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AN EPISTLE

TO THE

CLERGY OF THE SOUTHERN STATES.

BY SARAH M. GRIMKÉ.

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying—If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace." Luke xix, 41—42.

BRETHREN BELOVED IN THE LORD;

It is because I feel a portion of that love glowing in my heart towards you, which is infused into every bosom by the cordial reception of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that I am induced to address you as fellow professors of his holy religion. To my dear native land, to the beloved relatives who are still breathing her tainted air, to the ministers of Christ, from some of whom I have received the emblems of a Saviour's love; my heart turns with feelings of intense solicitude, even with such feelings, may I presume to say, as brought the gushing tears of compassion from the Redeemer of the world, when he wept over the city which he loved, when with ineffable pathos he exclaimed, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Nay, these are the feelings which fill the hearts of Northern Abolitionists towards Southern slave-holders. Yes, my brethren, notwithstanding the bon fire at Charleston—the outrages at Nashville on the person of Dresser—the banishment of Birney and Nelson—the arrest and imprisonment of our colored citizens—we can still weep over you with unfeigned tenderness and anxiety, and exclaim, O that ye would even now listen to the christian remonstrances of those who feel that the principle they advocate "is not a vain thing for YOU, because it is YOUR LIFE." For you the midnight tear is shed, for you the daily and the nightly prayer ascends, that God in his unbounded mercy may open your hearts to believe his awful denunciations against those who "rob the poor because he is poor." And will you still disregard the supplications of those, who are lifting up their voices like the prophets of old, and reiterating the soul-touching enquiry, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Oh that I could clothe my feelings in eloquence that would be irresistible, in tones of melting tenderness that would soften the hearts of all, who hold their fellow men in bondage.

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A solemn sense of the duty which I owe as a Southerner to every class of the community of which *I* was once a part, likewise impels me to address *you*, especially, who are filling the important and responsible station of ministers of Jehovah, expounders of the lively oracles of God. It is because you sway the minds of a vast proportion of the Christian community, who regard you as the channel through which divine knowledge must flow. Nor does the fact that you are voluntarily invested by the people with this high prerogative, lessen the fearful weight of responsibility which attaches to you as watchmen on the walls of Zion. It adds rather a tenfold weight of guilt, because the very first duty which devolves upon you is to teach them not to trust in man.—Oh my brethren, is this duty faithfully performed? Is not the idea inculcated that to you they must look for the right understanding of the sacred volume, and has not your interpretation of the Word of God induced thousands and tens of thousands to receive as truth, sanctioned by the authority of Heaven, the oft repeated declaration that slavery, American slavery, stamped as it is with all its infinity of horrors, bears upon it the signet of that God whose name is LOVE?

Let us contemplate the magnificent scene of creation, when God looked upon chaos and said, "Let there be light, and there was light." The dark abyss was instantaneously illuminated, and a flood of splendor poured upon the face of the deep, and "God saw the light that it was good." Behold the work of creation carried on and perfected—the azure sky and verdant grass, the trees, the beasts, the fowls of the air, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea, the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night, and all the starry host of heaven, brought into existence by the simple command, Let them be.

But was man, the lord of this creation, thus ushered into being? No, the Almighty, clothed as he is with all power in heaven and in earth, paused when he had thus far completed his glorious work—"Omnipotence retired, if I may so speak, and held a counsel when he was about to place upon the earth the sceptered monarch of the universe." He did not say let man be, but "Let us make man in OUR IMAGE, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing, that creepeth upon the earth." Here is written in characters of fire continually blazing before the eyes of every man who holds his fellow man in bondage—In the image of God created he man. Here is marked a distinction which can never be effaced between a man and *a thing*, and we are fighting against God's unchangeable decree by depriving this rational and immortal being of those inalienable rights which have been conferred upon him. He was created a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor, and designed to be God's vicegerent upon earth—but slavery has wrested the sceptre of dominion from his hand, slavery has seized with an iron grasp this God-like being, and torn the crown from his head. Slavery has disrobed him of royalty, put on him the collar and the chain, and trampled the image of God in the dust.

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"Eternal God! when from thy giant hand,
Thou heaved the floods, and fixed the trembling land:
When life sprung startling at thy plastic call;
Endless her forms, and man the Lord of all—
Say, was that lordly form, inspired by thee,
To wear eternal chains and bow the knee?
Was man ordained the slave of man to toil,
Yoked with the brutes and fettered to the soil?"

This, my brethren, is slavery—this is what sublimates the atrocity of that act, which virtually says, I will as far as I am able destroy the image of God, blot him from creation as a man, and convert him into a thing—"a chattel personal." Can any crime, tremendous as is the history of human wickedness, compare in turpitude with this?—No, the immutable difference, the *heaven-wide distinction* which God has established between *that* being, whom he has made a little lower than the angels, and all the other works of this wonderful creation, cannot be annihilated without incurring a weight of guilt beyond expression terrible.

And after God had destroyed the world by a flood because of the wickedness of man, every imagination of whose heart was evil, and had preserved Noah because he was righteous before him, He renewed man's delegated authority over the whole animate and inanimate creation, and again delivered into his hand every beast of the earth and every fowl of the air, and added to his former grant of power, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, even as the green herb have I given you all things." Then, as if to impress indelibly upon the mind of man the eternal distinction between his rational and immortal creatures and the lower orders of beings, he guards the life of this most precious jewel, with a decree which would have proved all-sufficient to protect it, had not Satan infused into man his own reckless spirit.

Permission ample was given to shed the blood of all inferior creatures, but of this *being, bearing the impress of divinity,* God said, "And surely your blood of your lives will I require, at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man, at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the IMAGE OF GOD made he man." Let us pause and examine this passage.—Man may shed the blood of the inferior animals, he may use them as *mere means*—he may convert them into food to sustain existence—but if the top-stone of creation, the *image of God* had his blood shed by a beast, that blood was required even of this irrational brute: as if Deity had said, over *my likeness* I will spread a panoply divine that all creation may instinctively feel that he is precious to his Maker—so precious, that if his life be taken by his fellow man—if man degrades himself to the level of a beast by destroying his brother—"by man shall his blood be shed."

This distinction between *men and things* is marked with equal care and solemnity under the Jewish dispensation. "If a man steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep." But "he that stealeth a man and selleth him

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or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." If this law were carried into effect now, what must be the inevitable doom of all those who now hold man as property? If Jehovah were to exact the execution of this penalty upon the more enlightened and more spiritually minded men who live under the Christian dispensation, would he not instantly commission his most tremendous thunderbolts to strike from existence those who are thus trampling upon his laws, thus defacing his image?

I pass now to the eighth Psalm, which is a sublime anthem of praise to our Almighty Father for his unbounded goodness to the children of men. This Psalm alone affords irrefragable proof that God never gave to man dominion over his own image, that he never commissioned the Israelites to enslave their fellow men. This was

> "Authority usurped from God not given—
> . . . . . Man over men
> *He* made not Lord, such title to *himself*
> Reserving, human left, from human free."

This beautiful song of glory to God was composed three thousand years after the creation, and David who says of himself, "The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue," gives us the following exquisite description of the creation of man and of the power with which he was intrusted. "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and all the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea."

David was living under that dispensation to which slave-holders triumphantly point as the charter of their right to hold men as PROPERTY; but he does not even intimate that any extension of prerogative had been granted. He specifies precisely the same things which are specified at the creation and after the flood. He had been eminently instrumental in bringing into captivity the nations round about, but he does not so much as hint that Jehovah had transferred the sceptre of dominion over his immortal creatures to the hand of man. How could God create man in his own image and then invest his fellow worms with power to blot him from the world of spirits and place him on a level with the brutes that perish!

The same Psalm is quoted by the Apostle Paul, as if our heavenly Father designed to teach us through all the dispensations of his mercy to a fallen world, that man was but a little lower than the angels, God's vicegerent upon earth over the inferior creatures. St. Paul quotes it in connection with that stupendous event whereby we are saved from eternal death. "But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Here

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side by side the apostle places "God manifest in the flesh" and his accredited representative man. He calls us to view the master-piece of God's creation, and then the master-piece of his mercy—Christ Jesus, wearing our form and dying for our sins, thus conferring everlasting honor upon man by declaring "both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." It is then, the Lord's brethren whom we have enslaved; the Lord's brethren of whom we say "slaves shall be deemed, taken, reputed, and adjudged, chattels personal in the hands of their owners and possessors to all intents and purposes whatever."—*Laws of South Carolina.*

And here I cannot but advert to a most important distinction which God has made between immortal beings and the beasts that perish.—No one can doubt that by the fall of man the whole creation underwent a change. The apostle says, "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together." But it was for *man* alone that the Lord Jesus "made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant." When he came before his incarnation to cheer his servants with his blessed presence, when he visited Abraham and Manoah, he took upon himself a human form. Manoah's wife says, "a man of God came unto me." And when he came and exhibited on the theatre of our world, that miracle of grace "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," what form did he wear? "Verily," says the apostle, "he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham:" Oh, my brethren, he has stamped with high and holy dignity the form we wear, he has forever exalted our nature by condescending to assume it, and by investing man with the high and holy privilege of being "the temple of the holy Ghost." Where then is our title deed for enslaving our equal brother?

Mr. Chandler of Norfolk, in a speech in the House of Delegates of Virginia, on the subject of negro slavery in 1832, speaking of our right to hold our colored brethren in bondage, says:

"As a Virginian, I do not question the master's title to his slave; but I put it to that gentleman, as a man, as a moral man, as a Christian man, whether he has not some doubts of his claim to his slaves, being as absolute and unqualified as that to other property. Let us in the investigation of this title go back to its origin—Whence came slaves into this country?—From Africa. Were they free men there? At one time they were. How came they to be converted into slaves?—By the stratagem of war and the strong arm of the conqueror; they were vanquished in battle, sold by the victorious party to the slave trader; who brought them to our shores, and disposed of them to the planters of Virginia.....The truth is, our ancestors had *no title* to this property, and we have acquired it only by legislative enactments."

But can "legislative enactments" annul the laws of Jehovah, or sanctify the crimes of theft and oppression? "Wo unto them that decree unrighteous decrees . . . . . to take away the *right* from the poor of my people." Suppose the Saviour of the world were to

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visit our guilty country and behold the Christianity of our slave holding states, would not his language be, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, enslave your fellow men, but I say unto you "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you," and set your captives free!

The sentiment—

"Man over man
He made not lord"—

is the sentiment of human nature. It is written, by the Almighty, on the soul, as a part of its very being. So that, urge on the work of death as we may, in the mad attempt to convert a free agent into a machine, a man into a thing, and *nature* will still cry out for freedom. Hear the testimony of James McDowell, in the House of Delegates, in Virginia in 1832.

"As to the idea that the slave in any considerable number of cases can be so attached to his master and his servitude, as to be indifferent to freedom, it is wholly unnatural, rejected by the *conscious testimony* of every man's heart, and the *written testimony of the world's experience*.....You may place the slave where you please, you may oppress him as you please, you may dry up to the uttermost the fountain of his feelings, the springs of his thought, you may close upon his mind every avenue of knowledge, and cloud it over with artificial night, you may yoke him to your labors as the ox which liveth only to work, you may put him under any process, which without destroying his value as a slave, will debase and crush him as a rational being, and the idea that *he was born to be free* will survive it all. It is allied to his hope of immortality—it is the ethereal part of his being, which oppression cannot reach; it is a torch lit up in his soul by the hand of Deity, and never meant to be extinguished by the hand of man."

I need not enter into an elaborate proof that Jewish servitude, as permitted by God, was as different from American slavery, as Christianity is from heathenism. The limitation laws respecting strangers and servants, entirely prohibited cruelty and oppression, whereas in our slave states, "THE MASTER MAY, AT HIS DISCRETION, INFLICT ANY SPECIES OF PUNISHMENT UPON THE PERSON OF HIS SLAVE,"* and the law throws her protecting ægis over the master, by refusing to receive under any circumstances, the testimony of a colored man against a white, except to subserve the interests of the owner.—"It is manifest," says the author (a Christian Minister) of "A calm enquiry into the countenance afforded by the Scriptures to the system of British Colonial Slavery" "that the Hebrews had no word in their language equivalent to slave in the West Indian use of that term. The word עבד obed, is applied to both bond servants and hired, to kings and prophets, and even to the Saviour of the world. It was a general designation for any person who rendered service of any kind to God or man. But the term SLAVE, in the Colonial sense, could not be at all applied to a freeman." The

* Sketch of the Laws relating to slavery, in the United States of America, by George M. Stroud.

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same word in the Septuagint which is translated servant, is also translated child, and as the Hebrew language is remarkable for its minute shades of distinction in things, had there been, as is asserted, slaves in Judea, there would undoubtedly have been some term to designate such a condition. Our language recognizes the difference between a slave and a servant, because those two classes actually exist in our country. The Burmese language has no word to express ETERNITY, hence a missionary remarked that it was almost impossible to convey to them any conception of it. So likewise among the ancient Greeks and Romans there was no word equivalent to humility, because they acknowledged no such virtue. The want of any term therefore in the Hebrew, to mark the distinction between a slave in the proper sense of the term and other servants, is proof presumptive to say the least, that no such condition as that of slave was known among the Jews of that day.

To assert that Abraham held slaves is a mere slander. The phrase, translated "souls that they had gotten in Haran," Gen. 12 : 5, has no possible reference to slaves, and was never supposed to have any allusion to slavery until the commencement of the slave trade in England, in 1563. From that time commentators endeavored to cast upon Abraham the obloquy of holding his fellow creatures in bondage, in order to excuse this nefarious traffic. The Targum of Onkelos thus paraphrases this passage "souls gotten, i. e. those whom they had caused to obey the law." The Targum of Jonathan calls them "Proselytes." Jarchi, "Those whom they had brought under the wings of Shekinah." Menochius, "Those whom they converted from idolatry." Luke Franke, a Latin commentator, "Those whom they subjected to the law." Jerome calls them "Proselytes." Here is a mass of evidence which is incontrovertible. Abraham's business as "the friend of God" was to get souls as the seals of his ministry. Would he have been called from a heathen land to be the father of the faithful in all generations, that he might enslave the converts he made from idolatry? As soon might we suspect our missionaries of riveting the chains of servitude on souls that they may have gotten, as seals of their ministry, from among those to whom they proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. Would heathen then, any more than now, be attracted to a standard which bore on it the inscription SLAVERY? No, my brethren; and if our downtrodden slaves did not distinguish between Christianity, and the Christians who hold them in bondage, they could never embrace a religion, which is exhibited to them from the pulpit, in the prayer-meeting, and at the domestic altar, embodied in the form of masters, utterly regardless of the divine command, "Render unto your servants that which is just." From the confidence which Abraham reposed in his servants we cannot avoid the inference that they clustered voluntarily around him as the benefactor of their souls, the patriarch of that little community which his ministry had gathered.

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Again, it is often peremptorily asserted that "the Africans are a divinely condemned and proscribed race." If they are, has God constituted the slave holders the ministers of his vengeance? This question can only be answered in the negative, and until it can be otherwise answered, it is vain to appeal to the curse on Canaan, or to Hebrew servitude, in support of American slavery. As well might the blood-stained Emperor of France appeal to the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites, and challenge the Almighty to reward him for the work of death which he wrought on the fields of Marengo and Leipsic, because God invested his peculiar people, with authority to destroy the nations which had filled up the measure of their iniquity. The express grant to the Jews to reduce to subjection some of the Canaanitish nations and to exterminate others, at once condemns American slavery, because those who derive their sanction to hold their fellow men in bondage from the Bible, admit that a specific grant was necessary to empower the Israelites to make bond-men of the heathen; and unless this permission had been given, they would not have been justified in doing it. It is therefore self-evident that as *we* have never been commanded to enslave the Africans, *we* can derive no sanction for our slave system from the history of the Jews.

Another plea by which we endeavor to silence the voice of conscience is, "that the child is invariably born to the condition of the parent." Hence the law of South Carolina, says "ALL THEIR (THE SLAVES) ISSUE AND OFFSPRING, BORN, OR TO BE BORN, SHALL BE, AND THEY ARE HEREBY DECLARED TO BE, AND REMAIN FOREVER HEREAFTER ABSOLUTE SLAVES, AND SHALL FOREVER FOLLOW THE CONDITION OF THE MOTHER." To support this assumption, recourse is had to the page of inspiration. Our colored brethren are said to be the descendants of Ham who was cursed with all his posterity, and their condition only in accordance with the declaration of Jehovah, that he visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.—I need only remark that Canaan, not Ham, was the object of Noah's prophecy, and that upon his descendants it has been amply fulfilled.

But we appeal to prophecy in order to excuse or palliate the sin of slavery, and we regard ourselves as guiltless because we are fulfilling the designs of Omnipotence. Let us read our sentence in the word of God: "And he said unto Abraham, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them, and I will afflict them four hundred years, and also that nation whom they shall serve, I WILL JUDGE." That nation literally drank the blood of the wrath of Almighty God. The whole land of Egypt was a house of mourning, a scene of consternation and horror. What did it avail the Egyptians that they had been the instruments permitted in the inscrutable counsels of Jehovah to accomplish every iota of the prophecy concerning the seed of Abraham?

Appeal to prophecy! As well might the Jews who by wicked hands crucified the Messiah claim to themselves the sanction of prophecy. As

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well might *they* shield themselves from the scathing lightning of the Almighty under the plea that the tragedy they acted on Calvary's mount, had been foretold by the inspired penman a thousand years before. Read in the 22d Psalm an exact description of the crucifixion of Christ. Hear the words of the dying Redeemer from the lips of the Psalmist: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" At that awful day when the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books are opened, and another book is opened, which is the book of life, and the dead are judged out of those things which are written in the book ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS—think you, my brethren, that the betrayer and the crucifiers of the Son of God will find their names inscribed in the book of life "*because they* fulfilled prophecy in killing the Prince of Peace? Think you that they will claim, or receive on this ground, exemption from the torments of the damned? Will it not add to their guilt and woe that "To Him bare all the prophets witness," and render more intense the anguish and horror with which they will call upon "the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb?"

Contemplate the history of the Jews since the crucifixion of Christ! Behold even in this world the awfully retributive justice which is so accurately pourtrayed by the pen of Moses. "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people from the one end of the earth even unto the other, and among those nations shalt thou find no ease." And can we believe that those nations who with satanic ingenuity have fulfilled to a tittle these prophecies against this guilty people, will stand acquitted at the bar of God for their own cruelty and injustice, in the matter? Prophecy is a mirror on whose surface is inscribed in characters of light, that sentence of deep, immitigable woe which the Almighty has pronounced and executed on transgressors. Let me beseech you then, my dear, though guilty brethren, to pause, and learn from the tremendour past what must be the inevitable destiny of those who are adding yea after year, to the amount of crime which is treasuring up "wrath against the day of wrath." "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land! The *prophets prophecy falsely*, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so, and what will ye do in the end thereof?" "Thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets, Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall."

The present position of my country and of the church is one of deep and solemn interest. The times of our ignorance on the subject of slavery which God may have winked at, *have passed away*. We are no longer standing unconsciously and carelessly on the brink of a burning volcano. The strong arm of Almighty power has rolled back the dense cloud which hung over the terrific crater, and has exposed it to our view, and although no human eye can penetrate the abyss, yet enough is seen to warn us of the consequences of trifling with Omnipotence. Jehovah is calling to us as he did to Job out of the whirlwind,

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and every blast bears on its wings the sound, Repent! Repent! God, if I may so speak, is waiting to see whether we will hearken unto his voice. He has sent out his light and his truth, and as regards us it may perhaps be said—there is now silence in heaven. The commissioned messengers of grace to this guilty nation are rapidly traversing our country, through the medium of the Anti-Slavery Society, through its agents and its presses, whilst the "ministering spirits" are marking with breathless interest the influence produced by these means of knowledge thus mercifully furnished to our land. Oh! if there be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, what hallelujahs of angelic praise will arise, when the slave-holder and the defender of slavery bow before the footstool of mercy, and with broken spirits and contrite hearts surrender unto God that dominion over his immortal creatures which he alone can rightly exercise.

What an appalling spectacle do we now present! With one hand we clasp the cross of Christ, and with the other grasp the neck of the down-trodden slave! With one eye we are gazing imploringly on the bleeding sacrifice of Calvary, as if we expected redemption though the blood which was shed there, and with the other we cast the glance of indignation and contempt at the representative of Him who there made his soul an offering for sin! My Christian brethren, if there is any truth in the Bible, and in the God of the Bible, *our hearts bear us witness* that he can no more acknowledge us as his disciples, if we wilfully persist in this sin, than he did the Pharisees formerly, who were strict and punctilious in the observance of the ceremonial law, and yet devoured widows' houses. *We have added a deeper shade to their guilt*, we make widows by tearing from the victims of a cruel bondage, the husbands of their bosoms, and then devour the widow herself by robbing her of her freedom, and reducing her to the level of a brute. I solemnly appeal to your own consciences. Does not the rebuke of Christ to the Pharisees apply to some of those who are exercising the office of Gospel ministers, "Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widow's houses, and for a pretence make long prayers, therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."

How long the space now granted for repentance may continue, is among the secret things which belong unto God, and my soul ardently desires that all those who are enlisted in the ranks of abolition may regard every day as possibly the last, and may pray without ceasing to God, to grant this nation repentance and forgiveness of the sin of slavery. The time is precious, unspeakably precious, and every encouragement is offered to us to supplicate the God of the master and of the slave to make a "right way" "for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance." Ezra says, "so we fasted and besought the Lord, and he was entreated for us." Look at the marvellous effects of prayer when Peter was imprisoned. What did the church in that crisis? She felt that her weapons were not carnal, but spiritual, and "prayer was made without ceasing." These petitions offered in humble faith were mighty through God to the emancipation of Peter. "Is the

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Lord's arm shortened that it cannot save, or his ear grown heavy that it cannot hear?" If he condescended to work a miracle in answer to prayer when *one* of his servants was imprisoned, will he not graciously hear our supplications when two millions of his immortal creatures are in bondage? We entreat the Christian ministry to co-operate with us to unite in our petitions to Almighty God to deliver our land from blood guiltiness; to enable us to see the abominations of American slavery by the light of the gospel. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Then may we expect a glorious consummation to our united labors of love. Then may the Lord Jesus unto whom belongeth all power in heaven and in earth condescend to answer our prayers, and by the softening influence of his holy spirit induce our brethren and sisters of the South "to undo the heavy burdens, to break every yoke and let the oppressed go free."

My mind has been deeply impressed whilst reading the account of the anniversaries held last spring in the city of New York, with the belief that there is in America a degree of light, knowledge and intelligence which leaves us without excuse before God for upholding the system of slavery. Nay, we not only sustain this temple of Moloch; but with impious lips consecrate it to the Most High God; and call upon Jehovah himself to sanctify our sins by the presence of his Shekinah. Now mark, the unholy combination that has been entered into between the North and the South to shut out the light on this all important subject. I copy from a speech before the "General Assembly's Board of Education." As an illustration of his position, Dr. Breckenridge referred to the influence of the Education Board in the Southern States. "Jealous as those States were, and not without reason, of all that came to them in the shape of benevolent enterprise from the North, and ready as they were to take fire in a moment at whatever threatened *their own peculiar institutions*, the plans of this Board had *conciliated* their fullest confidence: in proof of which they had placed nearly two hundred of their sons under its care, that they might be *trained and fitted to preach to their own population*." The inference is unavoidable that the "*peculiar institution*" spoken of is domestic slavery in all its bearings and relations; and it is equally clear that the ministry educated for the South are to be thoroughly imbued with the slave-holding spirit, that they may be "*fitted to preach to their own population*," *not* the gospel of Jesus Christ, which proclaims LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVE, but a religion which grants to man the privilege of sinning with impunity, and stamps with the signet of the King of heaven a system that embraces every possible enormity. Surely if ye are ambassadors for Christ, ye are bound to promulgate the *whole* counsel of God. But can ye preach from the language of James, "Behold the hire of your laborers which is of you kept back by fraud crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." Multitudes of other texts must be virtually expunged from the Bible of the slave holding minister; every denunciation against oppression strikes

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at the root of slavery. God is in a peculiar manner the God of the poor and the needy, the despised and the oppressed. "The Lord said I have surely seen the affliction of my people, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters, for I know their sorrows." And he knows the sorrows of the American slave, and he will come down in mercy, or in judgment to deliver them.

In a speech before the "American Seamen's Friend Society," by Rev. William S. Plumer of Virginia, it is said, "The resolution spoke of weighty considerations, why we should care for seamen, and one of these certainly was, because *as a class, they had been long and criminally neglected.* Another weighty consideration was that seamen were a suffering race."..... "And who was the cause of this? Was it not the Church who withheld from these her suffering brethren, those blessed truths of God, so well calculated to comfort those who suffer?" Oh my brother! while drawing to the life a picture of a class of our fellow beings, who have been "long and criminally neglected," of "a suffering race," was there no cord of sympathy in thy heart to vibrate to the groans of the slave? Did no seraph's voice whisper in thine ear 'Remember them which are in bonds?" Did memory present no scenes of cruelty and oppression? And did not conscience say, thou art one who withholds from thy suffering colored brethren those blessed truths of God so well calculated to comfort those who suffer? Can we believe that the God of Christianity will bless the people who are thus dispensing their gifts to all, save to those by whose *unrequited* toil, we and our ancestors for generations past have subsisted?

Let us examine the testimony of Charles C. Jones, Professor in the Theological Seminary, Columbia, S. C. relative to the condition of our slaves, and then judge whether they have not at least as great a claim as seamen to the sympathy and benevolent effort of Christian Ministers. In a sermon preached before two associations of planters in Georgia in 1831, he says: "Generally speaking, they (the slaves) appear to us to be without God and without hope in the world, a nation of HEATHEN in our very midst. We cannot cry out against the Papists for withholding the scriptures from the common people, and keeping them in ignorance of the way of life, for we *withhold the Bible* from our servants, and *keep them* in ignorance of it, while we *will not* use the means to have it read and explained to them. The cry of our perishing servants comes up to us from the sultry plains as they bend at their toil; it comes up to us from their humble cottages when they return at evening, to rest their weary limbs; it comes up to us from the midst of their ignorance and superstition, and adultery and lewdness. We have manifested *no emotions* of horror at abandoning the souls of our servants to the adversary, the "roaring lion, that walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

On the 5th of December, 1833, a committee of the synod of South Carolina and Georgia, to whom was referred the subject of the religious instruction of the colored population, made a report in which this language was used,

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"Who would credit it that in these years of revival and benevolent effort, in this Christian republic, there are over TWO MILLIONS of human beings in the condition of HEATHEN, and in some respects in a *worse* condition. From long continued and close observation, we believe that their moral and religious condition is such that they may be justly considered the HEATHEN of this Christian country, and will bear comparison with heathens in *any country in the world*. The negroes are destitute of the gospel, and *ever will be* under the present state of things."

In a number of the Charleston Observer (in 1834,) a correspondent remarked: "Let us establish missionaries among our own negroes, who, in view of religious knowledge, are as debasingly ignorant as any one on the coast of Africa; for I hazard the assertion that throughout the bounds of our Synod, there are at least ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND SLAVES, speaking the same language as ourselves, who never heard of the plan of salvation by a Redeemer."

The Editor, Rev. Benjamin Gildersleeve, who has resided at least ten years at the South, so far from contradicting this broad assertion, adds, "We fully concur with what our correspondent has said, respecting the benighted heathen among ourselves."

As Southerners, can we deny these things? As Christians, can we ask the blessing of the Redeemer of men on the system of American slavery? Can we carry it to the footstool of a God whose "compassions fail not," and pray for holy help to rivet the chains of interminable bondage on TWO MILLIONS of our fellow men, the accredited representatives of Jesus Christ? If we cannot ask in faith that the blessing of God may rest on this work of cruelty to the bodies, and destruction of the souls of men, we may be assured that his controversy is against it. Try it, my brethren, when you are kneeling around the family altar with the wife of your bosom, with the children of your love, when you are supplicating Him who hath made of one blood all nations, to sanctify these precious souls and prepare them for an inheritance with Jesus—then pray, *if you can* that God will grant you power to degrade to the level of brutes your colored brethren. Try it, when your little ones are twining their arms around your necks, and lisping the first fond accents of affection in your ears; when the petition arises from the fulness of a parent's heart for a blessing on your children. At such a moment, look in upon your slave. He too is a father, and *we know* that he is susceptible of all the tender sensibilities of a father's love. He folds his cherished infant in his arms, he feels its life-pulse throb against his own, and he rejoices that he is a parent; but soon the withering thought rushes to his mind—I am a slave, and to-morrow my master may tear my darling from my arms. Contemplate this scene, while your cheeks are yet warm with the kisses of your children, and then try if you can mingle with a parent's prayer and a parent's blessing, the petition that God may enable you and your posterity to perpetuate a system which to the slave denies—

"To live together, or together die.
By felon hands at one relentless stroke
See the fond links of feeling nature broke;
The fibres twisting roused a parent's heart,
Torn from their grasp and bleeding as they part."

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A southern minister, Rev. Mr. Atkinson of Virginia, in a speech before the Bible society last spring, says: "The facts which have been told respecting the destitution of some portions of our country are but samples of thousands more. Could we but feel what we owed to him who gave the Bible, we would at the same time feel that we owed it to a fallen and perishing world not merely to pass *fine resolutions*, or listen to *eloquent speeches*, but to exhibitit a life devoted to the conversion of the world."

Let us now turn to the heart-sickening picture of the "destitution" of our slaves drawn by those who had the living original continually before their eyes. I extract from the report of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia before referred to.

"We may now enquire if they (the slaves) enjoy the privileges of the gospel in their own houses, and on our plantations? Again we return a negative answer—They have no Bibles to read by their own fire-sides—they have no family altars; and when in affliction, sickness, or death, they have no minister to address to them the consolations of the gospel, nor to bury them with solemn and appropriate services."

This state of things, is the result of laws enacted in a free and enlightened republic. In North Carolina, to teach a slave to read or write, or to sell or give him any book, (the Bible not excepted) or pamphlet, is punished with thirty-nine lashes, or imprisonment, if the offender be a free negro, but if a white then with a fine of two hundred dollars. The reason for this law assigned in the preamble is, that "teaching slaves to read and write tends to excite dissatisfaction in their minds, and to produce insurrection and rebellion."

In Georgia, if a white teach a free negro, or slave, to read or write, he is fined $500, and imprisoned at the discretion of the court. If the offender be a colored man, bond or free, he is to be fined, or whipt at the discretion of the court. By this barbarous law, which was enacted in 1829, a white man may be fined and imprisoned for teaching his own child if he happens to be colored, and if colored, whether bond or free, he may be fined or whipped.

"We have," says Mr. Berry, in a speech in the House of Delegates of Virginia in 1832, "as far as possible closed every avenue by which light might enter their (the slaves) minds. If we could extinguish the capacity to see the light, our work would be completed; they would then be on a level with the beasts of the field, and we should be safe. I am not certain that we would not do it, if we could find out the necessary process, and that on the plea of necessity."

Oh, my brethren! when you are telling to an admiring audience that through your instrumentality nearly two millions of Bibles and Testaments have been disseminated throughout the world, does not the voice of the slave vibrate on your ear, as it floats over the sultry plains of the South, and utters forth his lamentation, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? *bless me, even me also*, O my father!" Does no wail of torment interrupt the eloquent harrangue?—And from the bottomless pit

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does no accusing voice arise to charge you with the perdition of those souls from whom you wrested, as far as you were able, the power of working out their own salvation?

Our country, I believe, has arrived at an awful crisis. God has in infinite mercy raised up those who have moral courage and religion enough to obey the divine command, "Cry aloud and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions."—Our sins are set in order before us, and we are now hesitating whether we shall choose the curse pronounced by Jehovah, "Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless and widow," or the blessing recorded in the 41st Psl. "Blessed is the man that considereth the poor (or the weak,) the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble."

And is there no help? Shall we be dismayed because our mistaken countrymen burned our messengers of Truth in Charleston, S. C.? No, my brethren, *I am not dismayed!* I do not intend to stamp the anti-slavery publications as inspired writings, but the principles they promulgate are the principles of the holy Scriptures, and I derive encouragement from the recollection that Tindal suffered martyrdom for translating and printing the New Testament—and that Tonstal, Archbishop of London, purchased every copy which he could obtain, and had them burnt by the common hangman. Now Great Britain is doing more than any other people to scatter the Bible to every nation under heaven. Shall we be alarmed as though some new thing had happened unto us because our printing press has been destroyed at Cincinnati, Ohio? The devoted Carey was compelled to place his establishment for the translation of the sacred volume beyond the boundary line of the British authorities. And now England would gladly have the Bible translated into every tongue.

If then there be, as I humbly trust there are among my Christian brethren some who like the prophet of old are ready to exclaim! "Wo is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts"—If to some of you Jehovah has unvailed the abominations of American Slavery, the guilt of yourselves and of your brethren! Oh remember the prophet of Israel and be encouraged. Your lips like his will be touched with a live coal from off the altar. The Lord will be your light and your salvation: He will go before you and the God of Israel will be your reward.

If ever there was a time when the Church of Christ was called upon to make an *aggressive* movement on the kingdom of darkness, *this is the time.* The subject of slavery is fairly before the American public.—The consciences of the slave-holders at the South and of their coadjutors at the North are aroused, notwithstanding all the opiates which are so abundantly administered under the plea of necessity, and expediency, and the duty of obedience to man, rather than to God. In regard to slavery, Satan has transformed himself into an angel of light, and under the false pretence of consulting the good of the slaves, pleads for retaining them in bondage, until they are prepared to enjoy the blessings

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of liberty. Full well he knows that if he can but gain time, he gains every thing. When he stood beside Felix and saw that he trembled before his fettered captive, as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, he summoned to his aid this masterpiece of satanic ingenuity, and whispered, say to this Apostle, "Go thy way for this time, at a more convenient season, I will call for thee." The heart of Felix responded to this intimation, and his lips uttered the fatal words—fatal, because, for aught that appears, they sealed his death warrant for eternity. Let me appeal to every Christian minister, who has known what it is to repent and forsake his sins: Have you not all found that prospective repentance and future amendment are destruction to the soul? The truth is, to postpone present duty, to get ready for the discharge of future, is just putting yourselves into the hands of Satan to prepare you for the service of God. Just so, gradualism puts the slave into the hands of his master, whose interest it is to keep him enslaved, to prepare him for freedom, because that master says at a convenient season I will liberate my captive. So says the adversary of all good, serve me to-day and to-morrow thou mayest serve God. Oh lay not this flattering unction to your souls, ye that are teachers in Israel. God is not mocked, and ye may as well expect indulgence in sin to purify the heart and prepare the soul for an inheritance with the saints in light, as to suppose that slavery can fit men for freedom. That which debases and brutualizes can never fit for freedom. The chains of the slave must be sundered; he must be taught that he is "heaven-born and destined to the skies again;" he must be restored to his dignified station in the scale of creation, he must be crowned again with the diadem of glory, again ranked amongst the sons of God and invested with lordly prerogative over every living creature. If you would aid in this mighty, this glorious achievement—"Preach the word" of IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION. "Be instant in season and out of season." "If they persecute you in one city, flee ye unto another," that your sound may go out through all our land; and you may not incur the awful charge,

"YE KNEW YOUR DUTY, BUT YE DID IT NOT."

It is now twenty years since a beloved friend with whom I often mingled my tears, related to me the following circumstance, when helpless and hopeless we deplored the horrors of slavery, and I believe many are now doing what we did then, weeping and praying and interceding, "but secretly, for fear of the Jews." On the plantation adjoining her husband's, there was a slave of pre-eminent piety. His master was not a professor of religion, but the superior excellence of this disciple of Christ was not unmarked by him, and I believe he was so sensible of the good influence of his piety that he did not deprive him of the few religious privileges within his reach. A planter was one day dining with the owner of this slave, and in the course of conversation observed that all profession of religion among slaves was mere hypocricy. The other asserted a contrary opinion, adding, I have a slave who I be-

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ieve would rather die than deny his Saviour. This was ridiculed, and the master urged to prove his assertion. He accordingly sent for this man of God, and peremptorily ordered him to deny his belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. The slave pleaded to be excused, constantly affirming that he would rather die than deny the Redeemer, whose blood was shed for him. His master, after vainly trying to induce obedience by threats, had him severely whipped. The fortitude of the sufferer was not to be shaken; he nobly rejected the offer of exemption from further chastisement at the expense of destroying his soul, and this blessed martyr died in consequence of this severe infliction. Oh, how bright a gem will this victim of irresponsible power be, in that crown which sparkles on the Redeemer's brow; and that many such will cluster there, I have not the shadow of a doubt.*

Brethren, you are invested with immense power over those to whom you minister in holy things—commensurate with your power is your responsibility, and if you abuse, or neglect to use it aright, great will be your condemnation. Mr. Moore, in a speech in the House of Delegates in Virginia, in 1832, says:

"It is utterly impossible to avoid the consideration of the subject of slavery. As well might the Apostle have attempted to close his eyes against the light which shone upon him from heaven, or to turn a deaf ear to the name which reached him from on high as for us to try to stifle the spirit of enquiry which is abroad in the land.....The MONSTROUS CONSEQUENCES which arise from the existence of slavery have been exposed to open day; the DANGERS arising from it stare us in the face, and it becomes us as men to meet and overcome them, rather than attempt to escape by evading them. Slavery, as it exists among us, may be regarded as the heaviest calamity which has ever befallen any portion of the human race. (If we look back at the long course of time which has elapsed from the creation to the present moment, we shall scarcely be able to point out a people whose situation was not in many respects preferable to our own, and that of the other states in which slavery exists. True, we shall see nations which have groaned under the yoke of despotism for hundreds and thousands of years, but the individuals composing those nations have enjoyed a degree of happiness, peace and freedom from apprehension which the holders of slaves in this country can never know.")

The daughters of Virginia have borne their testimony to the evils of slavery, and have pleaded for its extinction. Will this nation continue deaf to the voice of reason, humanity, and religion? In the memorial of the female citizens of Fluvanna Co., Va. to the General Assembly of that Commonwealth in 1832, they say:

"We cannot conceal from ourselves that an evil (slavery) is amongst us, which threatens to outgrow the growth, and dim the brightness of our national blessings. A shadow deepens over the land and casts its thickest gloom upon the sacred shrine of domestic bliss, darkening over us as time advances."

"We can only aid by ardent outpourings of the spirit of supplication at a throne of grace..... We conjure you by the sacred charities of kindred, by the solemn obligations of justice, by every consideration of domestic affection and

*Since writing the above, I have received information that "the perpetrators of the foul deed were in a state of inebriation," and that this martyr was an aged slave. Drunkenness instead of palliating crime aggravates it even according to human laws. But such are the men in whose hands slavery often places absolute power.

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patriotic duty, to nerve every faculty of your minds to the investigation of this important subject, and let not the united voices of your mothers, wives, daughters and kindred have sounded in your ears in vain."

We are cheered with the belief that many knees at the South are bent in prayer for the success of the Abolitionists. We believe, and we rejoice in the belief that the statement made by a Southern Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, at the session of the New York Annual Conference, in June of this year, is true: "Don't give up Abolitionism—don't bow down to slavery. You have thousands at the South who are secretly praying for you."—In a subsequent conversation with the same individual, he stated, That the South is not that unit of which the pro-slavery party boast—there is a diversity of opinion among them in reference to slavery, and the REIGN OF TERROR alone suppresses the free expression of sentiment. That there are thousands who believe slaveholding to be sinful, who secretly wish the abolitionists success, and believe God will bless their efforts. That the ministers of the gospel and ecclesiastical bodies who indiscriminately denounce the abolitionists, without doing any thing themselves to remove slavery, have not the thanks of thousands at the South, but on the contrary are viewed as taking sides with slaveholders and recreant to the principles of their own profession. *Zion's Watchman, November*, 1836.

The system of slavery is necessarily cruel. The lust of dominion inevitably produces hardness of heart, because the state of mind which craves unlimited power, such as slavery confers, involves a desire to use that power, and although I know there are exceptions to the exercise of barbarity on the bodies of slaves, I maintain that there *can be no exceptions* to the exercise of the most soul-withering cruelty on the *minds* of the enslaved. All around is the mighty ruin of intellect, the appalling spectacle of the down-trodden image of God. What has caused this mighty wreck? A voice deep as hell and loud as the thunders of heaven replies, SLAVERY! Both worlds of spirits echo and re-echo, SLAVERY! And yet American slavery is palliated, is defended by slaveholding ministers at the South and their coadjutors at the North. Perhaps all of you would shrink with horror from a proposal to revive the Inquisition and give to Catholic superstition the power to enforce in this country its wicked system of bigotry and despotism. But I believe if all the horrors of the Inquisition and all the cruelty and oppression exercised by the Church of Rome, could be fully and fairly brought to view and compared with the details of slavery in the United States, the abominations of Catholicism would not surpass those of slavery, while the victims of the latter are ten fold more numerous.

But it is urged again and again, that slavery has been entailed upon us by our ancestors. We speak of this with a degree of self-complacency, which seems to intimate that we would not do the deeds of our fathers. So to speak, argues an utter want of principle, as well as an utter ignorance of duty, because as soon as we perceive the iniquity of that act by which we inherit PROPERTY IN MAN, we should surrender to the rightful owner, viz. the slave himself, a right which although legally vested in us, by the "unrighteous decrees" of our country, is vested in the slave

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himself by the laws of God. We talk as if the guilt of slavery from its first introduction to the present time, rested on our progenitors, and as if we were innocent because we had not imported slaves originally from Africa. The prophet Ezekiel furnishes a clear and comprehensive answer to this sophistry. "What mean ye, that ye use this proverb saying: The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge..... Behold all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine. THE SOUL THAT SINNETH IT SHALL DIE. If a man be just and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live. If he beget a son that hath oppresst the poor and needy, he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him. Now, lo! if he beget a son that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and doeth not such like, that hath not oppresst any, neither hath spoiled by violence; that hath taken off his hand from the poor, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father. THE SOUL THAT SINNETH IT SHALL DIE. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him—and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

Upon the present generation, rests, I believe, an accumulated weight of guilt. They have the experience of more than two centuries to profit by—they have witnessed the evils and the crimes of slavery, and they know that sin and misery are its legitimate fruits. They behold every where, inscribed upon the face of nature, the withering curse of slavery, as if the land mourned over the iniquity and wretchedness of its inhabitants. They contemplate in their domestic circles the living examples of that description given by Jefferson, in his "Notes on Virginia," of the influence of slavery, on the temper and morals of the master, and they know that there is not one redeeming quality, in the system of American slavery.

And now we have the most undeniable evidence of the safety of Immediate Emancipation, in the British West Indies. Every official account from these colonies, especially such as have rejected the apprenticeship system, comes fraught with encouragement to this country to deliver the poor and needy out of the hand of the oppressor.

To my brethren of the Methodist connection, with some of whom I have taken sweet counsel, and whose influence is probably more extensive than that of any other class of ministers at the South, it may avail something to the cause of humanity, which I am pleading, to quote the sentiments of John Wesley and Adam Clarke. Speaking of slavery the former says, "The blood of thy brother crieth against thee from the earth: oh, whatever it costs, put a stop to its cry before it is too late—instantly, at any price, were it the half of thy goods, deliver thyself from blood guiltiness. Thy hands, thy bed, thy furniture, thy house and thy lands, at present are stained with blood. Surely it is enough—accumulate no more guilt, spill no more blood of the innocent. Whether thou art a Christian or not, show thyself A MAN." Adam Clarke says, "In heathen countries, slavery was in some sort excusable. Among Christians it is an enormity and crime, for which perdition has scarcely an adequate punishment.'

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Yet this is the crime of which the Synod of Virginia, convened for the purpose of deliberating on the state of the Church in November last, speaks thus: "The Synod solemnly affirm, that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church have *no right* to declare that relation (viz. the relation between master and slave) sinful, which Christ and his apostles teach to be consistent with the most unquestionable piety. And that any act of the General Assembly which would impeach the *Christian* character of any man because he is a slave holder, would be a palpable violation of the just principles on which the union of our Church was founded—as well as a daring usurpation of authority granted by the Lord Jesus."

And this is the sin which the Church is fostering in her bosom—This is the leprosy over which she is casting the mantle of charity, to hide, if possible, the "putrefying sores"—This is the monster around which she is twining her maternal arms, and before which she is placing her anointed shield inscribed "holiness to the Lord"—Oh, ye ministers of Him who so loved the slave that he gave his precious blood to redeem him from sin, can ye any longer with your eyes fixed upon the Cross of Christ, plant your foot on his injured representative, and sanction and sanctify this heart-breaking, this soul destroying system?

"Wo to those whose hire is with the price of blood
Perverting, darkening, changing as they go
The sacred truths of the Eternal God."

Brethren, farewell! I have written under a solemn sense of my responsibility to God for the truths I have uttered: I know that all who nobly dare to speak the truth will come up to the help of the Lord, and add testimony to testimony until time would fail to hear them. To Him who has promised that "the expectation of the needy shall not perish forever"—who "hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence," I commend this offering of Christian affection, humbly beseeching him so to influence the ministers of his sanctuary, and the people committed to their charge by his Holy Spirit, that from every Christian temple may arise the glorious anthem,

"Blow ye the trumpet blow,
The gladly solemn sound!
Let all the nations know,
To earth's remotest bound,
The year of jubilee is come."

Yours in gospel love,
SARAH M. GRIMKÉ.

New-York, 12th Mo. 1836.

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