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- ART. I.—1. *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Special Report of the Prudential Committee, on the control to be exercised over Missionaries and Mission Churches.* Printed for the use of the Board at the Annual Meeting.\* Revised edition. Press of T. R. Marvin.
2. *Correspondence between the Cherokee and Choctaw Missions, the Rev. S. B. Treat, and the Prudential Committee.* Missionary Herald, October, 1848.

IT is a matter of notoriety that the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, have for several years been sorely harassed on account of their supposed patronage or tolerance of slavery. Those known to the country as abolitionists, have felt it to be a duty to expostulate with the Board from time to time, for receiving money from the owners of slaves, for employing slaveholding missionaries, and for sustaining mission churches in which slaveholders were received as members.

\* Also published in the Missionary Herald for October, 1848.

The Board have thus been constrained to take action on this subject, and on several occasions have given deliverances which seemed to satisfy, for the time, the great body of their patrons. Still the matter has not been suffered to rest. With a view apparently of having the subject finally disposed of, the Board in 1847 adopted the following resolution, viz. "That the Prudential Committee be requested to present a written report at the next annual meeting, on the nature and extent of the control which is to be exercised over the missionaries under the care of the Board; and the moral responsibility of the Board for the nature of the teaching of the missionaries, and for the character of the churches."

In the meantime, the Prudential Committee directed the Rev. S. B. Treat, one of the secretaries, to visit the Cherokee and Choctaw Missions, "to ascertain, as fully as practicable, the state and prospects of those missions; and to inquire more particularly into their relations to the subject of slavery." Mr. Treat devoted seventeen weeks to this visitation. He held full conference with the missionaries, and at his request, each mission addressed a letter to the committee, exhibiting "their views and principles in detail," on the subject of slavery. Subsequently he drew up a report to the Prudential Committee of his visit, which report, together with the letters just mentioned, and the reply made by the committee through Mr. Treat, are all published in the *Missionary Herald* for October, 1848.

The report of the Prudential Committee, above mentioned, was submitted to the Board at its late meeting in September last, "but as the members had not time to give the subject that considerate attention which its importance demanded, the final disposition of the same was postponed." Mr. Treat's report on his mission, and the correspondence to which it gave rise, were read to the Board, and by them referred to a committee who reported that they abstained from expressing any opinion either on the letters of the missions or on that of Mr. Treat in reply, because they constitute a part of an unfinished correspondence, and because no final action could, with propriety, be had at that time. It was therefore resolved that "the whole subject should be left for the present, where it now is, in the hands of the Prudential Committee." Neither of these important documents, therefore, has yet received the sanction of the Board. In

the meantime they are published, in various forms, for information and discussion.

There are several reasons which determine us to call the attention of our readers to these documents. In the first place the principles contained in the Report of the Prudential Committee on the control of missionaries, are of great importance, affecting the whole nature and organization of the church. In the next place, those principles, and the whole subject, have as direct a bearing on the missionary operations of our church, as upon those of the American Board. Thirdly, it is to be presumed that the very design of the extensive publication of these papers, is to elicit friendly discussion. And finally, the first and most stringent application of the principles of Mr. Treat's letter, is to ministers and churches of one of our own presbyteries.

The questions embraced in the Report are discussed with singular skill and wisdom. In most points, we are happy in agreeing with its excellent authors. From some of their positions we are forced to dissent; and as far as Mr. Treat's letter is concerned, dissent must assume the form of a solemn protest, which, in that particular case, every presbyterian is entitled to enter.

The first class of subjects discussed in this Report relate to the general principles of ecclesiastical polity.

It is specially interesting to find that principles which retired men have gathered, after much study, from the scriptures, are those which practical men are led to adopt from stress of circumstances. The providence of God is forcing on the church views of its nature and polity, very different from those which theorists have in many instances entertained. It is well known e. g. that it was the common doctrine of all denominations that ordinations sine titulo are unscriptural; that the office of an evangelist was confined to the early age of the church; that those thus designated in the New Testament, were the vicarii of the apostles, vested with extraordinary powers for a special purpose and a limited time. To congregationalists no less than to prelatists, a bishop without charge was as much a solecism as a husband without a wife. A call from the people, in some form, was regarded as an essential part of a call to the ministry. Even presbyterians, though their principles involved no such conclusion, were led by their circumstances, to entertain a like,

disapprobation of such ordinations. They were an inconvenience. The whole land was possessed. No more ministers than parishes were needed, and therefore it was thought wrong to create them.

It is curious to see how all these parties have been driven, by the course of events, from their theory on this subject. Rome, petrified in one rigid form, cannot change, and therefore perpetrates the absurdity of ordaining men to extinct or imaginary dioceses. Hence we hear of the bishop of Heliopolis, or Ecbatana, or Hieropolis, even here in America. The Independents when brought into contact with the heathen, were for a long time in a strait what to do. They felt that it was a crying sin to allow their fellow men to perish in ignorance of the gospel. Christ, however, had provided, according to their system, no means of sending the gospel beyond the limits of organized churches. The office of evangelists was obsolete. Nothing therefore was to be done but to allow the heathen to perish, or to endeavour to plant churches so near them that they could individually be brought under Christian influence. Puritan piety soon burnt off these tow bonds of a narrow system. The absurdity that a church, commissioned and required to preach the gospel to every creature, could not lawfully have any preachers except among those already Christians, was soon discarded. Almost every accessible portion of the heathen world has been visited and blessed, by ministers ordained in violation of the fundamental principles of original congregationalism. Nay the old doctrine seems to be well nigh forgot. This Report says with as much confidence as though there was not a congregationalist alive, "The denial that a missionary is an office bearer until a Christian church has invited him to take the oversight of it in the Lord, is made in utter forgetfulness, as it would seem, of the commission by which a preaching ministry was originally instituted. The primary and pre-eminent design of that commission was to create the *missionary* office, and to perpetuate it until the gospel should have been preached to every creature." p. 6. Ministers in the order of nature and of time, are before churches. The missionary work has thus wrought a complete emancipation of our Congregational brethren, from a portion at least of their swaddling clothes.

The Presbyterians who came to the middle states were

scarcely less strict in their notions on this subject, than the Independents of New England. They had larger ideas of the church, and a higher view of the ministry, but they still thought that a theory elaborated in a thickly settled country, could be transferred bodily to this new world. Because Scottish law and English parliaments forbade ordinations *sine titulo*, they thought they must be wrong in themselves, except at least under very peculiar circumstances. But when they found themselves in a country where, instead of every square foot of land belonging by law to some parish, hundreds of square miles contained only here and there a Christian family, they were forced to have more ministers than organized churches. Still they could not entirely shake off the prejudices of education, and therefore as our early records show, the Presbyteries were constantly coming with the humble request to the Synod, for permission to ordain A. B. or C. D. *sine titulo*. This doctrine is however as thoroughly obsolete as the dress of our forefathers. As a matter of fact the churches do not believe it, and they do not practice upon it. They have outgrown it. Transplanted into a larger sphere and awakened to a sense of her original vocation to preach the gospel to every creature, the church feels that she has need of men to gather churches as well as to supply them, of men to exercise on all occasions, and to every willing people, and not to one congregation only, the gifts of a *διδασκαλος*. She has turned from the laws of European nations, made to protect bishops and rectors in the undisturbed possession of their livings, to the New Testament. There she has found no such trammels as to the exercise of her right to ordain—and somewhat to her surprise perhaps, has discovered that every minister mentioned in the scripture was ordained *sine titulo*; in other words, that there is among all the preachers named in the New Testament, scarcely one who was pastor of a particular congregation. The church breathes rather more freely here than she did in the crowded countries of the old world. It will be labour thrown away to attempt to bring her again into bondage. This is one good service done the church by the missionary work foreign and domestic.

A second benefit to be expected from the same source is the gradual banishment of high-churchism, and the consequent promotion of Catholic unity. By high-churchism we mean the

disposition to attribute undue importance to the external organization of the church; the desire to make everything relating thereto a matter of divine right; and to insist that no society, however orthodox and pure, can be a church unless organized in one particular form. This disposition has deep root in human nature. The external and visible is ever too apt to overshadow the spiritual. It is not therefore only in Romanists and Prelatists, but even in Presbyterians and Independents we see manifestations of this spirit. Things are made obligatory, which God has left indifferent. Points are regarded as essential which are either unimportant or injurious. This spirit perverts the very nature of religion. It subjects the conscience to human authority. It alienates those who ought to be united, and is the cause of almost all the schism which afflicts, disgraces and impedes the church.

We as presbyterians of course believe that the essential principles of our system are laid down in scripture; that there is no office *jure divino* superior to that of presbyters; that the people have a right by their representatives to take part in the government of the church, and that the whole church is one, and hence a part is responsible to a larger portion, or to the whole. But we neither believe that any one mode of organization is essential to the being of the church, nor that the details of any system of church polity are laid down in scripture as universally obligatory. The idea that the church has no discretion in such matters, no liberty to adapt herself to her varying circumstances, is derived, in no small measure, from pressing unduly the analogy between the old dispensation and the new. Because everything was prescribed to the Hebrew church, it is inferred that there must be an express divine warrant for every arrangement adopted in the Christian church. Thus also it argued that because there was a priesthood then, there must be a priesthood now; because the church and state were united then, they must be united now. The old economy was a visible theocracy, and therefore the new dispensation must be the same. Strange to say, this was the great argument and the great mistake, alike of Papists and Puritans, of the persecuting Dominicans and the intolerant Covenanters. There is nothing to favour this doctrine. The old dispensation was designed for one people,

for one very limited country, for a specific object and for a limited time. Most of its institutions also were typical, and therefore of necessity fixed. The institutions of the Christian church are not prophetic, neither are they limited to one people. They are designed for all nations, for all ages and for every part of the globe. It is inconceivable that any one outward form of the church can be suited for all these different circumstances. We can readily believe that one style of building and one mode of dress might suit all parts of Palestine, but who can believe that God would prescribe the same garments for the Arabs and the Laplanders. It is therefore a priori in the highest degree improbable that God ever intended to deny to his church all discretion as to the details of her organization. When we open the New Testament, the first thing that strikes the attention of the reader is, its comparative silence on this subject. It is truth, repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; it is the way of reconciliation with God and restoration to the divine image, which are the prominent, overshadowing subjects there presented. Prelatists meet this difficulty by acknowledging the fact, but appealing to tradition as of equal authority with the scriptures. Those Protestants who adopt the *jus divinum* principle, are obliged to substitute conjectures as to what was done, in place of positive commands as to what we should do. The fact that God has not commanded Christians to adopt any one mode of organization, is proof enough that he intended to leave his people free, within certain prescribed limits, to adapt their church polity to their circumstances.

This is the conclusion to which the work of missions is forcing all denominations of Christians. This Report avows that it is found impracticable to transfer bodily to heathen countries, any of the forms of church organization adopted in Christian lands. With regard to religious teachers the committee uses the following language: "Considering the weakness and waywardness so generally found in men just emerging from heathenism, native pastors must for a time, and in certain respects, be practically subordinate to the missionaries, by whom their churches were formed, and through whom, it may be, they are themselves partially supported. . . . Should a practical parity, in all respects, be insisted on between the missionaries

and the native pastors, in the early periods when every thing is in a forming state, it is not seen how the native ministry can be trained to system and order, and enabled to stand alone, or even to stand at all. As with ungoverned children, self-sufficiency impatience of restraint, jealousy and other hurtful passions will be developed. The native pastors themselves are, for a season but babes in Christ, children in experience, knowledge and character. And hence missionaries, who entertain the idea that ordination must have the effect to place the native pastors at once on a perfect equality with themselves, are often backward in intrusting the responsibilities of the pastoral office to natives." p. 7. "It must be obvious that the view just taken of this subject involves no danger to the future parity of the native ministry, considered in their relation to each other, for, in the nature of things, the missionary office is scarcely more successive and communicable to native pastors than the apostolic office to evangelists." p. 8.

This appears to us perfectly reasonable and scriptural. No one would think of instituting a democracy among recently emancipated slaves, especially where they formed a majority of the community. It is not inconsistent with our republicanism that we keep the Indian tribes on our borders in a state of pupillage, or for a time appoint the governors and judges of our territories. It is a plain scriptural principle that superiority should be acknowledged and respected. Parents are superior to their immature children, and therefore it is the will of God that children should obey their parents. The inspired apostles were superior to all other ministers, and therefore they had authority over the whole church. The Romish theory on this subject is right enough, it is only false in fact. That theory is, that the bishops are apostles, and therefore have a right to govern the church. We admit that if they were apostles, that is inspired and infallible men, they would indeed have a right to rule, and that to resist them would be disobedience to God. But as they are no more inspired than other men, and are often in all respects the inferiors of their brethren, to claim for them a divine right to rule, becomes an unscriptural and most hurtful usurpation. It is not the mere transient inequalities as to age and capacity, such as exist among men born and educated under the same circumstances, that can lay any adequate foundation for offi-



cial subordination. It must be of such a nature as in the cases referred to, as creates a real incapacity on the one side to share in the duties and responsibilities of the other side. That such a disparity does exist between European and American missionaries and their heathen converts, cannot be denied. Such converts, however, must be employed as religious teachers, both because the field is far too large for the missionaries to cultivate alone, and because in this way only can a native ministry be trained up. Being however children in comparison to the missionaries, they must be treated as such. They are in such a sense inferior that they must be subordinate. The providence of God has already forced the missionaries, especially in the Sandwich Islands, to act upon this principle. There a single missionary has under his care a church with four or five thousand communicants. This supposes a congregation of from ten to fifteen thousand persons. It is impossible that the pastor can adequately minister to such a multitude. He must have helpers. Those assistants must be taken from among the native converts. The pastor selects them, assigns them their district or sphere of labour, tells them what they must do, superintends their instructions, and advances them from one kind of duty to a higher as they increase in capacity. Whatever names may be given to these assistants, it would be hard to find anything on scriptural grounds to object to such an arrangement.

As to the organization of mission churches, the Report before us says: "When the time comes for organizing native converts into churches, the missionaries, acting in behalf of these children in knowledge and in the power of self-organization and government, cannot properly be restrained, by foreign interference, from conforming the organization to what *they* regard as the apostolical usage in similar cases, having respect, of course to those necessary limitations already mentioned."\* p. 31. "The result

\* Reference is here made to pp. 12, 13 of the Report, where it is said the missionary comes under certain well understood pledges. "1. As to *his manner of life*; which is to be one of exemplary piety and devotion to his work. 2. As to *his teaching*; which must be conformed to the evangelical doctrines generally received by the churches, and set forth in their well known Confessions of Faith. 3. As to *ecclesiastical usages*; to which he must conform substantially as they prevail among the churches operating through the Board. He must hold to a clerical parity among the brethren of the mission. He must hold to the validity of infant baptism. He must admit only such to the Lord's Supper, as give credible evidence of faith in Christ. So far as his relation to the Board and his stand-

may be a much simpler organization for the mission churches, than is found in lands that have long sat under the light and influences of the gospel. Indeed, experience has clearly shown, that it is not well to attempt the transfer of religious denominations of Christendom, full-grown and with all their peculiarities, into heathen lands, at least until the new-born churches shall have had time to acquire a good degree of discriminative and self-governing power. The experience acquired in lands long Christian, partially fails us when we go into heathen countries. We need to gain a new experience, and to revise many of our principles and usages; and for this purpose to go prayerfully to the New Testament." p. 31.

"The religious liberty which we ourselves enjoy, is equally the birth-right of Christian converts in every part of the heathen world, on coming into the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ, which they may claim as soon as they are prepared for it; just as American freedom is the birth-right of our own children. The right of our children is not infringed by that dependence and control which they need during their infancy and childhood. It is even their right to claim, that the parent shall thus act for them in the early stages of their existence. But the wise parent will always form the principles and habits of his child with reference to the time when the right of self-control must be fully exercised and yielded. In like manner the missionary must needs give form, at the outset, to the constitution and habits of mission churches, and for a time he must virtually govern them, But he will do this with a constant regard to a coming period, when those churches must and will act independently." p. 32.

Experience then has led the authors of this Report to recognise the following principles. 1. That a call from a church is not necessary to a call to the ministry; or, that ministers may properly be ordained *sine titulo*; or, that the office of an evangelist is not obsolete. 2. That such evangelists have all the rights and prerogatives belonging to the ministerial office. They are true office-bearers in the church of God. 3. That they may exercise a wide discretion as to the mode in which they organize churches gathered from among the heathen. 4. That mission

ing in the mission are concerned, he is of course not pledged to conform his proceedings to any other book of discipline than the New Testament."

churches have all the rights which belong to other Christian churches, though for a time they may properly be retained in a state of pupilage.

These principles must commend themselves to every candid reader. Regeneration does not convert an African into an European, or a Hindoo into an American. The heathen among whom our missionaries labour are far behind the Jews, Greeks and Romans to whom the apostles preached. As the church is to be established among all sorts of men, Hottentots, Hindoos, Sandwich Islanders, Indians, Greeks and Barbarians, wise and unwise, it must have liberty to adapt itself to these diverse circumstances. To transfer congregationalism to a heathen country, would be destructive, and has been found impossible. This fact should teach our eastern brethren that their system is not *jure divino* for all Christians, and should moderate the tone of assumption, which in some parts of the country, has begun to prevail on this subject. We do not pretend that Scotch Presbyterianism can be transferred bodily to our infant missionary churches. But we are disposed to make this claim in behalf of the genuine principles of continental and American presbyterianism. They have an elasticity which admits of their being suited to every change of circumstances. It is no violation of those principles to have preaching and teaching elders, subordinate to the pastor, as in the French churches; nor where suitable elders are scarce, to have several churches under one session or consistory as in various parts of Europe. We believe that God has mercifully left his people at liberty, within certain general principles laid down in his word, to modify their church polity as his providence may render expedient, and yet under all these forms to remain faithful to the radical principles of presbyterianism. It is not our purpose, however, to glorify presbyterianism; on the contrary we wish to express our sympathy with the Catholic spirit of this Report, and to show how much against the providence as well as the word of God, is the exclusive high-church [principle, which would transfer to the Christian church all the trammels, which, for wise reasons, were imposed on the church before the advent.

The second subject considered by the committee is the responsibility of missionaries.

What security have the churches at home for the fidelity of the men sent to plant the gospel among the heathen? The answer given to this question is—1. The care taken in the selection of the men. 2. The definite and well-understood engagements into which the missionary enters. 3. His claim to support like that of a pastor, depends on his fulfilling his engagements. 4. The Board have a right to enforce this fidelity, not by ecclesiastical censures, but by dissolving the connexion of the missionary with itself and with the mission. 5. The mutual watch and care of the missionaries over each other, and the direct influence of truth on their minds and hearts. 6. The influence of public sentiment at home. The missionaries know that in a peculiar manner the eyes of the church are fixed upon them, and that any failure on their part must be attended with special disgrace. To all this is to be added, if not included under number five, the responsibility of the missionary to the ecclesiastical body at home to which he may belong. These to say the least, are as secure pledges for the faithful discharge of their duties as can be given by ministers in this country. Experience shows this to be the case. They have their infirmities and their difficulties; but it is matter of devout thankfulness to God, that American missionaries have been an honour and blessing to their country, and sustain a character in all respects equal to any similar body of men in the foreign field.

The rights and responsibilities of the Board in relation to missionaries and mission churches, is the third topic discussed.

This is much the most difficult and delicate division of the whole subject. The principles advocated in this Report are the following. 1. The Board has no ecclesiastical control, properly speaking, either over the missionaries or their churches. It can neither depose nor excommunicate, nor in any way effect the ecclesiastical standing of those under its care. pp. 13, 22. 2. It has the right to enforce fidelity on the part of the missionaries to their engagements. Those engagements include among other particulars, *a.* Exemplary Christian conduct. *b.* Correct religious teaching. *c.* Conformity to established ecclesiastical usages. *d.* Proper diligence in the discharge of their duties. pp. 12, 13, 21, 38. 3. The rule by which the Board purpose to judge of the religious teaching of their missionaries is, "the evangelical

doctrines generally received by the churches, and set forth in their well-known Confessions of Faith." p. 13. "Many things," it is said, "which at first, it might seem desirable for the Board to do, are found on a nearer view, to lie entirely beyond its jurisdiction; so that to attempt them would be useless, nay, a ruinous usurpation. Nor is the Board at liberty to withdraw its confidence from missionaries, because of such differences of opinion among them, as are generally found and freely tolerated in presbyteries, councils, associations, and other bodies here at home." p. 17. The standard of judgment as to matters of polity is, "the ecclesiastical usages" which "prevail among the churches operating through the Board." "While the Board may not establish new principles in matters purely ecclesiastical, it may enforce the observance of such as are generally acknowledged by the churches, and were understood to be acknowledged by the missionaries when sent to their fields." p. 13. 4. The Board, is therefore, "responsible *directly*, in the manner which has been described, for the teaching of the missionaries." p. 38. 5. The Board is not responsible *directly* for the character of the mission churches. If there be evils, even scandalous wickedness in those churches, they can be reached only through the missionaries. p. 39. When evils exist however in the mission churches the committee may and must inquire whether the missionaries are doing their duty.

This we believe to be a correct statement of the views of the committee in relation to their authority and responsibility in reference to the missionaries and the mission churches. From this it appears that the committee claim for the Board the right not only to enforce the fidelity and diligence of those under its care, as missionaries, but their correct teaching and discipline, as ministers. It is assumed that the Board has the right, in all cases, to judge of that correctness. They can inflict no ecclesiastical censure, but they can dissolve the connection between the missionary and the mission for error in doctrine, or discipline.

We of course do not controvert all the positions above quoted from the Report. Nor do we deny that the Board, under peculiar circumstances, may rightfully exercise all the powers here claimed in its behalf. The above view of the subject, however, involves, in our judgment, an important misapprehension of the relation of the Board both to the churches at home, and to the mission-

aries and churches abroad. The Board is simply the agent, and not the plenipotentiary of the church. It does not stand in the place of the churches, nor is it invested with all the oversight and control over the missionaries, which the church may properly exercise. It stands related to those whom it sends out, as missionaries, and not as ministers. Every such messenger to the heathen sustains a twofold relation, the one as a missionary to the Board, the other as a minister to his ecclesiastical superiors or associates. To the former, he is responsible for his conduct as a missionary; he must go where he is sent; stay where he is required to remain; perform that part of the missionary work which may be assigned to him, &c., &c. To the latter, he is responsible for his doctrines and ministerial conduct. Where a missionary stands isolated, or has no ecclesiastical supervisors, or none who can act as such, then as a matter of necessity, the consideration of his doctrine and acts of discipline, falls under the cognizance of the Board; not however as a part of their appropriate function, but on the same principle that in cases of emergency, every citizen, and not merely the police, is bound to enforce the law of the land.

The case of a missionary is analogous to that of an officer of the army. Every such officer bears a twofold relation; the one to his military superiors, the other to the civil authorities. As an officer, he is to be judged by the articles of war; as a citizen, by the laws of the land. For the Secretary at War, or commanding general, to take into his hands the administration of the civil law, is equivalent to the proclamation of martial law. In like manner for the Board of Missions to undertake to judge of matters of doctrine and discipline, would be like putting the whole missionary world in a state of siege.

If the Board is the agent of the churches for the conduct of missions, it is clear, 1. That it has the right to select and send forth missionaries, to determine their location, to superintend and direct their labours, to enforce fidelity and diligence, and in general to do whatever is requisite for the successful prosecution of their work, which is not otherwise provided for. 2. That the Board has the *power* to discard any missionary at pleasure, i. e., for any reason that to them may seem sufficient. It may be incompetency, indolence, ill-temper, or any other cause.

3. The only question is, what are the reasons which *justify* an exercise of that power? It is evident that those reasons may be perfectly adequate; or they may be insufficient; or they may be such as involve a breach of trust on the part of the Board toward the churches. If, for example, they should discard a missionary because he was a Calvinist or Paedo-baptist, that would clearly be a breach of faith with those churches for whom they act and from whom they derive their funds. 4. The points on which we think it important to insist are these: First, that no doctrine or mode of teaching can be an adequate ground for discarding any missionary, which doctrine or mode of teaching is sanctioned by the churches operating through the Board; and that no mode of church organization, or condition of church membership, can be a justifiable reason for withholding aid and fellowship from a mission church, which mode of organization and condition of church membership, is approved by those churches. And secondly, that the question whether a given doctrine is consistent with the faith of those churches, or a given mode of organization, or condition of church membership is compatible with their discipline, is one for those denominations and not for the Board to decide. That is, the Board cannot go behind the decisions of those churches, and pronounce that to be inconsistent with their doctrines, which they say is consistent, or that to be incompatible with their discipline, which they say is conformable to it.

It is hardly to be presumed that the Prudential Committee would dissent from either of these propositions as thus stated. And yet they are very different from the principles of their report, and lead to widely different practical results. The principal points of difference are these two. *First.* The Report assumes that the Board is directly responsible for the teaching of the missionaries, and of course have the right to superintend and direct it. Hence the committee call up the missionaries and interrogate them, Do you think so and so? Do you teach thus and thus? According to our view this responsibility does not rest upon the committee (unless as a derelict) but upon the ecclesiastical body, presbytery, classis, or association to which the missionary belongs. *Second.* The Report, as a necessary consequence of the assumed responsibility on the part of the Board

for the teaching of the missionaries, claims for it the right of judging of that teaching; of deciding whether it is consistent with the generally received doctrines of the churches; and of matters of church polity and discipline, whether they are consistent or otherwise with established ecclesiastical usage. We on the other hand, must deny to the Board any such right, (except as before said in the absence of the legitimate judges of such matters). The right of judging must rest where the responsibility is.

That our view of this important subject is the correct one, we think will appear from the following considerations. 1. The Board is not an ecclesiastical body. It disclaims all ecclesiastical authority. But to sit in judgment on the orthodoxy of ministers, to determine whether their doctrines are consistent with "the well-known Confession of Faith," or their principles of polity and discipline, with established ecclesiastical usage, is one of the very highest and most difficult duties of an ecclesiastical tribunal. It is, from the nature of the case, ecclesiastical control in the truest and highest sense of the term. It is of no account to say that the Board cannot affect the ecclesiastical standing or privileges of those whom it judges. The nature of the cause depends on the matter tried, and not on the character of the penalty. Deposition and excommunication are rare ecclesiastical inflictions. Admonition and other milder censures are much more frequent. That the effect of an unfavourable decision by the Board is disgrace, the loss of standing and the loss of support, instead of temporary suspension from church privileges, does not alter the case. If the judgment be rendered for error in doctrine, it is an ecclesiastical judgment, whatever may be the nature of the penalty. In England, the courts having jurisdiction over clergymen, for clerical offences, whether the Court of Arches or the Privy Council, are courts of ecclesiastical control, even though the penalty they impose be fine or loss of stipend. The report says: "The question assumes a plain business form—whether there is an actual departure from the basis, on which the missionary appointment was made, and what effect it has exerted on the peace and usefulness of the mission, and on the operations of the Board." (p. 22.) This is not one whit a plainer question, nor one whit more a business matter, than a trial for heresy before a presbytery. In this latter case, the simple question is, "whether there is an actual



departure from the basis on which" the man was received into the presbytery. If the latter is an ecclesiastical question so is the former. They are both questions relating to the orthodoxy of ministers. And the body authorized to sit in judgment on that question, is vested with ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The right therefore to judge of such matters does not belong to the Board, for by common consent they have no ecclesiastical control.

2. This authority to judge in matters of doctrine does not belong to the Board. It was never committed to them by any power, human or divine. It does not inhere in them in virtue of their constitution, nor has it been delegated to them by the churches.

3. It is an authority which the Board is not competent to exercise. The Board itself meets but once in the year, and that only for a few days. Its authority is really in the hands of the Prudential Committee. Such a committee, however, is evidently not a competent tribunal to sit in judgment on the ministerial character, the orthodoxy or heterodoxy, of hundreds of missionaries in all parts of the world. They are, in many cases laymen, and have not the competent knowledge. Lawyers would not like to see clergymen set to administer the laws of the land. And, without disrespect, it may be said, that if there is anything from which ministers and the church need pray to be delivered, it is from being subject to civil judges, in ecclesiastical matters. Judge Roger's decision has given a wholesome lesson on that subject to old school Presbyterians, and the decision of Judge Gibson, we hope, has been equally beneficial to our new school brethren. Besides the incompetency arising from want of training, any such body, as the Prudential Committee, is too remote from the person to be tried. They cannot adequately examine into any such case, unless it happens to be one of the most open and notorious character. They cannot however calculate upon always having cases of that kind. They may be called upon to determine whether a given doctrine is not Arminian or Pelagian, and a real denial of the well known creed of the churches. Besides all this they have no promise of divine guidance in this matter.

4. The power in question is both onerous and dangerous. One would think the Prudential Committee had work enough on their hands, in superintending so many missions in every

part of the world, with all their complicated concerns, without assuming the additional burden of directing the teaching, and judging the orthodoxy of some hundreds of missionaries. We doubt not the committee would rejoice to see themselves exempted from all responsibility on that subject. It is besides rather ineongruous with our Protestant and especially our American ideas, that five or six men in Boston or New York, should have the power to determine what doctrines shall, and what shall not be taught in Europe, Asia, Africa and America; and to decide whether this or that opinion is consistent with the standards of evangelical churches. How much controversy have we had on that very point in all parts of the country. How earnestly has it been debated in New England itself. How decided were such men as Cornelius and Nettleton that certain doctrines whose advocates were neither few nor inconsiderable, ought not to be tolerated in our churches at home or abroad. Is the Prudential Committee prepared to decide all these litigated points? They must of necessity either exercise an intolerable power, or they must in a great measure let things take their course. Generally they would pursue the latter method, and every now and then the former. But the churches never can long recognise a power at war with all our ecclesiastical institutions. It would be very much like the republicanism which they have in Paris under General Cavaignac.

5. It is altogether unnecessary that the power to inspect the teaching of the missionaries and to judge of their doctrines, should be lodged in the hands either of the Board or of the Prudential Committee. It is far more safe and effective, if lodged elsewhere. The committee do not receive a missionary in the first instance, on the ground of any personal knowledge of his orthodoxy. They do not subject him to any theological examination. They take his orthodoxy for granted on the authority of the presbytery or the council that ordained him. They may refuse to receive him for ill-health, ignorance, unamiableness, or other reasons of like nature, but they could not refuse his services because he held any opinion which the church to which he belongs, and the body which ordained him, pronounce to be sound. In the first instance then, the committee are relieved of the responsibility of judging of matters of doctrine, and disclaim all right to review the decisions of com-

petent church courts. When the missionary enters upon his field, he retains his ecclesiastical connexion whatever it was. He remains a minister of the Dutch, of the Presbyterian, or of the Congregational church or denomination. In all ordinary cases, three, six, or more ministers belong to one station. If they are Presbyterians they form a Presbytery, if Congregationalists, an Association. There is just the same oversight over the orthodoxy of a member of the Choctaw Presbytery of Indian, as of a member of the Presbytery of New York. There is just as much security for the correct teaching of a Congregational minister in Ceylon, as for a similar minister in Connecticut. In all such cases the responsibility rests with the ministerial associates of the missionary. It is the doctrine of all the churches operating through the Board, that a minister is subject to his brethren in the Lord. That subjection is neither thrown off nor transferred when he becomes a missionary. If no man or committee is entitled to question a member of the Presbytery of New York, or of the Association of East Windsor, about his doctrines, no man or committee can question the members of a presbytery or association in a foreign land.

Placing the responsibility for the teaching of the missionaries, and the right to judge concerning it on their ministerial associates, has, it seems to us, every thing in its favour. It is according to principle. It is what all churches do in this country, and what they all say ought to be done. It is one of the most valuable rights of the ministry. It is to them what trial by jury is in the state. It is far more safe and effective as a method of control. It relieves the committee of a burdensome, invidious and most dangerous prerogative. And finally it is right, and the other wrong.

It has already been admitted, that where a missionary is perfectly isolated, where he has no ministerial associates, then from the necessity of the case, his responsibility is to the committee. But these are rare cases, and ought not to be permitted to occur.

6. Operating on the principle here advocated, would free the committee from a great deal of embarrassment. The Congregational, Dutch Reformed, and a large part of the Presbyterian churches make the American Board their agent for conducting foreign missions. Those denominations have severally their standards of doctrine, and each its own method of deter-

mining what is and what is not consistent with its faith and discipline. Let them decide such matters. So long as a minister is *rectus in ecclesia* with the Dutch or the Presbyterians, the committee are free from all responsibility as to his doctrine. So long as those churches allow of a certain mode of church organization, or condition of church membership, the committee have nothing to say in the matter. If the venerable Mr. Kingsbury stands well in his own presbytery, the five or six gentlemen in Boston composing the Prudential Committee, may well rest satisfied with his doctrines. If father Spaulding, in Ceylon, has the confidence of all his ministerial associates, the churches in this country will not be suspicious of his orthodoxy. If the Dutch Reformed or Presbyterians allow those who drink wine or hold slaves to come to the Lord's table, the blame, if there be any, rests with them. How can the committee help it? Will they withhold the money contributed by those denominations from churches who do exactly what they are allowed to do by their ecclesiastical superiors? The committee themselves say they cannot withdraw their confidence from any missionary for any opinion tolerated by the churches at home. (p. 17.) Then why not let the churches decide whether a doctrine or usage is tolerated in fact, and ought to be so. This is all we contend for, viz. that it rests with the churches, i. e., with the regular ecclesiastical authorities, to judge whether the doctrines and discipline of the missionaries and their churches are to be tolerated or not. We can hardly think of a case where this principle would not apply. In all the large missions of the Board, there are ministers and church members enough to constitute as trustworthy a tribunal as can be formed at home. If those ministers form a presbytery or classis, there is an appeal from their decision to the Synod or General Assembly. If they form an association or council, that is the highest tribunal known to the Congregational churches. If a mission, presbytery or association become decidedly heretical, they are to be treated precisely as such bodies would be treated at home. But the question of heresy is one for the churches and not for the committee to decide. The New School General Assembly allow slaveholders to come to the Lord's table. Shall the committee, agents of the New School Presbyterians, refuse to sustain such churches, or shall they throw the responsibility on the denominations to which

the churches belong? We think the latter is the only course consistent with right principles, or compatible with the harmonious action of the numerous patrons of the Board.

Much therefore as we admire this Report in many of its features, and greatly as we respect the source whence it proceeds, we cannot but believe that the committee have misconceived the relation in which the Board stands, as well to the churches at home, as to the missionaries abroad. The Board is not the plenipotentiary of the churches, to secure the orthodoxy of missionaries or the purity of mission-churches. It is an agent for employing such missionaries and planting such churches abroad, as the churches at home approve. The missionaries are responsible to the Board for their fidelity and diligence as missionaries, but for their doctrines and discipline as ministers, they are responsible to the denominational churches to which they belong, which churches are represented by the ministerial associates with whom the missionaries are connected.

We have not said a word against the organization of the Board. We would not for any consideration lisp a syllable that could in any way do them harm. We most unfeignedly rejoice in their great success and usefulness. We conceive we are doing them a friendly act in publishing this review. It is right to discuss, with respect and kind feeling, a question in which all churches, and the Presbyterian especially, are deeply concerned. We believe it is perfectly easy for the American Board so to conduct their operations, as not to come into collision with the rights of the churches. We believe, moreover, that any departure from that way will be found to be, in the language of this Report, "a ruinous usurpation."

That the misconception of the true relation of the Board to the church and the missionaries, to which we have referred, is a very serious matter, is evident from the letter of the Rev. Mr. Treat to the Cherokee and Choctaw missions. In the existing state of the church and of the country, we cannot regard the adoption of that letter by the Prudential Committee and its publication, as anything short of a national calamity. The elements of strife and disunion are already so numerous and powerful, that the accession of a body, among the most influential in the whole land, to the side of separation, must be regarded as a most

serious event. Should that letter be ultimately sanctioned by the Board, as it has already been by the Prudential Committee, the consequences must be disastrous. As soon as the letter was read, its true character was apparent. The abolitionists at once said, We ask nothing more; that is our creed. One of those abolitionists since his return home has published a manifesto, giving an account of his visit to Boston, of his fidelity to his principles, and of the action of the Board. In that publication, he says, "While slavery has a tolerated existence in churches planted and watered by those Boards, (of Foreign and Domestic Missions,) it will be impossible to bring American Christianity into that open and honest antagonism with slavery, which is necessary for its destruction." Mr. Secretary Treat has done what was promised a year ago, "to the entire satisfaction of the most decided abolitionists of Boston and vicinity, and to my own." "If," says he, "the missionaries obey (the instructions of the committee) they are abolitionists. If they disobey, they will be dropped." "I am satisfied," he adds, "with the above action of the committee. Deference to opposing opinions has made them use much indirectness and verbosity, in stating their abolition creed, but it is an abolition creed nevertheless." After referring to the action of the Board in the premises, he says, "I see not what the Board could have done farther, unless they had resolved to cut off the missionaries without waiting to see whether they would obey the instructions of their committee or not. "Let us sustain the American Board in the anti-slavery race which it has so well begun. It will be deplorable indeed, if anti-slavery men do not supply any falling off of funds in pro-slavery sections of the country. Let us unitedly move the Home Missionary Society to plant the South with a slavery expelling gospel."\*

Such is the interpretation put upon Mr. Treat's letter, by the abolitionists, and such, we are deeply grieved to say, appears to us its only true interpretation. The American Board of Commissioners is beyond doubt one of the noblest institutions of benevolence in the world. All Christians, yea, all mankind are interested in its proper management. A fearful responsibility rests on those who are at the helm of that noble ship. Under the guidance of strong and skillful hands, she has hith-

\* Pres. Blanchard's Appeal, as given in the *Christian Mirror*, Portland, Nov. 30, 1848.

erto weathered every storm. She is now approaching, with all her canvass spread, the outer circle of the great whirlpool of fanaticism. The slightest deviation from the proper course, must bring her within the sweep of that fearful current. Those on board may, for a while, exult in her accelerated motion. But every practised eye can see, from the quivering of her sails, that such acceleration is due, not to the favouring breezes, but to the dreadful undertow, which must inevitably engulf every thing yielded to its power.

A brief analysis of this Letter will enable the reader to judge of its true character. There are three points as to which it expresses the views of the committee. 1. As to slavery and slaveholding. 2. As to the duty of the missionaries in relation to it. 3. The power and authority of the committee in the premises.

As to the first of these points the letter says: "Domestic slavery is at war with the rights of man, and opposed to the principles of the gospel." "It is an anti-christian system, and hence you have a right to deal with it accordingly. True, it is regulated by law, but it does not for that reason lose its moral relations. Suppose polygamy or intemperance were hedged in by legal enactments, could you not speak against them as crying evils?"

Though the system is always and everywhere sinful, yet slaveholding is not always a sin, provided, 1. The slaveholder enters the relation and continues in it, involuntarily; or, 2. That he holds the relation simply for the benefit of the slave. The slaveholder may indeed misjudge in not granting immediate emancipation. In that case, "the continuance of the relation is wrong, but the master may stand acquitted in the sight of God, because influenced solely by benevolent motives."

Christ and his apostles, though they did not expressly condemn slavery, said much which "bears strongly against it. If the single precept, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,' were carried out, it would cease at once in all its essential features." The directions given in the New Testament, as to the relative duties of masters and slaves, are said to be "consistent with the hypothesis that the apostles regarded the general relation as unnatural and sinful." "But why," asks the writer, "did not the apostles directly affirm the sinfulness of slavery? Why did they not insist on the

duty of emancipation? Simply because (if we may presume to give an opinion) they saw such a course, in their circumstances, would not soonest and best extirpate the evil."

As to the duty of missionaries in reference to slavery this letter teaches, 1. That they should denounce it. The only question is as to time and mode. This must be left to their discretion, but apostolic example does not justify continued silence. If after twenty-five years, that time has not yet come, in those Indian missions, the committee say, "We may well ask, When will it come?" 2. If a recent convert is connected with slavery, the missionary should inquire into his views of that institution. 3. If he proposes to come to the Lord's supper, he must "prove himself free from the guilt of that system, before he can make good his title to a place among the followers of Christ." He must show either, 1. That his "being the owner of slaves is involuntary on his part," or, 2. That "he retains the legal relation at their request and for their advantage," and that "he utterly repudiates the idea of holding property in his fellow-men." 3. The committee, "denying that there can be morally or scripturally, any right of property in any human being, unless it be for crime, and holding that the slave is always to be treated as a man, suppose that whatever is done in plain and obvious violation of these principles, may properly receive the notice of yourselves and your sessions." 4. The missionaries are to pursue such a course that the mission churches may soon be freed "from all participation in a system that is so contrary to the spirit of the gospel and so regardless of the rights of man." 5. They are to abstain from using slave labour. "It is with profound regret," the committee say, "that we have learned how many hired slaves are now in the service of the Choctaw mission. We readily acquit you of any plan or purpose to disregard our known wishes on the subject. We cheerfully accept the excuse you offer, namely, that the boarding schools established in 1843, in consequence of an arrangement made with the Choctaw government, in your view made such assistance necessary, and that you supposed the committee must have assented to its employment." "This engagement with the Choctaw government has some fifteen years to run, and yet we do not feel willing to be a party to the hiring of slaves for this long period. By so doing, as it seems to us, we



countenance and encourage the system. We make this species of labour more profitable to the owner; at the same time that we put it into his power, if he will, to plead our example to justify or excuse the relation. In this state of things, it appears to be our duty to ask you first of all, to inquire once more into the supposed necessity of this practice, and to see if slave labour cannot in some way be dispensed with. And if you can discover no method by which a change can be effected, we submit for your consideration whether it be not desirable to request the Choctaw government to release us from our engagement in respect to the boarding schools. It is with pain that we present this alternative; but such are our views of duty in the case, that we cannot suggest a different course."

This practical question as to the propriety of employing slave-labour, stands, in a measure, by itself. We would venture to remark respecting it, 1. That as it is properly a secular matter, connected immediately with the schools, which are the property and under the control of the committee, they may be entitled to use the strong language of authority, which is employed in this letter. 2. It is no doubt conceivable that to employ such labour may be very inexpedient. If any considerable number of Christians are offended by it, or if any are thereby led into sin, it may be well to abstain from it, on the same principle that Paul said he would eat no meat while the world stood, if meat made his brother to offend. 3. The reasons, however, assigned by the committee are to us very unsatisfactory. Those reasons are all founded on the assumption that slaveholding is sinful. Otherwise there could be no scruples of conscience in the case. The committee would not hesitate to allow the missionaries to set to those around them a Christian example as to the method of treating and instructing slaves, did they not regard the "relation itself as unnatural and sinful." The slaves often earnestly desire to be employed by the mission, their condition is thereby improved, their privileges increased, and they are thus brought into the way of religious instruction, and perhaps of salvation. Unless slaveholding is a sin, it is hard to see how the force of these considerations is to be resisted. 4. The committee urge that by allowing the mission to hire slaves, they sanction the system and put it into the power of the owner to plead their example to justify the relation. This is not the fair interpreta-

tion of their conduct. Nothing more than the recognition of a *de facto* relation is involved in employing slaves. No opinion is thereby expressed of the justice of the relation. When one government recognises another, it is only as *de facto* not as *de jure*. It would involve endless difficulty and doubt, if such recognition was understood to be a judgment as to the legitimate or equitable title of the government recognised. It is so also with matters of property. Does every man who buys land of the United States, thereby sanction the equity of all the treaties by which that land was acquired? The settlers in New Holland are not understood to pronounce judgment on the justice of the sentences by which the men they hire, are consigned to bondage? Those who employed, and those who redeemed the Christian captives in Algiers, did not sanction the piracy by which those captives were obtained? What would be thought of a father, who should allow his son to pine in hopeless bondage, refusing to pay his ransom, because by so doing he would admit the right of his master, and render piracy more profitable? If such conduct would be unnatural, to us it seems no less unnatural, that a Christian Board should refuse to hire slaves to their own advantage, refuse to bring them under the influence of the gospel, lest they should be understood to sanction slavery. 5. The principle on which the committee act in this matter cannot be consistently carried out. Every use we make of the products of slave labour, is an encouragement to slavery. If all men were to agree not to use anything in the production of which slaves have been employed, slavery must instantly cease. This is not done here at the North. We presume it is not done by the committee. It is not done by the missionaries. They doubtless consume the wheat, the beef, the corn which slaves have assisted in raising. It therefore seems very strange, that the committee should say, they will give up their schools rather than sanction slavery, when they will not give up the sugar for their coffee for the same reason.

The missionaries require a great deal of assistance in their domestic and farming operations. Free labour is very difficult to be obtained. The plan of sending out assistant missionaries, has been tried and failed. The use of slave labour has been sanctioned by the former officers of the Board. In 1825 the Prudential committee resolved, that they "did not see cause to

prohibit the practice." In 1836 they resolved to dispense altogether with slave labour, but on a representation having been made by the missionaries that they could not get on without it, "the matter was left to their Christian discretion." There the subject has been left until the present excitement has called it up, and so disturbed the conscience of the committee, that they are forced to submit the alternative to the missionaries to give up their schools, or do without slave labour. This we regard as a very perverted judgment. It is straining at a gnat, while swallowing a camel. It is being dreadfully troubled about the mote in our brother's eye, while unmindful of the beam that is in our own eye. The encouragement given to slavery by the missions in hiring a few slaves, much to their own benefit, is as nothing, compared with that afforded by the wholesale use of the products of slave labour, by the good people of Boston. We are sincerely sorry to say that this whole letter seems to us full of a mistaken self-righteous spirit; carping at trifles in laborious devoted men in the wilderness; while blind to tenfold greater evils of the same nature, which pass without rebuke in our pampered churches at home.

The doctrine then of this letter is that slavery is every where and at all times sinful. Christ condemned it, though not in words. The apostles abstained from denouncing it, only on motives of expediency. Slaveholding is excusable and consistent with church-membership only when involuntary, or when temporarily continued at the request of the slave and for his benefit. The missionaries are to inculcate these principles, and to pursue such a course as shall free the mission churches from all participation in the system. Even hiring slaves is to be abstained from, though the consequence be the disbanding the missionary schools. We have never understood that the avowed abolitionists go any farther than this. They inculcate these doctrines in plainer terms, and in a more straight-forward, clear-headed manner. They are more peremptory in their demands, and violent in their spirit. But as to all essential matters, their doctrines are those here presented.

The third point on which the committee touch, is their own authority in reference to this whole subject. They say, 1. "We do not claim any *direct*\* control over the churches which you

\* The Italics are not ours.

have gathered, nor shall we ever approach them in the language of authority or dictation." We can suppose a case "in which we might be constrained by the sacredness of the trust committed to us, to withhold that pecuniary aid it has given us, in past years, so much pleasure to afford." 2. "We do not wish *you*, either individually or collectively to bring any other influence to bear on those churches or the community in which you dwell, except such as belongs to the ministerial office." 3. "We do not design to infringe in the least, by what we shall say in this letter, upon your rights as ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ." That is, the committee does not claim what, even a presbytery or a bishop, would not think of assuming, the right of dictation in matters of discipline. Nor do they wish the missionaries to assume that power to the exclusion of their sessions, or to the infringement of the rights of the churches. Nor finally do they claim any authority over the missionaries themselves, inconsistent with their office as ministers. Their whole claim is that they have the right to withhold pecuniary aid from those churches, which do not conform their discipline to the views of the committee; and from those ministers who do not obey their instructions as to their manner of teaching. This is the precise doctrine of the Report, viz. that the Board are responsible for the teaching of the missionaries, and therefore have the right to examine into what that teaching is, and to direct what it should be; and to withdraw their patronage from missionaries and churches, who do not conform to their instructions. The missionaries have been led to take this view of the power claimed by the committee, and to regard themselves and their churches as entirely in the hands of the Board. If on account of our views on this subject, they say, "the Committee or Board can no longer sustain us, if they must withdraw from us their support, and so far as they are concerned, leave the Cherokee people without the preaching of the word of God, then wherever the responsibility belongs there let it rest. . . . We pray the committee to remember that if the patronage of the Board be withdrawn from us, it will not be for the violation, on our part, of any condition on which we were sent into the field; but in consequence of new conditions, with which we cannot in conscience comply." Again, "If support be withdrawn from us on account of views

which we have expressed in this communication, it will of necessity be, so far as the Board are concerned, an entire withholding of the word of God from the Cherokee people. For to withcall us on this ground, and to send others who would pursue an opposite course, would be manifestly preposterous and vain." There is no doubt, therefore, as to how the missionaries have been taught to view this matter. So also in the passage quoted above from Pres. Blanchard's appeal, it is said with approbation, "If the missionaries obey, they are abolitionists; if they disobey, they are dropped." The committee claim therefore, in this letter, as we understand them, and as they seem to be universally understood, the right to withhold pecuniary aid from missionaries and mission churches unless they become abolitionists.

1. Our first objection then to this letter, as may be inferred from what we have already said, is that it proceeds on a misapprehension of the true relation and powers of the Board. It assumes that the Board is responsible for the teaching of the missionaries, and therefore has the right to judge of it, and to direct it. This we have endeavoured to show is a mistake. The Board are the agents, and not the plenipotentiaries of the churches. The churches have never committed to them the right to judge, in their behalf, of Christian doctrine, or of deciding what is and what is not consistent with their several creeds. This is a high ecclesiastical function, which belongs only to ecclesiastical bodies. The Board cannot go behind the official judgment of the churches. If the Presbyterian church has pronounced a certain doctrine consistent with her standards, the Board cannot dismiss a Presbyterian missionary from their service, on account of holding or teaching that doctrine. Nor can they withhold their support from any mission church, under the care of a presbytery, for any cause which the Presbyterian church does not consider worthy of censure. If the members of the committee discover that the Presbyterian church holds doctrines, or tolerates usages, which they cannot with a good conscience help to sustain, the simple course is for them to resign. But if multitudes sympathize with them, then the fact is revealed that they and the Presbyterians can no longer unite in the missionary work. But it is clearly preposterous for the committee to profess to be agents of the Presbyterian church, (old or new), and yet refuse to be guided by the judgment of

that church. The New School General Assembly, as well as the old, has decided that such slaveholding as is tolerated in the mission churches of the Cherokees and Choctaws, is consistent with Christian character and fellowship. With what show of reason then can the Boston committee, the agents of these presbyterians, in disbursing presbyterian money, say it shall not be permitted? It is clear as day that so long as the Dutch, Presbyterian and Congregational churches unite in the work of missions, the Board has no right to withdraw their patronage from any man or church, on account of any doctrine or usage which those churches approve. And it is no less clear that the right to judge of the consistency or inconsistency of any doctrine or usage with the standards of those churches, rests not with the committee, but with the churches themselves. To deny either of these propositions, is to create a dictatorship at once. The effect of this misapprehension is clear throughout Mr. Treat's letter. The secretary summons before him ministers who are members of presbytery in good standing, interrogates them as to their opinions, their mode of teaching, and exercise of discipline. He lays down rules as to how that teaching is to be conducted, and the terms on which members are to be received into Presbyterian churches. He gives them to understand that the committee may "be constrained by the sacredness of the trust committed to them, to withhold that pecuniary aid it has given them, in past years, so much pleasure to afford."\* His sole legitimate authority, in the matter, was to ask, "Brethren, does your church approve of such and such teaching? and does it sanction such and such conditions of church-membership?" If the answer to those questions is affirmative, the matter is ended. The committee may be grieved, or they may be glad. Their private opinions are not to be in the least consulted in such cases. As to manner, the letter is unexceptionable. It is couched in the blandest terms. It was evidently penned with the determination that no word should grate on the most delicate ear. Nevertheless, it is perfectly Archbishopal in its tone.

\* That aid, however, is not given by the committee, but by the churches through the committee. A very important distinction. If given by the committee, it may be given at their discretion—but if given by the churches, it must be given according to their pleasure, i. e., to men and churches whom they approve.

It is written just as the "servant of servants" is wont to write ; or, to use a better illustration, as Paul wrote, when he said, "Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin that which is convenient ; yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such a one as Paul the aged." This is lovely and venerable from apostolic lips—but apostolic lips have long since been sealed in death. We do not in the least attribute the apostolic tone of this letter, to any thing in the personal feelings of its authors. We believe them to be good men, and as humble as the rest of us. It is due to their false apprehension of their position. They are not entrusted with the authority which they suppose belongs to them. So long as the ecclesiastical bodies, with which the missionaries and mission churches among the Cherokees and Choctaws are connected, are satisfied with their doctrine and discipline, the Prudential Committee have no more right to interfere in the matter than any other five gentlemen in Boston.

2. Our second objection to this letter is that it is inconsistent with the Special Report of the Prudential Committee. It agrees indeed with the Report in claiming the right to sit in judgment on the teaching of the missionaries, and to control it according to their own interpretation of the general creed of the churches. It differs, however, from it in another important principle. The Report says expressly, the Board is not "at liberty to withdraw its confidence from missionaries, because of such differences of opinion among them, as are generally found and freely tolerated in presbyteries, councils, associations and other bodies here at home." p. 17. This rule follows as a matter of course, from what is said on pp. 13, 14, as to the standard by which the Board proposes to judge of doctrine, viz. the articles of faith "generally received by the churches." It may enforce obedience in those things in which the churches are united, but not in those cases in which they are divided. This principle is on p. 14 expressly applied to slavery. "The admission of slaveholders into the apostolical churches" is said to be one of the points about which the churches differ. Hence "the Board," it is said, "may not undertake to decide, that this class of persons was certainly admitted to church-membership by the apostles, nor that they were excluded, in such a way as to have the effect on the missionaries of a statute, injunction, or scripture doctrine

in respect to the admission of such persons into churches now to be gathered in heathen nations where slavery is found." The committee, it is added, may reason, persuade, and remonstrate, but further, neither they nor the Board, are authorized to go. Now according to the interpretation, as far as we know, universally put upon this letter; according to what appears to us its necessary meaning, and according to the understanding of the missionaries themselves, this is precisely the question the committee undertake in this letter authoritatively to decide. It lays down the rule as to how slaveholders are to be dealt with, when they are to be received, and when rejected from the communion of the church. All this is done officially, and with authority, and with the intimation that the continuance of the connexion between the Indian churches and the Board, depends upon their acting agreeable to the instructions here given. If this be not the character of the letter it loses all its importance. If it is an unofficial letter of friendship, instead of a letter of instructions, why should it be so solemnly sanctioned by the committee, reported to the Board, and their decision respecting it looked to us as determining the ground the Board was hereafter to stand upon? It would be sad news for the abolitionists, but a great relief to the missionaries, and to the Christian public, to know that the Board renounces the right to forbid slave-holding in the mission churches on pain of losing their patronage. This, however, is not to be hoped for, if this letter expresses their views of their own authority. It expresses the sentiment of the committee on the whole subject of slavery, calls upon the missionaries to say whether they acquiesce in them, and are ready "to act in accordance with them." The committee, therefore, here undertake to decide a point disputed among the churches. It decides moreover in favour of the minority. It proposes a doctrine of church communion which no denominational church has been left to adopt. It was indignantly voted down by an overwhelming majority (hundreds to units) in the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland. It was rejected, after nearly three weeks debate, by the New School Assembly in Philadelphia. It is repudiated by the Dutch Reformed church, and by that branch of the Presbyterian church with which some of these mission churches are immediately connected. It is probably



rejected by four-fifths of all the educated converted men in the world. Yet this doctrine, in obedience to a comparative handful of clamorous fanatics, the official organs of one of the most influential benevolent institutions in the world, would force on the ministers and churches of Christ. It would be better for the committee to cut off their right hands, rather than cut off the Indian churches because they admit slaveholders to their communion. Not because of any pecuniary loss it may occasion, but because it cannot be done without a sacrifice of principle, without subjecting the church to public opinion, now violently this, and again violently that. We sincerely pray that the Board may be preserved from any such disastrous mistake.

3. Our third objection to this letter is, that it is pervaded by a false philosophy. This is no small evil. It is a recognised truth that the world is governed by ideas. The character of men is formed, their conduct determined, and their destiny decided, in no small degree, by definitions. It is the view which they take of the primary principles of moral and metaphysical truth, that governs their opinions and consequently their conduct. The false philosophy of this letter leads to wrong views of duty, and those wrong views of duty, to a course of measures which, if persisted in, must split the American Board to pieces, and, to the extent of its influence, facilitate first, the division of the American churches, and then the dissolution of the American Union.

The philosophy on which this communication is founded, is what is popularly called "the doctrine of expediency." It is that philosophy in which the words "right" and "wrong," lose their distinctive meaning, and become the mere synonymes of beneficial and injurious. It is a philosophy which makes the end sanctify the means, and teaches that an action may be externally wrong and internally right. This is the philosophy to which all the doctrines and directions of this letter owe their character. This, for example, is the origin of the distinction between "slavery and slaveholding;" between "the system and the persons implicated therein." The system is always sinful, but those who practice it may be innocent. "The continuance of the relation is wrong, but the master may stand acquitted in the sight of God, because he was influenced solely by benevolent motives. Just as the selling ardent spirits, in the days of our

common ignorance on the subject of temperance, was clearly wrong; and yet many good men, never imagining that they were acting contrary to the law of love, engaged in the traffic. The *external* character of an act is one thing; its *internal* character quite another thing. A man may conscientiously do that which is injurious in its tendency; as, on the other hand, he may, with a bad motive, do that which is innocent or beneficial in its tendency."

Such language necessarily supposes that right means beneficial, and wrong, injurious. No moral distinction is admitted, but only a difference as expedient or inexpedient. A thing being injurious may indeed be one reason why it would be wrong in any one voluntarily to do it, but to merge the distinction of right and wrong into that of expedient and inexpedient, subverts the foundation of morals and religion, and when logically carried out, leads to the greatest enormities. According to the doctrine of this letter, no matter what "the external character of an act" may be, it is innocent if done conscientiously or from benevolent motives. If this is so, then Paul was not to blame for persecuting the church, because he verily believed he was doing God service; he had no doubt that the interests of truth, of his nation, and of the world were involved in putting down what he regarded as an imposture. This doctrine exculpates all persecutors and inquisitors, the exterminators of the Waldenses and of the Peruvians, provided only they were conscientious, which was, as it regards many of them, no doubt the case. It is vain to argue this matter. No man can look the naked proposition in the face, that every thing is innocent to him who thinks it to be right. The very essence of the guilt of men, the very sum of their depravity is their thinking good evil and evil good. The Bible holds up to us coincidence of moral judgment with God as the ideal of perfection, and as the clearest evidence of alienation from him that we regard that to be right which he abhors. If an act may be externally wrong and internally right, then the assassination of Henry IV, from an earnest desire to rid the world of an evil, was right; and then the doctrine that the end sanctifies the means, must, in all its length and breadth, be admitted. The motive of an action is determined by the end in view. If that end be the good of society, the motive is benevolent, and no matter what the nature of the act, the

agent stands acquitted in the sight of God, because he is governed by benevolent motives. This is radically and lamentably false morality. No man can sin innocently. No man stands acquitted in the sight of God for doing what God forbids. If slaveholding is sinful, all slaveholders are sinners. If persecution is wicked, all persecutors are without excuse. If selling ardent spirits is wrong now, the good men who formerly engaged in the traffic sinned against God. The reason of this is plain. All moral truths contain their own evidence; evidence which no man can innocently reject. How preposterous would it be for men to talk of committing theft, murder, or drunkenness from benevolent motives. No man can screen himself at a human tribunal, much less at the bar of God, behind his motives. It is indeed a plain doctrine of the Bible, and a plain principle of morals, that some sins, by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others. But it remains true, nevertheless, that every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and in that which is to come. The crimes of the heathen committed in their blindness, do not lose their nature as sins, though it will be far more tolerable in the day of judgment for them, than for many Christians. That sins may be greatly aggravated by the circumstances under which they are committed, and especially by the light enjoyed by the transgressor, is very different from the doctrine which holds a man innocent who conscientiously commits sin, or which teaches that a thing may be externally wrong and internally right.

Another evidence of the false philosophy of this letter, is found in the manner in which it speaks of the conduct of our Lord and his apostles in relation to slavery. It represents them as abstaining from the denunciation of sin, from motives of expediency. God, however, hates and every where and at all times, denounces all sin. Why were idolatry and covetousness denounced? They were far more prevalent than slaveholding; they were more influential and more deeply rooted, and yet no considerations of expediency constrained the apostles to silence, regarding them. It is an impeachment of the integrity of any teacher of morality to say that he avoided all denunciation of theft, murder and adultery from motives of expediency. No one

can think, without a shudder, of Christ and the apostles giving directions to thieves and drunkards how to treat their associates or victims. This doctrine that men's conduct in reference to moral questions, may be regulated by expediency, overlooks all moral distinctions. With regard to things indifferent, expediency is a very proper guide—but no truth can be plainer than that all sin should be everywhere denounced, and immediately forsaken.

To the same false principle are to be referred all the directions which this letter gives to the missionaries. Slaveholding is sinful, but you need not say so. You may choose your time. You may wait for suitable occasions. You may do it indirectly, when it would not answer to do it plainly. That all this is wrong is obvious. No such directions could be given with regard to any other sin. It would not do to say to the missionaries, you may take your own time to denounce robbery and murder. You may do it indirectly, &c., &c. The public are not so entirely blinded by a false philosophy, as not to see this is wrong. And we cannot but hope it may be given to the Prudential Committee, to see that there is something amiss in their theory. Either slaveholding is not a sin, or this is not the way to treat it.

From this same doctrine of expediency, from the doctrine that a thing may be externally wrong and internally right, flows the inquisitorial treatment of slaveholding converts here recommended; this prying into their motives in owning slaves, to determine whether they are selfish or benevolent. Is this the course pursued with regard to lying and theft? Is the poor convert cross-questioned as to his motives in cheating and stealing? We trow not. And why not? Simply because every one knows that cheating and slaveholding belong to very different categories. Lying and theft are sinful in themselves, and it matters not with what motives they are committed. If slaveholding is sinful, there is no need to enquire into a man's motives in sinning.

4. Our fourth objection to this letter is its want of discrimination and clearness. The writer gives us no distinct idea of what it is he condemns. He condemns slavery, but he does not tell us what he means by it. He seems to speak of it as a system which keeps men in degradation, which denies to them

a just compensation for labour; which disregards their rights as husbands and parents; which forbids their instruction, and debars them from access to the word of God. He sees, as every one else sees, that a system which does all this, must be sinful. It is a system which ought not to be dallied with, or assaulted indirectly, but should be openly denounced, and immediately abandoned by every good man. But these things are not slavery. They do not enter into its definition. It may, and in many cases does exist without one of these circumstances. Slavery is involuntary servitude. And servitude is the obligation to serve. This is all that is essential to slavery. It supposes the right on the part of the master to the service of the slave, without his consent. In every country where slavery prevails there are two sets of laws relating to it. The one designed to enforce this right of the master, to render it profitable, and to perpetuate it. The other intended to protect the slave. These laws vary continually. They were far more unjust in the French West India Islands, than in the British, and more unjust in the British, than in the Spanish. Laws made by slaveholders and intended to enforce, and to render secure and profitable their right to the service of their slaves, are almost always more or less in conflict with the gospel. So is all class legislation of any kind. In regard to these laws, it is the business of the church, by her instructions and discipline, to enforce such as are good and such as are indifferent, and to denounce such as are wicked. If the Roman law gave the power of life and death to the master, he was none the less a murderer, in the sight of the church, if he maliciously put his slave to death. If American law gives the master the power of punishment, he is none the less guilty in the sight of the church, for every act of cruelty. If the law allows the master to keep back from his slaves a due recompence for their labour; to debar them access to the means of grace, and especially from the word of God: he is not the less accountable to the church for every violation of the law of justice and mercy. Human laws allow to parents and husbands a power which they may dreadfully abuse. Yet the possession of that power is not itself sinful.

What we complain of is, that this letter makes no discrimination between slavery and slave laws; between the possession of

a master's power and the abuse of that power. The relation itself is pronounced "unnatural and sinful," when all the arguments tend to prove not the relation, but the abuse of it to be wrong. Christ and his apostles evidently regarded the possession of despotic power, whether in the state or the family, a matter of indifference, i. e., neither right nor wrong in its own nature, but the becoming one or the other according to circumstances. It was therefore not despotism in the state, or slaveholding in the family, which they condemned, but the wrong use of the authority of the despot or the master.

There is the same confusion with regard to the word "property." The letter says the converted slaveholder must repudiate the idea of having a right of property in a human being. Everything done on the assumption of such a right, is declared to be a proper matter for discipline. But not one word is said to inform us what this right of property is. Abolitionists say it is the right to make a man a thing, or a brute. If this is what is meant, will any one venture to say that Christ and his apostles, from motives of expediency, failed to denounce so great a sin as that? Neither lying nor stealing could be one half so offensive to God, as such an insult and degradation put upon his own image. No slave laws, however atrocious, ever proceeded on the assumption that a slave was not a rational being, of the same nature with his master. If this is what the letter means by the right of property, it is a mere chimera. The only sense in which one man can have property in another, is in having a right to his services. In this sense the state has the right of property in her citizens, a right which she often presses further than the slaveholder can press his power, when she forces men into her armies and navies, and sends them to die by pestilence or the sword.

These are subjects which we have repeatedly discussed at length, in the pages of this journal. We have no desire to travel again over the same ground. We have said enough to show the lamentable consequences of not discriminating things that differ; of confounding things lawful or indifferent, with things in their own nature sinful. If the noble letters written by the Cherokee and Choctaw missionaries, failed to open the eyes of the committee to this distinction, we despair of being

able to do it. Those letters show that the missions are faithful in this whole matter; dealing with the subject just as the scriptures treat it, condemning all that is sinful, and requiring all that justice or love demand, abstaining only from pronouncing, contrary to the scripture, and contrary to the judgment of nine-tenths of the people of God in all ages, "the relation itself to be unnatural and sinful."

There are several perfectly distinct and intelligible views of this whole subject of slavery, and of the proper method of dealing with it. The first is, that it is a good and desirable institution; a state of the labouring population, which upon the whole is preferable to any other. Appropriate means ought therefore to be taken to perpetuate and extend it. As however slavery is founded on the inferiority of one class of society to another, it cannot continue to exist unless that inferiority be perpetuated. Consequently, according to this view, slaves ought to be debarred from the means of improvement, and kept in a condition of intellectual and social debasement. This is the fanatical pro-slavery doctrine. It has been repudiated by all the great men of the south in the earlier periods of our history, and is probably not held by one educated man in a hundred, perhaps not by one in a thousand, in our slaveholding states.

The second view is, that the relation is unnatural and sinful, and should therefore be immediately and universally renounced, just like any other sin, drunkenness, lying, or theft. This is clear-headed, and straight-forward abolitionism.

The third is the scriptural view. Slaveholding, according to this view, belongs to the class of things indifferent, of things neither forbidden nor commanded in the word of God, which are right or wrong, according to circumstances. It is like despotism in the state. A man may possess despotic power in the state, power giving him authority over the persons and property of his fellow men. The abuse of such power is a great sin. To employ it with the view of perpetuating it, by keeping those under its control in a state of ignorance or debasement, is one of the greatest acts of injustice that one man can commit towards his fellows. But if that power be used justly and benevolently, its possession is no sin, and the despot may be one of the greatest benefactors of his race. Despotism, however, is not a desirable form of government, no means therefore ought

to be employed to perpetuate it. It is adapted only to a low state of civilization, and must disappear as the mass of the people increase in intelligence, property and virtuous self-control. It is just so with slavery or domestic despotism. A man may be a slaveholder without any impeachment of his Christian character. The relation in which he stands to his slaves is not a sinful one. It is not forbidden in the word of God. It may be the most appropriate and natural relation in which the parties can stand to each other. Just as despotism in some circumstances is the very best form of government. But such slaveholder is bound to use his power as a Christian, just as a parent or husband is bound to use his authority; or a rich man his wealth. He must act in obedience to the gospel, which teaches that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and that a fair compensation must in all cases be made to him; which forbids the separation of those whom God has joined in marriage; which requires all appropriate means to be used for the intellectual and moral improvement of our fellow men, and especially that free access should be allowed them to the word of God, and to all the means of grace. This is the gospel method of dealing with slavery. If this method be adopted, the inferiority of the one class to the other, on which slavery is founded, will gradually disappear, and the whole system be peacefully and healthfully abolished. This is the way in which the gospel has already banished domestic slavery from a large part of the Christian world. There are some men who are so blind they cannot see, or so wicked they will not acknowledge, the difference between this view and first above mentioned.

An unsuccessful attempt is sometimes made, as in this letter of Mr. Treat's, to find some middle ground between abolitionism, and what we have ventured to designate as the scriptural view of this subject. The principles of the abolitionists are admitted, but their conclusions are denied or modified. The system is sinful, but those who practise it may be innocent. The relation is wrong, but it need not be immediately abandoned. Being sinful, it affords prima facie evidence that those who are concerned with it, are not Christians. Before they can be properly recognised as such, they must prove they are influenced by benevolent motives, in doing what is "unnatural and sinful."\*

\* Mr. Goodell, the prominent New York abolition editor, says, When you



In all we have now written, we have been influenced by the most friendly feelings towards the American Board. We believe it has been an incalculable blessing to this country, and to the heathen world. We regard the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom as deeply involved in its prosperity. We think all Christians are bound to pray for its success, to avoid everything that can injuriously affect it, and to promote its efficiency, as God may give them the ability and occasion. We believe that the misapprehension, which in our judgment, characterizes the Report of the Prudential Committee, is perfectly natural, and entirely consistent with the purest intentions on their part. We believe, further, that the correction of that misapprehension, and the adoption of the principles we have endeavoured to sustain in this review, so far from impeding their operations, would tend directly to disembarass and facilitate them. The committee say they are directly responsible for the teaching of the missionaries. They must, therefore, have the right to know what it is, to judge and to direct it. The consequence is, their conscience is always on the alert. The opinions of the few gentlemen in Boston as to what is, and what is not, the faith and discipline of the church, become the rule by which all missionaries are to conduct their teaching, subject indeed to the revision of the Board. Hence, if the missionaries teach that slavery is not in itself sinful, and that slaveholding is not *prima facie* evidence of an unconverted state, and the committee think otherwise, and that the churches agree with them, they are bound to require the missionaries to conform to their views. According to the other view of the matter, the committee are not directly responsible for the teaching of the missionaries. That responsibility rests on the ecclesiastical body to which they belong. To that body, therefore, and not to the Committee, belongs the right of inquiry, judgment and direction. Consequently, so long as the denomination, with which a missionary is connected, approves of any doctrine or rule of discipline, the committee cannot interfere. If, for example, missionaries connected with the Presbyterian or Dutch church, with the approbation of those churches, admit slaveholders to the

convince an Old School man of sin, he will forsake it. But when you have convinced a New School man that a thing is sinful, you have still to satisfy him that it is expedient to abandon it.

communion, the committee are relieved from all responsibility. On the other hand, if missionaries connected with the Congregationalists, with the approbation of those entitled to judge, hold and teach that slaveholders should not be received, the committee are bound to acquiesce, as to the mission churches under Congregational control. By the Board and the churches keeping thus, in their separate spheres, we see not why there need be any collision between them.

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ART. II.—*The Work claiming to be the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, including the Canons; Whiston's version, revised from the Greek; with a Prize Essay at the University of Bonn, upon their origin and contents; translated from the German, by Irah Chase, D.D. New York. D. Appleton & Co. 1848.*

IT is justly remarked by Dr. Chase, in his preface to the work before us, that "in reading these Constitutions and Canons of the Apostles, the Christian of the present day will be likely to exclaim—a splendid specimen of pious fraud, a strange mixture of good and evil!" Viewing the work in the light of its own claims, as a pretended production of apostolic times, embodying a system of church discipline stamped with apostolic authority, it is indeed a remarkable "specimen of pious fraud." Still we hail its publication with pleasure, and think that Dr. Chase has done the church good service, by putting within the reach of the Christian student, and in a very convenient form, a work which hitherto has been almost inaccessible to the great mass of the Christian ministry in our country. There is, as we shall presently see, considerable diversity of opinion among the learned as to the age in which the Constitutions were framed; but whatever be the true date of their origin, there can be no doubt that the collection belongs to a remote Christian antiquity; and it is all the more precious from the fact that so few literary monuments of the earlier ages of the church have been preserved. It is a document of high value and importance for illustrating the ecclesiastical history of a very distant period,