THE RIGHTS AND THE DUTIES OF MASTERS.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE DEDICATION

OF

A CHURCH,

ERECTED IN CHARLESTON, S. C.,

FOR THE BENEFIT AND INSTRUCTION OF THE COLOURED POPULATION.

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INTRODUCTION.

The following Sermon was preached on Sunday evening, May 26, 1850, before a large assembly of intelligent and respectable citizens of Charleston, at the dedication of a Church erected for the religious instruction of the Negroes. This building has been put up under the supervision of the Second Presbyterian Church. The congregation worshipping in it are under the ecclesiastical watch and control of the Session of that Church, into which will be received all those who may become Church members. There is, therefore, no separate ecclesiastical organization of this congregation. The Rev. John B. Adger is their Minister, and his successors will, from time to time, be appointed by the Session of the Second Church and by the Presbytery of Charleston.

This commodious edifice is in the Gothic style—a model of neatness and simplicity. Its shape being that of a capital T, the transepts or wings are appropriated to the use of white persons, and are entered by separate doors. The cost of this Church, including the lot and a small building in the rear, for Sunday School purposes, has been about $7,700. A balance of about $1,700 remained due at the dedication, but since that time it has been all paid, and the undertaking stands a pleasing monument of the Christian zeal of our community for the sound and thorough religious training of their slaves.

At the Sunday School connected with this Church, there are generally present about one hundred and eighty scholars, who are taught by the Minister and some twenty or thirty ladies and gentlemen. Their improvement in religious knowledge and orderly behaviour, during two years of instruction, is very manifest.

The Session of the Second Presbyterian Church, anxious that the profound and comprehensive views of Dr. THORNWELL, upon *the* question of our country and our day, should not be confined to those who heard his Discourse, have requested and obtained from him a copy for publication. It is, accordingly, now sent forth as another Scriptural exhibition of the Rights and the Duties of Masters.

SERMON.

COLOSSIANS IV: 1. Masters, give unto your Servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a master in Heaven.

I REJOICE in the solemnities of this night. I rejoice not merely that a new house has been dedicated to the worship of God and the promulgation of the Gospel; which always affords a just occasion of congratulation and delight, but that a building has been erected—erected in the metropolis of the State, and erected at this particular time, for the special benefit of those who are emphatically the poor of our land. When the scheme was first projected, opposition was very naturally excited to the separation of masters and servants in the solemn offices of religion, which its execution, to some extent, involved. It was felt to be desirable that the different classes of the community should meet together and experience the salutary influence upon their relations to each other, which the contemplation of their common relation to God was suited to exert. These considerations were not destitute of force, and they would have been entitled to prevail, had it not been obvious that the advantages of such promiscuous assemblies were dearly purchased by the exclusion of immense numbers of the coloured population from all adequate opportunities of religious instruction at all. The question was soon found to be partial separation, or a partial diffusion of the gospel among the slaves.

An enlarged philanthropy prevailed over sentiment—and the completion of this structure is a declaration to the world—that neither apprehensions of safety to ourselves, nor of injury to our servants—that neither mawkish sentimentalism nor absurd jealousy, shall deter us from providing the negro with the armour of salvation.

This triumph of Christian benevolence is the more illustrious, as having taken place in a community which has been warned by experience to watch with jealous care, all combinations of the blacks. Religion has been so often the cloak of designing knaves—and religious assemblies so often prostituted to the unhallowed purposes of anarchy and crime, that good men began to apprehend that religion itself might be ultimately excluded as a measure of police. But the erection of this house is a publick proof that the good people of Charleston can be bribed by no temptations of interest or security to confound the abuse with the lawful uses of a thing—and that while they take every precaution which wisdom and prudence suggest to guard effectually against the one, they will not be driven into any mad crusade against the other. Bowing with reverence to the authority of God, and recognizing the obligation to communicate His will to the children of men, they are determined to make known His Gospel, in its simplicity and purity, without any checks or hindrances but those which shall prevent religious conventions from being turned into conventions of crime. All they demand is that it shall be Christianity which is taught—the Christianity contained in the Bible, proclaimed by Apostles and Prophets, and sealed by the blood of a goodly company of Martyrs and Confessors. The name

of Jesus is not a name for conspirators to conjure with—it carries no danger with it—the doctrines of Jesus are doctrines according to godliness, and our people, we rejoice to say, have refused under any pretext of expediency or policy, to league with Herod and Pontius Pilate, in an unholy combination against the anointed of the Lord. Time will show that they have acted wisely, and that this Church will prove a stronger fortress against insubordination and rebellion than weapons of brass or iron.

The juncture at which you have been led to begin and carry out this undertaking—it is but just to say—affords a proof of your homage to religion, and a vindication of your characters, as beautiful as they are conspicuous. The slave-holding States of this confederacy have been placed under the ban of the publick opinion of the civilized world. The philanthopy of Christendom seems to have concentrated its sympathies upon us. We have been denounced, with every epithet of vituperation and abuse, as conspirators against the dignity of man—traitors to our race, and rebels against God. Overlooking, with a rare expansion of benevolence, the evils which press around their own doors, the vices and crimes and sufferings of their own neighbours and countrymen, the philanthropists of Europe and this country can find nothing worth weeping for but the sufferings and degradation of the Southern slave, and nothing worth reviling but the avarice, inhumanity and cruelty of the Southern master, and nothing worth labouring to extirpate but the system which embodies these outrages and wrongs. So monstrous are the misrepresentations which ignorance, malice and fanaticism are constantly and assiduously propagating in regard

to this relation among us, that if our names were not actually written under the pictures, we should never suspect that they were intended for us. In the grave discussions of philosophy—the solemn instructions of the pulpit—the light effusions of the poet—in popular assemblies and legislative halls—among all classes and conditions of men—we are held up to execration and contempt; and our society is shunned as scrupulously as if the taint of leprousy adhered to us. Even those who cannot find it in their hearts to join in the violent maledictions which zeal for humanity has piled upon us, never venture upon a plea of justification in our defence. They pity us—they lament our lot—admit that our case is bad, desperately bad—but then we are not so much to be blamed. They curse us in their sympathies.

This insane fury of philanthropy has not been content with speculating upon our degradation and wretchedness at a distance. It has aimed at stirring up insurrection in our midst. In the sacred names of religion and liberty, private efforts have been made to turn the hearts of servants against their masters; and publick institutions, which the implied faith of the country should render only vehicles of convenience, have been treacherously converted into engines of sedition and organs of tumult. Outlaws from humanity, the Constitution of the Country has been unable to protect us from the machinations of those who, according to the legitimate use of language, can be much more appropriately styled Manstealers than ourselves. At this moment the Union is shaken to its centre by the prevalence of sentiment over reason and truth: and the remarkable spectacle is exhibited of a people con-

strained in conscience to violate the faith of treaties, the solemnity of contracts, and the awful sanctity of an oath; constrained in conscience to trample in the dust the plainest obligations of duty, rather than infringe the speculative rights of man. A spurious charity for a comparatively small class in the community, is dictating the subversion of the cherished institutions of our fathers, and the hopes of the human race—the utter ruin of this vast imperial Republick, is to be achieved as a trophy to the progress of human development.

That we should be passive spectators of these scenes of madness and confusion—that we should be indifferent to the condemnation of the civilized world, and especially to efforts to put in jeopardy our lives, as well as our property, is not to be expected. The fear of good men among ourselves has been, that the natural exasperation which so much unmerited censure and such extraordinary interference with our affairs have a tendency to produce, would provoke us to extremities resulting rather from the violence of resentment than the dictates of prudence. Perhaps, at the first alarming indications of our moral position, in the estimate of the world, we indulged too much in the language of defiance, and permitted ourselves to yield to suggestions of policy, which, in our calmer moments, neither the reason nor the conscience of the country should approve. It is useless to deny that we were tempted to resort to measures of legislation, which, while they contribute nothing to our security, have given a pretext to the calumnies of our enemies, and embarrassed our defence in the hands of our friends. But I feel bound, in candour, to say, that, under the extraordinary pressure which has been upon us, it is a matter of astonish-

ment and of devout thanksgiving to God, that we have been able, in the regulation of our domestick institutions, to preserve so much moderation, prudence, humanity and caution. When the first explosion had passed off, we consented to plead our cause at the bar of the world; we looked more narrowly into the nature and organization of society—at the origin and extent of the rights of man—and feeling justified in our own consciences and in the sight of God, we endeavoured to conduct ourselves with the dignity which a consciousness of rectitude inspires, and to deserve, if we cannot obtain, the confidence of mankind. That in the conduct of our plea we have contributed our full proportion to the philosophy of government—that we have done much to expose the fallacies and dangers of prevailing theories in regard to the scope and purpose of political institutions—that we have been eminently conservative in our influence upon the spirit of the age, it seems to us, cannot be decently denied. To say that we have run into no extravagancies in our defences of slavery—that we have not, like all controvertists, been perplexed with the ambiguity of terms, and betrayed by rashness into untenable positions, is to say that we are angels and not men. But, the wonder is, that our excesses have not been greater and more disastrous. With infidelity on the one hand, suggesting a short reply to the indictment of the world, that our Negroes are not of the same blood with ourselves—a plea which, if it had been admitted, would have justly drawn down the curse of God, as well as the execrations of the race; with the dictates of a narrow expediency on the other, suggesting that our safety depended upon the depression and still lower degradation of the black race; with

Scylla on the one side and Charybdis on the other, the wonder is, that we have not been frightened from our propriety, and driven to the adoption of more measures that would seem to justify the censures of our enemies.

The inception and successful progress of this enterprise encourage the hope that we mean to maintain our moderation. It is a publick testimony to our faith, that the Negro is of one blood with ourselves—that he has sinned as we have, and that he has an equal interest with us in the great redemption. Science, falsely so called, may attempt to exclude him from the brotherhood of humanity. Men may be seeking eminence and distinction by arguments which link them with the brute; but the instinctive impulses of our nature, combined with the plainest declarations of the word of God, lead us to recognize in his form and lineaments—in his moral, religious and intellectual nature—the same humanity in which we glory as the image of God. We are not ashamed to call him our brother.—The subjugation of the fears and jealousy which a systematic misrepresentation of religion, on the part of our inveterate opposers, has had a tendency to produce, is a publick declaration to the world, that, in our philosophy, right is the highest expediency, and obedience to God the firmest security of communities as well as individuals. We have not sought the protection of our property in the debasement of our species; we have not maintained our own interests in this world, by the deliberate sacrifice of the eternal interests of the thousands who look to us for the way of salvation. Under the infallible conviction—infallible, because the offspring of the word of God—that he who walketh uprightly, walketh surely, we have endeavored to carry

out a plan which shall have the effect of rendering to our servants, in the most comprehensive sense, that which is just and equal. If others feel called to seduce them into grievous crime, and to ply them with instigations to insurrection and tumult, our firmest precautions against the threatened danger shall be the faithful discharge of our duties, which, while it preserves a conscience void of offence towards God, conciliates the confidence and affections of man.

If God shall enable us to maintain the moderation and dignity which become us, and to set an example of faithfulness and diligence in the discharge of the duties which spring from the relation of master and servant, it will be an omen of good. It will be a signal proof that He has not condemned us, and a cheering token that in the vicissitudes of human affairs, truth will ultimately prevail, and we shall stand acquitted at the bar of the world. The agitations which are convulsing the kingdoms of Europe—the mad speculations of philosophers—the excesses of unchecked democracy, are working out some of the most difficult problems of political and social science: and when the tumult shall have subsided and reason resumed her ascendency, it will be found that the very principles upon which we have been accustomed to justify Southern slavery, are the principles of regulated liberty—that in defending this institution we have really been upholding the civil interests of mankind—resisting alike the social anarchy of communism and the political anarchy of licentiousness—that we have been supporting representative, republican government against the despotism of masses on the one hand, and the supremacy of a single will on the other.

God has not permitted such a remarkable phenomenon as the unanimity of the civilized world, in its execration of slavery, to take place without design. This great battle with the Abolitionists, has not been fought in vain. The muster of such immense forces—the fury and bitterness of the conflict—the disparity in resources of the parties in the war—the conspicuousness—the unexampled conspicuousness of the event, have all been ordered for wise and beneficent results; and when the smoke shall have rolled away, it will be seen that a real progress has been made in the practical solution of the problems which produced the collision.

What disasters it will be necessary to pass through before the nations can be taught the lessons of Providence—what lights shall be extinguished, and what horrors experienced, no human sagacity can foresee. But that the world is now the theatre of an extraordinary conflict of great principles—that the foundations of society are about to be explored to their depths—and the sources of social and political prosperity laid bare; that the questions in dispute involve all that is dear and precious to man on earth—the most superficial observer cannot fail to perceive. Experiment after experiment may be made—disaster succeed disaster, in carrying out the principles of an atheistic philosophy—until the nations, wearied and heart-sickened with changes without improvement, shall open their eyes to the real causes of their calamities, and learn the lessons which wisdom shall evolve from the events that have passed. Truth must triumph. God will vindicate the appointments of His Providence—and if our institutions are indeed consistent with righteousness and truth,

we can calmly afford to bide our time—we can watch the storm which is beating furiously against us, without terror or dismay—we can receive the assault of the civilized world—trusting in Him who has all the elements at His command, and can save as easily by one as a thousand. If our principles are true, the world must come to them; and we can quietly appeal from the verdict of existing generations, to the more impartial verdict of the men who shall have seen the issue of the struggle in which we are now involved. It is not the narrow question of abolitionism or of slavery—not simply whether we shall emancipate our negroes or not; the real question is the relations of man to society—of States to the individual, and of the individual to States; a question as broad as the interests of the human race.

These are the mighty questions which are shaking thrones to their centres—upheaving the masses like an earthquake, and rocking the solid pillars of this Union. The parties in this conflict are not merely abolitionists and slaveholders—they are atheists, socialists, communists, red republicans, jacobins, on the one side, and the friends of order and regulated freedom on the other. In one word, the world is the battle ground—Christianity and Atheism the combatants; and the progress of humanity the stake. One party seems to regard Society, with all its complicated interests, its divisions and sub-divisions, as the machinery of man—which, as it has been invented and arranged by his ingenuity and skill, may be taken to pieces, re-constructed, altered or repaired, as experience shall indicate defects or confusion in the original plan. The other party beholds in it the ordinance of God; and contemplates "this little scene of human life," as placed in the middle of a

scheme, whose beginnings must be traced to the unfathomable depths of the past, and whose development and completion must be sought in the still more unfathomable depths of the future—a scheme, as Butler expresses it, "not fixed, but progressive—every way incomprehensible"—in which, consequently, irregularity is the confession of our ignorance—disorder the the proof of our blindness, and with which it is as awful temerity to tamper as to sport with the name of God.

It is a great lesson that, as the weakness of man can never make that straight which God hath made crooked, true wisdom consists in discharging the duties of every relation; and the true secret of progress is in the improvement and elevation which are gradually superinduced by this spirit.

The part, accordingly, which is assigned to us in the tumult of the age, is the maintenance of the principles upon which the security of social order and the development of humanity depends, in their application to the distinctive institutions which have provoked upon us the malediction of the world. The Apostle briefly sums up all that is incumbent, at the present crisis, upon the slaveholders of the South, in the words of the text—Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven. It would be an useless waste of time to spend many words in proving, that the servants contemplated by the Apostle were slaves. Finding it impossible to deny that slavery, as an existing element of society, is actually sanctioned by Christ and His Apostles, those who would preserve some show of consistency in their veneration of the Scriptures, and their condemnation of

us, resolve the conduct of the founders of Christianity into motives of prudence and considerations of policy. While they admit that the letter of the Scriptures is distinctly and unambiguously in our favour, they maintain that their spirit is against us, and that our Saviour was content to leave the destruction of whatsoever was morally wrong in the social fabric, to the slow progress of changes in individual opinions, wrought by the silent influence of religion, rather than endanger the stability of governments by sudden and disastrous revolutions. "The Apostle does not," says a learned commentator, "interfere with any established relations, however, as in the case of slavery, morally and politically wrong—but only enjoins the discharge of the duties which the very persons themselves recognize." It is not for me to explain how the imputation of a defective morality can be reconciled with the great Protestant dogma, that the Bible is an adequate rule of faith and practice; or upon what principles, slaveholders should be rejected from the fellowship of the Christian Church now, when Paul received them as brethren, and sanctioned the bondage in which they held their servants.

But it may be worth while to expose the confusion of ideas, from which this distinction, betwixt the letter and the spirit of the Gospel, has arisen, and which has been a source of serious perplexity, both to the defenders and the enemies of slavery. Many Christian men have been led, in reference to this subject, to lend their sanction to principles which, in all other applications, they would reject with abhorrence, because they have felt that the genius and temper of Christianity were inconsistent with the genius and temper of slavery,

while others, driven to the opposite extreme, from a faithful study of the letter, have been led to deny the principles which lie at the foundation of all human progress, and to assume an attitude in regard to human rights and liberty, which, in their abstract forms, can be characterized as little less than monstrous.

That is a desperate cause which is either incompatible with the general tone and spirit of Christianity, or with the progress of true liberty, which is only another name for the social and political development of man. If it can be shown that slavery contravenes the spirit of the Gospel—that as a social relation it is essentially unfavourable to the cultivation and growth of the graces of the Spirit—that it is unfriendly to the development of piety and to communion with God—or that it retards the onward progress of man—that it hinders the march of society to its destined goal, and contradicts that supremacy of justice, which is the soul of the State, and the life-blood of freedom—if these propositions can be satisfactorily sustained, then it is self-condemned—religion and philanthrophy alike require us to labour for its destruction, and every good man amongst us would feel bound to contribute to its removal; and even the voice of patriotism would demand that we should wipe from our country the foul reproach of standing in the way of the destined improvement of mankind.

The confusion upon this subject has arisen from a twofold misapprehension—one in relation to the nature of the slavery tolerated in the letter of the Scriptures, and the other in relation to the spirit of Christianity itself.

It is common to describe slavery as the property of man in man—as the destruction of all human and

personal rights, the absorption of the humanity of one individual into the will and power of another. "The very idea of a slave," says Dr. Channing,* "is that he belongs to another, that he is bound to live and labour for another, to be another's instrument, and to make another's will his habitual law, however adverse to his own." "We have thus," says he in another place,† "established the reality and sacredness of human rights, and that slavery is an infraction of these, is too plain to need any laboured proof. Slavery violates not one but all, and violates them not incidentally, but necessarily, systematically, from its very nature." In other words, in every system of slavery, from the operation of its inherent and essential principles, the slave ceases to be a person—a man—and becomes a mere instrument or thing. Dr. Channing does not charge this result upon the relation as it obtains under particular codes, or at particular times, or in particular places. He says, distinctly and emphatically, that it violates all human rights, *not incidentally*, but *necessarily*, *systematically* from *its very nature*. It belongs to the very essence of slavery to divest its victims of humanity.

"Slavery," says Professor Whewell,‡ "is contrary to the fundamental principles of morality. It neglects the great primary distinction of Persons and Things—converting a person into a thing, an object merely passive, without any recognized attributes of human nature. A slave is, in the eye of the State which stamps him with that character, not acknowledged as a man. His pleasures and pains, his wishes and desires, his needs and springs of action, his thoughts and feelings, are of no value whatever in the eye of the community. He is reduced to the level of the brutes. Even his crimes, as we have said, are not acknowl-

* Works, vol. ii. p. 17. 10th complete edition. Boston, 1849.

† Works, vol. ii. p. 46. 10th complete edition. Boston, 1849

‡ Elements of Morality, vol. i. p. 372–3. American edition.

edged as wrongs, lest it should be supposed, that, as he may do a wrong, he may suffer one. And as there are for him no wrongs, because there are no rights—so there is for him nothing morally right—that is, as we have seen, nothing conformable to the Supreme Rule of Human Nature: for the Supreme Rule of his condition is the will of his master. He is thus divested of his moral nature, which is contrary to the great principle we have already laid down; that all men are moral beings; a principle, which we have seen, is one of the universal truths of morality, whether it be taken as a principle of Justice or of Humanity. It is a principle of Justice, depending upon the participation of all in a common Humanity; it is a principle of Humanity, as authoritative and cogent as the fundamental Idea of Justice."

If this be a just description of slavery, the wonder is, not that the civilized world is now indignant at its outrages and wrongs, but that it has been so slow in detecting its enormities, that mankind, for so many centuries, acquiesced in a system which contradicted every impulse of nature, every whisper of conscience, every dictate of religion—a system as monstrously unnatural as a general effort to walk upon the head or think with the feet. I have, however, no hesitation in saying, that whatever may be the technical language of the law, in relation to certain aspects in which slavery is contemplated, the ideas of personal rights and personal responsibility pervade the whole system. It is a relation of man to man—a form of civil society, of which persons are the only elements, and not a relation of man to things. Under the Roman code, in which more offensive language than that employed by ourselves was used in reference to the subject, the Apostles did not regard the personality of the slave, as lost or swallowed up in the propriety of the master. They treat him as a man—possessed of certain rights, which it was injustice to disregard, and make it the office of

Christianity to protect these rights by the solemn sanctions of religion—to enforce upon masters the necessity, the moral obligation, of rendering to their bondmen that which is just and equal. Paul treats the services of slaves as *duties*—not like the toil of the ox or the ass—a labor extracted by the stringency of discipline—but a moral debt, in the payment of which they were rendering a homage to God. "Servants," says he,* "be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." I need not say to those who are acquainted with the very elements of moral philosophy, that obedience, except as a figured term, can never be applied to any but rational, intelligent, responsible agents. It is a voluntary homage to law—implies moral obligation, and a sense of duty, and can only, in the way of analogy, be affirmed of the instinctive submission of brutes, or the mechanical employment of instruments and things. †

* Ephes. iv. 5–9

† "By a license of speech," says one who can be accused of no patronage to slavery—"by a license of speech—pardonable in cases where no consequences result from it—we employ the word so improperly as to say that the sculptor's chisel obeys his hand; but it would be an insufferable affectation to use the abstract term *obedience* in such instances, as if the tool were consciously fraught with a moral quality. Nor may we stretch the proprieties of speech so far as to apply the abstract term even to the hand of the artist; the hand, it is true, obeys the mind—but how absurd would it be to commend the hand for its *obedience*, and scarcely less so to speak of the obedience of a well-trained horse; although, by an admissible analogy,

The apostle not merely recognizes the moral agency of slaves, in the phraseology which he uses, but treats them as possessed of conscience, reason and will—by the motives which he presses. He says to them in effect that their services to their masters are duties which they owe to God—that a moral character attaches to their works, and that they are the subjects of praise or blame according to the principles upon which their obedience is rendered. "The blind passivity of a corpse, or the mechanical subserviency of a tool," which Dr. Channing, and Prof. Whewell regard as constituting the very essence of every system of slavery—precluding as it does every idea of merit or demerit, of approbation or of censure, never seems to have entered the head of the Apostle. He considered slavery as a social and political economy, in which relations subsisted betwixt moral, intelligent, responsible beings, involving reciprocal rights and reciprocal obligations. There was a right to command on the one hand—an obligation to obey on the other. Both parties might be guilty of injustice and of wrong—the master might prostitute his power by tyranny, cruelty, and iniquitous exactions—the servant might evade his duty from indolence, treachery, or obstinate self-will. Religion held the scales of justice between them—and enforced fidelity upon each by the awful sanctions of eternity. This was clearly the aspect in which the Apostle contemplated the subject.

The state of things so graphically described and elo-

we say he obeys the hand and leg of his rider. The fiery, yet obsequious animal, while yielding himself to the will of his rider, knows nothing of obedience, because his nature does not include that moral liberty which is the source and soul of the virtue so named"—*Taylor's Loyola and Jesuitism, p.* 286.

quently deplored by the great father of Unitarian Christianity in America, is a palpable impossibility. The constitution of the human mind is in flagrant contradiction to the absorption of the conscience, will, and understanding of one man into the personality of another—it is a thing which cannot be conceived—and if it ever could take place, the termination of all responsibility on the part of the slave would render it ridiculous to labour for his spiritual improvement, or attribute to him any other immortality, than that which Indian fables ascribe to the dog as the faithful companion of his master. And yet upon this absurdity, that slavery divests its victims of humanity—that it degrades them from the rank of responsible and voluntary agents to the condition of tools or brutes—the whole philosophical argument against the morality of the system, as an existing institution—is founded. Moralists prove that man can hold no property in man—that the conscience, in other words, the moral and responsible agency of one person—for to this point the question is reduced—can never be owned by another—it is not an article of barter or exchange—the individual cannot transfer it from himself—and the system which attempts the impossibility is an outrage upon humanity. We cheerfully admit that no man can sell his soul to another—and if the transaction were possible, it would evidently be a most damning sin. "If suicide," we use the words of one of the profoundest thinkers of the day,* "if suicide be a crime—and who but the atheist questions this—so would be the amputation of a limb for no surgical reason; and so would it be a crime

* Taylor's Loyola and Jesuitism, p. 289. Amer. edition

and a frightful impiety to swallow a drug for the purpose of effecting a paralysis of one side, or the extinction of a sense—of sight or of hearing. But is not man's individual mind and conscience, with its voluntary convictions of truth and virtue, a faculty and an element of human nature? is not the freedom of the will a sacred bestowment, which every responsible being has received from his Maker? What shall a man accept in exchange, either for his soul, or for any one of its elementary prerogatives? Neither his soul, nor any of its powers, is really at his disposal—for not only are these powers in themselves beyond all price, but if a price could be adduced that should be their equivalent in whole or in part, the offer could not be listened to: the proposal is a blasphemy, and it is a blasphemy in the intention, notwithstanding that such an intention could never actually be carried out." We grant most cheerfully, and we make an admission in no way inconsistent with Southern slavery, or the slavery sanctioned in the Bible, that though "the human soul may be lost, it cannot either be sold or be made a gift of to another—that conscience may be bound or may be slaughtered, but cannot be transferred to another's keeping—that moral responsibility, instead of being shifted entirely from one to another, or instead of being shared between two, each taking a half or a portion, is doubled, whenever it is attempted to be transferred, or to be deposited, or to be pawned."*

The property of man in man—a fiction to which even the imagination cannot give consistency—is the miserable cant of those who would storm by prejudice

* Taylor's Loyola and Jesuitism, p. 289

what they cannot demolish by argument. We do not even pretend that the organs of the body can be said strictly to belong to another. The limbs and members of my servant are not mine, but his—they are not tools and instruments which I can sport with at pleasure, but the sacred possession of a human being, which cannot be invaded without the authority of law, and for the use of which he can never be divested of his responsibility to God.

If, then, slavery is not inconsistent with the existence of personal rights and of moral obligation, it may be asked in what does its peculiarity consist? What is it that makes a man a slave? We answer, the obligation to labour for another, determined by the Providence of God, independently of the provisions of a contract. The right which the master has is a right, not to the *man*, but to his *labour;* the duty which the slave owes is the service which, in conformity with this right, the master exacts. The essential difference betwixt free and slave-labour is, that one is rendered in consequence of a contract; the other is rendered in consequence of a command. The labourers in each case are equally moral, equally responsible, equally men. But they work upon different principles.

It is strange that Channing and Whewell should have overlooked the essential distinction of this form of service, as it lies patent in the writings of philosophers who preceded them. The definition given by Paley, a man pre-eminently marked by perspicuity of thought and vigour of expression, is exactly the same in spirit with our own. In the actual condition of society, the intervention of a contract is not always a matter of very great moment, since it is not always a

security to freedom of choice. The Providence of God marks out for the slave the precise services, in the lawful commands of the master, which it is the Divine will that he should render; the painful necessities of his case are often as stringent upon the free labourer, and determine, with as stern a mandate, what contracts he shall make. Neither can he be said to select his employments. God allots to each his portion—places one immediately under command—and leaves the other not unfrequently a petitioner for a master.

Whatever control the master has over the person of the slave, is subsidiary to this right to his labour; what he sells is not the man, but the property in his services—true he chastises the man, but the punishments inflicted for disobedience are no more inconsistent with personal responsibilities than the punishments inflicted by the law for breaches of contract. On the contrary, punishment in contradistinction from suffering, always implies responsibility, and a right which cannot be enforced, is a right, which society, as an organized community, has not yet acknowledged. The chastisements of slaves are accordingly no more entitled to awaken the indignation of loyal and faithful citizens—however pretended philanthropists may describe the horrors of the scourge and the lash—than the penalties of disgrace, imprisonment, or death, which all nations have inflicted upon crimes against the State. All that is necessary in any case, is that the punishment should be *just*. Pain unrighteously inflicted is cruelty—whether that cruelty springs from the tyranny of a single master, or the tyranny of that greater master, the State. Whether adequate provisions shall be made to protect the slave from inhumanity and oppression—

whether he shall be exempt from suffering except for disobedience and for crime, are questions to be decided by the law of the land; and in this matter the codes of different nations, and of the same nation at different times, have been various. Justice and religion require that such provisions should be made. It is no part of the essence of slavery, however, that the rights of the slave should be left to the caprice or to the interest of the master; and in the Southern States, provisions are actually made—whether adequate or inadequate it is useless here to discuss—to protect him from want, cruelty, and unlawful domination. Provisions are made which recognize the doctrine of the Apostle, that he is a subject of rights, and that justice must be rendered to his claims. When slavery is pronounced to be essentially sinful, the argument cannot turn upon incidental circumstances of the system—upon the defective arrangement of the details—the inadequate securities which the law awards against the infringement of acknowledged rights—it must turn upon the nature of the relation itself, and must boldly attempt to prove that he ceases to be a man, who is under obligation, without the formalities of a contract, to labour under the direction and for the benefit of another. If such a position is inconsistent with the essential elements of humanity, then slavery is inhuman; if society, on the other hand, has distinctly recognized the contrary as essential to good order, as in the case of children, apprentices and criminals, then slavery is consistent with the rights of man, and the pathetick declamation of abolitionists falls to the ground.

This view of the subject exposes the confusion, which obtains in most popular treatises of morals, of slavery

with involuntary servitude. The service, in so far as it consists in the motions of the limbs or organs of the body, must be voluntary, or it could not exist at all. If by voluntary be meant, however, that which results from hearty consent, and is accordingly rendered with cheerfulness, it is precisely the service which the law of God enjoins. Servants are exhorted to obey from considerations of duty; to make conscience of their tasks, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men. Whether, in point of fact, their service, in this sense, shall be voluntary, will depend upon their moral character. But the same may be said of free labour. There are other motives beside the lash that may drive men to toil, when they are far from toiling with cheerfulness or good will. Others groan under their burdens as well as slaves, and many a man who works by contract is doomed to an involuntary servitude, which he as thoroughly detests as the most faithless slave, who performs nothing but the painful drudgery of eye-service.

There is a moral bondage, the most galling and degrading species of servitude, in which he may be held, as with chains of brass, who scorns to call any man master on earth. Those who have most patiently studied the ends of government and the theory of political society, who are best prepared to solve the problems connected with the nature and extent of the individual restraints, which the security of public order demands—those who have most profoundly investigated the whole question of civil and political liberty, may yet be slaves. They may submit to the sway of a fiercer and more cruel tyrant than any despot who ever wielded a sceptre on earth. "Jesus answered them,

Verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant or slave of sin." This moral slavery, from which it was the professed object of their pretended philosophy to deliver men, was a subject of fruitful and eloquent declamation among the ancient moralists, philosophers and poets. "Who," says Seneca, "is not a slave. One is in bondage to lust, another to avarice, another to ambition, and all to fear." "No bondage," he adds, "is more grievous than that which is voluntary." "To be a slave to the passions," says Pythagoras, "is more grievous than to be a slave to tyrants." "Count no one free," says Plato, "who is intent on the indulgence of wicked passions. Such men serve more cruel masters than those who obtain their slaves by inheritance and purchase, with a right to enforce obedience." "All wicked men," says Cicero, "are slaves. If slavery be the obedience of a broken and an abject mind, deprived of the freedom of will, as indeed it is, who can deny that all frivolous, covetous, wicked men are slaves." "If you are subject to the perturbations of fear, the tumult of corrupt desire, or the violence of anger, you endure," says Claudian, "the yoke of bondage." This slavery to sin is true slavery; it is that which degrades, which renders man unfit for the improvement of his nature, the society of angels, and the favour of God. The external circumstances in which men are placed, the number and variety of their civil and social privileges, the outward advantages of rank, birth or fortune, these are not the things which ennoble or depress us in the scale of excellence. The Monarch on his throne, with prostrate millions around him, may be little, mean, despicable in the sight of the holy and the good, while the poor slave, in his humble

hovel, or on his pallet of straw, may possess a dignity and moral grandeur which assert his affinity with heaven. There is a freedom which is the end and glory of man; the only freedom which the pen of inspiration has commended, and which, from its very nature, is independent of the decrees of kings, or the mandates of States. It is *the* freedom which God approves; which Jesus bought by his blood, and the Holy Spirit effectually seals by His grace; the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. It consists essentially in the dominion of rectitude, in the emancipation of the will from the power of sin, the release of the affections from the attractions of earth, the exemption of the understanding from the deceits of prejudice and error. It is a freedom which the *truth* of God brings with it—a freedom enjoyed by the martyr at the stake, a slave in his chains, a prisoner in his dungeon, as well as the king upon his throne. Independent of time or place, or the accidents of fortune, it is the *breath* of the soul as regenerated and redeemed; and can no more be torn from us than the atmosphere of Heaven can be restrained. If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. The ancient philosophers caught a glimpse of it when they declaimed upon virtue as the end and perfection of our being; Cicero almost seized it when he described him alone as possessed of freedom of will, who pursues rectitude, rejoices in duty and regulates his conduct by wisdom and prudence. This freedom makes man truly a man; and it is precisely the assertion of this freedom—this dominion of rectitude—this supremacy of right, which the Apostle enjoins upon slaves—when he exhorts them to obey their masters in singleness of heart as unto Christ—to

despise eye-service, but to do their work as in the eye of God. To obey under the influence of these motives, is to be slaves no longer. This is a *free* service—a service which God accepts as the loyal homage of the soul—and which proclaims them to be the Lord's freed-men, while they honour their masters on earth. Such slavery might be their glory—might fit them for thrones in the kingdom of God. So far was the Apostle, therefore, from regarding involuntary servitude as the characteristic of slavery, that he condemns such servitude as a sin. He treats it as something that is abject, mean, despicable; but insists on the other hand, that slavery dignifies and ennobles the servant, who obeys from the heart.

But while it may be admitted that slavery is not absolutely inconsistent with moral responsibility, nor the freedom of a moral agent, it may be asked whether the slave is not stripped of some of the rights which belong to him essentially as a man; and in this view, whether the relation is not incompatible with the spirit of the Gospel, which asserts and promotes the dignity and perfection of our race. In other words, whether there is not a limitation upon the moral freedom of the slave—whether his situation does not preclude him from discharging his *whole* duty as a man; and, therefore, whether the relation is not ultimately destructive of the full complement of human rights.

This question, it seems to me, comprises the whole moral difficulty of slavery; and it is at this point of the discussion, that the friends and enemies of the system are equally tempted to run into extravagance and excess; the one party denying the inestimable value of freedom; the other exaggerating the nature and extent

of human rights, and both overlooking the real scope and purpose of the Gospel, in its relation to the present interests of man.

That the design of Christianity is to secure the perfection of the race, is obvious from all its arrangements; and that when this end shall have been consummated, slavery must cease to exist, is equally clear. This is only asserting that there will be no bondage in heaven. Among beings of the same nature, each relatively perfect, there can be no other inequalities than those which spring from superior endowments—the outward advantages of all must be of the same kind, though they may vary in degrees proportioned to the capacities of the individuals to enjoy them. If Adam had never sinned and brought death into the world, with all our woe, the bondage of man to man would never have been instituted; and when the effects of transgression shall have been purged from the earth, and the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, given to the saints, all bondage shall be abolished. In this sense, slavery is inconsistent with the spirit of the Gospel, that it contemplates a state of things—an existing economy, which it is the design of the Gospel to remove. Slavery is a part of the curse which sin has introduced into the world, and stands in the same general relations to Christianity as poverty, sickness, disease or death. In other words, it is a relation which can only be conceived as taking place among fallen beings—tainted with a curse. It springs not from the nature of man as man, nor from the nature of society as such, but from the nature of man as sinful, and the nature of society as disordered.

Upon an earth radiant with the smile of heaven, or

in the Paradise of God, we can no more picture the figure of a slave than we can picture the figures of the halt, the maimed, the lame and the blind; we can no more fancy the existence of masters and tasks than we can dream of hospitals and beggars. These are the badges of a fallen world. That it is inconsistent with a perfect state—that it is not absolutely a good—a blessing—the most strenuous defender of slavery ought not to permit himself to deny; and the devout believer in Revelation would be mad to close his eyes to the fact, that the form in which it is first threatened, in the Bible, is as a punishment for crime. It is a natural evil which God has visited upon society, because man kept not his first estate, but fell, and, under the Gospel, is turned, like all other natural evils, into the means of an effective spiritual discipline. The Gospel does not propose to make our present state a *perfect* one—to make our earth a heaven. Here is where the philanthropists mistake. They picture to themselves imaginary models of a perfect commonwealth; they judge of good and evil by the standard of such ideal schemes; they condemn whatever comes short of their conceptions, without reference to the circumstances, which, after all, may make it relatively good. The sterility of the earth is, no doubt, in itself considered, an evil; but in its relations to man, who has lost his integrity, and to whom labour has become a burden, it is a needful stimulus of industry, and is so overruled into a blessing. The distinction of ranks in society, in the same way, is an evil; but in our fallen world, an absolute equality would be an absolute stagnation of all enterprise and industry. Good and evil, it should never be forgotten, are relative terms, and what may be good for one man

may be an evil to another—or what is good at one time, may be hurtful to the same individual at another. It can be affirmed of no form of government, and of no condition in society, that it is absolutely the best or the worst; and, in the inscrutable Providence of God, it is no doubt arranged that the circumstances of individuals, and the social and political institutions of communities, are, upon the whole, those which are best adapted to the degree of their moral progress. The free citizen of England and America could not endure the condition of African bondage—it would defeat his individual development. Neither could these nations endure the lifeless stagnation of Asiatic despotism. But the governments of Asia may be the only ones consistent with the moral development of their people, and subjection to a master, the state in which the African is most effectually trained to the moral end of his being. When we consider the diversities in moral position, which sin has been the means of entailing upon the race, we may be justified in affirming, that, relatively to some persons and to some times, slavery may be a good, or to speak more accurately, a condition, though founded in a curse, from which the Providence of God extracts a blessing. We are not to judge of the institutions of the present, by the standard of the future life—we are not to confound the absolute and relative. For aught that we know slavery may stand in somewhat the same relation to political society, in a world like ours, in which mortality stands to the human body; and it may be as vain to think of extirpating it, as to think of giving man immortality upon earth. It may be, and perhaps is, in some of its forms,

essential to an imperfect society; and it may be, and perhaps is, the purpose of God that it should be found among men, as long as the slime of the serpent is over the earth. Admit, then, that slavery is inconsistent with the spirit of the Gospel, as that spirit is to find its full development in a state of glory—yet the conclusion by no means follows, that it is inconsistent with the spirit of the Gospel, as that spirit operates among rebels and sinners, in a degraded world, and under a dispensation of grace. The real question is, whether it is incompatible with the spiritual prosperity of individuals, or the general progress and education of society. It is clearly the office of the Gospel to train men, by virtue of the discipline of temptation, hardship and evil, for a state of perfection and glory. Nothing is inconsistent with it which does not present obstacles to the practice of duty, which its own grace is inadequate to surmount. Whoever, therefore, would maintain that slavery is incompatible with the present relations of the Gospel to man, must maintain that it precludes him, by its very nature, from the discharge of some of the duties which the Gospel enjoins. It is nothing to the purpose to speak of it generally and vaguely as an evil—it must be shown to be an evil of that specifick kind which necessitates the commission of sin, and the neglect of duty. Neither is it sufficient to say that it presents strong temptations to sin, in the violent motives which a master may press upon a slave, to execute unlawful commands. This can be affirmed of numberless other situations, in which none will contend that it is unlawful to be found. The question is—not whether it is the state most favourable to the offices of piety

and virtue—but whether it is essentially incompatible with their exercise. This is the true issue.

The fundamental mistake of those who affirm slavery to be essentially sinful, is that the duties of all men are specifically the same. Though they do not state the proposition in so many words, and in its naked form would probably dissent from it, yet a little attention to their reasoning puts it beyond doubt, that this is the radical assumption upon which they proceed—all men are bound to do specifically the same things. As there are obviously duties of some men, in some relations, which cannot be practiced by a slave, they infer that the institution strips him of his rights, and curtails the fair proportions of his humanity. The argument, fully and legitimately carried out, would condemn every arrangement of society, which did not secure to all its members an absolute equality of position; it is the very spirit of socialism and communism.

The doctrine of the Bible, on the other hand, is that the specifick duties—the things actually required to be done, are as various as the circumstances in which men are placed. Moral perfection does not depend upon the number or variety of single acts, but upon the general habitudes of the soul. He is upright whose temper of mind is in conformity with the law, and whose prevailing disposition would always prompt him, in all the relations of life, to do what is right. There may be many right things which he may never be required to perform—but he is entitled to the praise of excellence if he cultivates a spirit which would lead him to perform them, if circumstances should ever make them his duty. The heart may be in full and

perfect sympathy with the whole spirit of the law, where the moral training has been confined to comparatively a narrow circle of actual duties. He may be full of benevolence who has never had the means or opportunity of costly alms to the poor—he may cherish the gentleness of a lamb who has received no injuries to be forgiven—no wrongs to be forgotten—and he may possess the patience of a martyr, or the fortitude of a hero, whose virtue has never been tried by severe suffering or danger. The circumstances in which men are placed in this sublunary state are exceedingly diversified, but there is probably no external condition in which the actual discipline to which men are subjected may not terminate in the temper of universal holiness. Some are tried in one way, some in another—some are required to do one set of things, some another—but the spirit of true obedience is universally the same—and the result of an effectual probation is, in every case, a moral sympathy with the moral perfections of God. The lesson is the same, however different the text-books from which it has been taught.

Now, unless slavery is incompatible with the habitudes of holiness—unless it is inconsistent with the spirit of philanthropy or the spirit of piety—unless it furnishes no opportunities for obedience to the law, it is not inconsistent with the pursuit or attainment of the highest excellence. It is no abridgement of moral freedom; the slave may come from the probation of *his* circumstances as fully stamped with the image of God, as those who have enjoyed an easier lot—he may be as completely in unison with the spirit of universal rectitude, as if he had been trained on flowery beds of ease.

Let him discharge his *whole* duty in the actual circumstances of his case, and he is entitled to the praise of a perfect and an upright man. The question with God is —not *what* he has done—but *how;*—man looketh at the outward circumstances, but God looketh at the heart.

Hence those moralists are grievously in error, who have represented slavery as inconsistent with the full complement of human duty and as a consequent limitation upon the spiritual freedom of man, because there are duties which God has not connected with this condition of society. To maintain that the same things are universally obligatory, without regard to circumstances or relations, that what is exacted of one must necessarily be exacted from another, however different or even incongruous their outward states, is to confound the obligations of rulers and subjects, of parents and children, of guardians and wards, and to plunge the community into irretrievable confusion. All that can be affirmed is, that the same temper of universal rectitude is equally incumbent upon all, while it must be admitted that the outward forms of its manifestations and expression must be determined by the relations which Providence has actually assigned to our state. The slave is to show his reverence for God—the freedom of his inward man—by a cheerful obedience to the lawful commands of his master;—the master, his regard for one who is his master in heaven, by rendering to the slave that which is just and equal. The character of both is determined, in the sight of God, by the spirit which pervades their single acts, however the acts may differ in themselves.

If slavery is not essentially incompatible with the dis-

charge of the essential duties, as a spiritual service, it is not destructive of the essential rights of humanity. All political organizations, our enemies themselves being judges, are subservient to the interests of the individual. "A human being," says Dr. Channing,* in a passage to which we have no other objection than that it represents the perfection of the individual as the ultimate end of his existence, while the Scripture represent it as a means to a higher and nobler end—the glory of God, "A human being is a member of the community, not as a limb is a member of the body, or as a wheel is a part of a machine, intended only to contribute to some general, joint result. He was created, not to be merged in the whole, as a drop in the ocean, or as a particle of sand on the sea-shore, and to aid only in composing a mass. He is an ultimate being, made for his own perfection as the highest end, made to maintain an individual existence, and to serve others only as far as consists with his own virtue and progress. Hitherto governments have tended greatly to obscure this importance of the individual, to depress him in his own eyes, to give him the idea of an outward interest more important than the invisible soul, and of an outward authority more sacred than the voice of God in his own secret conscience. Rulers have called the private man the property of the state, meaning generally by the state themselves, and thus the many have been immolated to the few, and have even believed that this was their highest destination. These views cannot be too earnestly withstood. Nothing seems to me so needful as to give to the mind the consciousness, which governments have done so much to

*Works. Vol. II. p. 77.

suppress, of its own separate worth. Let the individual feel that through his immortality, he may concentrate in his own being a greater good than that of nations. Let him feel that he is placed in the community, not to part with his individuality, or become a tool, but that he should find a sphere for his various powers, and a preparation for immortal glory. To me, the progress of society consists in nothing more than in bringing out the individual, in giving him a consciousness of his own being, and in quickening him to strengthen and elevate his own mind."

All this the grace of God, through the instrumentality of the gospel, may accomplish in the person of one who is bound to labor under the direction and authority of another. The servant of men may be the freeman of the Lord. If his situation is compatible, as it confessedly is, with the achievement of the great end of his existence—if in the school of bondage he may be trained for the glorification and enjoyment of God, he is not divested of any of the rights which belong to him essentially *as man*. He may develope his moral and religious nature—the source and measure of all his rights—and must, consequently, retain every characteristick of essential humanity.

No proposition can be clearer than that the rights of man must be ultimately traced to his duties, and are nothing more than the obligations of his fellows to let him alone in the discharge of all the functions, and the enjoyment of all the blessings of his lot. Whatever puts an obstruction or hinderance to the complement of his duties, is an encroachment upon the complement of his rights as a *man*. Whatever is incompatible with

the exercise of his moral nature is destructive of the fundamental law of his being. But as the moral discipline of man is consistent with the greatest variety of external condition, it is consistent with the greatest variety of contingent rights—of rights which spring from peculiar circumstances and peculiar relations—and in the absence of which a man may still be a man. These cannot be treated as a fixed and invariable quantity. Dependent as they are upon our duties—which, in turn, are dependent upon our circumstances, they fluctuate with the gradations and progress of society—being wider or narrower according to the spheres in which we move. It is only by postulating duties for the slave which God has not enjoined on him—that any show of decency can be given to the declamations against the robbery and fraud which have incapacitated him to perform them. The slave has rights—all the rights which belong essentially to humanity, and without which his nature could not be human, nor his conduct susceptible of praise or blame. In the enjoyment of these rights religion demands that he should be protected.

But then there are rights which belong to men in other situations, to which he is by no means entitled; the rights of the citizen, for example, and the free member of the commonwealth. They are not his, for the simple reason that they are not essential, but contingent; they do not spring from humanity simply considered, for then they would belong to women and children—but from humanity in such and such relations.

As to the influence of slavery upon the advancement of society, there can be no doubt, if the government of

God be moral, that the true progress of communities and States, as well as the highest interests of individuals, depend upon the fidelity with which the duties are discharged, in every condition of life. It is the great law of providential education, that to every one that hath shall be given and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. In this way the reign of universal justice is promoted, and wherever that obtains, the developement of the individual, which is the great end of all social and political institutions, must infallibly take place. The prosperity of the State at the same time is secured, and secured, too, without the necessity of sudden changes or violent revolutions. It will be like the vigor of a healthful body, in which all the limbs and organs perform their appropriate functions, without collision or tumult, and its ascension to a high degree of moral elevation will be like the growth of such a body, silent and imperceptible, the natural result of the blessing of God upon the means He has appointed. Let masters and servants, each in their respective spheres, be impregnated with the principle of duty—let masters resolve to render unto their servants that which is just and equal, never transcending the legitimate bounds of their authority—and servants resolve to cherish sentiments of reverence for their masters according to the flesh—never falling short of the legitimate claims on their obedience; and the chief good of each, as individuals and as men, will be most surely promoted, while each will contribute an important share to the strength and stability of the commonwealth. The feet are as indispensable to the head as the head to the feet. The

social fabrick is made up of divers ingredients, and the cement which binds them together in durability and unity is the cement of justice.

Beside the arguments drawn from considerations of justice and the essential rights of humanity, the incompatibility of slavery with the spirit and temper of the Gospel, is not unfrequently attempted to be made out, from the injunction of the Saviour to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to do unto others as we would have them to do unto us. The principle, however, upon which the precept of universal benevolence is interpreted in this case, makes it the sanction of the grossest wickedness. If we are to regulate our conduct to others by the arbitrary expectations which, in their circumstances, our passions and selfishness might prompt us to indulge, there ceases to be any other standard of morality than caprice. The humour of every man becomes law. The judge could not condemn the criminal, nor the executioner behead him—the rich man could not claim his possessions nor the poor learn patience from their sufferings. If I am bound to emancipate my slave because if the tables were turned and our situations reversed, I should covet this boon from him, I should be bound, upon the same principle, to promote my indigent neighbors around me, to an absolute equality with myself. That neither the Jews, in whose law the precept was first formally announced, nor the Apostles, to whom it was more fully expounded by the Saviour, ever applied it in the sense of the Abolitionists, is a strong presumption against their mode of interpretation. The truth is, it is nothing but the inculcation of *justice* from motives of love. Our Saviour directs us to

do unto others what, in their situations, it would be right and reasonable in us to expect from them. We are to put ourselves in their situations, that we may duly weigh the circumstances of their case, and so be prepared to apply to it the principles of universal justice. We are to let no motives of indolence, ease or apathy prevent us from considering their condition. We are to take the same interest in them that we would take in ourselves—and are to extend to them the same protection of the Divine law which we would insist upon for ourselves. The rule then simply requires, in the case of slavery, that we should treat our slaves as we should feel that we had a right to be treated if we were slaves ourselves—it is only enforcing by benevolence the apostolick injunction—Masters give unto your servants, that which is just and equal. Do right, in other words, as you would claim right.

The instances which are usually urged to prove that slavery is inconsistent with the rights of man, unfortunately for the argument, are not peculiar to slavery. They are incidents to poverty, wherever it prevails in a distressing form; and a wise system of legislation could much more easily detach them from the system of slavery than from the deep indigence which is sure to crush the laborer where a crowded population obtains. They are, at best, only abuses in the one case which might be corrected, while in the other, they seem to be inseparable elements.

Enough has been said to show that slavery is not repugnant to the spirit of the Gospel, in its present relations to our race. It is one of the conditions in which God is conducting the moral probation of man—a con-

dition not incompatible with the highest moral freedom, the true glory of the race, and, therefore, not unfit for the moral and spiritual discipline which Christianity has instituted. It is one of the schools in which immortal spirits are trained for their final destiny. If it is attended with severer hardships, these hardships are compensated by fewer duties, and the very violence of its temptations gives dignity and lustre to its virtues. The slave may be fitted, in his humble, and if you please, degraded lot, for shining as a star in the firmament of heaven. In his narrow sphere, he may be cherishing and cultivating a spirit which shall render him meet for the society of angels and the everlasting enjoyment of God. The Christian beholds in him, not a tool, not a chattel, not a brute or thing—but an immortal spirit, assigned to a particular position in this world of wretchedness and sin, in which he is required to work out the destiny which attaches to him, in common with his fellows, as a man. He is an actor on the broad theatre of life—and as true merit depends not so much upon the part which is assigned, as upon the propriety and dignity with which it is sustained—so fidelity in this relation, may hereafter be as conspicuously rewarded, as fidelity in more exalted stations. Angels and God look not upon the outward state of man;—the poverty, rags, and wretchedness of one—the robes, diadems and crowns of another, are nothing. True worth is the moral vesture of the soul. The spirit of obedience, the love of holiness, sympathy with God, these are the things which make men beautiful and glorious. This is true freedom—these are the things which shall endure and flourish with increasing lustre, when Thrones have

crumbled in the dust and Republicks mouldered among the ruins of the past.

The important question among us is, that which relates to the discharge of our own duties as masters—what are the things which are just and equal that we are required to render to our slaves.

But before attending to this inquiry, it may be well to notice the popular argument against slavery, drawn from the fact, that as it must have begun in the perpetration of grievous wrong, no lapse of time can make it subsequently right. Prescription can never sanctify injustice. The answer turns upon the distinction between the wrong itself and the effects of the wrong. The criminal act, whatever it may have been, by which a man was reduced to the condition of bondage, can never cease to be otherwise than criminal, but the relations to which that act gave rise, may, themselves, be consistent with the will of God and the foundation of new and important duties. The relations of a man to his natural offspring, though wickedly formed, give rise to duties which would be ill-discharged by the destruction of the child. No doubt the principle upon which slavery has been most largely engrafted into society as an integral element of its complex constitution—the principle, that captivity in war gives a right to the life of a prisoner, for which his bondage is accepted in exchange, is not consistent with the truth of the case. But it was recognized as true for ages and generations—it was a step in the moral developement of nations, and has laid the foundation of institutions and usages, which cannot now be disturbed with impunity, and in regard to which, our conduct must be regulated by the

fact of their existence, and not by speculation upon the morality of their origin. Our world exhibits, every where, the traces of sin—and if we tolerate nothing but what we may expect to find in a state of perfection and holiness, we must leave this scene of sublunary distraction. The education of States is a slow process. Their standards of rectitude slowly approximate the standard of God, and in their ages of infancy, ignorance and blindness, they establish many institutions upon false maxims, which cannot subsequently be extirpated without abandoning the whole of the real progress they have made, and reconstituting society afresh. These things, moreover, take place under the sleepless Providence of God, who is surely accomplishing His own great purposes, and who makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrains, at pleasure, the remainder of wrath.

In treating slavery as an existing institution, a fact involving most important moral relations, one of the prime duties of the State is to protect, by temporal legislation, the real rights of the slave. The moral sense of the country acknowledges them—the religion of the country to a large extent, ensures their observance, but until they are defined by law and enforced by penalties there is no adequate protection of them. They are in the category of imperfect and not of perfect rights. The effect of legal protection would be to counteract whatever tendencies slavery may be supposed to possess to produce servility and abjectness of mind. It would inspire a sense of personal responsibility—a certain degree of manliness and dignity of character, which would be, at once, a security to the master and an immense

blessing to the slave. The meanness, cunning, hypocrisy lying and theft, which accompany a sense of degradation, would give place to the opposite virtues, and there would be no foundation in our social relations for that slavery which Cicero defines—*oledientia fracti animi et abjecti, et arbitrio carentis suo.*

In the different systems of slavery, taken collectively, all the essential rights of humanity have been recognized by law—showing that there is nothing in the relation itself, inconsistent with this legal protection. The right to acquire knowledge—which is practically admitted by us, though legally denied, was fully recognized by the Romans, whose slaves were often the teachers of their children, and the scholars of the commonwealth. The right of the family was formally protected among the Spaniards; and the right to personal safety is largely protected by ourselves. But, without stopping to inquire in what way temporal legislation may, most effectually, protect the rights of the slave, we hesitate not to affirm that one of the highest and most solemn obligations which rests upon the masters of the South, is to give to their servants, to the utmost extent of their ability, free access to the instructions and institution of the Gospel. The injustice of denying to them food and raiment, and shelter, against which the law effectually guards, is nothing to the injustice of defrauding them of that bread which cometh down from Heaven. Their labor is ours. From infancy to age, they attend on us—they greet our introduction into the world with smiles of joy, and lament our departure with a heartfelt sorrow; and every motive of humanity and religion exacts from us, that we

should remunerate their services by putting within their reach, the means of securing a blessed immortality. The meanest slave has, in him, a soul of priceless value. "No earthly or celestial language can exaggerate its worth. Thought, reason, conscience, the capacity of virtue, the capacity of Christian love—an immortal destiny, an intimate moral connection with God; here are attributes of our common humanity which reduce to insignificance all outward distinctions, and make every human being" a sublime, an awful object. That soul has sinned—it is under the curse of the Almighty, and nothing can save it from an intolerable hell but the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. They must hear this joyful sound or perish. For how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent? Our design in giving them the Gospel, is not to civilize them—not to change their social condition—not to exalt them into citizens or freemen—it is to save them. The Church contemplates them only as sinners, and she is straitened to declare unto them the unsearchable riches of Christ. She sees them as the poor of the land, under the lawful dominion of their masters; and she says to these masters, in the name and by the authority of God, give them what justice, benevolence, humanity would demand even for a stranger, an enemy, a persecutor—give them the Gospel, without which life will be a curse. Sweeten their toil—sanctify their lives—hallow their deaths. The solemnities of this night are a proof that the call has not been wholly disregarded among us. We have begun a good work, and God grant that it may never cease until every slave in

the land is brought under the tuition of Jesus of Nazareth. None need be afraid of His lessons. It was said of Him on earth, that He should nor cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. He was no stirrer up of strife, nor mover of sedition. His "religion on the other hand, is the pillar of society, the safeguard of nations, the parent of social order, which alone has power to curb the fury of the passions, and secure to every one his rights; to the laborious, the reward of their industry; to the rich, the enjoyment of their wealth; to nobles, the preservation of their honors; and to princes, the stability of their thrones." Insurrection, anarchy and bloodshed—revolt against masters, or treason against States, were never learned in the school of Him, whose Apostles enjoined subjection to the magistrate, and obedience to all lawful authority, as characteristic duties of the faithful. Is any thing to be apprehended from the instruction of Him in whose text-book it is recorded: "let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their masters worthy of all honour?" Christian knowledge inculcates contentment with our lot; and in bringing before us the tremendous realities of eternity, renders us comparatively indifferent to the inconveniences and hardships of time. It subdues those passions and prejudices, from which all real danger to the social economy springs. "Some have objected," says a splendid writer*, "to the instruction of the lower classes, from an apprehension that it would lift them above their sphere, make them dissatisfied with their station in life, and by impairing the habits of sub-

* Robert Hall. Advantages of Knowledge to the lower classes. Works. Vol. I. p. 202.

ordination, endanger the tranquillity of the State; an objection devoid surely of all force and validity. It is not easy to conceive in what manner instructing men in their duties can prompt them to neglect those duties, or how that enlargement of reason which enables them to comprehend the true grounds of authority, and the obligation to obedience, should indispose them to obey. The admirable mechanism of society, together with that subordination of ranks which is essential to its subsistence, is surely not an elaborate imposture, which the exercise of reason will direct and expose. The objection we have stated, implies a reflection on the social order, equally impolitic, invidious and unjust. Nothing in reality renders legitimate governments so insecure as extreme ignorance in the people. It is this which yields them an easy prey to seduction—makes them the victims of prejudice and false alarms, and so ferocious withal, that their interference in a time of public commotion is more to be dreaded than the eruption of a volcano."

Our highest security in these States, lies in the confidence and affection of our servants, and nothing will more effectually propitiate their regards than consistent efforts, upon our part, to promote their everlasting good. They will feel that those are not tyrants who are striving to bring them unto God; and they will be slow to cast off a system which has become associated in their minds with their dearest hopes and most precious consolations. Brutal ignorance is indeed to be dreaded—the only security against it, is physical force—it is the parent of ferocity, of rashness, and of desperate enterprizes. But Christian knowledge softens and subdues.

Christ Jesus in binding his subjects to God, binds them more closely to each other in the ties of confidence, fidelity and love. We would say, then, to you and to all our brethren of the South, go on in your present undertaking; and though our common enemies may continue to revile, you will be consolidating the elements of your social fabrick, so firmly and compactly, that it shall defy the storms of fanaticism, while the spectacle you will exhibit of union, sympathy and confidence, among the different orders of the community, will be a standing refutation of all their accusations against us. Go on in this noble enterprise, until every slave in our borders shall know of Jesus and the resurrection; and the blessing of God will attend you—and turn back the tide of indignation which the public opinion of the world is endeavouring to roll upon you. Go on in this career, and afford another illustration of what all experience has demonstrated, that Christianity is the cheap defence of every institution which contributes to the progress of man.