

FREDERICK DOUGLASS' PAPER.

fluences which operate on the mind of the slaveholders, have been those very slaveholders themselves—the whole system of whose social economy they do well in denouncing, and in laboring to extirpate from the face of the earth; yet, would they often sin notwithstanding, both against truth and charity, if, by a sweeping and universal charge, they were to denounce all who partake of this system, nay, live upon the profits of it, as individually void of humanity and honor, or void of Christian principle. There are various methods, various lines of procedure and policy, on which philanthropists and patriots might enter, and join their forces for the abolition of slavery. The most unjustifiable, and, let me add, the most unwise and least effectual of these, were to pronounce a wholesale anathema, by which to unchristianize, or to pass a general sentence of excommunication on slaveholders.

2. In this paragraph, the Dr. makes a distinction between the master and his slaves—condemning the one, but sparing the other. This is a most unchristian commandment. It is strange reasoning in a Divinity Professor, to argue that being reared under the system, and being fanning with its atrocities, under the light of the Gospel, and after being warned of it, etc. The Abolitionists should never, had this, contrary to Scripturc, yet asserts that we ask too much from a man, when we bid him renounce that all that belongs to him. This is plainly admitting man's right of property in his fellow-men. Abolitionists think that he has a better right to what is stolen than has the slave-owner to the body of his fellow-creature.

3. We deny not the existing tendency of slavery on the parts, and the characters of all who are engaged in it; and let us concede, that in virtue of these, a greater number—if an inventory could be taken of them—of inhuman and licentious, of barbarous and brutalized men, are to be found in the middle and upper classes of society, throughout the slaveholding States of America, than throughout those other States which have so nobly rid themselves of this enormous evil. Now, what effect ought this admission to have upon the question? Not that slaveholding shall simply, and *per se*, infer exclusion from the ordinances of the gospel, but that, as many of the vices which slaveholding tends to generate and to multiply in that exclusive, there will, and because of these vices, be a more frequent call for ecclesiastical discipline in the slaveholding congregations. The Apostle tells us not to keep company—not to hold Christian fellowship, if “any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an adulterer, or a rater, or a drunkard, or an extortioner.” Should any such, then, present himself for admission to the table of the Lord, there is a clear scriptural warrant for his debarment from this, and all the other privileges of Church membership; *not however, on the ground of his being a slaveholder*, but on the ground of one or other of those vices which exist, it is to be feared, in greatest force and frequency, wherever there exist the habits and the temptations of slaveholding. The magnitude of the temptation can never be held an alleviation of the crime, so as to exempt the slaveholder, who has fallen into it from the proper and the prescribed discipline, else there is an end of all Christian morality. Far less can the magnitude of the temptation to laxity of discipline, or to pass over the delinquencies of a wealthy and influential slaveholder, exempt any Christian Church from the duty of an impartial and pure, and righteous government over all its members,—else not only may that Church present a hideous mass of corruption, but every other Church in Christendom, which connotes at it, contracts thereby a blemish and a deformity, which must and which ought to injure its otherwise fair reputation.

Let every man, be he a slaveholder or not, be cast out from the brotherhood of the Christian ordinances, who falls into any of the vices which are here enumerated; and let the brotherhood of every Church be disowned which is found to tolerate these vices in its members, be they high or low—Nay, should it be found in any instance that the wealthy oppressor meets with an indulgence which is not shown to the humbler delinquents of the congregation—let the church be all the more indignantly denounced as unworthy of fellowship, or recognition, and its brotherhood be disowned by the other Churches of Christ. When we have got thus far into the argument, we come within sight of a clear principle,—a comfort which we did not enjoy so long as the demand was made upon us for the excommunication of all slaveholders, or for the wholesale excommunication of all Christians who were found to have the names of slaveholders on the roll of their communicants. Our understanding of Christianity is, that it deals not with civil or political institutions, but that it deals with persons and with ecclesiastical institutions, and that the object of these last is to operate directly and proximately with the most wholesome effect on the consciences and the character of persons. In entire sympathy with this view, a purely and rightly administered Church will exclude from the ordinances, *not any man as a slaveholder*, but every man, whether slaveholder or not, as licentious, as intemperate as dishonest, as avaricious, as improvident, as dishonest as dishonest. Should any single American Church be found to have acted otherwise, let it, while the imputation rests upon it, and it remains uncorrected, be treated as an outcast from all other Churches. Nay, should the proceeding be carried up by appeal to an American Presbytery, and be sanctioned or tolerated there, let all contention and communion with such a Presbytery be suspended. Last of all, let the Supreme Court,—the General Assembly of the American Presbyterian Church,—be convicted of having perverted a corrupt sentence, which arises in the principle, and brings along with it the practice, of a toleration for undoubted moral delinquencies—and then the only correspondence, we trust, which the Free Church of Scotland would consent to hold with the Presbyterian body of America, would be that of grave and solemn remonstrance because of the dishonor done by them to our common Lord.

3. In this paragraph, Dr. Chalmers totally forgets himself—he forgets that slavery is the parent sin, which he would spare, while he would punish the numerous family, that it is the fruitful tree, which he would not cut down, but merely prune and thin out. We see him, however, in entire sympathy with this view, when he says that it is a question of personal character, morals, and discipline, that churches are entitled to deal with slavery, and not as a civil or political institution.

We hope that our Free Church will never deviate to the right or the left from the path of undoubted principle. But we hope, on the other hand, that she will not be frightened from her propriety, or forced by clamor of any sort, to outrun her own convictions, so as to adopt, at the bidding of other parties, a new and factitious principle of administration, for which she can see no authority in Scripture, and of which she can gather no trace in the history or practice of the Christian Church. The whole essence of the inquiry consists in the question—what is slavery in itself?—whether it is a curse to the world, and towing all others in solitary horror, and enveloping all, then there runs a falacy through this letter, unworthy of its author. If it be not a grant dishonesty to claim and treat a man as property, which cannot be done without every man stealing the rights of another, it is a manifest violation of the eighth commandment.

The thief did not steal. It is not a great heinousness to hold three millions of human beings in a state of confinement, we do not understand the seventh commandment.

It is a question of personal character, morals, and discipline, that churches are entitled to deal with slavery, and not as a civil or political institution.

4. In the ninth of the unworthy appeal to the price of the Free Church, not to set at the bidding of a foreign party, our best answer to the statement of Dr. C. that, to exclude slaveholders is a new factitious, and unconstitutional principle is to repeat the following sentence from the address of the Sociey, written in 1841, by the Rev. James Morgan:

“The Christians of Britain have felt themselves called on to enter into a solemn compact to reform their country, to make it a nation of slaves, who will be proprietors in the crime of slavery, either by practising it themselves, or conniving at it in others.”

Whether to the public to believe Dr. C., when he says that to exclude the slave owners a unconstitutional, or Mr. Morgan, when he says that to receive them is unconstitutional, a determination came to offer to Dr. C. not among the Christians who have come to this determination?

5. Would the Abolitionists, then, have their eye on such cases, and hold them forth in authentic exhibition to the world, so that the Churches of distant lands may be made to know what the laxity of discipline is which obtains throughout the Churches and Church Courts of America. Let them verify the instances, and tell us of them in detail, in their author, in his dealings with slavery.

what the particular Churches are where men are recognised as members, and live in the undisputed possession of church privileges, notwithstanding their concubinage, or their cruelty, or the gross violence and villainy of any sort, which might not only be condemned upon, but have been actually made good against them; and then we shall know, and in the light of clearest scriptural principle, how to guide our proceedings, both with the Churches which sanction such enormities by their forbearance, and with Church Courts which, by their corrupt judicial sentences, may be well said to frame these iniquities by law. These were a far more likely process whereby to augment the moral force of that opposition to slavery, which as one of its most determined and implacable enemies, we hope is growing and gathering every day,—not by *forcing upon us a new principle*, and requiring at our hands an altogether new practice, unknown to the Churches of other days—even that slaveholding is in itself that sort of ecclesiastical felony which must be visited by a sentence of exile for shorter or longer periods from the ecclesiastical community. There are other felonies of which we have never doubted—vices which ought, by the precedents of all ages, to be dealt and proceeded with; and if these vices do follow in the train of slaveholding with greater frequency than in the train of any other occupation, let this, by the exercise of a virtuous Church discipline, be made palpable to all, and another powerful blow will thus be inflicted on the system,—another telling argument be added to the successive strokes of that catapult which is at length to bring down this monster evil, with all its horrors and teeming abominations. It is thus that the title of a pamphlet, which I lately saw, might be reversed: and the American Churches, instead of the props, as they are represented, of American Slavery, might be the pioneers to undermine its foundations, and bring it to its final overthrow,—not by aggression from without, but by the force of sentiment and principle from within—a force which, to the immortal honor of the Free States of America, has already told spontaneously, yet with full effect, on more than half the provinces of the Union. But I must repeat my conviction, that slavery will not be at all shaken,—it will be strengthened and stand its ground,—if assailed through the medium of that most questionable and ambiguous principle which the Abolitionists are now laboring to force upon our acceptance, even that slaveholding is, in itself, a ground of exclusion from the Christian sacraments,—instead of being assailed through the medium of such other and obvious principles as come home to the hearts and the consciences of all men.

5. Dr. Chalmers here, as if in ignorance of all that has been done, asks of the abolitionists the furnishing of a history of the thing, anything relating to the last forty years, and for which Dr. Cunningham calls them men without sense or sanity. Besides, when ministers, and elders, and communions hold slaves, the difficulty of exercising discipline on the sins springing out of slavery is increased—rendered almost impossible. If these vices do follow, says the Dr. in the train of slaveholding, with greater frequency than in the train of any other occupation. Does Dr. Chalmers, a preacher of the gospel, venture to assert that slaveholding is an evil, which may not be paralleled like other occupations, and which only differs from others by presenting greater temptations to sin? The meaning here, also, is so plain, that he who runs may read.—Notwithstanding the severe things which he writes against slavery, he here plainly admits that it is in his own occupation, which has more attendant sins in its train than any other calling in which men may engage.

6. There is one reformation about which, for ourselves, we feel no difficulty, and that is, how to proceed against slaveholding ministers, or ministers who hold slaves, not as masters of a household, who must have them for domestic servants, but as masters who combine this worldly with their sacred or professional occupation. In our own Churches we should liyan interdict on our ministers here against their holding any secular trade or employment, lest it should secularize them; and *a fortiori*, we would lay an interdict on ministers there from holding slaves for profit, lest it should brutalize them. We must be forgiven the harshness of this expression. We do not say that this is the invariable effect of slaveholding in America, and therefore it is that we resist the proposed excommunication of all slaveholders. But we say, that if not the universal effect, it is at least the tendency of the system: and we hold it the bounden duty of every Church to restrain its ministers from all which might put to hazard either their characters or reputations, and so to keep all vitiating tendencies and temptations away from them.

7. But, again, not only is there a wrong principle involved in the demand which these Abolitionists now make on the Free Church of Scotland; it is in itself a wrong procedure for hastening forward that object, for the accomplishment of which we are alike desirous with themselves; or, in other words, it is not only wrong in principle, but hurtful in effect. Shall we concede to their demands, then, speaking in terms of our opinion, we incur the discredit (and in proportion to that discredit we damage our usefulness as a church) of having given in,—and at the bidding of another party,—to a faction and new principle, which only wants, but which contravenes, the authority of Scripture and of Apostolic example, and, indeed, has only been heard of in Christendom within these few years, as if gotten up for an occasion, instead of been drawn from the repositories of that truth which is immutable and eternal, even the principle that no slaveholder should be admitted to a participation in the Christian sacraments. We think, therefore, that it is a demand which ought not, and of which it is our expectation and wish that it will not be complied with; a refusal this, however, which, though right and necessary on other grounds, may be conceived of on the ground of our indifference to the evils of slavery; and thus most inadmissible and unwisely with these Abolitionists have conjured up what the enemies of their righteous cause might construe into a testimony on the side of slavery, when, in fact, we are all most intent on the extinction of it, as one of the greatest moral nuisances that ever infested the face of our earth. To illustrate our meaning still further, let me suppose that my distinguished friend, than whom none within the circle of my acquaintance is more devoted to the cause of Christ, or more strenuous in his opposition to slavery, and all its abomination—John J. Gurney,—let me put me the case of his being required to denounce slavery right and left, along the whole path of that apostolic journey which he made some years ago in America, when he visited and travelled thro' it for the main object of decrying the blessed gospel of salvation to all, whether bond or free,—let me imagine that, in the prosecution of this high errand, some zealous and obtrusive Abolitionist had crossed him in his way, and required of him to mix up all occasions with the message of reconciliation to God, the avowals of his detestation for slavery, and of his opinion that none who were engaged in it could either possess the character, or be entitled to the privileges of Christians. We appeal to the common sense of all men, whether this be the way by which either the missionary cause on the one hand, or the philanthropic cause on the other hand, would have best been expedited. The truth is, that had the two been implicated and bound together, in the way that some did require of him, it would have proved most injurious to both. And, therein did Mr. Gurney act with far greater wisdom than at least certain of his advisers.

8. Though within these few days I have had reason to know that the Abolitionists acted to Mr. Gurney on that occasion with greater wisdom and forethought than he did, by the Free Church of Scotland, I have certainly seen a strong desire to fail in the cause of emancipation, against this noble-hearted Christian and philanthropist, because he did not come up to the full extent of the requirements and speculations of

“The Christians of Britain have felt themselves called on to enter into a solemn compact to reform their country, to make it a nation of slaves, who will be proprietors in the crime of slavery, either by practising it themselves, or conniving at it in others.”

Whether to the public to believe Dr. C., when

he says that to exclude the slave owners a unconstitutional, or Mr. Morgan, when he says that to receive them is unconstitutional, a determination came to offer to Dr. C. not among the Christians who have come to this determination?

9. The particular Churches are where men are recognised as members, and live in the undisputed possession of church privileges, notwithstanding their concubinage, or their cruelty, or the gross violence and villainy of any sort, which might not only be condemned upon, but have been actually made good against them; and then we shall know, and in the light of clearest scriptural principle, how to guide our proceedings, both with the Churches which sanction such enormities by their forbearance, and with Church Courts which, by their corrupt judicial sentences, may be well said to frame these iniquities by law. These were a far more likely process whereby to augment the moral force of that opposition to slavery, which as one of its most determined and implacable enemies, we hope is growing and gathering every day,—not by *forcing upon us a new principle*, and requiring at our hands an altogether new practice, unknown to the Churches of other days—even that slaveholding is in itself that sort of ecclesiastical felony which must be visited by a sentence of exile for shorter or longer periods from the ecclesiastical community. There are other felonies of which we have never doubted—vices which ought, by the precedents of all ages, to be dealt and proceeded with; and if these vices do follow in the train of slaveholding with greater frequency than in the train of any other occupation, let this, by the exercise of a virtuous Church discipline, be made palpable to all, and another powerful blow will thus be inflicted on the system,—another telling argument be added to the successive strokes of that catapult which is at length to bring down this monster evil, with all its horrors and teeming abominations. It is thus that the title of a pamphlet, which I lately saw, might be reversed: and the American Churches, instead of the props, as they are represented, of American Slavery, might be the pioneers to undermine its foundations, and bring it to its final overthrow,—not by aggression from without, but by the force of sentiment and principle from within—a force which, to the immortal honor of the Free States of America, has already told spontaneously, yet with full effect, on more than half the provinces of the Union. But I must repeat my conviction, that slavery will not be at all shaken,—it will be strengthened and stand its ground,—if assailed through the medium of that most questionable and ambiguous principle which the Abolitionists are now laboring to force upon our acceptance, even that slaveholding is, in itself, a ground of exclusion from the Christian sacraments,—instead of being assailed through the medium of such other and obvious principles as come home to the hearts and the consciences of all men.

10. In this paragraph, the high ground is taken, that refuse to receive a slaveholder to the Sacrament, not only wanting Scripturc authority, but insinuating that it is a mere act of *negligence*. That is, if we refuse the Sacrament to a slaveholder, we are keeping fellow-creatures without education and wife marriage, for no man can keep slaves and grant them the rights of men—*if the Sacrament be refused to them*, then we are opposing the Holy Word of God. Here the sentiments are expressed from those of the Rev. Mr. Morgan, writing the address of the Belfast Anti-Slavery Society, to the Church in the United States. Dr. Chalmers thinks that all which is demanded in that address should be refused—and, indeed, it has been refused.

11. John J. Gurney visited the societies of Friends or Quakers in America, of which he is a minister, and as they neither have nor can have slaves, it would have been useless for him to have been urging them to do what they had already done, that is, refuse to admit slaveholders to their church.

12. Not to allow slaves, namely, slavery, best awakes prejudice against another topic namely, the gospel, is strange advice to give a minister—advice on which the operation from the Free Church to the Presbyteries of America certainly rests. They will tell you, Mr. Gurney, in behalf of the Free Church, that they have voted to exclude slaveholders from their meetings, and that *slavery can co-exist with christianity*, and that the life of a man is in more danger, while speaking against slavery among white christian slaveholders, than among

13. In conclusion, it may be remarked, that the practical effect of this latter has been to gladden the hearts of slaveholders and depress Abolitionists, both in this country and in Europe—showing clearly that Dr. C. is regarded as the apostle of slavery.

I am, my dear sir,

Yours very truly,

THOS. CHALMERS.

6. Dr. Chalmers here quotes the example of the American Board, for *only public moral*, when refusing to *act against it*; and he hopes that the Free Church will imitate them in this: that is, in praying without action. We are sorry to say that the Free Church has, when entreated by the Abolitionists, to give them the right of voting on the subject of slavery, and that the Free Church has voted on the side of the slaveholder, and received his money and his thanks; and voted against the slave, and received his indignation and his ears.

7. It is melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church. The Free Church has, when entreated by the Abolitionists, to give them the right of voting on the subject of slavery, and that the Free Church has voted on the side of the slaveholder, and received his money and his thanks; and voted against the slave, and received his indignation and his ears.

8. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

9. Dr. Chalmers here quotes the example of the American Board, for *only public moral*, when refusing to *act against it*; and he hopes that the Free Church will imitate them in this: that is, in praying without action. We are sorry to say that the Free Church has, when entreated by the Abolitionists, to give them the right of voting on the subject of slavery, and that the Free Church has voted on the side of the slaveholder, and received his money and his thanks; and voted against the slave, and received his indignation and his ears.

10. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

11. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

12. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

13. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

14. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

15. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

16. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

17. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

18. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

19. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

20. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

21. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

22. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

23. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

24. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

25. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

26. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

27. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence*, to all the nations of Europe, it should find a refuge in the Free Church.

28. It is not melancholy, that when slavery has been denominated as a mere *negligence</*