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ON THE
SUBJECT OF SLAVERY:

ADDRESSED TO THE DELEGATES FROM THE CONGRE-
GATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS TO THE LAST GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

BY N. L. RICE, D. D.,
PASTOR OF SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ST. LOUIS.

SECOND EDITION.

SAINT LOUIS, MO.:

KEITH, WOODS & CO., PRINTERS, 88 MARKET STREET.

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P R E F A C E .

THOSE opposed to the doctrines of the Abolitionists, have been charged with shunning and fearing discussion; and it was intimated to the last General Assembly, by one of the Congregationalist delegates, that Presbyterians were not so communicative on this subject as they should be. Fully persuaded that that cause which will not bear discussion, is a bad one—persuaded, also, that the existing agitations on the subject of slavery demand discussion, and that the discussion of the subject, in the spirit of kindness, will do good in more than one way, I ventured to address, to the Congregationalist delegates to the last General Assembly, the following letters. The interest they have awakened, and the desire expressed in different quarters, to have them printed in a more permanent form, have induced me to consent to the publication in the form in which they now appear. Every position taken in these letters might be indefinitely strengthened; but, it is believed, that sufficient evidence has been furnished to satisfy all reasonable persons. Hoping that the views here presented may do some good, in allaying prejudice and passion, in counteracting the tendency to extreme positions, and in awakening an interest in favor of emancipation and colonization, the author ventures to

republish them in a form somewhat more permanent than that of a weekly newspaper.

On no important subject, has there been so much declamation, and so little argument—so much that has claimed to be discussion, with so little regard to the facts, in view of which only an intelligent judgment can be formed. The immense evils which have resulted from such agitations, and the evils yet to be apprehended, admonish us, that the time has come for kind, sober argument. Abolitionists, in the intensity of their zeal against slavery, have forgotten to look well to their own principles of action. They have overlooked the obvious truth—that the best cause may be damaged by the adoption of false principles by its advocates. In these letters, the author has called their attention to their own proceedings, and invited them to stop assailing others, and defend themselves. It is to be hoped, that our brethren will either be silent on the subject in their future intercourse with Presbyterians, or calmly undertake the defense of the principles and mode of action adopted by Abolitionists.

THE AUTHOR.

LETTERS ON SLAVERY.



LETTER I.

BRETHREN :—Since I had the pleasure, as the Moderator of the last General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, of welcoming you as delegates to that body, from your respective Associations, I have thought much of the subject of Slavery, which you felt it your duty, in your remarks, to introduce. Your remarks were characterized by Christian courtesy, and were, therefore, heard attentively and respectfully. Yet, you gave us to understand that, in your opinion, and in the opinion of the bodies represented by you, the Presbyterian church is failing to discharge her duty, with respect to slavery, if not actually receding from her former testimony on this subject. That was not the time, nor the place, fully to state the views we entertain on this subject, and the reasons for them. Yet, the present unhappy agitations arising from this subject, and its threatening aspect, seem to demand calm and candid investigation. Not as the Moderator of the General Assembly, but as an humble minister of the Presbyterian church, I now deem it my duty to address you, and to assign some reasons why Presbyterians cannot coöperate with our Congregationalist brethren, who embrace the doctrines of the Abolitionists, in their method of dealing with this delicate and difficult subject. You think us neglectful of our duty to masters and slaves. After long and careful examination of the principles involved, we are sure that you have fallen into serious error, and that the

course you have chosen to pursue, has been unscriptural, unwise, and greatly injurious to the interests of religion, to our country, and to the slaves. If this were simply *my* opinion, it might merit little attention. If it were the opinion only of those residing in the slave States, it might be attributed to interest or to prejudice. But it is entertained by great numbers of the wisest and best men in the free States—men, who have no interests to serve, which might warp their judgments. It is, therefore, worthy of the careful and candid consideration of yourselves, and of those with whom you are ecclesiastically associated. They are not infallible. They may have erred in the views they have taken of this subject; and, if they have, they have done, and are likely to do, far more injury to the cause of Christ, and to their country, than they can ever repair.

I do not approach you with the language of denunciation. I am weary of seeing, in our public prints, crimination and re-crimination. It imparts no light. It convinces no one. It excites the worst passions, and perverts the judgment. I address you as ministers of Christ, in view of your responsibility and mine. You have spoken to us courteously, but in language of censure. Will you patiently and candidly weigh what we have to say in reply? Will you listen, without passion, whilst I attempt to prove, that the Presbyterian church is right, and you and your brethren wrong, in the treatment of this subject?

I shall not now discuss the question, whether slaveholding, considered abstractly, is *right*; nor shall I attempt to prove that slavery is a *blessing*, or an institution, the perpetuation of which is desirable. It exists in our country, and is to be treated as a *reality*. I believe, that the mode of treating it, adopted by the Abolitionists, is unscriptural, unwise, and deeply injurious to the slaves themselves. Let us reason together.

There are two aspects in which the subject of slavery ought to be viewed, viz: 1st. As a *providential fact*; and 2d. As an

institution involving *important duties and interests*. These two aspects are quite distinct; but they cannot be entirely separated.

1st. Slavery, as it exists in our country, presents itself as a *providential fact*. You and I agree in holding the doctrine of a particular providence. You will agree with me, therefore, that, however wicked the men by whom slavery was introduced into this free country, God has permitted it for wise reasons, in order to the accomplishment of some great and important ends. The sale of Joseph into slavery by his brethren, was an unmitigated wickedness; and the men who bought him and sold him to Potiphar, were little better than his unnatural brethren. Yet the hand of God was in it. It was part of a plan full of benevolence toward Joseph, and even toward his wicked brethren. Joseph happily looked more at the providence of God in this thing, than at the wickedness of his oppressors. He, therefore, quietly submitted, discharged his duty to Potiphar, and waited the development of God's designs. In due time, that development came; and he could say to his brethren—"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

Brethren, has it ever occurred to you, and to those with whom you act, that God has some great and benevolent ends to accomplish, by permitting slavery to exist in our country? You may regard this as a strange question; but although I have been in the habit, for years, of reading the writings of Abolitionists, I do not remember to have seen the question discussed in a single instance. Their minds seem to have been fixed exclusively upon the wrongs which, as they suppose, have been inflicted upon the slaves; and their time and energies have been expended in condemning and denouncing slaveholders. The Presbyterian church has taken a widely different view. She has endeavored to understand the designs of an All-wise Providence, in permitting

the existence of slavery in our country. She has believed, that she did, to some extent, understand them; and her treatment of slavery has been influenced, in no small degree, by her views of the leadings of God's providence.

Precisely here, as we believe, Abolitionists of all classes have egregiously erred.

May it not be, that God, in his providence, sent the Africans to this country, that they might receive the light of the Gospel, and that, from amongst them, he might gather into his kingdom many precious souls? May not the language of Joseph to his brethren be precisely appropriate to those who, for gain, tore them from their country?—"But as for you, ye thought evil against me," etc. And if such was God's merciful design in sending them to this country, did not His providence call upon the American churches to see to it, that the Gospel should be preached to them? I am persuaded, you will not deny, that such was one of the purposes of God, in permitting the existence of American slavery; for it is a fact—a soul-cheering fact, in connection with a painful subject—that the Holy Spirit has called multitudes of them into his kingdom. You, of course, believe that God wisely adapts means to ends. The end designed, as you will not deny, was the conversion and salvation of a multitude of those degraded Africans. A part of the means, was the sending of them to these United States.

Now, brethren, let me earnestly ask—What have Abolitionists done toward the conversion of the slaves in this country? To what extent have they obeyed the call of God's providence, to preach to them "the unsearchable riches of Christ?" Who have been the instruments in the conversion and salvation of the multitudes of them who have become Christians in the slave States? The Abolitionists, you must candidly acknowledge, have had no part in this good work. They have, indeed, asserted the right of the slaves to their freedom from the authority of man; but they have done nothing to deliver them

from the bondage of sin and Satan. For their knowledge of the Gospel, and for their hopes of heaven, they are indebted to the very men so constantly and so bitterly denounced by Abolitionists; and in heaven, they will bless God, that there were some Christians who were not Abolitionists.

The Presbyterian church, though often condemned for unfaithfulness, has, from the beginning, paid special attention to their religious instruction. In 1787, the synods of Philadelphia and New York spoke distinctly on this subject; and in 1815, the General Assembly "urged the Presbyteries under their care to adopt such measures as will secure, at least to the rising generation of slaves, within the bounds of the church, a religious education." The Assembly of 1818, "recommended to all the members of our religious denomination, not only to permit but to facilitate and encourage the instruction of their slaves in the principles and duties of the Christian religion," etc. Our ministers and people have not been inattentive to this work. You may not be unaware, that a number of our ministers have devoted themselves entirely to the instruction of the negroes. Those of some other denominations have pursued a similar course. Have you not greatly erred, brethren, in wholly neglecting the spiritual interests of those whom God, in his providence, has sent to your doors, that you might aid in preaching the Gospel to them?

You will not deny, moreover, that the spiritual and eternal interests of the slaves are of infinitely greater importance, than their freedom from human bondage. How has it happened, then, that the attention of Abolitionist ministers has been given almost exclusively to those interests which are of comparatively trifling importance? How has it happened, especially when their office, as Christian ministers, requires that their labors be chiefly directed to the spiritual interests of men?

Is it not probable, that another gracious purpose which God

designed to answer, by permitting the existence of slavery in this country, was to evangelize Africa, by sending Christianized Africans back to the land of their forefathers, to bear the light of the Gospel? You well know at what sacrifice of precious lives missions in Western Africa have been conducted. You know, that the constitution of the white man cannot endure that climate. Ought not the organization of the American Colonization Society to have been hailed by all American Christians, as the most important benevolent enterprise of the age, and as affording a satisfactory answer to the difficult question, why, in the providence of God, slavery was permitted in our country? It offered to manumitted negroes, an asylum, where they could be truly free, and where they could become really elevated. It offered the most effective means of suppressing the slave trade on the coast of Africa. It afforded the very best means of sending the Gospel to the benighted tribes of Africa. It proposed to establish, on the coast of Africa, a civilized and free Republic, which, transplanting American institutions, might bless unnumbered millions. In 1829, Henry Clay, with far-seeing wisdom, said—"We may boldly challenge the annals of human nature, for the record of any human plan for the amelioration of the condition or advancement of the happiness of our race, which promised more unmixed good, or more comprehensive beneficence, than that of Colonization, if carried into full execution." And have not the results justified this strong language? Look now at the Republic of Liberia, with its free institutions, its schools, its churches, its commerce, its influence upon the neighboring tribes of heathen, and its success in the suppression of the slave trade; and say, whether Mr. Clay was not right. The day has come, when even Abolitionists are constrained to utter the praises of Colonization. Read the following from a late number of the *Congregationalist*, of Boston :

"AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY.—It claims to have estab-

lished a colony in Africa, that has already been acknowledged an independent Republic by the principal governments of the world—to have settled Christianity on a permanent footing, preparing the principal agency for sending it abroad over the whole dark and populous continent—to have planted there American civilization, giving the people a constitution like our own—laws, schools, arts, language, and newspapers, besides rearing a college edifice, and supporting a public library of great value—and to have furnished thousands of free people of color with a home, where they labor under none of the disadvantages of an inferior caste; where hope animates them to noble exertions, and they may freely aspire to all offices of trust and honor, even to the Presidency. The march of the Republic is onward—men, who, but a few years ago, were slaves in Virginia and Kentucky, now own farms and large plantations of coffee, sugar, and other valuable productions. Commerce, too, increases, as the immense internal resources of the country are brought to light, and colored men, in a few years, amass handsome fortunes; and educational systems are becoming perfected—schools and seminaries are springing up in every direction—so that the next generation of Liberia will possess a sound, classical and religious education; and besides all this, the moral atmosphere is healthful—the Sabbath is revered along the coast and in the interior, and by those who come from a distance to Liberia for purposes of trade. Thus much is gained.”

The organization of the American Colonization Society was hailed with delight by all the leading Christian denominations and philanthropists in the country. Foremost, amongst the advocates of Colonization, stood the Presbyterian church. The General Assembly of 1818 said—“We recommend to all our people to patronize and encourage the society, lately founded, for colonizing in Africa, the land of their ancestors, the free people of color in our country. We hope, that much good may

result from the plans and efforts of this society. And while we exceedingly rejoice to have witnessed its origin among the *holders of slaves*, as giving an unequivocal pledge of their desire to deliver themselves and their country from the calamity of slavery, we hope that those portions of the American Union, whose inhabitants are, by a gracious Providence, more favorably circumstanced, will cordially, and liberally, and earnestly, coöperate with their brethren, in bringing about the great end contemplated."

For a time, the Congregationalists of New England heartily sustained the cause of Colonization. In looking over the files of the *Christian Intelligencer*, of New Haven, for a series of years, I find it heartily advocated; and I see evidence that it was extensively popular throughout New England.

But at length, Abolitionism came into existence, and, at once, assailed Colonization with great zeal and bitterness. In the year 1832, the notorious Lloyd Garrison took the lead in assailing the Colonization Society, and published a book against it. "This work," says Dr. Alexander, "seemed at once to arouse the feelings of many persons who, with zeal, embraced Mr. Garrison's views; among these, were found ministers of the Gospel, and men and women of irreproachable character." Dr. Alexander further says: "The fiercest wrath of this party was directed against the Colonization Society, as the abettors of slavery." James G. Birney and Gerritt Smith were once ardent friends of Colonization; but their conversion to Abolitionism was signalized by the most bitter opposition to Colonization. The Colonization cause lives and triumphs, only because Abolitionists were unable to destroy it. The Republic of Liberia exists, and challenges the admiration of the world, only because they were unable to blast its prosperity.

Now, brethren, look at Garrison, (the father of Abolitionism,) and his party, and listen to their infidel blasphemies, and then look at the fruits of Colonization, which he slandered and

reviled. Compare the scattered fugitives in Canada with the Republic of Liberia. The former exhibits the work of Abolitionism; the latter, the work of the men denounced by Abolitionists, as the enemies of the slave.

Will you venture now to deny that God designed, by means of Colonization, to plant a free Christian Republic on the shores of Africa, and to make it a blessing of vast extent, not only to the colonists themselves, but to benighted Africa? *Can* you doubt it? I am satisfied you cannot. But if you admit it, then you are compelled to admit, that Abolitionists, instead of rightly interpreting the providence of God, have perseveringly fought against it—that they have been the most determined enemies of a great work of God—one of the most important of this eventful age. And you must admit, too, that the very men whom Abolitionists have denounced as the enemies of the slave, and as walking in darkness, understood the leadings of Divine Providence infinitely better than they did.

Verily, it does seem to me, the day has come for Abolitionism to humble itself under the mighty hand of God. In spite of its puny efforts, He has pushed forward His own cause. You can easily imagine, brethren, how lectures from those occupying such an attitude, impressed the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church—a body which, from the beginning of its existence, has correctly read and obeyed the voice of Divine Providence, with regard to this important subject. I doubt, if there was a member of that body who did not think, that penitent acknowledgment of egregious and injurious error would have come, with far greater propriety, from those who sent you to lecture the Presbyterian church. For they have left the souls to perish in ignorance, whom the providence of God called them to enlighten; and they have perseveringly fought against what is now demonstrated to be a great and

gracious plan of God for the benefit of slaves, and for the enlightenment of benighted Africa.

Very respectfully, yours, etc.,

N. L. RICE.

LETTER II.

BRETHREN :—I have mentioned two great purposes which God evidently designed to accomplish, by permitting the existence of slavery in our country. These purposes, Abolitionists of all classes have failed to comprehend or to regard. Let us now consider this subject, as, apart from its providential aspects, it involves great *moral questions*. He is a very superficial thinker, who does not see that the subject is a very complicated and difficult one—requiring patient, thorough, and impartial examination. There is, first, a question as to the duty of individual slaveholders. Is it their duty, at once, to manumit their slaves? If you say, yes, another question arises, viz: What is their duty, when the laws of the State forbid manumission, without the removal of the slaves beyond its limits? If you say, remove them, in view of the legislation of the free States against the settlement of free negroes amongst them, whither shall the Christian master remove his slaves? And then, must he provide for them a home; or has he done his duty, when he has liberated them? If you say, he must give them a home, the difficulty is, that multitudes of slaveholders are not able to provide homes for their children. And then, suppose, what is constantly occurring, the master has just inherited his slaves, but has received no service from them—Is he bound to provide for them? What is the duty of a master, when, as it constantly happens, a number of his slaves have intermarried with those of other men? He cannot manumit

them within the State—Is he bound to separate husbands and wives, parents and children, whether they are willing or unwilling, in order to free his slaves?

And then, there arises a question for the conscientious citizen. Is he bound to exert his influence and to cast his vote in favor of immediate emancipation, without colonization? If you say, yes, the question assumes a more difficult shape, viz: Suppose he is convinced that such emancipation will prove a serious injury to both the slaves and the country, is he bound still to go for it? It will not do to say, there is no ground for such opinion; for it has been, and is, held by many wise and good men, who sincerely and earnestly desire the removal of slavery from the country. It was held and expressed by such men as Henry Clay and Dr. Alexander; and it was decidedly expressed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, in 1818.

I express no opinion with regard to these questions. I simply affirm, that the whole subject is complicated and difficult, requiring careful and patient examination, and kind and thorough discussion. On such a subject, declamation and denunciation are wholly out of place; and resolutions adopted by Abolitionist Conventions, or even by Congregational Associations, are worse than worthless.

However we may differ in our views of the proper mode of dealing with slavery, there are several points on which, I am persuaded, you will agree with me.

1. In the attempt to convince men of error, and to reform them, the Christian is bound to avoid everything in his conduct and language, which tends needlessly to produce irritation. 2 Tim., 2: 24, 25. Too many regard the harshness of their language as the best proof of moral courage, and of faithfulness in contending against sin. I fear, this error has not been entirely avoided by our New England brethren. Certainly, the Abolitionists, as a class, have seemed to place great confidence in severe language.

2. You will admit, that good men, in their zeal to accomplish a desirable end, are in danger of adopting unsound principles and wrong means, and of indulging a bad spirit. The history of the church affords a thousand examples in point. One instructive example is found in Luke, 9 : 54, 55. Precisely here, the devil often gains signal advantages ; for he is never so certain of defeating a good object, as when he betrays its friends into the adoption of wrong principles, and the manifestation of an unchristian spirit. This danger is particularly great, in connection with those objects which make strong appeals to the natural feelings. Passion blinds the intellect.

The end at which anti-slavery men originally aimed, was a noble one. They desired to relieve the country of a great evil, and to elevate a degraded class of their fellow-beings. The object itself appeals strongly to some of the best feelings of the human heart. And there is enough of cruelty practiced in connection with slavery, to excite feelings of indignation toward those who practice it. But on such subjects, we are peculiarly in danger of indiscreet zeal—a zeal which does injustice to the innocent, and renders the condition of those we desire to benefit, less tolerable.

And now, brethren, let me call your attention to what I must regard as one of the great mistakes of our New England brethren, in the treatment of this subject. There has been such inconsistency between their *language* and their *position*, as is adapted, not only to destroy the force of their appeals, but to produce irritation. Their language concerning the sin of slaveholding, as you will admit, has been very strong—extremely severe; and they have so far countenanced and affiliated with the most violent Abolitionists, that in the minds of the people they appear fully identified with them. Slaveholding has been condemned as identical with “man-stealing,” as a sin which should exclude persons from the church of Christ—a sin calculated to draw down the judgments of God upon the nation.

The following language, which I take from a late number of the *Congregationalist*, is a fair specimen: "If American slavery is not a sin to be repented of, and a crime to be punished, then we are sure there is not a sin black enough in all human history to need repentance, nor a crime foul enough to demand punishment."

Now, brethren, how do you and the churches of New England stand with reference to this subject? You are the descendants of slaveholders, or of those who, without hesitation, fraternized with slaveholders; and you boast of your ancestry! To what extent the Congregationalists of New England were actual slaveholders, I have no means of ascertaining; but that many of them, even some of their eminent ministers, owned slaves, is certain. The venerable Dr. Cummings, editor of the *Christian Mirror*, of Portland, Maine, stating the fact, that the great President Edwards lived and died a slaveholder, says: "If you ask for authority for this statement, we give one that few will dispute. We find it in the appendix to President Allen's address, in commemoration of the close of the second century since the settlement of Northampton, where President Edwards exercised his successful ministry for more than twenty-three years." We copy the paragraph containing the statement."

"It is a fact, which need not be concealed, that President Edwards was a slaveholder, as were also Mr. Stoddard and many good men in New England, who lived before the discussions concerning liberty and human rights, at the period of the American revolution. Mr. Edward's first slave was Rose, who, probably, was given as a servant to his wife at the time of his marriage; but she was, at last, a free woman, and her husband was Jacob, a tanner and freeman, at Stockbridge. She was the mother of Titus and Tamar; the daughter was free, but Titus was a slave. In the appraisal of Mr. Edward's estate, in 1779, a negro boy, named Titus, is estimated at thirty pounds."

The *Congregationalist* maintains, that a slaveholder cannot be a Christian; and yet, as Dr. Cummings well remarks—"It has expressed great admiration of President Edwards, and sought the honor of discipleship to that eminent man and thorough Christian." And he adds—"If President Edwards could hold slaves, and still be a Christian, shall it be thought a thing incredible, that some southern slaveholders are good men, giving to their servants what is just and equal?" Well might he reason thus; for the people of New England were far less excusable for holding slaves, than the people of the South and West. In the first place, they had no difficulty in securing hired help. In most of the slaveholding States, it is almost impossible to hire free laborers. In the second place, the civil law threw no such obstacles in the way of emancipation, as in most of the slaveholding States. For in most, if not all of them, a master cannot emancipate his slaves, unless he will remove them out of the State. And since the free States are throwing insuperable obstacles in the way of the settlement of free colored people in their limits—and since the Abolitionists denounce African Colonization, it really seems reasonable that they should stop their denunciations long enough to tell conscientious masters what to do with their slaves.

If, then, there is sin in slaveholding, the Congregationalists of New England who held slaves, or who held Christian fellowship with slaveholders, were exceedingly criminal. And if slaveholders in the South, surrounded by ten times the difficulty, cannot be Christians, then, brethren, instead of boasting of the piety of your Puritan fathers, your first duty is to disown them!

But this sin lies still nearer your own door. Slavery terminated in New York, on the fourth of July, 1827. At that time, as I learn from an article in the *Christian Intelligencer*, of New Haven, (Vol. 12, No. 11,) the following six States had no slaves, viz: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts,

New York, and Ohio. In Connecticut and Rhode Island, it was still in existence. So that New England has been but a few years free from this crime. *And so long as slavery was sustained by the civil law, unless I greatly err, it was not agitated, as a ground of discipline in any of your churches.* Am I not correct? It passed away from New England, rather because it was unprofitable, as I presume, than because Congregationalism expelled it. It required no extraordinary piety to denounce it, after it had passed from you, and when you had nothing to lose by so doing.

This is not all. It is only *six years*, as I learn from the *New York Evangelist*, since Dr. Bacon introduced into the Connecticut Congregational Association a minute, recommending to the churches to commence discipline with all those members who hold slaves, or are implicated in the system. Whether this recommendation has been complied with, I do not know. It is certain, that *six years* ago, the churches in Connecticut were involved in the sin of slaveholding; and they may be yet! Now, brethren, how long is it since the New England Associations began to lecture the Presbyterian church on this subject? Certainly, much more than six years have passed since we received our first lecture; and yet, at the very time you were lecturing us, you had slaveholders in your own churches! Was this fact known? Certainly, it would not have been, if our brethren had been as careful to watch their own fold, as to inspect ours.

Still further, it is only about six years since a bill was introduced into the Legislature of Massachusetts, to declare null and void all future contracts made in that State, the consideration whereof shall be the sale or transfer of slaves in other States. And the *New York Evangelist*, noticing the introduction of this bill, said: "There are hundreds of sober-faced Yankees, whom nobody suspects of being implicated in such disgraceful business, who have large interests in the continuance

of the slave trade—not a few sustaining the relation of slaveholders.”

Now, brethren, I will not say, that facts like these should shut your mouths on the subject of the evil of slavery, or prevent you from doing what you can to remove it from the country. But I do say, it does not look well in you to denounce slaveholders as sinners who must be excluded from the church of Christ—as man-stealers—and yet to boast, that you are naturally and ecclesiastically descended from Christian slaveholders. It will not do for you to exclude slaveholding ministers from your pulpits, and then proclaim yourselves the admiring disciples of Jonathan Edwards the slaveholder. It will not answer for you to denounce the churches in the slaveholding States, when, within six years, your own churches have quietly allowed slaveholders regular standing among them!

Brethren, if you have really discovered the heinousness of the sin of slaveholding, and are prepared to denounce slaveholders as the chief of sinners, and those who fellowship them as little better, you should begin with penitent confession, and with disowning the Puritan churches and ministers, in whom you have gloried. And then, in condemning slaveholding, you should adopt the language of Paul—“Among whom, also, we all had our conversation in times past.” And again—“What then? Are we better than they? No, in nowise.” But when you stand up before the world, denouncing slaveholders in the harshest language, as if you had never sinned after this fashion, and as if the churches from which you are descended, and in which you glory, had never held slaves how can you expect anything but denunciation in return? Can you imagine that men will fail to see your glaring inconsistencies, and to say, that your zeal against slavery grew hot when you had nothing to lose by it? Is it strange that they conclude, that if slavery were in New England, as it is in the South, the New England churches would treat it just as they did when it was there?

Brethren, the language of denunciation on this subject, is not becoming in the churches and ministers of New England. The people in the slave States had the right to expect from them the language of penitent confession, and the language of kindness and persuasion. No wonder, then, that all their appeals have been indignantly resented. The language of our Saviour toward those who magnified the sins of others, whilst blind to their own, was severe. John, 7 : 3-5. The language of Paul was no less so. Romans, 2 : 17-23. Now, brethren, if you desire to do anything toward the removal of slavery from our country, and from the churches, you must change your tone and position. Either disown the churches from which you are descended, and the ministers of whom you have boasted, or acknowledge the churches and ministers who are less guilty in this matter. Confess, and then reprove in the spirit of true penitence. Some degree of consistency is essential to your success. I propose, in a future letter, to compare the course pursued by the Presbyterian church, with that of Abolitionists, and to say something of the results.

Very truly, yours,

N. L. RICE.

LETTER III.

BRETHREN :—I have said, that Abolitionists have destroyed their moral influence over slaveholders, by resorting to declamation and bitter denunciation, instead of argument and persuasion. I have just read a notice of the remarks of Dr. Kirk, of Boston, at a meeting of the Massachusetts Colonization Society, at Lowell Institute, in 1852. He is represented as saying—“For thirty years, hard words, and some very ugly ones, had been used ; and if any good had been accomplished, it was very slow, for not a single statute in any slave State had been

altered or repealed." Again, Mr. Kirk avowed himself ready to join an Abolition society to-day, if it would only treat slaveholders as men. It was vain to think, by bustle, abuse, and denunciation, to scare the South. "May God," said he, "in his infinite mercy, instead of sending us meetings to abuse, grant us those of persuasion and love." Amen, say we.

Allow me now, brethren, to call your attention to another capital error of Abolitionists, in their treatment of slavery. I refer to the *sources* whence they have drawn their information respecting the condition and treatment of slaves. You will agree with me, that those who undertake to convince and reform men, must treat them with entire fairness and candor. The moment they show a disposition to misrepresent their principles and conduct, and to exaggerate their faults, not only is their influence destroyed, but they are denounced as slanderers by those whom they seek to reform. Perseverence in such a course, cannot fail to stir up the worst passions. On no subject ever discussed, is this more emphatically true, than on that of slavery. For this, there are obvious reasons. It is particularly unfortunate, that the very subject which, of all others, requires to be treated with prudence and wisdom, has been chiefly discussed by men of strong prejudices and passions. Those who have attentively read the epistles of Paul, cannot have failed to remark how careful he was, when obliged to administer reproof, to do the persons censured the most ample justice. He labored to show them that he was truly their friend, and that it afforded him pleasure to acknowledge all their excellencies.

Have our New England brethren and other Abolitionists followed this excellent example? I think not. One of you stated in the General Assembly, as evidence that you have correct views of slavery, that you gain your information from the *slave laws* and from *Southern papers*. Much of it has likewise been gained from fugitive slaves.

Now, brethren, as to the slave laws, which we have often

seen printed in Abolition prints, if the objects of those who quote them, were to show that they are defective, oppressive, and unrighteous, the argument would be legitimate; and from multitudes of Christians in the slave States, they would find a hearty response. Even now, there is a movement in North Carolina, to amend the laws regulating slavery in some very important particulars. In most of the States, the severest laws are a dead letter—public sentiment being adverse to them.

But when the character of slaveholders—especially of Christian slaveholders—and the condition of slaves, are inferred from the laws which stand on the statute book, the grossest injustice is done. Would it not be quite as fair to infer the character of husbands and of parents in Massachusetts from the civil laws which there regulate these relations? And does not every husband and father in the State know, that he could treat his wife and children very cruelly, without subjecting himself to the penalties of the civil law? And is it not a fact, that multitudes of wives and children, in every State in the Union, do thus suffer? But Christian men, and the large majority who make no profession, are governed in the treatment of their families and of their servants by “the higher law.”

But you read the *newspapers*; and from them you learn what is the condition of slaves. Why not ascertain the treatment which wives and children receive from the same source? In the course of twelve months, you might gather up a large number of divorces, and quite a number of murders of wives and children. And why might not a Socialist use such facts as a potent argument against marriage? Would you not reply, that such occurrences are published just because they are extraordinary? If five hundred men meet on the street and shake hands, no paper will publish the fact; but if ten men should get into a street fight, all the papers would proclaim it. So, if a thousand masters treat their slaves kindly, no paper publishes

such facts; but if one murders a single slave, the fact is published throughout the country.

On this point, the late Dr. Alexander, a man not accustomed to make statements at random, says: "In selecting matter for publication, it often happened that the leaders of the Anti-slavery Society were imposed on by narratives purely fictitious—fabricated by some designing villain, to answer his own purposes; and in the public statement of the condition of the Southern States, the facts were more frequently exaggerated and distorted in a shameful manner; and isolated facts were set forth with all their revolting circumstances, just as though they were a fair specimen of common occurrences." Again, "Pamphlets also were written, and exaggerated narratives of cruelty to slaves, accompanied with pictorial representations, were not only circulated in the free States, but sent by mail and other ways, in great numbers, to the Southern States. Some of the pamphlets written, were of an atrocious character, calculated to stir up the slaves to insurrection. * * * Alarm and indignation spread through the Southern country, like an electric shock. * * * The effect on the people of the South, in regard to slavery, was the very opposite of that aimed at—sentiments more favorable to the continuance and even perpetuity of slavery, began now to be very commonly entertained; whereas, before, such sentiments were scarcely ever heard." *Hist. Af. Col.* pp. 383, 384.

Brethren, it requires only a very moderate acquaintance with human nature, to see that those who circulated or favored such publications, were really the greatest enemies of the slaves and of our country. They did infinitely more to retard emancipation, than the most zealous pro-slavery men could possibly do. They tied the hands of the friends of emancipation, of whom the number was very large, and increasing, in the slave States.

Do you reply—that the Congregationalists of New England are not to blame for the extravagancies of Abolitionism? I answer:

1st. Those of them who embrace Abolitionist doctrines, have allowed themselves to appear before the public, as identified with the authors of such publications as I have named. They have boldly and severely condemned slaveholders; but if they have ever made any opposition to those men in the free States, whose uncandid, slanderous publications have so completely crippled the cause of emancipation, I have the fact yet to learn.

2d. They have encouraged and lauded those who professed to detail the horrors of slavery; but they have refused to hear a word of testimony of a different character. One of your own ministers—a man of very high standing—recently visited the South. He made it his business carefully to inquire into the condition of the slaves; and he published the results of his investigation. How was his testimony received? Were his Abolitionist brethren glad to learn that the condition of the slaves is not so bad as they had supposed, and that professing Christians in the South are better people than they had given them credit for being? Far from it. Instead of a candid hearing, Dr. Adams was met with bitter reproach, and excluded from many of your pulpits. The *Congregationalist*, one of your leading papers, says: “It is a fact, that many and many a congregation in New England, which, a year ago, would have welcomed his labors more quickly and warmly than those of almost any other living minister of Jesus, would now feel it to be a calamity and grief to see him ascending their pulpit stairs.” Why is all this reproach heaped upon Dr. Adams? Is it pretended, that he has borne false testimony, in order to conceal the true character of slavery? I have seen no such charge made or intimated. Dr. Cummings, editor of the *Christian Mirror*, of Portland, Maine, has, doubtless, given the true reason. He says: “The *Congregationalist* has treated Dr. Adams with almost unwonted severity, because, having seen at the South, slaveholders possessing and exercising all the attributes of

humanity and Christian love, condescension, and meekness, towards their slaves, he recorded what he saw, with appropriate reflections, and published them in a book." Dr. Adams had the honesty and the moral courage to tell the truth, with respect to slavery in the South ; and for telling the truth, he is unwelcome in many of your pulpits ! Happily, he is a man of very high standing ; otherwise, he must have been overwhelmed by the opposition and reproaches of his Abolitionist brethren.

Now, brethren, how do you stand before the people of the slave States ? Not as candid, impartial men, anxious to do justice to your fellow-men and to Christians in those States, but as men so blinded by prejudice and passion, as to be utterly unwilling to hear the truth on the subject of slavery—so prejudiced, that whilst you listen with pleasure to the tales of a fugitive slave, of whose veracity you know nothing, you cover with reproach one of your own ablest and best ministers, for giving an unvarnished statement of facts. Yet, you expect the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church to be influenced by your opinions on the subject. Is such expectation reasonable ? And do you wonder, that your moral influence over the people in the slave States has been annihilated, and that multitudes of them answer the caricatures and the denunciations of Abolitionists with great severity and bitterness ? You denounce them as guilty of the heinous sin of slaveholding. They denounce you as guilty of the heinous sin of slander ? And do you wonder at it ? Has not the course pursued been precisely adapted to make such an impression on their minds ?

But I would not do injustice. I rejoice to know, that there are men—not a few of them—in New England, who pursue a widely different course. Amongst these, I have mentioned Dr. Cummings, the editor of the *Christian Mirror*, who says—"We have been worried almost to absolute exhaustion, by the motives brought to act on ourselves : 'Unless you change your ground, you will lose all your subscribers.'" But he resists the

extravagancies of Abolitionism, and yet does not lose his subscribers. He says, moreover, "Dr. Adams is not without friends. He has the most decided and unequivocal approbation of some of the best and wisest Christian men of New England. The venerable Dr. Humphrey speaks of his book in the most exalted terms, as one of the honestest books that ever was written on that subject," proving its author "to be a scholar, a gentleman, a philanthropist, a patriot, and a Christian." Rev. Mr. Maltby, of Bangor, says: "I thank the author—I thank God, for the book. I am glad that another element is born into the history of the nineteenth century, a green spot where the fires have passed." I rejoice to learn, that there are many men of high standing in New England, who hold the same views; and I am glad that they are beginning to come out and declare their principles. The time has come for such men to speak.

Still, the misrepresentations and exaggerations, of which I have just spoken, have spread through the slaveholding States; and they have had precisely the effect which every one, even slightly acquainted with human nature, would have anticipated. They have destroyed the confidence of the people in the candor and truthfulness of those who would fain reform them, and produced a high degree of exasperation. They have, at the same time, destroyed the influence of Abolitionists over the mass of Anti-slavery men in the free States. If their object had been to destroy their influence for good, and to do the greatest amount of injury to the cause of emancipation, I know not what means, better adapted to such ends, they could have adopted.

There are evils connected with slavery; but cruel treatment is comparatively rare. There is no candid man, acquainted with slavery as it is, who will not testify, that, generally, slaves are kindly treated, well clothed, and well fed. This is especially true of the slaves of Christians. There are multitudes of poor people in our cities and towns, who labor harder, and fare

worse. These facts do not prove slavery a blessing ; nor that it is not a great evil ; but they constitute a very valid reason why the passions of men should not be excited by tales of cruelty on the part of masters, and of bodily suffering on the part of slaves.

Brethren, if you expect ever to exert any influence in favor of emancipation, you must cease to declaim and denounce slaveholders, and resort to calm, kind argument ; and you must let them see that you are disposed to do them justice. The injury already done by a contrary course, to the cause of emancipation, to the cause of Christ, and to our country, is beyond all calculation ; and it has been done by methods of proceeding, for which no intelligent man, with the Bible in his hand, can find an excuse. God's word teaches nothing more clearly, than the duty of Christians, in all their attempts to reform men, to manifest a spirit of candor and kindness. Abolitionism, from the beginning of its career, has been precisely the reverse of this ; and long will it be before the mischief it has done, can be counteracted.

Fraternally,

N. L. RICE.

LETTER IV.

BRETHREN :—If, in seeking to reform men, it is essential that we treat them fairly and kindly, it is no less so, that in our appeals to the word of God, we interpret it correctly. Scarcely anything more contributes to confirm men in the opinions they hold, than for the opponents of those opinions to pervert the Scriptures in their arguments against them. Into this fatal error, Abolitionists have fallen. They have opposed slavery, not as an *evil*, socially and politically, but as a *heinous sin*. If it is necessarily a sin—especially if it is *such* a sin as Aboli-

tionists make it—we shall certainly find it strongly condemned in the Scriptures. For you, brethren, agree with us, that they are a perfect rule in morals, as well as in faith; and you will not deny, that inspired men, under both the Old and New Dispensations, have had to deal with slavery; for it existed before the five books of Moses were written; and in the apostolic age, it existed in its worst form in the Roman empire.

With great propriety, therefore, all who believe in the inspiration of the Bible, have turned to it for light on this subject. On examining it, we are struck with two very remarkable facts, viz: its condemnation of all robbery, oppression, cruelty, and injustice, and its toleration of slavery. Abraham, the father of believers, had servants, “bought with his money.” The Jews, though not permitted permanently to hold each other in slavery, were allowed to purchase slaves from the Gentiles. The law of Moses regulated slavery—defining the rights and duties of masters and slaves. In the churches planted by the apostles, there were not only pious slaves, but “believing masters.” These are incontrovertible facts; how are they to be reconciled with the doctrine, that slaveholding is necessarily sinful—that it is a sin of the first magnitude? Abolitionists saw the difficulty of reconciling their views of slavery with the teachings of inspired men; but they made the effort. To accomplish this, they adopted two methods, viz:

1. They denied that the Jews were permitted to hold slaves; and they denied, that the apostles admitted slaveholders into the churches planted by them. To sustain themselves in these denials, they placed the Bible on the rack of criticism, and gave forth learned dissertations on the Hebrew word *eved*, and on the Greek words *kurios*, *andrapodistes*, *doulos*, etc. But these learned criticisms labored under insuperable difficulties.

In the first place, they encountered the authority of all lexicographers, critics, and commentators. This single fact would have proved fatal to them; for it is the vainest conceit in the

world, to expect slaveholders to believe that the Abolitionists were the first to understand the language of inspiration respecting slavery.

In the second place, those criticisms were in contradiction of the obvious meaning of the inspired writers. It is too clear to require proof, that Moses could not have said of a servant *hired* by a Jew—“He is his money.” Exod., 21 : 21. To an unprejudiced mind, it is clear, beyond all controversy, that the “believing masters,” of whom Paul said, they were “faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit,” were slaveholders. For they are called *despotai*—a word which, as Abolitionists confess, means slaveholders; and their servants were “under the yoke.” 1 Tim., 16 : 1–3. When, in the effort to evade the force of this passage, they tell us that the phrase—“believing masters”—means *reformed slaveholders*, just as we speak of *reformed drunkards*, the perversion of the Scriptures is glaring; for why, if they had ceased to be masters, did Paul command their *manumitted* slaves still to “do them service” the more faithfully, because they were Christians?

These desperate criticisms seem to have been generally abandoned. At least, I have seen none of them for some years past. Their *effects*, however, are permanent. One of these effects was to convince slaveholders, that the Bible really *sanctions* slavery. They reason thus: “These Abolitionists, in order to prove slaveholding sinful, are driven to the most glaring perversion of the Scriptures. The advocacy of *truth* could not drive men to such extremes.” And as one extreme, especially when the passions are excited, begets another, the conclusion was easily reached—that the Bible really upholds slavery. Abolitionists, therefore, instead of convincing slaveholders, drove them to the opposite extreme, and they did the cause of emancipation incalculable injury. At the same time, by proving themselves incompetent expounders of the Word of God, they lost the confidence of conservative men in the free States. These last,

as well as multitudes in the slave States, resisted them, not as friends of emancipation, but as perverters of the Scriptures.

But Abolitionism seeks to sustain itself on another ground. We are told that the apostles did, indeed, admit slaveholders into the churches planted by them, without requiring them to emancipate their slaves; but they laid down great moral principles, which, in their legitimate working, would exterminate slavery—that the time had not come to speak out and denounce slavery, as it deserved to be denounced. See the discussion between Dr. Blagden and the *Congregationalist*. This ground is, for Abolitionists, both untenable and dangerous. It is wholly untenable. They tell the world, that slavery is a sin of the darkest hue—identical with robbery and man-stealing. Now, can any man in his senses persuade himself, that God gave express permission to the Jews to commit such a sin—or that the apostles, whilst laying down principles which condemn slavery as one of the blackest crimes, did receive into their churches men living in the commission of such a sin, and did speak of them as “believing masters, faithful and beloved?” Is it credible, that whilst stating the relative duties of masters and servants, they did not tell masters plainly, that in holding slaves, they were living in damnable sin?—that they contented themselves with teaching certain general principles, the bearing of which was not then perceived, and even yet is not generally understood?

But you tell us, the *time had not come* for the bold and open development of those principles. Why not? Is it because the sin of slaveholding is so difficult to perceive, that the human mind required fuller development, before it could be understood? This will not be pretended; for Abolitionists do assert, that to deprive men of their liberty, is as obviously wrong, as to rob them of their money; and, therefore, they insist upon making Abolitionists of the Western Indians. Who has not heard of the trouble in the American Board, because of the

existence of slavery amongst the Choctaws? Besides, if the subject was obscure, there was the greater need of speaking out plainly.

Or do you say, the time had not come, because opposition to slavery would have excited persecution against the apostles and primitive Christians? Do you, then, advocate the principle, that the ministers of Christ may withhold the truth, or teach it so obscurely, that it is not perceived; and may connive at sin, whenever a different course would expose them to persecution? Is this the morality of Abolitionism? But did not the apostles openly oppose other forms of sin in the face of fierce persecution? Did they hesitate to condemn the errors of Paganism, though established by law? And why should they have been so peculiarly tolerant of slavery, if it was so great a sin?

Brethren, the ground taken by the *Congregationalist* and other Abolitionist prints, is a slander of the apostles of Christ! Paul, who spoke so kindly of Christian slaveholders, solemnly affirms, that he had not shunned to declare "all the counsel of God." Acts, 20: 27. It is not true, that those holy men ever concealed or obscured the truth, or connived at sin, to avoid persecution?

This ground is not only untenable, but it is *dangerous*. If slaveholding is necessarily sinful, then Moses, in God's name, authorized the Jews to commit sin, and the apostles of Christ allowed men living in gross sin, to be members of their churches; and, instead of requiring them to repent and reform, spoke of them as "faithful and beloved." Now, if men are reduced to the alternative of believing that such a course was deliberately pursued by inspired men, or of becoming infidels, my conviction is, that they will choose the latter. You condemn pro-slavery men for asserting that God has *sanctioned* slavery; but your own position, I verily believe, is far more dishonoring to Him.

No wonder, Lloyd Garrison and his party are infidels of the

most impious type. Their minds dwelt on the evils of slavery, until it seemed to them *the great sin*; and their passions became excited. They turned to the Bible for support. They were compelled to feel, that it neither breathes their spirit, nor sustains their principles; and instead of abandoning their errors, they hurled the Bible from them in fanatical rage. No wonder, Gerritt Smith's faith has become unsettled, since he abandoned the cause of Colonization, and became an Abolitionist. But, brethren, has it not appeared to you a little singular, that peculiar illumination on one point in morals should render the mind incapable of seeing other great truths? Is it not marvelous, that in the defence of human rights, men should reject God's Word, which only can protect those rights?

Certain it is, that the unwise criticisms just mentioned, and the unsound moral principles laid down, making it impossible to defend the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the fanatical infidelity produced by the Abolitionists, have annihilated the moral influence of Abolitionists in the slave States, and, to a great extent, in the free States. Their errors, moreover, have naturally driven men to the opposite extreme; so that now, it is not uncommon to hear the Bible quoted, as decidedly *sanctioning* slavery. By their manner of handling the Scriptures, Abolitionists have done infinite injury to the cause of emancipation and to the cause of religion. No wonder, one of you told the General Assembly, last spring, of the unsettled state of men's minds in Massachusetts, and of the increase of infidelity there. If Abolitionism much longer holds the sway, there will be little else there but infidelity.

The people of the slaveholding States have had another reason, decidedly Scriptural in its character, for rejecting the doctrines of Abolitionists. They have had abundant evidence, that God has acknowledged and blest those ministers and churches they so strongly denounced. If Abolitionists have refused Christian fellowship with them, the Head of the church

has communed with them, and in answer to their prayers, has showered the blessings of His grace upon them. We witness in such churches, and under the labors of such ministers, revivals of religion as frequent, as powerful, as extensive, as in the churches in the free States, or as in the Abolitionist churches. Christians are refreshed; back-sliders are healed; sinners are awakened to inquire for the way of life; young converts give scriptural evidence of conversion; and the fruits of these revivals are lasting and happy. In every department of morals, apart from the matter of slavery, these Christians are as exemplary as those of New England; and in all benevolent works, they are as fruitful. They seem to have as much Christian enjoyment in life; and they are as triumphant in death. Many of the best ministers in the free States—such, for instance, as the late Dr. Archibald Alexander, were converted in the slaveholding churches.

Abolitionists denounce these Christians as living in heinous sin. They point to these revivals and the fruits of them, and make the conclusive reply by which the blind man defended our Saviour's character against the Pharisees—"Now, we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." John, 9: 31. Abolitionists refuse to hold fellowship with these Christians. They point to the evidences that God communes with them, and then to the language of Peter, when called to account for baptizing a Gentile family; "Forasmuch, then, as God gave them the like gift, as he did unto us who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" Acts, 11: 17.

Now, we must either regard all these revivals as spurious, or reject the doctrine of the Abolitionists, and condemn the conduct of those who make the mere fact of slaveholding a bar to Christian fellowship. For although all Christians are imperfect, and, consequently, God does commune with imperfect

beings; he certainly does not answer the prayers and bless the labors of those who persevere in heinous sin. Most assuredly, he does not commune with those who are too sinful to have Christian fellowship with the Congregationalists of New England. Brethren, do you wonder that the Christians in the slaveholding States reject the principles of the Abolitionists?

What shall we say, then? Does the Bible fix its seal of approbation upon slavery, and teach, that one portion of the human family may, if strong enough, reduce another portion to a state of servitude? By no means. That slavery is a great evil, is as clear as that freedom is a great blessing. There is no man living, who would not regard it as a great calamity to be made a slave. Moreover, it is true, that Christianity aims to elevate every class of the human family, and to promote universal freedom. And yet the fact is clear, beyond all question, that God did permit the Jews to buy and hold slaves; and the apostles did receive slaveholders into their churches, as "faithful and beloved." The conclusion to which we are forced by these facts, is, *that circumstances have existed which justified men in holding slaves.* Such circumstances existed in Moses' time, and in the apostolic age. The true question, then, for the discussion of American philanthropists and Christians, is this: *Do the circumstances in which the people of the slave States are placed, justify them in holding slaves?* This general question embraces several other distinct questions, viz: 1st. Is it the duty of each of the slave States, under existing circumstances, to pass laws for the immediate emancipation of all their slaves, without Colonization? If this question were decided affirmatively, then it would be the duty of each citizen to exert his influence in favor of such laws. 2d. If immediate emancipation is not the duty of the States, then is it their duty to adopt plans for *gradual* emancipation? If so, then the duty of each citizen would be to exert his influence in favor of such plans. 3d. Whilst slavery is sustained by the States, and in

view of all the circumstances, is it the duty of individuals immediately to emancipate their slaves? If Abolitionists, instead of perverting the Scriptures, and declaiming against American slavery in general, had calmly and candidly discussed these questions, looking all the facts in the face, much good would have resulted. But when they not only perverted the Word of God, and embraced principles tending directly to infidelity, but harshly condemned men for not doing impossibilities; they could expect only to produce irritation and determined opposition. And when they closed their pulpits and their churches against men owned and honored of God, in the conversion of many souls, they could expect only to excite the indignation of the churches in the slave States.

The Presbyterian church has stood at an equal remove from the extremes of Abolitionism and Pro-slaveryism. She has refused to pervert God's Word, to make it either denounce or sanction slavery. She has regarded it as a great evil, but an evil *inherited*, an evil of long standing, and so interwoven with the very texture of society, that, like a chronic disease, it must require much time, and patient and kind treatment, to eradicate it. She is fully persuaded, that for all the evils under which mankind suffer, the Gospel is the great and only remedy. Refusing, therefore, to mingle in heterogeneous conventions, and sanction their vague and unmeaning resolutions, she goes forward on her sublime mission, preaching the Gospel alike to masters and slaves, saying, openly and boldly, all that the apostles said, and refusing to say a word more. And to-day, she stands prepared to compare notes, as to results, with her traducers.

Fraternally,

N. L. RICE.

LETTER V.

BRETHREN:—You have felt yourselves called, in the providence of God, to endeavour to secure to the slaves in this

country their freedom, and to deliver the church of Christ and the country from the sin of slaveholding. If you were really called to this great work, you were, of course, called to do it in accordance with the Word of God. On the two following points, you will agree with me: 1st. That if slavery is to be abolished in our country, it must be done by the voluntary action of the people of the slave States. I will not allow myself to entertain the suspicion, that you aim at any other than a peaceful termination of it. 2d. You agree with us, that the Gospel of Christ is the great reforming agent for our world. If it is a sin to hold slaves, nothing is so likely to convince men of this, and to induce them to abandon it, as the exhibition of Gospel truth. This is especially the weapon with which ministers of Christ are to fight against sin in all its forms.

Now, permit me to inquire, what our zealous New England brethren, who are Abolitionists, have done to have the Gospel faithfully preached in the slave States? They have planted and nourished churches in all the free States; how has it happened that they have wholly neglected the slave States? Brethren, have you a single church, or a single missionary, in any one of the slave States? I mean, a church or a missionary who holds and preaches what you regard as the truth on the subject of slavery.

Nay, the worst remains to be told. You have not only neglected to send ministers to preach the Gospel in the slave States, but you have exerted your influence to prevent those who might be disposed to go! By whom, and for what purpose, was the Southern Aid Society organized? It was organized by men who are not Abolitionists, to do the work which Abolitionism will not allow the American Home Missionary Society to do, viz: to aid in supporting the Gospel in the slave States.

The editors of the *Congregationalist* recently stated, that the

destitutions in Missouri "are great and lamentable; the vacant churches are numerous, and withal feeble." Well, did they call upon ministers in New England to bear to these destitute regions the Word of Life? Far from it. On the contrary, they said, "it is among the last States of the Union in which any man of God can promise himself usefulness or comfort." They went further, and, after stating that "slavery is there in its worst type and most revolting features," they said—"If there be a single Lot in such a Sodom, the voice of heaven says to him, 'Flee, for thy life.'" That is, in plain English, the devil reigns in Missouri; the people are so wicked, and slavery exists in so odious a form, that Christ's ministers ought not to attempt to preach the Gospel to them! How dishonoring such a sentiment to the Gospel of Christ! One would have thought, that *Christian men*, if they believed the state of things in Missouri to be so deplorable, would instantly have set themselves to work to devise ways and means of sending to the people that Gospel which is the only remedy.

Brethren, you occupy a truly singular position before the people of these United States. You proclaim it as your firm belief, that the people in the slave States are living in great darkness and in great sin. You declare your conviction, that you are called, in the providence of God, to enlighten and reform them. You proclaim it, as your faith, that the Gospel of Christ is the great agent of illumination and reform. And yet you refuse to carry this only reforming agent to the benighted people! You have, for a quarter of a century, sought to reform them by widely different means. How shall we reconcile your faith and your practice?

This is not all. You have steadily pursued a course directly adapted to destroy your influence, to stir up the worst passions of men, and thus to make the prospects of emancipation more hopeless. Most men will give a respectful hearing to those who look them in the face, and reason kindly to show them

their errors. But when they find themselves denounced in public meetings, and in public prints, by ministers of Christ who have never come nigh them, they are not only angered, but they feel a contempt for the men whom they regard as their traducers. For more than a quarter of a century, the people in the slave States have seen themselves held up to public odium by men they never saw; and who, that knows anything of human nature, would have expected any but the most unfavorable results from such a course? Would any man in his senses expect to reform one of his neighbors by getting several others together, and passing resolutions expressive of their very bad opinion of him? Can you plead apostolic example for your mode of proceeding? When did the apostles hold a convention and pass resolutions condemnatory of sinners whom they had not the courage to approach? Did they not always go to those they would turn from sin, and speak to them in the spirit of Christ?

But, it will be said, as it has been, that it is unsafe for Abolitionists to attempt to preach in the slave States. I answer: 1st. The danger, so far as it exists, is simply the consequence of the unwise, unscriptural course they have pursued. For, in years past, the subject of slavery was very freely discussed; and the tendencies were increasingly in favor of some plan of gradual emancipation. About the year 1834, the Synod of Kentucky, after a full discussion of the subject, adopted and recommended a plan of emancipation to the churches under their care; and no unpleasant excitement followed. In the Legislature of Virginia, the subject was discussed with the utmost freedom. In Tennessee, there were large numbers who avowed themselves in favor of emancipation. The same thing is true of Maryland. But so soon as the spirit of Abolitionism showed itself in its bitter denunciations, a reaction commenced. By a long continuance in a course of conduct most unwise and unscriptural, Abolitionists

have enraged the people, until the subject cannot be discussed as in former years; and now they plead the angry excitement produced by themselves, as a reason why they stand at a distance and agitate, instead of going to the people and kindly preaching the Gospel! 2d. But have not Abolitionists condemned ministers of the Gospel in the slave States, for not preaching against slavery? And, brethren, were not your remarks in the last General Assembly directed to the same end? But how can you condemn others for failing to do what you yourselves dare not do? It requires very little courage for you to stand up in Boston and declaim against slavery, and tell how others ought to preach; and really Abolitionists show a great lack of manly courage, when they press others into danger they themselves dare not encounter—especially when they have, by their course, created the danger.

I cannot but think, brethren, it is time for you to do one of two things, viz: either come to the slave States, and preach the Gospel, as you understand it; or, if you have not the courage to do this, cease to interfere with those who are willing to cultivate the field. If you can come and set us an example, do so; but if not, leave us to do the work in our own way.

Or will you say to us, as the *Congregationalist* has said, flee out of Sodom? That is, take from the people the light, that they may see; and in your great friendship for the slaves, rob them of the inestimable blessings of the Gospel! Will slavery be abolished, or the condition of slaves be rendered more tolerable by such a course?

But, brethren, has it occurred to you, that in one most important particular, you stand in strong contrast with the apostles of Christ? They could, and did, preach the Gospel amongst slaveholders; but you cannot. Their preaching and their writing excited no mob violence and no persecution from pro-slavery men; but Abolitionists keep the country in constant excitement, and cry out in consequence of persecution. The

apostles conscientiously communed with slaveholders; but Abolitionists cannot. Why these differences? The only possible answer is, that the principles and the preaching of the apostles were unlike the principles and the preaching of Abolitionists. And does the question admit of a doubt—which should be considered the truest friends of the slaves?

Brethren, if you expect to promote the best interests of the slaves, you must come amongst the slaveholders, as Ministers of Jesus Christ, breathing the spirit of your Divine Master—as men who love their souls; and you must preach to them the *whole* Gospel of Christ. We not only never succeed in reforming men by standing at a distance, and abusing them, but we never succeed in turning them from any one sin by constantly harping upon it. If a man is brought under the influence of the Gospel, he will be honest, though he should not hear dishonesty denounced every Sabbath. And so, in the degree, that a man feels the power of the Gospel, will he be disposed to give to his servants “that which is just and equal.” Let the sun shine, and the snow will melt, though the sun does not concentrate all its rays on the snow-banks.

Brethren, if, during the last twenty-five years, the men who have given their time and labors to Abolition agitations, had expended the same time and the same amount of labor in preaching the Gospel in the slave States, in the spirit of Christ, how glorious would have been the results. Instead of angry agitation, divided churches, and an ardent pro-slavery spirit, which we now see, the cause of emancipation would have gone forward; and several of the States on which slavery is now fastened for another half century, would have rejoiced in having escaped from its evils. But, most unhappily, Abolitionists threw aside the sword of the Spirit, which the Saviour had put into their hands, and used weapons of their own manufacture. The results are what might be anticipated.

One of you, in the General Assembly, intimated, that it is

the purpose of Congregationalists to plant churches in the South. Come on. Though late in forming the purpose, better late than never. Imitate the example of the Presbyterian church, instead of delivering lectures to her. If you will come in the spirit of Christ, we will welcome you.

Fraternally, N. L. RICE.

LETTER VI.

BRETHREN :—You cannot be ignorant of the fact, that with many slaveholders who have desired to manumit their slaves, one of the most difficult questions has been *where to place them*. In the way of manumitting them at home, two serious difficulties have presented themselves.

1. In the majority of instances, the condition of those thus manumitted, instead of being improved, has been made worse; whilst, at the same time, they form a very undesirable population. Henry Clay, who never hesitated to declare his conviction that slavery is a great curse to the States in which it exists, said—"Of all the descriptions of our population, and of either portion of the African race, the free people of color are, by far, as a class, the most corrupt, depraved, and abandoned. There are many honorable exceptions among them, and I take pleasure in bearing testimony to some I know. It is not so much their fault as the consequence of their anomalous condition. Place ourselves—place any men in the like predicament—and similar effects would follow. They are not slaves, and yet they are not free." The same testimony will be borne by the best friends of the colored race. In the free States, their character and condition are no better; and several of those States, as you are aware, have adopted stringent laws to prevent the increase of such a population. On this subject, Mr.

Clay further said—"If the question were submitted, whether there should be immediate or gradual emancipation of all the slaves in the United States, without their removal or Colonization, painful as it is to express the opinion, I have no doubt that it would be unwise to emancipate them. For I believe, that the aggregate of the evils which would be engendered in society, upon the supposition of such general emancipation, and of the liberated slaves remaining promiscuously amongst us, would be greater than all the evils of slavery, great as they unquestionably are." You may declaim as much as you please against prejudice against color; but it exists in both the free and the slave States, and it is insuperable. And in view of this state of things, wise and good men, who desired to emancipate their slaves, have more than doubted whether they ought to do so, unless they could remove them to a region where they might become truly free and elevated.

2. The laws of most, if not all the slave States, positively prohibit emancipation, unless the emancipated slaves be removed without their limits. And some of the most stringent of these laws are easily traceable to the excitement produced by the Abolitionist agitations. Men are not bound to perform impossibilities. What, then, ought those slaveholders who desire to emancipate their slaves, to do with them? Some of them own five hundred or more, of all ages. What would you advise them to do with their slaves? Until you can answer this difficult question, all declamation against slavery simply injures the slaves.

Here, brethren, let me call your attention to one of the many fatal errors of Abolitionists. I have shown, in my first letter, that they failed rightly to interpret the providence of God in connection with the great work of Colonization, and were found fighting against God. But they did more. Their opposition to Colonization was really the most effective opposition to emancipation. This is evident, when we consider--

1st. That the Colonization Society offered to conscientious slaveholders the opportunity of placing their slaves where their condition would certainly be greatly improved, without injury to the country. Very many have embraced the opportunity thus afforded, and have made great pecuniary sacrifices, to give to their slaves true freedom.

2d. The Colonization cause afforded the opportunity for informing the public mind in regard to the evils of slavery. For, reasonable men were willing to see the people convinced of the propriety of emancipating their slaves, when they saw a plan of removing them from the country. Again and again, have I heard the evils of slavery vividly portrayed by the friends of Colonization, without the slightest unpleasant excitement resulting.

But Abolitionists, as a class, manifested the most determined hostility to the Colonization cause. They did what they could to prevent the Society from raising funds, and to prejudice the colored people against Liberia. James G. Birney and Gerritt Smith were once ardent advocates of Colonization; but with their conversion to Abolitionism, began their opposition to it. The hostility of Abolitionists and Pro-slavery men seemed, at one time, likely to defeat this noble enterprise.

Thus the Abolitionists did incalculable injury to the cause of emancipation—1st. By rendering it more difficult for the friends of the cause successfully to present the evils of slavery; 2d. By crippling the only Society which offered to slaveholders an asylum for their slaves; and 3d. By abusing the people who saw themselves environed with difficulties, and thus producing a high degree of irritation. The more reasonable part of them *now* acknowledge the merits of the Colonization cause, and profess to rejoice in its glorious achievements. Three years ago, James G. Birney published a pamphlet, in which he decidedly advised free colored people to go to Liberia. He said—"In a missionary point of light, it is a good thing; in its influence

upon the abominable slave trade, it is a good thing; and then, in respect to the colonists themselves, we have no doubt that they are better situated for the enjoyment of equal rights, for development and progress, than they were, or would have been, had they remained in this country." Respecting the colony, he adds—"We hope well for it; at present, it does not seem to us to be the work of the devil; it looks more like the work of God." The *Congregationalist*, too, declares strongly in favor of Colonization.

Brethren, we rejoice to see Abolitionists abandoning their insane opposition to Colonization. There never was any good excuse for it. For years, it was popular in New England; and the sources of information were abundant. But however they may now change their course, the effects of their hostility to Colonization will long continue, and will operate most injuriously upon the cause of emancipation. If the Congregationalists of New England had remained faithful to this noble cause—if anything like the zeal which has been manifested in crippling it, had been employed in its promotion, the cause of emancipation must, ere this, have made glorious progress. The late venerable Dr. Alexander says: "The opposition which has arisen to the North and the South, and which has gone on increasing in virulence and extent, has, no doubt, had the effect of preventing any efficient action of Congress on this subject. At one time, it seemed as if the expression of opinion in the Legislatures of the States, in the ecclesiastical bodies of all denominations, and in the meetings of the people, would have so pressed this subject on the attention of Congress, that, in obedience to the voice of the people, the national government would have not only patronized the society, but have extended over Liberia the broad shield of its protection. That pleasing vision, however, has passed away." By whose influence has this pleasing vision been caused to pass away? A half century will scarcely be sufficient to place the cause of emancipation where

it would have this day stood, if Abolitionism had never been born.

Brethren, look now at your position before the people of these United States. A plan was adopted, originating with slaveholders, fraught with incalculable blessings to Africa, and offering to those who were willing to manumit their slaves, the desired opportunity to place them in circumstances the most favorable; and offering to the friends of emancipation the most favorable opportunities for advocating it before the people. This plan received the endorsement of all the religious denominations in the country, and of the Legislatures of several of the States. It counted amongst its friends large numbers of the most eminent men in the church and in the State. It had the almost certain prospect of securing the patronage of Congress. It is now seen and confessed, that the enterprise was one of the noblest of this age—admirably suited to promote the best interests of the colored people of our country. But in the midst of its successful labors, Abolitionists rose up, and, combining with Pro-slavery men at the South, labored with surprising zeal to crush it in its infancy. Sustained by slaveholders and Anti-abolitionists, it surmounted almost incredible difficulties, and compelled even Abolitionists to acknowledge its excellencies. And now the very men who have done so much to cripple the cause of emancipation, come to lecture the Presbyterian church—the steadfast friend of the cause—as if she had been, and were now, unfaithful; and, as if they had not done more than all the Pro-slavery men to tie her hands, and defeat her efforts to elevate the slaves?

Brethren, I do not oppose Abolitionism, because of its tendency to emancipate the slaves of our country, but rather because it perpetuates slavery, aggravating all its evils, and in other ways, does infinite mischief.

Fraternally,

N. L. RICE.

LETTER VII.

BRETHREN :—There are several ways in which efforts may be made to secure freedom to the slaves in our country. Moral suasion may be used, convincing masters of their duty, and persuading them to do it. Stratagem may be employed, inducing and assisting slaves to run from their masters. Political action may be resorted to, arraying the North against the South in excited political contests. The two last named methods may be adopted by the same persons; but they cannot be united with the first. I need scarcely ask which of these methods best accords with the office of the Christian ministry, and with the character of the church of Christ. The office, brethren, with which you and I are clothed—an office involving the greatest interests and the most solemn responsibilities—makes it our special and chief duty to reform men, and to remove the evils of society by *moral* means. The weapon put into our hands by our Master, is “the Sword of the Spirit.” And whatever social and political rights we exercise, we are bound to exercise in such a way, as will not impair our moral influence. Whenever Christian ministers pursue a course which destroys their moral power, they are shorn of their strength, their Master dishonored, and the church wounded.

And now, brethren, bear with me, whilst I call your attention to another capital error into which, as I think, Abolitionists have fallen. I refer to their efforts to make slaves dissatisfied with their condition, and to induce them to leave their masters. You have, doubtless, heard of the “under-ground railroad,” which means a systematic plan to induce and aid slaves to escape from their masters. To what extent the Congregationalists of New England have taken stock in this celebrated road, I do not know; but, certainly, in the slave States, those of them who are Abolitionists, are generally understood to have large

interests in it. Several things have conspired to produce this belief.

In the first place, whilst our Congregational brethren of the Abolition type, have freely expressed their opinions on this whole subject from time to time, they have expressed no opposition to this unwise and improper course, so long pursued by Abolitionists. In the second place, the popularity of "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*," in which the operations of *the railroad* are set forth in a very attractive style, confirms the belief, that it meets with favor in New England. Occurrences of the nature of mob violence have looked in the same direction.

I do not condemn Abolitionists for not actively engaging in capturing fugitive slaves. If I had the misfortune to own a slave, and he should leave me, I would not lift a finger to get possession of him; and I would do for others just what I would do in my own case. Nor do I condemn Abolitionists for taking the necessary precautions to prevent the kidnapping of free colored people. In such a work, they would secure the approbation of all good men. But their great error, and their great wrong, has been in adopting measures to render slaves dissatisfied, and to induce them to run from their masters. The impropriety of this course will be obvious from two or three considerations:

1. It is in direct contradiction of the teaching of inspired men. The apostles enjoined it upon servants to "obey in all things, their masters, according to the flesh"—to "count their own masters worthy of all honor"—to "be subject to their masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." And it is worthy of special remark, that they enjoined such faithful obedience, as a duty they owed to God, and in order that the religion of Christ might not be dishonored. Paul said to them—obey "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 whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Eph., 6 : 5-7. He bade them count their masters worthy of all honor, "that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." 1 Timothy, 6 : 1. Peter commanded them to be subject to their masters, even to the *froward* ; "for this is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully." 1 Peter, 2 : 18.

Such was the duty of slaves, as taught by the apostles of Christ, and such the reasons urged for the performance of it. Faithful obedience to their masters was made part of their *religion*. But Abolitionists, professing to believe the apostles inspired of God, have taught slaves, that instead of counting their masters worthy of all honor, they should regard them as the most hateful tyrants—that it is their right, if not their duty, to run from them ; and they have told them of certain systematic arrangements they have made to aid their escape. Secret agents have been employed to go amongst the slaves, and persuade them to this course. Fugitive slaves have been counseled to take horses, boats, or whatever was necessary to their escape. Nay, one of the leading Congregational papers, the *Independent*, advised them to arm themselves, and even to kill those who would take them back to slavery. "Be fully prepared," said the editors, "for your own defence. If to you death seems better than slavery, then refuse not to die, whether at the way-side, at your own threshold, or even as a felon upon the gallows. Defend your liberty and the liberty of your wife and children, as you would defend your life and theirs against the assassin. If you die thus, you die nobly, and your blood shall be the redemption of your race. Should you destroy the life of your assailants, you will pass into the custody of the criminal law, as administered in the free States, under an indictment for murder ; but the verdict of the community and

the verdict of almost any jury will be 'justifiable homicide in self-defence;' and the facts being known, the South will cease to molest you or your fellows. Or should a different verdict be found, and you be condemned to die as a murderer, your ignominious head shall be luminous with the halo of the martyr, and your sacrifice shall be for the deliverance of your people." The same paper advised the free negroes to form a secret society, one of whose objects should be that of "spreading information among the slaves of the South, as to the means and methods of escape."

Now, brethren, is the contrast between darkness and light more complete, than between the advice given by this Abolitionist print, and that given upon the same subject by the apostles of Christ? I am happy to acknowledge, that there are several Congregationalist papers, which gave utterance to no such atrocious sentiments, amongst which I feel bound to mention the *Puritan Recorder*, the *Congregational Journal*, and the *Christian Mirror*. I never admired "the fugitive slave law," and never believed it would be of any considerable advantage to slaveholders; nor do I believe, it would ever have been enacted, but for the efforts of Abolitionists to entice slaves from their masters. But, in the language of the *Puritan Recorder*, I say—"While it is a law, let it be obeyed, either by doing what it commands, or *patiently suffering the penalty* which it threatens."

2. The conduct of which I am speaking, necessarily annihilated every particle of the moral influence of Abolitionists in the slave States, and caused them to be regarded with perfect abhorrence. Slaveholders, learning that they were trying to decoy their slaves, or to excite them to insubordination and violence, resolved to treat them in a corresponding manner. All unlawful violence against Abolitionists, we have uniformly and publicly condemned; but who that knows anything of human nature, would have expected any other result from the illegal and unchristian proceedings to which they resorted?

If a man claims and holds, as his property, that to which you believe he has no right, you may reason with him, and press the claims of right upon his conscience. But if he ascertains, that whilst conducting this argument, you have employed some one secretly to carry it off, will he listen to your arguments any longer? Can you ever again exert the slightest moral influence upon him? Will he not meet your appeals with bitter scorn, if not with violence? Brethren, our Saviour sent us to exert a moral and religious influence. What right have we to resort to a course of conduct, which will destroy our moral influence over those whose reformation we are bound to seek?

3. The effect of the course of Abolitionists was to perpetuate slavery, and to aggravate all its evils. Not only has New England thus lost the influence she once exerted in favor of emancipation, but in the minds of multitudes, emancipation and Abolitionism are identified. Consequently, the most decided friends of emancipation in the slave States, feel that their hands are, to a great extent, tied.

I have said, that the course of Abolitionists has aggravated the evils of slavery. It has led to the enactment of laws against teaching slaves to read, lest they should read their incendiary publications. And the escape of a few slaves has naturally induced masters to place greater restraints upon others; and the slightest suspicion that a slave was disposed to escape, has, in not a few instances, led to his being sold to an inhuman slave-trader. Thus, for every slave the Abolitionists have successfully run to Canada, thousands who remained behind, have felt their bonds heavier. The man must be most ignorant of human nature, who doubts that the attempt, occasionally successful, to run slaves to Canada, certainly makes masters more suspicious, more watchful, and more severe. If we could weigh in opposite scales, the advantages gained to fugitive slaves, and the trouble brought upon those who remain, I have no doubt the latter would be far heavier. If ever any people had reason

to pray—"Save us from our friends"—the slaves in this country are such a people.

But the Abolitionists have resorted to *political agitation*, as well as to stratagem, in their zeal against slavery; but here again, I must think, they have been most unfortunate and most unwise. There is a kind of political action, by which a great work might have been done for the removal of the curse of slavery from our country, viz: that of enlisting the Legislatures of the several States and Congress in the work of Colonization. This kind of action was contemplated in the organization of the American Colonization Society. The evil of slavery was felt to be *national*, and of immense magnitude; and men of enlarged views aimed to enlist the nation in the effort to remove it. Men of enlarged and liberal views took hold of the noble enterprise. One Legislature after another, both of the free and the slave States, took action in favor of it. The prospects were truly cheering. Then, in an evil hour, Abolitionism was born; and its withering influence was soon felt. It very nearly succeeded in defeating one of the noblest and most philanthropic enterprises of this age. The success of Colonization, and the admiration of the world it now successfully challenges, should cause Abolitionism to hide its head in shame.

But Abolitionists resorted to political agitation. They commenced their career by petitioning Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. Apart entirely from the question of the constitutional power of Congress to do this, the movement manifestly must do infinitely more injury than good. For whilst the success of those petitions must have appeared to every considerate man extremely doubtful, they could not but arouse the most determined opposition from the slave States. For, taken in connection with other movements of the Abolitionists, this was naturally regarded as a part of a plan to agitate the subject of slavery throughout the Union, and to encroach, as far as possible, upon the rights of the slave States. But even

if the effort were successful, the number of slaves liberated would be very trifling; whilst the irritation resulting could not fail to effect, most injuriously, the cause of emancipation throughout the slave States. The effort failed, as wise men foresaw; and the injury done was incalculable.

But another plan of political agitation has been adopted. The purpose is avowed to admit into the Union not another slave State. Slavery is to be kept within its present geographical limits; and the whole country is thrown into agitation to effect this object. Its advocates declaim fluently and harshly of the aggressions of the slave power; and Pro-slavery men declaim as fluently and as bitterly against the aggressions of Abolitionism.

Now, brethren, has it not been one of the potent arguments against slavery, that it injures the States in which it exists, both in their population and in their wealth—that the free States are prospering in all respects, whilst the slave States are comparatively at a stand? This has been the argument; *and there is truth in it.*

But if Abolitionists believe what they affirm, do they not see that the greater prosperity of the free States will necessarily give them the ascendancy? Why, then, have they pursued a course which could not but array all the slave States against the exclusive formation of free States; thus, rendering the accomplishment of the object more difficult and more uncertain? Look at the present aspect of affairs in Kansas. No sooner was the Territory organized, and the Missouri Compromise repealed, than Emigrant Aid Societies were organized in the East, and strong appeals were made to induce men to emigrate, for the purpose of excluding slavery. I do not deny, that Abolitionists have the *political* right to form such societies; nor have I one particle of sympathy with any illegal or violent means which may have been adopted for the purpose of counteracting their efforts. And yet, who that knows the existing

state of feeling between the North and the South, could have doubted that the people of Upper Missouri and of other slave States, would be excited by the extraordinary movements of Abolitionists, to most determined efforts to defeat their plans? What is the result? A state of things now exists, which deters multitudes of quiet but firm Anti-slavery men from going to Kansas; and it must be populated mainly by two of the most dangerous classes of society—the fanatical Anti-slavery men, and the fanatical Pro-slavery men—and, probably, by a third class, consisting of ambitious men without merit, who can hope to bring themselves into notice only by riding some hobby. Deplorable collisions are to be feared, producing a state of things throughout our country, deeply injurious to its peace and prosperity.

Let us suppose, that ultimately Kansas will be a free State. Then an object will be gained in connection with a vast amount of excitement and wickedness, which might have been quietly secured by the ordinary flow of population. For no one acquainted with the existing state of things, can doubt that the emigration from the free States, including the foreign emigration, would have been greater than from the slave States; and that large numbers going from the slave States, would have desired to exclude slavery from the Territory. But it is a possible, not to say a probable case, that Kansas will be made a slave State. If it should, Abolitionists may thank themselves for such a result.

But suppose you succeed in confining slavery to its present limits, what will you have accomplished toward its abolition? One of the most insuperable difficulties in the way of emancipation in the Southern States, is *the great number of slaves*. If you prevent it from spreading over a large territory, you simply increase the difficulty of removing it from the country. Is it wise, then, in order to gain this point, to pursue a course which annihilates the influence you might exert in favor of gen-

eral emancipation? Is it wise or right for you to lay aside "the sword of the Spirit," in order to use carnal weapons, when the former would be infinitely more effective?

Fraternally,

N. L. RICE.

LETTER VIII.

BRETHREN :—In preceding letters, I have pointed out several errors into which, as I am obliged to believe, Abolitionists have fallen, in their treatment of slavery, and have stated some of the consequences. Allow me to call your attention to several *facts*, which demonstrate, beyond all question, that Abolitionism has done incalculable injury to the cause of emancipation, to religion, and to our country.

1. It has divided the friends of emancipation. Slavery is an evil of immense magnitude, demanding, for its removal from our country, the combined wisdom and energies of all who regard it as an evil. Unless you regard the great majority of the Christians in the free States, and large numbers of those in the slave States, as hypocrites and liars, you cannot doubt, that they sincerely desire the emancipation of all the slaves, provided it can be secured by the operation of correct principles, and without more injury than good. They have solemnly and repeatedly declared such to be their desire; and as candid men, you cannot question their sincerity. Nor can you say truly, that they hold principles which tend to perpetuate slavery. For, in the first place, it is a fact, that their principles—not those of Abolitionists—have removed slavery from every one of the free States, where it has had an existence. This is true, so far as emancipation has resulted from *moral principle*. I state this as a significant fact, and am prepared to sustain the state-

ment by abundant proof, should it be denied. It was not Abolitionism, in its modern phase, which removed slavery from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, or even from the New England States.

In the second place, the principles to which I refer, originated and have sustained the Colonization enterprise; and in connection with this, large numbers of slaveholders have emancipated their slaves, and placed them where they are truly free. This enterprise now challenges the admiration of the world; and leading Abolitionists acknowledge its merits, and advise the colored people to go to Liberia, rather than to Canada. Many benevolent slaveholders in the South have sacrificed large sums of money, in order to prepare their slaves for freedom, and to place them in comfortable circumstances. They have done this, as a matter of moral principle and of benevolence.

But Abolitionists have pursued a course in which the large majority of the friends of emancipation could not unite; nay, which they have felt bound, in conscience, to oppose. Instead of employing their time and energies in forming and executing plans for the elevation of the slaves, they have been compelled to make battle with a fanaticism, which, whilst it would never abolish slavery, would abolish everything most dear to the Christian. Can there be greater folly, than to divide the friends of a great enterprise, in the accomplishment of which the united efforts of all are imperatively demanded?

2. Abolitionism has produced a general and powerful reaction in the slave States against emancipation, and in favor of perpetuating slavery. In a late editorial article, the *Congregationalist* denies, that any such reaction has taken place. But there are, unhappily, abundant facts which prove it beyond all question. Let us look at a few of these facts.

Before Abolitionism began its work of agitation, it was almost universally admitted in the slave States, that slavery is an evil of immense magnitude, from which it is most desirable

the country may be delivered ; and instances of emancipation were multiplying in the slave States. The late venerable Dr. Alexander, in his *History of Colonization*, says : “ The condition of the slaves occupied the attention of many serious, sagacious men in Virginia, about the close of the last century. It was often a subject of free conversation among enlightened men, and their opinions, generally, were favorable to the emancipation of the slaves, both on principles of justice and sound policy. But the great difficulty was to know what disposal to make of them. To obviate this difficulty, various plans were devised,” etc. Dr. Alexander further states, that St. George Tucker, one of the judges of the Court of Appeals, professor of law in the College of William and Mary, and the editor of *Blackstone’s Commentaries*, devised and published a plan for the gradual emancipation of all the slaves in the State. “ And although his scheme was, by few, considered feasible, yet the proposal of emancipation from such high authority created no excitement in the country. The plan was canvassed, and its provisions discussed with as much calmness as ordinary political measures, in which all the citizens had an interest.” Again and again, during the early part of the present century, the Legislature of Virginia agitated earnestly the subject of finding a suitable region to which free negroes, and those whose masters should liberate them, might be removed ; and that body gave its influence decidedly to Colonization.

In the *Christian Observer*, of Boston, of October, 1816, I find a letter from a gentleman in Baltimore, giving some most interesting facts relative to emancipation in Tennessee and Maryland, and other slave States. He makes the following general statement : “ Now, emancipation seems to engage the attention of all ranks. Societies are forming in the most of the slave States, in some instances almost exclusively by slaveholders, for the express purpose of promoting that interesting measure. Formerly, the *right* to hold slaves was scarcely ever

questioned; now, it is admitted on all sides, that they are justly entitled to their liberty. Under this impression, many are disposed to emancipate them, but are not willing to turn them loose, without education, upon the community," etc. Concerning the prospects of emancipation in Tennessee, the writer says: "To a petition, circulated under the auspices of the Abolition Society of Tennessee to the Legislature of that State, for some legislative provision in the case, there were upwards of *fifteen hundred* signatures; and as an evidence of their earnest desire for the consummation of their request, many of the slaveholders were so particular as to write opposite their names, 'slaveholder.'" Of emancipation in Maryland, he says: "In this State, emancipation seems to be the order of the day. Many families of the first rank have recently manumitted their slaves. Few die now, without making provision for their enlargement; and, I trust, the time is near at hand when the Legislature will pass an act to register and secure the freedom of all such as may be born hereafter." In 1832, the Legislature of Maryland passed the following, amongst other resolutions, viz: "*Resolved*, That as philanthropists and lovers of freedom, we deplore the existence of slavery among us, and would use our utmost exertions to ameliorate its condition;" and they recommended Colonization "as the commencement of a system, by which, if judicious encouragement be afforded, these evils may be measurably diminished, so that, in process of time, the relative proportion of the black to the white population, will hardly be matter of serious or unpleasant consideration."

During the same period, similar views prevailed in Kentucky; and the friends of emancipation looked forward confidently to the time, as rapidly approaching, when a plan of gradual emancipation would be adopted. Leading politicians in the State, as well as large numbers of Christians, were earnestly in favor of such a plan. For a number of years, a law existed, forbidding the importation of slaves into the State for purposes of

traffic. This law was evidently intended to prevent the increase of the number of slaves, that emancipation might be more easily effected. Henry Clay, by far the most popular man in Kentucky, openly avowed his opposition to slavery. Dr. Alexander says: "While Mr. Clay has so warmly advocated the cause of the Colonization Society, and so firmly and strenuously opposed the mad schemes of the Abolitionists, he has ever openly declared his hostility to slavery." On this subject, he says: "If I could be instrumental in eradicating this deepest stain upon the character of our country, and removing all cause of reproach, on account of it, by foreign nations; if I could be only instrumental in ridding of this foul blot, the revered State that gave me birth, or that not less beloved State, which kindly adopted me as her son, I would not exchange the proud satisfaction which I should enjoy, for all the triumphs ever decreed to the most successful conqueror."

Between the years 1830 and 1834, the subject of slavery was freely and fully discussed by the Synod of Kentucky. This discussion resulted in the adoption of a plan of gradual emancipation to be recommended to the churches. This plan was published in a pamphlet, in which the evils of slavery were set forth in very strong language. Meanwhile, Sunday schools for colored persons were established in many places, and were largely attended.

At the period to which I refer, confident hopes were entertained, that in the course of a few years, Virginia, Maryland, and Kentucky, would adopt plans of gradual emancipation. General Lafayette said—"I have been so long the friend of emancipation, particularly as regards these otherwise most happy States, that I behold, with the sincerest pleasure, the commencement of an institution, [the American Colonization Society,] whose progress and termination will, I trust, be attended by the most successful results;" and he added—"You will, in time, have an accession of at least three free States in

this Union—Maryland, Virginia, and Kentucky.” This, he believed, would occur within half a century from the time—almost thirty years ago—when he uttered these opinions. See *Religious Intelligencer*, of New Haven, for December 24, 1825.

But in the midst of these cheering prospects, when all the leading Christian denominations, many of the leading statesmen, and multitudes of the people, favored emancipation, particularly in connection with Colonization, Abolitionism, in its modern type, commenced its career. Lloyd Garrison, the blaspheming infidel, gave the key-note. In the year 1832, when the Colonization Society was enjoying the full tide of prosperity, he published a large book, entitled “Garrison’s Thoughts on African Colonization.” One of the New York papers said of this book, “the boldness, the magnitude, and the severity of his charges against the Society, are truly astonishing.” Dr. Alexander says: “This was the origin of what is now called Abolitionism. Abolitionists had existed in great numbers before, and had formed Abolition societies; but these were a peaceable and reflecting people, who looked at consequences, and attempted to produce no agitation, and employed no denunciation, but watched for, and embraced, any opportunities which offered, to defend the liberty of such as might be illegally held in bondage,” etc. Mr. Garrison’s zeal, as the same venerable writer tells us, “was not satisfied by his written publications in this country; but, as Mr. Cresson was in England gaining, and successfully winning favor to the cause there, Mr. Garrison determined to follow him, and counteract his influence, by presenting his own views.”

Thus, Abolitionism began its career under the lead of a reckless, bad man. The first object of its attack was an institution now proved and admitted to be one of the noblest and most philanthropic of the nineteenth century, formed by some of the wisest and best men of the country; and the first weapons it wielded, were misrepresentation and slander. And although

good men were brought under its influence, their piety was injured, not promoted by it, and its spirit has, to this day, undergone no favorable change. With the rise of Abolitionism, commenced the reaction against emancipation, and in favor of slavery, which has increased with every passing year. Dr. Alexander states, that at the circulation of the Abolitionist publications, "alarm and indignation spread through the Southern country, like an electric shock. In some instances, lawless acts of violence were resorted to, against persons suspected of Abolitionism, or found in possession of any of the books or pamphlets of the Anti-slavery Society. * * * The effect on the people of the South, in regard to slavery, was the very opposite of that aimed at; sentiments more favorable to the continuance and even perpetuity of slavery, began now to be very commonly entertained; *whereas, before, such sentiments were scarcely ever heard.*"

And now, brethren, what is the result of the Abolitionist agitation of a quarter of a century? In Virginia, we hear little now in favor of emancipation; and no one expects, at any early day, to see a plan of emancipation adopted by that State. The same is true of Maryland. In Kentucky, the reaction seems almost complete. Instead of a plan of emancipation, that State has adopted a Constitution, which fastens slavery upon it permanently. Slaveholders are no longer permitted to emancipate their slaves, unless they remove them from the State. This retrograde step has been taken, notwithstanding the earnest efforts of Presbyterians and others to secure a different result. In Missouri, the reaction is equally complete, and, of course, in the more southern States. This is not all, nor the worst. A state of feeling between the North and the South has been produced, which threatens the most disastrous results to our Civil Union; and a dissolution of the Union would not only prove a curse to our country, but to the cause of freedom and of Christianity throughout the world.

I do not say, that those who run to the opposite extreme, because of the Abolitionist agitations, are excusable. Truth is not changed by the fanaticism of men; nor is the obligation to embrace it canceled. Yet, no man acquainted with human nature, would have expected any other result, than what we now see and deplore. On the Abolitionists mainly rests the responsibility of the present state of things. Their principles and their course have been, in their effects, eminently *pro-slavery*. They have not only driven multitudes into pro-slavery views, but they have, to a great extent, tied the hands of the friends of emancipation in the slave States. They have, at the same time, crippled the influence of the great majority of the friends of emancipation in the free States.

3. Abolitionism has done even more than I have mentioned, to render hopeless all the plans of emancipation. It has divided churches, which, as bodies, were decidedly favorable to the cause. The New School Presbyterian church is divided on this question of slavery; and instead of united action to remove the evil, there is painful agitation. In 1828, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal church passed strong resolutions in favor of the Colonization cause, which even the *Congregationalist* allows to be, in its tendencies, most happy. But now, that large body is divided into the Church *North* and the Church *South*; and then the Church *North* is divided in sentiment. Other divisions, which I need not mention, have occurred; and now, instead of the united efforts of the Christian church to elevate the slaves, and remove from our country the evil of slavery, we have divided counsels, heart-burnings, and denunciations, which neutralize its influence.

And then the cause of Christ has been made to bleed at every pore. Not only have ecclesiastical bodies been divided, but the peace of particular churches in the free States, has been destroyed. Thus, has the preaching of the Gospel been divested of its power; and men have become hardened in sin.

Thus, too, the Christian religion, which should have been the support of our Civil Union, and the preserver of its peace, has been perverted, so as most powerfully to work the dissolution of the Union, and the destruction of its peace.

But the heart sickens in recounting the deplorable evils resulting from the errors of Abolitionism. Surely, it is high time for those who have produced such results, to question their own infallibility. It is time for them to exhibit some degree of modesty in censuring those who have conscientiously differed from them.

Fraternally,

N. L. RICE.

LETTER IX.

BRETHREN:—Abolitionism has had ample time to produce its legitimate fruits; and it has produced them. The following remarks, made by Mr. Webster, in a speech in Congress, five years ago, show that the most distinguished statesmen of New England took the same view of its disastrous effects, which I have already presented. He disavowed the intention to impute corrupt motives even to its leaders, but said—"I am not blind to the consequences. I cannot but see what mischief their interference with the South has produced. And is it not plain to every man? Let any gentleman who doubts of that, recur to the debates of the Virginia House of Delegates, in 1832, and he will see with what freedom a proposition made by Mr. Randolph, for the gradual abolition of slavery, was discussed in that body. Every one spoke of slavery as he thought; very ignominious and disparaging names and epithets were applied to it. The debates in the House of Delegates, on that occasion, I believe, were all published. They were read by every colored man who could read; and if there were any who could not

read, those debates were read to them by others. At that time, Virginia was not unwilling, nor afraid to discuss this question, and to let that part of her population know as much of it as they could learn. That was in 1832." After speaking of the commencement of the Abolition Societies, and of the character of their publications, he said—"They attempted to arouse, and did arouse, a very strong feeling; in other words, they created great agitation in the North against Southern slavery. Well, what was the result? The bonds of the slaves were bound more firmly than before—their rivets were more strongly fastened. Public opinion, which, in Virginia, had begun to be exhibited against slavery, and was opening out for the discussion of the question, drew back, and shut itself up in its castle. I wish to know, whether anybody in Virginia can now talk as Mr. Randolph, Governor McDowell and others, talked then, openly, and sent their remarks to the press, in 1832? We all know the fact, and we all know the cause; and everything that this agitating people have done, has been, not to enlarge, but to restrain; not to set free, but to bind faster the slave population of the South. This is my judgment."

I now propose to defend the Presbyterian church against the charges of Abolitionists. I do not affirm, that she has done her whole duty to the slaves in our country; but I do maintain, that the principles on which she has undeviatingly acted, are *scriptural*, and that her course, uniformly the same, has been eminently wise, and, in all its results, most happy. I maintain, that she has proved herself a better friend to the slaves than the Abolitionists. The reasons for these opinions, I now proceed to give.

1. The Presbyterian church has not failed to do for the slaves the great work which her commission from Christ requires his church to do for all men. She has preached to them the Gospel of Christ, and has been instrumental in the salvation of great numbers of them. You cannot deny, that the peculiar

work committed by Christ to his ministers and his church, is to preach the Gospel to all men; nor can you doubt, that it is infinitely more important to the slaves, to be saved from the bondage of sin and Satan, than from the servitude to man. You cannot, therefore, question—that those who have labored for the evangelization of the slaves, have done for them an incomparably better work, than those whose main efforts have been directed to the effecting of their emancipation.

If you will take the trouble to examine the Minutes of the Synods of Philadelphia and New York, and of the General Assembly, from its earliest existence, you will find, that this work was never lost sight of. The Minutes of our Synods and Presbyteries in the slave States exhibit the same attention to the spiritual condition of the slaves. Some of our ablest ministers have devoted themselves wholly, for years together, to instructing the slaves in the truths of God's Word; amongst whom I may mention Rev. Drs. C. C. Jones and Adger. In a number of instances, planters have paid salaries to ministers to preach regularly to their slaves; and not a few masters and mistresses have devoted part of each Sabbath to their religious instruction. Dr. Humphrey, one of your own most eminent men, says: "Many masters and mistresses spend much of the Sabbath in giving them (the slaves) moral and religious instruction, which is greatly blessed to them." Again: "But a few in the free States, I believe, are aware to what an extent the owners of large plantations at the South, are coöperating with religious societies in bringing their slaves under the sound of the Gospel, nor of its saving effects upon tens of thousands who hear it. In the cities, large congregations and churches of colored people, mostly slaves, have been gathered by themselves, and under pastors of their own kindred. Elsewhere, slaves and their masters worship and sit together at the Lord's Table. The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon the bond, as well as the free, if not more copiously. I had no idea myself, till lately, of

how much is doing in the slave States, for the blacks, nor of the success of missionary labors among them.”

I should do great injustice to other denominations, were I not to say, that they participate in this good work quite as largely as the Presbyterian church. Dr. Humphrey states the fact, that in the Baptist churches of Georgia, there are *fourteen thousand* colored members. And he states the additional fact, that in 1851, the Methodist Church South employed *ninety-nine* missionaries among the colored people, and in *fifty-two* churches, they had thirty thousand one hundred and two members, and fourteen thousand four hundred and sixty-eight children under religious instruction.

Abolitionists have succeeded in running a few slaves to Canada. The Christians and churches denounced by them as unfaithful to the slaves, have been instrumental in delivering, within the same time, *tens of thousands* of them from the bondage of Satan. And though they may die in servitude to men, they will rejoice as the free men of Christ, through eternal ages. If they live and die in slavery, they have received that which makes them happier in slavery, than are wicked men in the enjoyment of freedom. “For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman.” Tell me, brethren, who have been the truest friends of the slaves—those who have labored for their conversion to Christ, or those who have left their souls to perish in sin, and constantly clamored about their emancipation?

2. The Presbyterian church, in evangelizing the slaves, has most effectually prepared them for freedom, whenever the providence of God shall open the way for their emancipation. You cannot deny that, to the ignorant and vicious, freedom is no great blessing; and you cannot but know, that the prevailing ignorance and wickedness amongst slaves, have constituted one leading difficulty in the way of their emancipation. Moreover, you will acknowledge, that nothing so fully prepares any people

for the rational enjoyment of freedom, as an acquaintance with the Bible and true piety. This view was taken of the subject by the General Assembly of 1815. That body urged the Presbyteries "to adopt such measures as will secure, at least to the rising generation of slaves within the bounds of the church, a religious education; that they may be prepared for the exercise and enjoyment of liberty, when God, in his providence, may open a door for their emancipation." The Assembly of 1818 repeated the recommendation, with the same object in view.

3. The Presbyterian church, as well as other Anti-abolition churches, has preached the Gospel to *masters* and to *the people of the slave States*. And, brethren, you will not deny, that the Gospel is the divinely appointed means of reforming men, and inducing them to turn from all sin, and of removing all social evils. Let it be admitted, for argument's sake, that Presbyterian ministers have not, in their discourses, fully and faithfully explained and enforced the principles of the Bible with respect to slavery; you will acknowledge that they have so preached the Gospel—that God has blessed it to the conversion of multitudes of sinners; and you will certainly admit, that whenever a man becomes a true Christian, he thinks of his accountability, and begins earnestly to inquire after his duty to those under his control. And if slavery is the heinous sin which Abolitionists represent it to be, will not intelligent men, reading the teachings of inspired men, be likely to see it so? And is it not a fact, that large numbers of slaveholders, under the influence of the Gospel, as preached in the slave States, have prepared their slaves for freedom, and then manumitted them? How often have individuals manumitted a number of slaves they might have sold for fifty thousand dollars? Allow me to ask you, as candid men, which has proved most efficacious in causing men to emancipate their slaves—the Gospel, as preached in the slave States, or the resolutions, pamphlets, etc., issued by Abolition-

ists in the free States? Brethren, we are prepared to compare notes with you. How many slaveholders have been induced by Abolitionist publications to emancipate their slaves?

But the preaching of the Gospel, even where it does not result in numerous immediate emancipations, does greatly improve the condition of the slaves, by operating upon the minds of individuals, and by forming a powerful public sentiment against unkindness to them. There is no candid man, even tolerably informed, who will not testify, that the condition of the slaves has been improved precisely in proportion as the Gospel has exerted upon the people a more pervading influence. If all that is to be desired, has not been accomplished, yet much has been done to promote the happiness of the slaves in every slaveholding State. The physician, who cannot immediately, or at all, effect a cure, is regarded as doing a humane work, if he affords some partial relief to his patient.

Certain it is, that the Presbyterian church has used, and is using, the very means appointed by God for the reformation of the world, and for improving the condition of men; and it is no less certain, that Abolitionists have not used those means.

4. Our church has not only preached the Gospel to masters and slaves, but she has exerted her *authority* over her own members, to protect the slaves from cruel treatment. The General Assembly of 1818 enjoined it upon all church Sessions and Presbyteries "to discountenance, and, as far as possible, to prevent, all cruelty of whatever kind, in the treatment of slaves; especially the cruelty of separating husband and wife, parents and children; and that which consists in selling slaves to those who will either themselves deprive these unhappy people of the blessings of the Gospel, or who will transport them to places where the Gospel is not proclaimed, or where it is forbidden to slaves to attend upon its institutions. The manifest violation or disregard of the injunction here given, in its true spirit and intention, ought to be considered as just ground for the discip-

line and censure of the church. And if it shall ever happen that a Christian professor, in our communion, shall sell a slave who is also in communion and good standing with our church, contrary to his or her will and inclination, it ought immediately to claim the particular attention of the proper church judicature; and unless there be such peculiar circumstances attending the case as can but seldom happen, it ought to be followed, without delay, by a suspension of the offender from all the privileges of the church, till he repent, and make all the reparation in his power, to the injured party." Such is, and long has been, the law of the Presbyterian church on this subject. As far as possible, she has protected slaves from cruel treatment, and secured to them the privilege of hearing the Gospel.

5. The Presbyterian church has ever been the steadfast friend of the American Colonization Society; and she has favored Colonization, not because it made the slaves more valuable by the removal of the free negroes, as Abolitionists have imagined, but because it afforded the best means yet devised for promoting emancipation. The General Assembly of 1818, as stated in my first letter, favored Colonization with this view. The Assembly of 1819, resolved, "that in their opinion, the plan of the Society is benevolent in its design, and if properly supported, and judiciously and vigorously prosecuted, is calculated to be extensively useful to this country and to Africa." And after stating the difficulties in the way of placing the colored people in this country "on a footing with their brethren of the same common family," the Assembly further says: "In restoring them to the land of their fathers, the Assembly hope that the way may be opened, not only for the accomplishment of that object, but for introducing Colonization and the Gospel to the benighted nations of Africa. From the information and statement received, the Assembly believe, that the proposed colony in Africa, may be made a powerful auxiliary in the efforts which are making to abolish the iniquitous traffic in slaves, car-

ried on in Africa ; and, happily, calculated to lay the foundation of a gradual emancipation of slaves in our own country, in a legal and constitutional manner, and without violating the rights, or injuring the feelings of our southern brethren." The Assembly of 1825 expressed "their high gratification at the progress of the American Colonization Society," which they regarded as "a great work of humanity and religion." They declared their conviction, "that the temporal prosperity and moral interests of an extensive section of our country, of a numerous, degraded and miserable class of men in the midst of us, and of the vast continent of Africa, uncivilized and unchristianized, are ultimately connected with the success of this institution." They, therefore, resolved, *unanimously*, to recommend to the churches under their care, to patronize the objects of the Society, and to take up collections for it on the fourth of July.

These are specimens of the action of the General Assembly of our church on the subject of Colonization. Did the Presbyterian church over-estimate its importance? Has not the result fully justified the expectation expressed? It has planted, on the shores of Africa, a Christian Republic, which extends its civilizing and Christianizing influence over tens of thousands of the benighted natives. It has suppressed the slave trade along the coast more effectually than could the armed vessels of England, France, and the United States. It has afforded a home to a large number of those once in slavery, where they enjoy complete freedom. It has afforded the opportunity to slaveholders, who felt it their duty to manumit their slaves, to do so. And it is yet in its infancy, and has but just entered upon its noble mission.

Even the *Congregationalist*, that sees almost nothing good in any enterprise which is not baptized with the spirit of Abolitionism, praises Colonization, and bids it God speed, "regarding it as a lamp and pitcher in the hand of Gideon and his

men—the token of God's presence among us for the overthrow of the slaveholder's hosts!" Exactly so. It turns out that the institution bitterly and perseveringly denounced by Abolitionists, as designed to aid slaveholders in oppressing their slaves, has demonstrated itself a greater friend to the African race, than those who proclaimed themselves the special friends of the slaves. Aided by Presbyterians and other Anti-abolitionists, it has done a work incomparably greater and better than they ever pretend to have done; and this work, it has accomplished peacefully, without agitation or violence, blessing, at the same time, both masters and slaves.

In view of such facts as these, brethren, we stand before the world, prepared to look our Congregational brethren in the face, and to compare notes with those who have deemed it their duty to lecture us. We have not done our whole duty; but we have done incomparably more than those who were content to deliver windy speeches, and pass windy resolutions in the free States; and we would have accomplished far more, but for their unwise interference.

Fraternally,

N. L. RICE.

LETTER X.

BRETHREN:—From Rev. Dr. Baird's account of the state and prospects of religion in America, made to the late Conference of Evangelical Alliance, in Paris, I learn, that in 1850, there were, in Virginia, 54,333 free people of color; in Maryland, 74,723; and in all the slaveholding States, 290,424. How came all these people by their freedom? Has Abolitionism exerted an influence in the slave States so extensive in favor of emancipation? Far otherwise. As Dr. Baird remarks—“These people or their ancestors, obtained their freedom by the

influence of the Gospel on the hearts of their former masters." And by whom was the Gospel preached to them? Not by Abolitionists, but by the men whom they are accustomed to condemn, as unfriendly to the slaves. In the same manner, a large proportion of the 204,484 colored people in the free States obtained their freedom. Add to those the colony of Liberia, and you see what the Gospel, unaided by Abolitionism, has done for emancipation.

The position of the Presbyterian church, in relation to slavery, is happily distinguished from that of Abolitionists in this—that her utterances and her course have been *unambiguous* and uniformly *consistent*.

1. She has uniformly condemned the *slave trade*, as a great wickedness; and, therefore, has not hesitated to condemn the conduct of those who introduced slavery into our country, and of those who, in our country, traffic in slaves.

2. She has uniformly made a broad distinction between those who forced slavery upon the different States, and those who find themselves involved in the evil to such an extent, as to render an immediate removal of it, especially in the present state of public sentiment, impracticable. It was not a *sin* for these last to *inherit* the evil; nor is it their duty, in order to remove it, to adopt measures deeply injurious to masters and slaves. Yet, since it is an evil of immense magnitude to masters, to slaves, and to every State in which it exists, it is the duty of all concerned to do what they can, by the operation of sound principles, to remove it. Precisely this ground was taken by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, in 1787. That body declared, that they "do highly approve of the principles in favor of universal liberty, that prevail in America, and the interest which many of the States have taken in promoting the abolition of slavery. Yet, inasmuch as men introduced from a servile state to a participation of all the privileges of civil society, without a proper education, and without previous

habits of industry, may be, in many respects, dangerous to the community; therefore, they earnestly recommend it to all the members belonging to their communion, to give those persons who are at present held in servitude, such good education as to prepare them for the better enjoyment of freedom." The General Assemblies of 1793, 1815, and 1818, took precisely the same ground, not favoring immediate emancipation, but earnestly recommending the adoption of the most effective means toward the final abolition of slavery—especially Colonization in Africa.

3. In accordance with these views, our church has ever refused to make the mere fact of slaveholding a bar to Christian fellowship. In 1795, the following overture was presented to the General Assembly: "A serious and conscientious person, a member of the Presbyterian congregation, who views the slavery of the negroes as a moral evil, highly offensive to God, and injurious to the interests of the Gospel, lives under the ministry of a person, or amongst a society of people, who concur with him in sentiment on the subject upon general principles—yet, for particular reasons, hold slaves, and tolerate the practice in others: Ought the former of these persons, under the impressions and circumstances above described, to hold Christian communion with the latter?" After "due deliberation," the Assembly resolved—"That as the same difference of opinion, with respect to slavery, takes place in sundry parts of the Presbyterian church, notwithstanding which they live in charity and peace, according to the doctrine and practice of the apostles, it is hereby recommended to all conscientious persons, and especially to those whom it immediately respects, to do the same." The Assembly of 1815 reaffirmed the same view. The Assembly of 1845 took precisely the same ground.

4. The Presbyterian church has uniformly relied on the Gospel as the chief means for the elevation of the slaves, and for the removal of slavery. She has, therefore, given no counten-

ance to conventions of men and women of all shades of opinion, agreeing almost in nothing, except in denouncing slavery. Nor have our General Assemblies deemed it wise to be constantly debating the question, and passing general resolutions. Such a course, at all times of doubtful wisdom, in dealing with an extremely complicated and difficult subject, would be eminently unwise, at a period when the improper course of imprudent men has produced an excitement most unfriendly to the progress of the truth. The wise man has taught us, that there is "a time to keep silent," as well as "a time to speak."

In two respects, our church has been misrepresented. Her enemies have charged her with changing her ground. This charge, as her public acts prove, is untrue. She has never been either *Abolitionist* or *Pro-slavery*, but has undeviatingly adhered to the plain teaching of inspired men—firmly believing, that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." She has been charged with fearing and shunning discussion. This charge is false. The records of our General Assemblies show, that again and again, the subject of slavery has been discussed in their sessions with the utmost freedom. No longer ago than 1845, the petitions of Abolitionists were received, committed to a large committee, considered, and decided upon. In one respect, we are behind some of our contemporaries—we are not "ever learning, and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth." You will excuse this *defect*!

But, brethren, "wise men" came from the East in ancient times. Why not now? Our New England brethren have sent delegates to enlighten the Presbyterian church on the subject of slavery. As *Abolitionists*, or as *Congregationalists*, were you really prepared to afford us any light? When we look into the ranks of Abolitionists, do we find *unity*? Far from it. We see one party, composed of men and women, of various colors, furiously denouncing *slavery* and the *Bible*, as almost equally bad! The very principles by which this party would

overturn slavery, would overturn church, State, and family, and produce the most horrid anarchy. Next behind these, we see a party professing to be Christians, but refusing to coöperate with such institutions as the American Board of Foreign Missions, the American Tract Society, etc., because they are too Pro-slavery. This party seems to manifest a tender sympathy for the *woman's rights* movement; and their debates are enlivened by the *Rev. Miss Brown* and others of the like views. Next in order to these, is a party who sustain the societies to which I have referred, and who would even be willing to send delegates to the General Assembly, provided they might relieve their consciences by delivering a very brief lecture on slavery! This party is represented by the *Congregationalist* and the *Independent*. Next comes a large and influential class of Congregationalists, who, though decidedly Anti-slavery, have no sympathy with the distinctive doctrines of Abolitionists, and none with their agitations. This class is represented by such men as Drs. Adams, Humphrey, Lord, Cummings, etc.

Now, brethren, if we could bring all the Abolitionists together in one grand convention, what a sight? Professedly evangelical men, Quakers, Unitarians, Universalists, Infidels, etc.—would you look for light on any moral question from such a heterogeneous multitude? But you visited the General Assembly, as delegates from the Congregational Associations. Well, are the members of these Associations agreed either as to the *sin* of slaveholding, or as to the duty of Christian churches in the slaveholding States? They are not. Far from it. If you cannot convince your brethren in New England of the truth of the doctrines of Abolitionists and of the wisdom of their course, how do you expect to convince Presbyterians? After all, did you give to the Assembly any new light? You gave us your *opinion*, that slavery is a bad thing; but did you expect such an expression of opinion to have any weight with the General Assembly? Why should it? The members of that body had

enjoyed quite as good opportunities, to say the least, of becoming acquainted with slavery, as you, or the bodies represented by you. Of what particular advantage, then, was the expression of your opinion? If it relieved the consciences of any of our New England brethren, I am satisfied; but they must have singular consciences, if they are relieved by doing what could not, and should not, have any weight with honest men—*especially as you did not tell the Assembly what, in your opinion, they ought to do.* Those who volunteer advice and reproof, ought not to evade the most difficult points; nor to find fault with those who are doing the best they know how, unless they are prepared to inform them of some better way. I heard you attentively; and I really did not know, when you concluded your remarks, what you thought we ought to do. Brethren, this was a capital defect in your addresses.

But I must bring these letters to a close. If I know my own heart, I desire to know the whole truth on this subject. I have carefully examined it in the light of God's Word; and I have formed conclusions. But, brethren, if you can give me any new light, I shall be grateful to you. I have resided and preached the Gospel in both the free and the slave States. I have seen slavery as it is; but I never owned a slave, and never expect to own one. I think I have examined the subject impartially. If you say, the slave trade is an abominable wickedness, whether carried on abroad, or in our own country, I agree with you. If you affirm, that slavery is a great evil, which philanthropists and Christians ought to seek to remove from our country, I agree with you again. If you assert, that many of the laws which regulate slavery, are oppressive and unjust, and ought to be changed, I still agree with you. If you say, that the slaves are our fellow-men, rational, accountable, immortal, and that we are bound to do what we can to promote their present and future happiness, I heartily agree with you. If you go further, and assert, that slaveholding, without regard to circumstances,

is *sin*, and that all slaveholders ought to be excluded from the church of Christ, I cannot agree with you. Neither my Bible, my reason, nor my observation, will allow me to agree with you.

Brethren, can you tell us of any method by which slavery can be abolished, and the condition of the slaves materially improved? We have the Gospel; can you tell us of anything which will exert a better or a more powerful influence over the minds of men? We advocate Colonization; can you tell us of any better or more efficient agency? You may denounce slavery in general, as long as you please, but your general resolutions give no light.

After all, would it not be wise in you to abandon a course which has been fully tried, and which has been productive only of evil, and once more try the preaching of the Gospel! If you feel called to do anything in the matter, would it not be well to unite cordially with the friends of emancipation in promoting *Colonization*? Most heartily, do I adopt the language of the venerable Dr. Humphrey, one of your most distinguished ministers, on this subject: "Let us neither denounce nor be discouraged, because the great work lingers. 'Light and love,' and soft words and strong reasons, will ultimately prevail."

The time has come, in my humble judgment, when it is both the interest and the duty of every true Christian and philanthropist to throw the full weight of his influence against the fanaticism of *Abolitionism*, and the fanaticism of *Pro-slaveryism*. The former is like a quack doctor, who, in his unskillful treatment of a chronic disease, produces other diseases, and threatens to kill the patient; and the latter, like a deranged man, would resist the most skillful physician, and bless God for his malady. They are two extreme errors, each enlisting in its defence the worst passions of human nature, and threatening ruin to Church and State.

Brethren, I have now, to the best of my ability, discharged a duty I owed, as I think, to the cause of Christ, to my church,

to my country, to the slaves. Cheerfully, do I leave the subject before the minds of those who may think it worth while to read what I have written, praying God that the truth may prevail. With kindest feelings, I am, Yours, fraternally,

N. L. RICE.

P.S.—I should do injustice to Rev. Mr. Thayer, of Rhode Island, and to my own feelings, were I to close these letters, without saying, that his address to the General Assembly, was not only entirely courteous, (as were the addresses of the other Congregational delegates,) but entirely free from the expression of any sentiment to which exception could be taken.

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