

A

TWO YEARS' ABSENCE,

OR

A FAREWELL SERMON,

PREACHED

IN THE FIFTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

BY J. W. C. PENNINGTON.

Nov. 2d, 1845.

HARTFORD.

PUBLISHED BY H. T. WELLS,
1845.

TO THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY OF MY CHARGE :

Beloved Brethren:—The following farewell sermon is dedicated particularly to you. In the month of August last I presented to you the following request :

*To the Fifth Congregational Church and }
Society of Hartford : }*

Dear Brethren in Christ:—Having, after prayerful deliberation, concluded that it is my duty to retire from public labors and to spend two years in classical studies, I hereby request you to dismiss me for that length of time—I on my part to resign my salary, and you to supply the pulpit—the dismissal to take effect from and after the first of November next.

I am, dear brethren,

with high esteem,

Yours in Christ,

J. W. C. PENNINGTON, *Pastor.*

August 18, 1845.

As a church and society you have severally and readily voted to grant my request, and accordingly I stand dismissed from your service until the first of November, 1847, at which time I expect, by the will of God, in good faith, to return to your service. It has been highly gratifying to me to find that the harmony which has existed between us for six years prevailed in this case.

The question has frequently been asked me, “Where are you going to study ?” This question has embar-

rassed me, for several reasons: One is, that people are apt to think the questions they ask are fair, whether they are really so or not; another is, that as a creature of providence, and a prudent man, I could not answer it. Another is, that when yankees cannot get answers to their questions, they usually get up a tremendous guessing scrape; and lastly, in this way I am in danger of being prejudiced.

You will bear in mind that among the reasons given in support of my request, one was based upon the fact that I am a fugitive from slavery—that the first few months of my absence will be taken up in attending to *certain* business with a view to relieve myself from that increasingly unhappy situation. For this reason no good can be gained by telling where I shall go to study, if I knew, while it might prejudice my business. At the same time, I am not bound to tell where I shall go at present. I am bound to say *what* I go for, and *when* I shall come back. You remember, brethren, I have often told you that you did not know all you might know about slavery. If slavery can empty your pulpit, what wonder if it acts like a torpedo upon others? But some have said to me, “You need not be afraid here.” I am not afraid. If I wanted dollars to buy myself, I could raise a thousand within the fire limits of Hartford in twenty-four hours. If I wanted daggers to defend myself, I could raise ten thousand of the truest hearted and hardest handed men in Connecticut. But neither of these is the mode I should CHOOSE to advance anti-slavery. Besides, I am not at all the proper sort of a subject for the kind of excitement consequent upon either of these modes. I am quite certain that I should not be benefitted by such proceedings as were had in the case of Dixon at

New York, or of Lattimer at Boston. I should doubtless fail to gratify the expectations of many who might act for me, and then my situation would, on some accounts, be more unpleasant than it is now. But upon my own plan I am prepared and qualified to act successfully. If any doubt that the situation of a fugitive is *legally* perilous in Connecticut, let them read "An Act to repeal an Act therein mentioned, and for other purposes."

"Whereas, it has been decided by the Supreme Court of the United States, since the passing of the Act of 1838, entitled "An Act for the fulfillment of the obligations of this State imposed by the Constitution of the United States, in regard to persons held to service or labor in one State escaping into another, and to secure the right of trial by jury, in the case therein mentioned, that both the duty and the power of legislation on that subject pertain exclusively to the national government; therefore,

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened, That the Act aforesaid, and the Act in alteration thereof, passed in 1839, be, and the same is hereby repealed.

"Sec. 2. No judge, justice of the peace, or other officer appointed under the authority of this State shall be authorized, as such, to make, issue, or serve any warrant or process for the arrest or detention of any person claimed to be a fugitive from labor or service, as a slave, under the laws of any other State or country, escaping into this State, or to grant a certificate of the title of any claimant to the service of any person so claimed to be a fugitive as aforesaid, with a view to his detention or removal out of this State: and any warrant, process, or certificate so issued or granted by

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any judge, justice of the peace or other officer of this State, shall be utterly null and void, and shall constitute no justification for any acts done under the same. *Provided*, nevertheless, that nothing in this Act contained shall be construed to impair any rights which by the constitution of the United States may pertain to any person to whom labor or service may be due by the laws of any State, from any fugitive escaping into this State or to prevent the exercise in this State of any powers which may have been conferred by Congress, on any judge or other officer of the United States in relation thereto."

You and the public will, I trust, grant me the merit of sincerity in what I have said in this sermon with reference to slavery. Fifteen years ago I escaped from slavery. I entered the ministry and public labors at a time when all the avenues of learning were closed. The means of thorough learning are now within our reach. I am still a young man. Our part of this nation is yet in its elements, to be moulded. *And the last half of the present century will be our great moral battle day.* I GO TO PREPARE FOR THAT.

In regard to the grand pinch of the case, now in court, viz. *communion with slaveholders*, ours is the only tenable position. It is the only position that will hold in these progressive times. The position of the American Board, and of the old school Presbyterian Assembly, will not hold five years. They are like two devotees just before the wheels of Juggernaut. They are certainly in the way of the car of progress. We, like sound moral philosophers, pronounce against the system. We excommunicate it. Let the exceptions come out, and we will take care of them—mercifully, kindly and liberally. This is the great theory of dis-

cipline, moral, religious, or political. If a church is heretical, pronounce it so and let the pure come out. "Come out of her, my people." If a province is rebellious, pronounce it so, and let the loyal come out. If Sodom is corrupt, God pronounces **FIRST** and then hastens Lot out.

Who embraced James G. Birney, J. A. Thorne, Dr. Brisbane, and the noble young lion, C. M. Clay? We. Who excommunicate the system with all who willingly and wilfully hold to it? We do not know of any scripture that requires us to embrace men before they have cast away their sins.

On the subject of applying church discipline to slaveholders, I have long since adopted a sentiment of my former pastor and venerable father in the gospel, S. H. Cox, D. D., of Brooklyn, N. Y., in his letter to Dr. Allen in 1836, in which he says:—

"As to the *principle*, as related to the moral code of God, I hesitate not a moment to say, that other things being equal, a slaver of any description ought to be excluded from the communion of the church; and that, by consequence, the members of the church, individually, ought to withdraw communion from slaveholders and slavedealers universally. Whatever in the system, or in our support of it, is morally wrong, is no small criminality. It is piacular, rather than venal. It is the moral annihilation and perdition of our fellow creatures—each one of them a brother of the species—an immortal—a man, in body, soul, and spirit. And is **OUR** Judge eternal, who condescends to wear our common nature, in the person of Jesus Christ, on his throne? and to call every man his brother—such emphatically, if he loves the Saviour? and to be represented on the earth, by the poor and the oppressed?

And the King shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto *one of the least of these my brethren* ye have done it unto me."

I drank in this sentiment when I first read it, because I thought it correct, and I think so now. If my beloved old pastor has changed from this sentiment, there is one thing I have to say kindly and respectfully, and that is, that I have not changed with him. I hold this sentiment the more fast, because I believe that the slaveholders' "other things" are "equal," especially their light. The men who have sent out the Washingtons, the Jeffersons, the Madisons, the Monroes, the Jacksons, the Calhouns, the Clays, &c., are they too much in the dark to be judged by the light?

I am gratified to be able to append the following certificate, which will show friends and foes my ecclesiastical standing and relations:

Br. PENNINGTON,—

The Association have directed me to furnish you with the following certificate and testimonial, for your use, during your proposed absence from your people and your brethren:

Brother J. W. C. Pennington, proposing to be absent from his pastoral charge for the term of two years, this is to certify that he is Pastor of the Fifth Congregational Church in Hartford, Conn., and a brother beloved and a member, in good standing, of the Hartford Central Association, and as such, is affectionately recommended to the sympathy and fellowship of the people of God, wherever Providence shall cast his lot.

By vote of Association at Unionville,
Sept. 2, 1845.

Attest, I. N. SPRAGUE,
Scribe of Association.

The meeting of the Association, at which this certificate was voted, was held at Unionville; and the question of disciplining slaveholders was the subject of discussion at that meeting.

J. W. C. PENNINGTON.

S E R M O N .

“AND NOW, BRETHREN, I COMMEND YOU TO GOD, AND TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE; WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP, AND TO GIVE YOU AN INHERITANCE AMONG ALL THEM WHICH ARE SANCTIFIED.”—Acts xx. 32.

AFTER a residence of some two years at Ephesus, Paul had been absent from there a number of months on a pastoral visit through Macedonia. He was now on his way up to Jerusalem, and having touched at Miletus, and intending to “sail by Ephesus,” (verse 16) he sent there and called the elders of the church to him at Miletus.

“And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befel me by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: * * * * * But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the

ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. * * * Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not syaring the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." Then comes our text: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

In our text we have one of those excellencies of the Holy Scriptures that is every where evinced. I mean their peculiar adaptation to the various circumstances of the church—their moral and spiritual profitableness unto all things. In discoursing hence, my theme shall be, **THE APOSTOLIC COMMENDATION, ITS MEANING AND ITS APPLICATION.**

I trust, brethren, that the spirit with which we pursue this inquiry will make it a profitable one to our souls, and pleasant to our minds. Let such be our fervent desire, and our devout prayer to the Author of the Bible and the great fountain of spiritual light.

I. My plan requires me to direct your attention to the **MEANING** of this commendation.

I love to find the meaning of the word of God. As

a book of salvation, it has in general a plain meaning; and for the purposes of salvation this meaning is every thing to us. If you are sick you seek a skillful physician and good medicine. But you do not forget his prescription—the manner in which you are to take the medicine.

1st. “*And now, brethren.*”

A crisis has overtaken us in the providence of God, which is to try our mutual faith and our mutual affections; but we are, and shall ever be, **BRETHREN**. This happy Gospel term, embracing so many of the species, male and female, as have been made “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,” is significant of the catholicity and the durability of the faith, the hope, and the abounding goodness of God, which have constituted and built the brotherhood upon the Rock. There is certainly great utility in that feature of our holy Gospel which binds its sincere and catholic-spirited professors together into a brotherhood, whose ties are not broken, and whose affections are not chilled by the distance that may separate its members.

‘**NOW, BRETHREN.**’ How very emphatic and Paul-like! And yet it is not less characteristic of Paul and the crisis, or Paul in the crisis, than it is of that sanctified and God-given affection of the heart, and heaven-dawning affinity of soul, which bound the speaker to those whom he addressed.

2d. **I COMMEND** *you to God.*

I suppose that *entrust*, or *deliver* to, is a good construction of the speaker here. The original is, *παραιδεμαί*—commend, to give up to, to confide to. The sense is strikingly appropriate to the occasion. His charge was one of such weight and importance, that he was constrained by his sense of duty to entrust it to

God, as the most competent to take care of it. O, how many duties and interests center in one relation! What does this word signify in regard to God? That He is the great and kind benefactor who, "like as a father pitieth his children," pitieth those that fear him.

What does it signify in regard to the Apostle himself? That in his devout communion with God, in his daily prayers, and in the hourly out-goings of his heart, they should be his theme. That in this commendation his faith in the "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and, in you all," was not more strong than his fidelity to them.

And in all what does it signify in regard to the brethren, here commended? That they should look to the "Father of lights," from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift, and ever giveth to all men (and especially his own children) liberally, and upbraideth not. O, then behold the mutual relation, mutual duties, and the mutual blessing that mingle and commingle, though tryingly, yet sweetly and consolingly.

If Paul wishes to commend his brethren to God, he may. He is such a God that he will receive the trust. Paul may have the same confidence here that he shows in another place in regard to his own personal salvation, when he says "for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Do Paul's brethren wish to be commended to God? They may be with the happiest assurance that they shall be cared for.

3d. *And to the* **WORD** *of his* **GRACE.**

Thus the commendation proceeds. ΛΟΓΩ της χάριτος αυτου. The given word. The word he in mercy bestowed to serve us as "a lamp unto our feet, and a light

unto our path." And here he commends them to the great **RULE** of Faith and Practice.

"The judge that ends the strife
Where wit and reason fail,
Our guide to everlasting life
Through all this gloomy vale."

Here is the source of light and truth on all essential points of duty. God has given this word that his own children may be perfectly enlightened on every essential point of duty; that by this they may square their lives, regulate their entire intercourse with the world, and order their conversation aright. That also they may have a never-failing source of holy consolation. To this word he commends them; to it he urges them to resort. And as the New Testament scriptures were not committed to writing at this time, it is obvious that he had reference to the preached word, or the Gospel, which was then given to their charge. In commending them to this word, he was performing the part of a faithful apostle and teacher, for Paul himself knew well the great value and importance of the word of grace. Having himself realized its benefits, having preached it to others with such vigilance and success, he could with safety commend them to it. Not being ashamed of this word, and having experience of its great utility, he could, without the least hesitation, thus commend his brethren to it as a source of comfort and consolation.

In the providence of God they had been led to place great reliance upon Paul's presence and counsel. And as they were now to be deprived of that presence and counsel, and as they would, under these circumstances, be likely to indulge in despair, he wisely guards them against that extreme by urging them to rely upon

the holy word of God. Men always have some peculiar source of reliance when in trying circumstances. It is true, at least, to say that men can be very easily led to place peculiar reliance upon some source of support when they are in trials. In trials Christians very naturally look to the Bible—to the word of God's grace. In trial they feel the need of something on which they can rest. This word is so full of promises, counsels and instructions, that every true friend of God seeks no better source when in trouble.

4th. You will now allow me to call your attention more particularly to some things which this word is able to do; or in other words, to what will be the effect of this commendation.

(1.) *Which is able to build you up.*

God is able to do this. He is able to do this by any instrument of his own choice. He is able to do it by his word of grace. This great result, then, was to be secured to them in consequence of their being commended to God and to the word of his grace. The phrase "*build you up,*" is a figurative one, but no figurative expression is more easily understood. It is in general synonymous with growth in grace, and in divine knowledge; becoming wiser unto salvation, holier, and attaining in every respect a more finished state of Christian morals. Whatsoever teaches the believer to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil, tends to build him up. Every lesson of experience he learns in spiritual things, tends to build him up. Every step he advances in faith, hope, love, joy and peace, tends to build him up. These show the upward rearing of his spiritual house—his steady tendency to the object and end of his Christian life. They show the increase of his moral power, the weight of

his character. They show his advance from strength to strength, the finishing of his stature of a man in Christ Jesus. The process is happily described in his "Pilgrim's Song."

"Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings,
Thy better portion trace ;
Rise from transitory things,
Tow'rds heav'n, thy native place.
Sun, and moon, and stars decay—
Time shall soon this earth remove ;
Rise, my soul, and haste away
To seats prepared above.

"Rivers to the ocean run,
Nor stay in all their course :
Fires ascending seek the sun,
Both speed them to their source ;
So a soul that's born of God,
Pants to view his glorious face ;
Upward tends to his abode,
To rest in his embrace."

And to this great and glorious end is the word of God's grace well adapted. It begins this work by begetting the strong desires above described. It continues this work by continuing these desires, by feeding and filling them. In this way the soul is put in possession of a strong and increasingly vigorous and healthy spiritual appetite.

(2.) *And to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*

Sanctification is here put for salvation ; glorification is often put for eternal life ; "inheritance" in the Bible almost always means a complete state of salvation. See, then, what the word of God's grace is able to do. It gives an inheritance among all them which are sanctified, or saved by grace. In the prospect, then, what light, comfort and consolation ! It reveals a Saviour to all ; gives them great and precious promises, and un-

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quenchable desires. It brings them into the same family, and so makes them heirs of the same inheritance in heaven. This, I believe to be the sense of the text here. Such is the virtue of the word of God's grace. Such are its covenants, its promises, encouragements, and its whole tendency, from the moment it produces that great change, (regeneration,) in the soul of man, to the day of its final account, when God shall judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ: "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law."

In this broad and catholic sentiment of the word of God all should most cordially rejoice. All must at once concur in the inflexible justice, the tender mercy, the hope of immortality, and the peace, that are here announced.

II. I am now to make an APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT.

What particular considerations will give it an application to our present situation, or what does the subject REQUIRE of you.

1st. *Love to God.*

You must love God before you can be commended

to him, or to the word of his saving grace. Christ says, Prov. viii. 17, "I love them that love me." Here love answers to love. The same sentiment is taught 1 John iv. 19, "We love Him because He first loved us." To those who do really love God, this application is easy and very important. Paul says, 1 Cor. viii. 3, "But if any man love God, the same is known of him." Does this acquaintance exist between God and you? Christ says, John xiv. 23, "*If any man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*"

Now there will not be any difficulty in commending such a man to God, and to the word of his grace. There cannot be when there is already such an inclination as that here expressed. Have you such love as leads you to keep the word of the Son of God? And have you received into your bosom those august visitors? If you have, I shall have no difficulty in accomplishing the object I have in view, commending you to God and to the word of his grace. But, if otherwise, I shall utterly fail in my attempt. On this point I will leave you to enlarge for yourselves. To get your souls in tune for this examination, sing with the poet:

- 1 "'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought:—
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?
- 2 "If I love, why am I thus?
Why this dull, this lifeless frame?
Hardly, sure, can they be worse,
Who have never heard his name.
- 3 "Could my heart so hard remain,
Pray'r a task and burden prove—
Ev'ry trifle give me pain—
If I knew a Saviour's love?

4 "When I turn mine eyes within,
All is dark, and vain, and wild;
Fill'd with unbelief and sin—
Can I deem myself a child?"

5 "If I pray, or hear, or read,
Sin is mix'd with all I do;
You who love the Lord indeed,
Tell me—is it thus with you?"

6 "Yet I mourn my stubborn will,
Find my sin a grief and thrall;
Should I grieve for what I feel,
If I did not love at all!"

7 "Lord, decide the doubtful case!
Thou who art thy people's Sun:
Shine upon thy work of grace,
If it be indeed begun.

8 "Let me love thee more and more,
If I love at all, I pray;
If I have not lov'd before,
Help me to begin to-day."

2d. The subject requires you to cultivate an *experimental acquaintance with the word of God*.

There are various kinds of acquaintance with the Bible. Some are minutely acquainted with it as a *history*. They have all of its historical facts at their tongues' end. They know what it says about the creation, and fall, the building of the ark, and the deluge. The various wonderful dealings of God with the Jews and other wicked nations of the earth, &c. Others have a great deal of what I will call chapter and verse acquaintance with the Bible. They not only know *what* the Bible says on a given subject, but they know *where* it says so and so. Such have, as the saying goes, (a very mistaken one,) the "Bible by heart." Another man has much acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures as mere language. They are much in the use of the expressions, the figures, parables, &c.

The world just now is full of controversial acquaint-

tance with the word of God. Many of our pulpits have operated upon the Christian world, like so many chairs of "polemic theology," teaching men the art of *controversy*. Hence every leader or founder of a new sect is generally a keen, waspish controversialist, skillful in the defense of his cause by his acquaintance with the letter of the Bible. But all *this* acquaintance with the word may exist, and yet it may not be known as a *word of grace*. Men may know what the Bible says *about* the soul, and yet not know or understand what it says *to* the soul.

The kind of acquaintance of which I speak here, is that which knows the word of God as a word that can never fail: Mark vii. 13. As a word by which the man of God can live: Luke iv. 4. As the sword of the Spirit: Eph. vi. 17. As a word that gives spiritual life: 1 Pet. i. 23; Heb. iv. 12: vi. 5. In short, as a word which is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, &c.: 2 Tim. iii. 16.

3. PRACTICAL OBEDIENCE to the word of God is your duty.

All the benefits you expect to realize from the word of God depend upon this. It is a singular fact that men, in general, will make almost any other use of the word of God but obey it. Many of our hottest controversialists never intend to obey the word of God, though they appeal to it as "the Judge that ends the strife." Many might be told as Samuel told Saul, "behold to *obey* is better than sacrifices."

Obedience to this word, to be practical, must intend conformity to all its injunctions. This obedience must be practical, because it is made the very test of Christian character. He that would show himself to be a Christian must show it by his obedience to the Chris-

tian's statute book. This obedience to the word of God leads you to esteem it above your own opinions, and above the opinions of any other men, however pious and eminent. Let your motto be, "What saith the Lord,—that will I do."

4th. You must learn to *apply the word of God to OVERT ACTS.*

A warm and important discussion is now going on in regard to the application of the word of God to such overt acts as intemperance, rum-selling, encroaching upon the sabbath, slaveholding, &c. Did the infinitely wise God, who is the author both of the world and of his own word, and who beholdeth the end from the beginning, foreseeing all that should take place in the world, make a world in which evils should take place to which the word he has given has no practical application? *Has the only wise God committed such a serious blunder in the organization of his moral government?* What does the governor of a State do, as he finds evils out-growing his statute book? He calls the attention of his law-making power to the fact, and recommends new enactments. If he did not do so, his judgment would be impeachable. What think you, has the greatest and the wisest governor of the greatest province given a statute book which *passes over in silence* some of the greatest evils under which his province groans? On this point you are solemnly bound to be intelligent and independent.

If you stand commended to the guidance of the word of God, you are bound to know its position in reference to certain overt acts that crowd the land with curses. Take the last and the greatest of the curses that I named above. I mean slavery. Is the word of God silent on this subject? I, for one, desire to know. My

repentance, my faith, my hope, my love, and my perseverance all, all, I conceal it not, I repeat it, all turn upon this point. If I am deceived here—if the word of God does sanction slavery, I want another book, another repentance, another faith, and another hope! I speak very reverently, and from a deep and mournful reflection.

We are called upon to show whether "*the Bible condemns slavery without any regard to circumstances,*" or not. I object to this form of the question. It shows one of the subtleties of unsanctified logic. It requires all the arguments and the rule of morals, to be constructed for the exceptions, instead of the system. The question fairly stated is this: "IS SLAVEHOLDING CONSISTENT WITH THE GOSPEL?" They wish to have us spend our time, and confuse ourselves, by drawing comparisons between A and B, and between C and D, slaveholders of different habits, or by different circumstances. For instance, is that poor widow who holds her slaves by the tenure of her husband's last will and testament as guilty as Henry Clay? or, is Henry Clay, whose man Charles will not leave him, as guilty as the man who makes it his special business to buy and sell slaves? Let the pure question come up without any darkening counsel by words without knowledge, and I vouch that it will soon be settled.

Much is attempted to be made of the fact that men in other ages have been slaveholders, and that the Bible states that fact. But the question is not affected by what the Bible records as matter-of-fact history, but only by what it reveals as consistent or inconsistent with the moral nature of God, what is obedient or rebellious before his throne. In reference to slavery, is it consistent with the will of God? Does the Bible

as His statute book, and His holy providence as His exposition of His own book, show it to be right in His sight? Does the light of nature shine upon slavery approvingly? These are questions I ask aside from the speculations and the prejudices of men.

Multitudes now admit that slavery is evil. Many others hold it to be a sin. And yet when it is proposed to bring Christian discipline to bear upon the evil, the sin, objections are raised in favor of exceptions. What are the exceptions?

1. The slaveholder A holds his slaves for their own benefit, because the law will not allow them to remain in the State if set free.

2. The slaveholder B holds his slaves because he has no other estate or business upon which to rely for his living. Now the simple question is, can objections to the application of Christian discipline, founded upon either of these exceptions, be sustained upon Gospel ground?

In reference to the slaves, who when set free would be exposed to the law, is it not their duty to do as any other persecuted men? When the fires of persecution burn too hot in one place, flee to another. Suppose the pilgrim fathers of New England, instead of encountering the perils of the deep and of the wilderness, in search of religious liberty, had selected some royal prince as their guardian, and surrendered themselves slaves for life, in consideration of that protection, or consented to hold their opinions at the mercy of their oppressors? Would New England ever have seen her glory? And would Old England and all despotic Europe ever have received that wholesome rebuke which they have so keenly felt? And are not the free States, Canada, the West Indies,

and Mexico, as accessible to these slaves as the wild wilderness was to those fathers? Are not these places fully as accessible to freed slaves as they are to the thousands of fugitives who annually, unaided and forbidden, find their way there? The objection is founded deep in selfishness. For why should a few scores of such slaves be indulged and cared for, to the serious detriment of the rights of millions?

In reference to the second case, suppose B were a slave trader instead of a slave holder;—suppose he were a lottery dealer, a rum-seller, &c., instead of a slaveholder;—what, in the view of Christianity, would be his duty? If a rum-seller, he would be putting the cup to his neighbor's mouth to make his living. This living would cost the bodies and souls of men and the happiness of their families. Would there be any doubt of his duty in that case? None. What better is the slaveholding professor of religion? What reason is there for making exceptions in favor of the slaveholder, who fears that the consequence of doing right will be poverty, any more than in the case of the rum-seller? *Is not this on the principle of loving houses and lands more than Christ?* And can those professing Christian slaveholders who act upon this principle be worthy of Christ?

It is now held by many in high theological authority, that the mere relation between master and slave, *is not sinful*; that it is consistent with a Christian profession; and even with unexceptionable piety towards God and man. But the same persons who hold this opinion, also hold that for certain things done by the Christian slaveholder, under authority of this relation, we may apply discipline to him.

Now to show how far this reasoning will retain its

strength and beauty, I will put the following case: To-day we celebrated the Lord's Supper. As we sat, suppose there had entered a stranger, who under the catholic invitation to members of other churches, desired to sit and partake with us. But it being known to the church that the stranger is not only a slaveholder, but had actually come to this city to rescue a slave who fled from him, and who is a member of this church, he is rejected. These gentlemen would say that you did right. That slaveholder showed by that act that he was cruel and avaricious; that he also committed gross outrage upon the sense of this Christian community. But the same slaveholder, holding the same relations, having the same views and feelings on the subject of slavery, might come on some other business, and these same gentlemen would censure you for excluding him from your table. This case *I* think shows their position, and for the life of me I cannot see the consistency of it. They would have you admit that the man has a free, full, pure, consistent, innocent and legal right to have, hold and defend a piece of property, and yet if that same property happens to escape him, they would have you condemn him for pursuing. Poor Shimei, he may hold his slaves in Jerusalem, but because he went to Gath after his fugitives, he must die! These men say that a man has a right to wear a beaver hat, but if as he is passing your door it is blown by the wind into your yard, and he goes to get it, you must scold him out! "O consistency, thou art a jewel!"

Let no one think that I am pleading for the rights of the slaveholder, either to hold or to pursue slaves. I am only pleading for consistency. In the case supposed, what has the pursuer done but piously and le-

gally followed out the relation between master and slave, owner and property. He is consistent with himself—just as much so as the man who searches for a bag of gold he has lost. For if the relation between master and slave be consistent with the Gospel, then it must be equally consistent with the Gospel for the master to pursue his lost slave, even to this city, and claim him. How can we expect to make the fruit good while the tree is corrupt? “Either make the tree good and [so] his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and [so] his fruit corrupt. For the tree is known by his fruit.” What kind of fruit does slavery bear? Bad. As saith the noble Pollok,

“bad the root,
And bad the fruit it bore.”

My sentence is that slavery is condemned by the general tenor and scope of the New Testament. Its doctrines, its precepts, and all its warnings are against the system. I am not bound to show that the New Testament authorizes me in such a chapter and verse to reject a slaveholder. It is sufficient for me to show, what is fully acknowledged by my opponents, that it is murdering the poor, corrupting society, alienating brethren, and sowing the seed of discord in the bosom of the whole church, and covering all missionary ground with the blasting fires of controversy.

Let us always bear in mind what slavery is, and also what the Gospel is.

Here is slavery in its legal attributes :

“A slave is one who is in the power of his master to whom he belongs; the master may sell him, dispose of his person, his industry and his labor; he can do nothing, possess nothing, nor acquire any thing, but what must belong to his master.” La. Civ. Code, Art.

35. "All their issue and offspring born and to be born, shall be, and they are hereby declared to be and remain forever hereafter absolute slaves, and shall follow the condition of the mother."

It is said that facts are stubborn things. The above are statute facts.

But here follows an ecclesiastical exposition of slavery, by the Synod of KENTUCKY.

"This system licenses and produces *great cruelty*.

"Mangling, imprisonment, starvation, every species of torture, may be inflicted upon him, (the slave,) and he has no redress.

"There are now in our whole land two millions of human beings, exposed, defenceless, to every insult, short of maiming or death, which their fellow men may choose to inflict. *They suffer all* that can be inflicted by wanton caprice, by brutal lust, by malignant spite, and by insane anger. Their happiness is the sport of every whim, and the prey of every passion that may, occasionally, or habitually, infest the master's bosom. If we could calculate the amount of woe endured by ill-treated slaves, it would overwhelm every compassionate heart—it would move even the obdurate to sympathy. There is also a vast sum of suffering inflicted upon the slave by humane masters, as a punishment for that kind of idleness and misconduct which slavery naturally produces.

"*Brutal stripes* and all the varied kinds of personal indignities, are not the only species of cruelty which slavery licenses."

I want no higher authority than this. I want no truer picture of slavery.

But how does this agree with our Gospel? Does it sanction "cruelty?" Jas. ii. 13. Does it sanction

“mangling?” Luke x. 30. Does it sanction “imprisonment?” Heb. xi. 36. Does it sanction “starvation?” Matt. xxv. 45. Does it sanction “torture?” Heb. xi. 37. In short does it sanction “malignant spite,” “insane anger,” and whimsical sporting with the happiness of our fellow men?

And O how precious is that part of this ecclesiastical exposition which speaks of the “vast sum of suffering inflicted upon the slave by “HUMANE masters,” for evils INHERENT in the system—“idleness and misconduct which slavery naturally produces.”

Two hundred and thirty long, dreary and bloody years have passed away, during which eight generations of us have sunk, starved, beaten, mangled, broken-hearted, and bathed in blood to the grave. At this day of reform, revivals, missionary operations, political renovations, and literary excellence, when we rise up and cry to these men upon Christian principle, enough, enough, O do let the past days of your bloody doings suffice; slacken your hands, let us go that we may make friendship, and do a little for the glory of God before the day of account comes with us both; they turn upon us and ask by what authority we say these things. We think it now about time to ask these self consecrated tyrants, by what authority *they* have done these things and continue to do them. It is high time they begun to look to the account they will have to give ere long. They have pretended to act by Bible authority. They very well know that if we are right, they are wrong; hence they are afraid to come “to the law and to the testimony,” because on this subject they know there is no truth on their side.

Decidedly the greatest, the most critical and the

most perplexing biblical question now to be decided, is whether the Bible does, or does not, condemn American slavery; and consequently whether we have a right to refuse communion with American slaveholders as Christians. Some taunting wag might ask, what have learned theologians and pious statesmen been about these eighteen hundred years the world has been in possession of the Gospel, that they have not settled that question in its light? My brethren, the question is fully settled with me; and I hope it is with you.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, in the confident hope that during the two years of our pastoral separation, God will be your Almighty friend, protector and guide, and his word your light, support and comfort; that you will live unitedly in the fear and love of God; that you will keep your church pure; be examples of public and private piety; train your children right; pray much; pass the fugitive along, support the temperance cause, stand by the Union Missionary Society, pray for the Mendi mission and brother Raymond. And the God of Grace reward you.

Let piety prevail in your families. Let order prevail in your meetings. Pray do not take a retrograde movement in your affairs, but advance, even faster than you have done heretofore.

Let both the Female Missionary and the Female Relief Societies hold on their way faithfully. You have done nobly—you can continue to do so.

I hope all the children of the church and congregation will earnestly seek early piety. I hope the children of the Sabbath school will not let the children of Detroit think more of and do more for the Mendi mis-

sion than they. Cannot the little girls of the congregation do something to help Mrs. Raymond? You can pray for the Mission. I hope you will at night as you retire, utter a prayer like this: "*O Lord, our Heavenly Father, be pleased to bless Mr. and Mrs. Raymond, spare their lives and bless the work of their hands, to the salvation of the chiefs, the people and the children of Mendi, for Thy name's sake. Amen.*"

"Blest be the tie that binds
 Our hearts in Christian love;
 The fellowship of kindred minds,
 Is like to that above.
 Before our Father's throne
 We pour our ardent pray'rs;
 Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
 Our comforts and our cares.
 We share our mutual woes;
 Our mutual burdens bear;
 And often for each other flows
 The sympathizing tear.
 When we asunder part,
 It gives us inward pain;
 But we shall still be join'd in heart,
 And hope to meet again."