, and assist in upholding it; but who will say that the "Father of mercies" gives such a permission to his children? Before we can admit so monstrous a doctrine, we must reverse all our ideas of the attributes of God. If any man can fairly show, that the Bible countenances such slavery as existed in the days of the apostles, he would construct a more powerful argument against the divine origin of our religion than infidelity has ever yet

invented. A religion that sanctions a system of atrocious cruelty can never have come down from heaven. The overpowering argument in proof of the truth of Christianity is drawn from the immaculate purity, the universal benevolence, the uncompromising holiness, exhibited in all its principles and precepts. When such a religion can be shown to harmonize with slavery, we may expect to see the literal fulfilment of the prophetic declaration, that "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid."

It is often pleaded, that in the Old Testament God himself expressly permitted his people to enslave the Canaanites. True; for God may punish any of the children of sin as he sees fit; He has a right to do so, and *He alone has a right*. He may commission either the winds, or the waves, or the pestilence, or their fellow-men, to work his purpose of vengeance upon any people. But *man has no right to arrogate the prerogative of the Almighty—he has no right, uncommissioned by his Maker, either to enslave or destroy his fellow*. God commissioned Saul to exterminate the Amalekites: could we plead this as an excuse for the massacre of an Indian tribe? God expressly directed his prophet Samuel to hew Agag in pieces: could any of us allege this as a ground for cutting down every man whom he considered as an enemy of Zion's King? How, then, can any man assert, that because God determined to punish the Canaanites, and used the Israelites as the executioners of his decree, we are at liberty to obey the dictates of our own avarice, and hold our fellow-men in bondage? Is not such a perversion of God's holy word more shocking than Belshazzar's desecration of the sacred vessels of the sanctuary, when he and his concubines drank wine out of them, amid the drunken revelry of his impious feast?

We are told, again, that the apostles gave to Christian masters and Christian servants directions for the regulation of their mutual conduct. True; and these directions will be valuable while the world lasts; for so long, we doubt not, will *the relation of master and servant exist*. But how do such directions license holding of slaves? *The terms which the apostles use in giving these precepts are the*



*same terms which they would have used, had there been no slaves upon the earth.* Many of the masters of that day were indeed slave-holders, and many of the servants were slaves: but should that circumstance have prevented the inspired ambassadors from teaching the duties which devolve upon masters and servants, in every age, and under every form of service? If so, then the fact that rulers at that time were generally tyrants, and the people vassals, should have prevented them from laying down the duties of rulers and people. In the precepts of holy writ, neither *political tyranny* nor *domestic slavery* is countenanced. Nay, if masters complied with the apostolic injunction to them, and gave their servants, as they were directed to do, "that which is just and equal," there would be at once an end of all that is properly called slavery.

The divine right of kings to tyrannize over their subjects, and the unlawfulness of resistance to their authority on the part of the people, were formerly maintained by the very same kind of scriptural arguments which are now advanced in support of slavery. The arguments drawn from the Bible in favor of despotism are, indeed, much more plausible than those in favor of slavery. We despise the former—how then should we regard the latter?

It has been sometimes said, that the "*New Testament does not condemn slave-holding in express terms.*" And the practice has been advocated, because it has not been thus denounced. If this assertion were true, and if the Bible only *virtually* denounced it, it would be a sin. No man can righteously continue a practice which God disapproves of, no matter in what form the disapproval is expressed. But the assertion is not true. **THE NEW TESTAMENT DOES CONDEMN SLAVE-HOLDING, AS PRACTISED AMONG US, IN THE MOST EXPLICIT TERMS, FURNISHED BY THE LANGUAGE IN WHICH THE INSPIRED PENMEN WROTE.** If a physician, after a minute examination, should tell a patient that his every limb and organ was diseased—if he should enumerate the various parts of his bodily system, the arms, the legs, the head, the stomach, the bowels, &c., and should say of each one of these parts distinctly that it was unsound; could the man depart and say, "After all, I am not diseased; for the physician has not said in

*express terms that my body is unsound ?*" Has he not received a *more clear and express declaration* of his entirely diseased condition, than if he had been told in merely general terms that his *body* was unsound ? Thus has God condemned slavery. He has specified the parts which compose it, and denounced them, one by one, in most ample and unequivocal form. In the English language we have the term *servant*, which we apply indiscriminately both to those held in voluntary subjection to another, and to those whose subjection is involuntary. We have also the term *slave*, which is applicable exclusively to those held in involuntary subjection. The Greek language had a word corresponding exactly in signification with our word servant ; but it had none that answered precisely to our term slave.\* How then was an apostle, writing in Greek, to condemn *our slavery* ? Could it be done in the way in which some seem to think it must be done, before they will be convinced of its sinfulness ? How can we expect to find in Scripture the words "slavery is sinful," when the language in which it is written contained no term which expressed the meaning of our word slavery ? Would the advocates of slavery wish us to show that the apostles declare it to be unchristian to hold servants (doulos) ? This would have been denouncing, as criminal, practices far different from slave-holding. But inspiration taught the holy penmen the only correct and efficacious method of conveying their condemnation of this unchristian system. They pronounce of *each one of those several things which constitute slavery, that it is sinful* : thus clearly and for ever denouncing the system, wherever it might appear, and whatever name it might assume. If a writer should take up each part of our federal constitution separately, and condemn it article by article, who would have the folly to assert that, after all, he had *not expressly condemned the constitution* ? Who would say, that this tho-

\* The words oiketes, andrapodon, are those which most nearly correspond, in the idea which they present, with our word slave. But oiketes properly signifies a *domestic* ; and andrapodon, *one taken and enslaved in war*. The inspired writers could not have denounced *our sort of slavery*, by using either of these words. If they had forbidden us to hold oiketai, they would have forbidden us the use of all domestics—if they had forbidden us to hold andrapoda, they might have been interpreted as forbidding our use only of *such slaves as had been taken and enslaved in war*.

rough and entire disapproval of every part of the instrument of confederation must pass for nothing, and is no proof of the writer's hostility to it, because he has never said in exactly so many words, "I disapprove of the constitution of the United States?" We see that he could condemn it most explicitly and thoroughly, without ever mentioning it by name.

Further, human language is so fluctuating that words often, in the lapse of time, change their meaning. The word tyrant expresses now a very different idea from that which it once conveyed. So the term constitution of the United States, at some future period, from the alterations introduced into our government, may indicate something far different from that which it now indicates. It is true wisdom, then, when we wish to perpetuate our condemnation of a system or institution, to express our sentiments of the various *things* that constitute the system or institution, and not of the *mere name* by which it is now known. Thus our sentiments will be guarded from the misconceptions that may arise in the fluctuation of language. So that even if there were words in Greek specifically set apart to designate the idea of slavery, inspiration would probably still have guided the apostles to their present form of expression in its condemnation. Had they used such language as this, "Slavery is sinful," some modern apologist for the system might have alleged that *our slavery was such as existed among the Greeks*—that slavery here was a different thing from that which the apostles denounced. But the course they pursued leaves no room for such a subterfuge. We have received the command, "Love thy neighbor as thyself;" and we are conscious that we are violating the whole spirit as well as letter of this precept, when, for our own trifling pecuniary gain, we keep a whole race sunk in ignorance and sin. We are commanded to give our servants "that which is just and equal;" and no sophistry can persuade us that we fulfil this toward those whom we deprive of the reward of their labor. We know that the idea of a bondman receiving a just and equal remuneration for his labor, never enters the minds of slave-holders. The precepts against fraud, oppression, pride, and cruelty, all cut directly through the

heart of the slave system. Look back at the *constituents* and the *effects* of slavery, and ask yourselves, "Is not every one of these things directly at variance with the plainest commands of the gospel? The maintenance of this system breaks not one law of the Lord, or two laws: it violates the whole code—it leaves scarcely one precept unbroken. And will any one, then, contend that slavery is not reprobated by God, and that he may participate in the system, and assist in its perpetuation, without deep criminality? Forbid it, conscience—forbid it, common sense. Gaming, horse-racing, gladiatorial shows in which men were hired to butcher each other, the selling of children by their parents which was often practised in ancient days—all these things are condemned by the Scriptures, not by name, but (as slavery is condemned) *by denouncing those crimes of which these acts are modifications and illustrations.*

These views of the sinfulness of slavery place it beyond all doubt, that it is the duty of every individual connected with the system to aid, vigorously and efficiently, in its abolition, and thus free himself from all participation in its criminality. How is this to be done? Certainly not by merely treating our slaves kindly, and thus mitigating the evils of their condition. You may say you have already, in the case of your own slaves, abolished the worst evils of the system, and that in every way you promote their comfort and welfare. Still, duty absolutely requires at least one more step—a *guarantee that their future happiness, and that of their children, shall not be at the mercy of another's caprice.* And this can be effected only by a legal provision for their release from bondage. It is probable that the Romans were in a better condition under Titus than they would have been had they governed themselves. But the gentleness of his sway only aggravated the horrors of their situation, under his dark and bloody successors. Granting all that any man may urge in favor of his own kindness to his dependants, still he is, contrary to the laws of nature and God, retaining them in a condition which is tolerable only under the most rare and favorable circumstances—which inevitably works woe and ruin, unless prevented by the singular virtue and generosity of

an extraordinary master. Would we be willing that we and our children should be thus held? And remember that the fundamental principle of Christian morality is, that "What things soever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." Are we complying with our Saviour's injunction, when we thus leave our fellow-beings exposed to all the future miseries which avarice, caprice, and cruelty may inflict? Yet we profess subjection to Christ's laws—"He that knoweth my will and doeth it," says the divine Redeemer, "he it is that loveth me." The very best condition of a slave for life, is like the condition of those unfortunate men that we sometimes read of, who have been unjustly condemned to die; but mercy or policy arresting the execution of the sentence, they have, for a time, been permitted to go at large, yet liable every moment to be remanded to prison and to death. This is the situation of a slave, at his best estate; and who will say that either mercy or justice permits us to retain him in such a situation?

It is often urged that *our slaves are better off than the free negroes*. If mankind had considered this plea for continuing to hold slaves a valid one, the whole world would have been still in slavery; for all nations have been at one time or other in some kind of slavery, and all despots urged this plea against their emancipation. Besides, no man ought to urge this as his reason for retaining his bondmen, unless he feels conscious that it is *his real motive*. And we willingly appeal to every man's conscience to say, whether his own imagined interest is not his real motive for refusing to adopt any efficient measures for changing the condition of his servants. That our negroes, if emancipated, will be worse off, is, we feel, but the specious pretext for lulling our own pangs of conscience, and answering the argument of the philanthropist. None of us believe that *God has so created a whole race, that it is better for them to remain in perpetual bondage*. One mode of emancipation may be preferable to another; but any mode is preferable to the perpetuation, through generations to come, of a degrading bondage. History, with a hundred tongues, testifies that, as a general rule, to emancipate is to elevate. And it is vain for any man to argue against

such a general law of nature, by adducing the occasional departures which have fallen under his own personal observation. We plant ourselves down on the broad and acknowledged principle, that God created all men capable of freedom: if, then, they have become unfit for this condition, it is by our fault they have become so; and our exertions, if we are willing to do our duty, can easily restore to them that fitness of which we have deprived them.

Some may plead, in justification of their personal continuance in the business of slave-holding, their apprehensions that emancipation here will promote the mixture of the white and colored races. To such persons we can give a most conclusive reply. A relinquishment of your slaves, in connexion with their colonization, will effectually relieve all your scruples, as it will free you from the sin of encouraging and supporting the system of slavery, and will, at the same time, deliver you from all criminality which you apprehend would be attached to promoting the mixture of the races. You may plead that colonization will not rid the country of this evil. But it will certainly rid you; and every man's great and first business is to repent of and escape from his own sins. Offer your slaves for colonization, and they will be accepted: thus your conscience will be cleared. It is singular that men should consider themselves justifiable in continuing to support a sinful system, because every one around them will not agree to withdraw their support *at the same time*. The system ought to fall, and must fall; but it will fall only by one and another successively withdrawing from its support, and declaring their belief in its sinfulness. The probability of the full success of colonization, as a political remedy for slavery, is a question which we need not now examine. For neither the sinfulness of slavery, nor our duty to abandon it, depends, in any way, on the success of colonization. If slavery be sinful, our duty is to rid ourselves of all participation in the sin which it involves, whether the colonizing scheme shall prosper or fail. And that it is sinful is as certain as that the light of God's truth has shone upon our world.

As the conclusion of all that has been advanced, we assert it to be the unquestionable duty of every Christian,

to use vigorous and immediate measures for the destruction of this whole system, and for the removal of all its unhappy effects. Both these objects should be contemplated in his efforts.

No plan of emancipation can be proposed to which we may not find objections. Difficulties environ us. Our position is unnatural; and we can neither retain it, nor recede from it, without suffering and inflicting evils; and the man who will not emancipate until he can see a plan which will secure the happiness of himself and his slaves, without effort and without inconvenience, will have to wait until the trumpet of the archangel shall summon the slave and his master before the dread tribunal of their common Lord. He who will not move in this work, because he can see no plan unattended with some evils and some sacrifice, is like one who, having wandered into the depth of a swamp, determines to remain there, because he can see no way of escape, in which he will not encounter thorns and quagmires to obstruct and amoy him.

What, then, is the wisest plan we can adopt for effecting this work of duty? The *most simple* is that of abolition, or immediate and complete emancipation. Many considerations, however, induce in us the belief, that this is not the best plan which might be presented to you for general adoption. It is, doubtless, preferable to perpetuating the bondage of your slaves. So, too, in the political world, a revolution, with all its consequences, is preferable to a perpetuation of tyranny; yet certainly a safe and rapid political reformation is, in all practicable cases, the dictate of both humanity and policy. There are, we doubt not, many cases in which the condition and character of particular slaves render their immediate emancipation the master's duty. But those who conceive that *immediate* emancipation is, in all cases, a duty, do not reflect upon the circumstances in which we are placed. They argue as if we had a system of laws devised in reference to the peculiar character and condition of emancipated blacks, and adapted both to exercise over them a salutary and necessary restraint, and also to secure their intellectual and moral improvement. If the political community in which we live would enact such laws, then the case

which they imagine might be realized, and our duty might be different from what it now is. At present, an emancipated black among us is placed in peculiarly unpropitious circumstances. His situation is surrounded by difficulties and temptations, and no provision is made to secure him against them, or to promote either his own intellectual and moral culture, or that of his offspring. We cannot, then, place our slave under the restraint and protection of peculiar laws, which would, as far as might be practicable, guaranty his safety and advancement. We have no legal system which might be a kind of Mosaic dispensation to our slaves, preparing them for the clearer light and higher privileges of a more glorious economy, where they would be admitted to that full liberty wherewith God, in his providence, has made us free. We, as individuals, are shut up to the alternative of giving our slaves unrestrained self-control, or retaining, for a time, our legal authority over them. The fact that our power is greater than should have ever been intrusted to masters, is no sufficient reason for a conscientious man's immediate relinquishment of his only title to exercise that portion of authority which, he is fully persuaded, is necessary to be continued, for a time, for the good of those over whom it extends.\*

The plan, then, which we propose, is, for the master to retain, during a limited period, and with a regard to the real welfare of the slave, that authority which we before held, in perpetuity, and solely for his own interest. Let

\* Our brethren of the Kentucky Synod cannot long stand where they are. They claim now only to hold slaves *temporarily, for the slaves' own good*. They say, "The fact that our power is greater than should have ever been intrusted to masters," &c. Well, what is the power "greater than should have ever been intrusted to masters?" The power to coerce labor with the raw-hide? The power to sell? We suppose so. And what is "that portion of authority" which the slaves' good makes it necessary to retain? It must be the authority of moral power, we suppose; the authority which a benevolent man can exercise by presenting worthy motives. Such good reasoners as our brethren of the Kentucky Synod will not long maintain that it is right for them to restrain their fellow-men by the *fear* of penalties which they ought never to have had the power to inflict. They will, therefore, ere long, *immediately* renounce to their slaves the power of inflicting such penalties, and they will distinctly state to them, that they retain no power at all over them, except the power to show them that it will be for their own good to continue in their service for fair compensation. When this is done, there will be little cause of contention between us and our Kentucky brethren. Surely they will not continue to exercise, or permit others to suppose they will exercise, that portion of their legal power which, by their own confession, they ought never to have been intrusted with.—*Emancipator*.



the full future liberty of the slave be secured against all contingencies, by a recorded deed of emancipation, to take effect at a specified time. In the mean while, let the servant be treated with kindness—let all those things which degrade him be removed—let him enjoy means of instruction—let his moral and religious improvement be sought—let his prospects be presented before him, to stimulate him to acquire those habits of foresight, economy, industry, activity, skill, and integrity, which will fit him for using well the liberty he is soon to enjoy. That master is, in our opinion, doing most for the destruction of this system, who thus sets in operation a machinery which, in a given and limited period, will not only unbind the body of the slave, but will, link by link, and in the only way in which it can be effected, twist off the fetters that now cramp his soul. If the master retains his authority over his servants only for a time, that he may enjoy ampler opportunities of employing means for their amendment and elevation—if he regards them as a trust committed to him by his Master and theirs, for their mutual benefit, and no longer as property of which he has the uncontrolled disposal, for his own selfish ends—if he acts and feels thus, he is not only free from guilt, but he is “bringing forth fruits meet for repentance”—he is doing a work of righteousness and humanity. If it be pretended that such a man is sinning, it must be on one or other of these grounds—either he is doing harm to his own servant by his course, or he is injuring others by countenancing the oppressive and cruel system of slavery. But neither of these allegations would be correct. Will any sober man, acquainted with the ordinary character of slaves, assert that it would be doing them an injury to deny them, for a time, the exercise of unlimited self-control? Will he assert, that the authority of a conscientious and kind benefactor extending over them, for a time, to assist them in the attainment of correct sentiments, useful knowledge, and virtuous habits—restraining them from vice, shielding them from temptation, and moulding them to rectitude—will he assert that such authority is doing harm? Why is it that wisdom and benevolence have fixed upon twenty-one as the age at which our children are to become their

own masters? Why are they not freed from parental control at seventeen or eighteen? Simply, because, as a general rule, they are not fit for self-government at eighteen. They are, therefore, kept under authority for three years longer; and not only no harm, but even a kindness is done to them. The almost unanimous voice of mankind pronounces that this is right. Now it is well known that the great mass of slaves are mere children in understanding and knowledge. The white youth at eighteen usually far surpasses the great mass of our slaves, in intelligence and capacity of managing successfully his own affairs. If, then, we grant it to be right to retain the one for a few years, to qualify him for his future condition; why is it not right to do the same in the case of the other? We love our children, and do for them that which we think will benefit them: why should we not confer the same benefit on the slave? Is a course which is kindness to a child, injustice and oppression to a slave? The voice of enthusiasm may declare against us; but the voice of sober reason will pronounce in our favor.

Neither is it true, that the gradual emancipator sins by his countenancing others in holding slaves. His example cannot be appealed to by slave-holders, as a justification of their course. His system is as different from theirs as benevolence is from injustice. Let them do as he does, and slavery at once ceases. He has, by his deed of emancipation, recorded his detestation of their system, and shown that he will sacrifice his gains to his abhorrence of it. But it is asked, What difference is there, in principle, between his holding them for some years, and their holding them for life? The difference in principle is the same that exists between guardianship and slavery, or between ordinary apprenticeship and slavery. If it were sinful to do any thing which may be misinterpreted into an encouragement of slavery, it would then be wrong to use the products of slave labor, to associate with slave proprietors, and to do a thousand other acts, which may be said to be a countenancing of this unjust system.

It is also a matter worthy of the serious consideration of a benevolent mind, whether, by a hasty emancipation, he may not be riveting more firmly the chains of other

slaves. The strongest and most frequent argument in the mouth of the advocate of slavery is, the worthlessness of the free blacks. This argument is, it is true, sophistical; but its force is accumulated by every case of emancipation, when the subsequent conduct of the black is at war with his own interest, and the welfare of the community. If, then, we do not use a reasonable prudence, and secure, as far as may be possible, the future good conduct of those whom we make free, we may be found among the number of those whose well-meant but misguided zeal retards the work they aim to advance.

We have thus sketched a general outline of the plan which we propose for your adoption; and have endeavored to show, that the principles on which it is based are the principles of truth and righteousness. We have no hesitation in saying, that this plan, in its general features, should be adopted and acted on by all. In carrying out into its minute details, many cases of doubt and difficulty will arise, both as to the precise period for emancipating particular slaves, and as to the means to be used for their adequate preparation. But every one who cherishes Christian benevolence, and strives to keep an honest conscience, will be able, by applying the principles laid down, to ascertain the *specific course* which is duty, in his own individual case. These cases of difficulty can, however, only occur in respect to the slaves who are already advanced in years, and whose habits are fixed: in relation to the young, our course is plain and unembarrassed. In view, then, of these circumstances, we leave many things to private judgment, and confine ourselves to a few specifications, as exhibiting what is the clear and unquestionable duty of *all*.

1. We would recommend that all slaves now under twenty years of age, and all those yet to be born in our possession, be emancipated as they severally reach their twenty-fifth year.

2. We recommend that deeds of emancipation be now drawn up, and recorded in our respective county courts, specifying the slaves we are about to emancipate, and the age at which each is to become free.

This measure is highly necessary, as it will furnish to

our own minds, to the world, and to our slaves, satisfactory proof of our sincerity in this work ; and it will also secure the liberty of the slave against all contingencies.

3. We recommend that our slaves be instructed in the common elementary branches of education.

4. We recommend that strenuous and persevering efforts be made, to induce them to attend regularly upon the ordinary services of religion, both domestic and public.

5. We recommend that great pains be taken to teach them the holy Scriptures ; and that to effect this, the instrumentality of Sabbath-schools, wherever they can be enjoyed, be united with that of domestic instruction.

These are measures which all ought to adopt ; and we know of no peculiarity of circumstances in the case of any individual which can free him from culpability if he neglects them. There are, indeed, various other means, which we might suggest, for improving the moral and intellectual condition of our blacks ; but they are such as we cannot press upon you as matters of absolute duty, since combinations of circumstances may, in the cases of some individuals, make them impracticable. Our ministers of the gospel, for example, might greatly aid this cause, by preaching at certain stated times to the blacks. Perhaps the afternoon of every alternate Sabbath could not, usually, be better employed than by devoting it to such a service. Much more religious instruction would be conveyed to them by sermons specially adapted to their capacities ; a much larger number would attend on such occasions ; many would be thus induced to attend the ordinances of public worship, at other times, who now are never seen at the house of God ; and there would be a manifestation to the community, that we really believe the souls of the blacks to be imperishable and invaluable.

In many of our congregations, there are a sufficient number of pious masters to enable them, easily and at a small expense, to have the young whom they intend to emancipate taught, during the winter months, by a hired teacher.

There are many families in which the younger white members could easily be induced to pursue a systematic course of imparting instruction to the blacks, and thus

communicate to them in a few years far more than the bare elements of learning. Sabbath-schools for the blacks ought to be organized in nearly all our congregations.

All these and many more such measures have been successfully adopted in some places, and by some individuals. There are many others who might pursue them with equal success.

Brethren, there are three courses before you, one of which you must choose—either to emancipate immediately and without preparation, or to pursue some such plan of gradual emancipation as we propose, or to continue to lend your example and influence to perpetuate slavery. It is improbable that you will adopt the first course: if, then, you refuse to concur in the plan of gradual emancipation, and act upon it, however you may lull conscience, you are lending your aid to perpetuate a demoralizing and cruel system, which it would be an insult to God to imagine that he does not abhor—a system which exhibits power without responsibility, toil without recompense, life without liberty, law without justice, wrongs without redress, infamy without crime, punishment without guilt, and families without marriage—a system which will not only make victims of the present unhappy generation, inflicting upon them the degradation, the contempt, the lassitude, and the anguish of hopeless oppression, but which even aims at transmitting this heritage of injury and woe to their children, and their children's children, down to their latest posterity. Can any Christian contemplate, without trembling, his own agency in the perpetuation of such a system? And what will be the end of these scenes of misery and vice? Shall we wait until worldly politicians and legislators may rise up and bid them cease? We will wait in vain. Already have we heard the sentiment proclaimed from high places, and by the voice of authority, that a race of slaves is necessary to the existence of freedom. Is it from those who utter such sentiments that we expect deliverance to come? No. Reformation must commence where we are divinely taught that "judgment must begin—at the house of God." This work must be done; and Christians must begin it, and begin it soon, or wrath will come upon us. The groans

of millions do not rise for ever unheard before the throne of the Almighty. The hour of doom must soon arrive—the storm must soon gather—the bolt of destruction must soon be hurled—and the guilty must soon be dashed in pieces. The voice of past history, and the voice of inspiration, both warn us that the catastrophe must come, unless averted by repentance. And let us remember that we are each of us individually responsible. We are individually assisting to pile up this mountain of guilt. And even if temporal judgments do not fall upon our day, we are not, on that account, the more safe from punishment. If we “know our Lord’s will and do it not, we shall be beaten with many stripes.” The sophistry and false reasoning by which we may delude our own souls, will not blind the eyes which “are as a flame of fire.” A few years, at most, will place us where we would gladly give all the slaves of a universe, to buy off the punishment that oppression brings down upon the soul. It may be difficult to do our duty; but it will be far more difficult to stand in the judgment without having done it.

Brethren, we have done. The hour is coming, in which the slave and his master must stand together before the tribunal of God—a God who judges righteously. Are you prepared to place yourselves before him who will decide upon your eternal destiny, and say that you have done justice to those whom you now hold in bondage? Are you prepared to say, “As I have done unto these, so let it be done unto me; as I have showed mercy, so let me receive mercy at the hands of my judge?” Anticipate, we beseech you, the feelings and decision of that great day which is fast hastening on—try yourselves now, as God will then try you. “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” Are you “doing justly,” while you retain your fellow-men in hopeless bondage? Are you “loving mercy,” while you are supporting a system that degrades and brutalizes beings whom God created in his own image? These are solemn questions. Let reason answer them; and let conscience decide your future course.

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