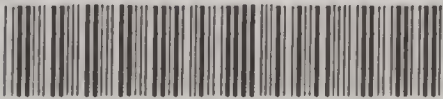


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FELLOWSHIP OF SLAVEHOLDERS

INCOMPATIBLE

WITH A

CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

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NEW YORK:
AMERICAN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.
1859.

Fellowship of Slaveholders

INCOMPATIBLE WITH A

CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

A GREAT crisis impends. God puts a pregnant and solemn question to the American Church. He demands an immediate and explicit answer. He that has eyes must see the issue between Freedom and Slavery. He that has ears must hear the voice of God calling upon the Church—calling upon you and me—to stand on his side. Have you such faith in him that you are willing to follow him, regardless of consequences? Dare you stand alone, if need be, for the right? Will you side with slavery, or against it? This is a test which no American church-member can evade. You shall encounter this touchstone at every corner. Whoever falls upon it shall be broken; but on whomsoever it may fall, it shall grind him to powder.

It is not my purpose to paint the features of that great crime, which is practically enthroned in our political Constitution, and which, "as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing itself that *it is God.*" I have not the ability, had I the disposition, to delineate or compute the wrongs of the slave, multiplied as they are million-fold, and perpetuated through centuries. My business is with those who admit that slavery is a sin, but fellowship the sinner. He who is so stupid as not to be able to discern, by a simple application of the Golden Rule, that slavery

is a great crime, may as well read no further. He would seem to be too stupid to be a Christian.

Slavery, then, is confessedly a transgression of God's law. Unlike many other sins, however, it is powerful in State and Church. Those who study, even superficially, its relations are amazed at its multifarious and intricate connections with all our political, religious and social life. It is entwined with every muscle and fibre of the body politic—nay, of the professed visible body of Christ, the organized Church. That religious society which has seriously endeavored to free itself from all complicity with slavery will smile at the question, "What have we to do with this evil?" To dissolve all connection with it—all such connection as can fairly convey the impression that the Church sanctions it—all such connection as gives it aid and comfort, is found to be like the sundering of soul and body. Most of those who have looked deepest into the subject declare the Anti-Slavery cause to be the entering wedge that shall cleave in twain the visible Church. Be it yours and mine to drive that wedge home. Out of agitation will come purity; out of death, life. Paradise lies beyond the grave.

Ask the man who has gone farther than this—who has made it his life-work to weaken and destroy the monster—ask him what he thinks of the connection of the Church with slavery. But I forget. You may not wish to be seen with him. The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. "*Infidel*" may be branded on his brow. "*Fanatic*" is howled in his ears. His good name is blasted. His pathway is through thorns and among pitfalls. He runs a gauntlet through a million lashes, kicks, stings. With a heavy cross and bleeding feet, he is ever toiling up some new Calvary.

There is no help for this. It must needs be that offences come. In this boasted land of light and freedom, and beneath the shadow of its hundred thousand steeples, it is as true as ever it was in Palestine that whosoever will follow our Savior must deny himself, and take up his cross; must be hated of all men for his name's sake; and

whosoever would save his life must lose it; and if any man, in comparison, hate not his father and mother and wife and children, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be his disciple. He needs something of that fiery earnestness which characterized the apostle Paul, burning on, indestructible and unquenchable, through the blackest night of malice and the deepest waters of affliction—pouring forth its radiant light to illuminate the dark, and condensing that light into lightning to thunder-blast the wrong! You need not be told, my friend, it is a pretty serious matter to *be* a Christian. To *play* pious is a different thing.

For this reason: Whoever professes to be a Christian, professes to stand on the abstract right. He pledges himself, before angels and men, and in the presence of almighty God, to renounce *all* sin; he surrenders himself unreservedly to the divine will and disposal; he covenants that, whatever he does, he will do all to the divine glory. Between him and *every* form of iniquity there must be an eternal and exterminating war. He is to hate *all* sin, without exception, without evasion, without compromise. Though the sin look fair and beautiful, it makes no difference. He must hate it all. Though the universe combine in support of the wrong, it makes no difference. He is to stand, if need be, alone with God. Though friends vanish, and enemies frown, though property and family and respectability must be surrendered, though a myriad tortures rack his flesh, and the cruelest death impend over him, it makes no difference. Our dear Master walked that path. Earth and hell were leagued to put him down. With unflinching step and unblanched cheek, he trod the wine-press alone. *Alone!* You and I must follow him.

Apply the principle. To human vision, the system of Southern slavery looms up as the most gigantic sin of this nation. The Churches, however, occupy a guilty position in regard to it—a great number directly upholding and justifying it—a still larger number sanctioning and encouraging it by complicity and silence—the remainder condemning it in *words*, but supporting it by *deeds*, inas-

much as they *refuse to treat slaveholding as they treat other sins*, viz. : by renouncing all church association, connection and fellowship with the confirmed slaveholder, and his apologists and justifiers. I repeat it ; ninety-nine of every hundred Churches refuse to treat this atrocious sin with as much severity as they treat the most trivial sins. At the communion-table, in the administration of baptism, at ministerial ordinations and installations, in church correspondence, in letters of dismissal and recommendation, by the customs and courtesies of the pulpits, in the meetings, the fellowship and the action of great representative religious organizations, both State and national, ninety-nine hundredths of all our Churches uphold, publish, and solemnly authenticate, confirmed slaveholders and their confirmed apologists as Christians "in good and regular standing." For in the creed of every one of these Churches, in one form or another, it is proclaimed that none but true disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are thus entitled to public recognition as Christians. The inference is irresistible, that they openly, by their *acts*, no matter what their language may be, support and countenance this great enormity. Sinning wilfully after they have received a knowledge of the truth, they tempt the world to brand them as hypocrites. Holding up by their conduct the idea that Christianity is not inconsistent with this wickedness of oppression, they bring scandal upon the Christian name, and thus crucify the Son of God afresh.

Suppose that our Churches should publicly, on all occasions, treat known thieves, robbers, adulterers, gamblers, or their upholders and apologists, as Christians in good and regular standing. Would you disown and repudiate such a Christianity, or not? Yet this is precisely what the Church has done, only a thousand times worse. "One murder makes a villain; millions, a hero." The slave system steals men, steals infants as soon as they are born. It robs the slave of all his rights. Its central principle is that the slave is not a man, but property. It denies him the right to come and go at will. He is con-

fined to the narrow limits his master may assign, comprising a few rods, or at most a few miles. He is denied the right to make any legal contract, even for earning his own freedom. He is denied the right of free speech, to say nothing of the freedom of the press. He is denied the right to acquire property; for not a slave in the South can be the legal owner of a single cent. He is denied the right to marry; for by the laws of all the slave States, not one of the slaves can have a lawful wife or husband. They live in enforced concubinage. Not a legitimate child is ever born of a slave father or mother. He is denied the right to the society of father or mother, wife or child. Dr. Adams acknowledges that in a slave prayer-meeting he could not explain the "our *Father*" of the Lord's Prayer, to slaves. They know nothing of father or mother. The fifth commandment is annihilated. The family is broken up—worse than annihilated. They have no *home*. The endearments that cluster around that sacred spot, the thousand sweet memories which that word awakens in your heart and mine—what can the homeless slave know of them? He is denied the right of self-defence against violence. If a slave lift his arm against the stripes that tear his flesh, the master may strike him dead, and there is no redress. Christian mother, wife, daughter, the slave woman can be compelled, on penalty of death, if no white witness be present, to submit to the lust of the most beastly monster that ever polluted the earth, and there is no redress. The slave is denied liberty of conscience. The master's will is his conscience: The master is his God. What a God! Corresponding often precisely to our devil. He can have no more character than an ox. He is denied a hearing in any court of justice. His testimony against a white man is forbidden by law. In some States he is denied the right to choose freedom, even if it be conceded by a will; in others, the master is not permitted to emancipate him. He is denied education. It is a State's prison offence to teach him to read the name of God. Even in the Cherokee Churches, sustained by the American Board

of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, slaveholders are members in good standing ; though the law, which is one of the very mildest of the kind, reads, " It shall not be lawful for any person or persons whatever to teach any free negro or negroes, not of Cherokee blood, or any slave belonging to any citizen or citizens of the nation, to read or write," under a penalty of \$100 to \$500 at the " discretion of the court." Some of the most influential men in procuring the passage of such enactments have been members of our Churches in good and regular standing. The slave is denied the right to improve his mind. One of the most alarming evidences of the wickedness of slavery is that it so destroys the slave's manhood, that he is sometimes even *contented* and willing to be reduced to a level with the ox or horse. But why pursue the sickening catalogue further? In the language of the highest (lowest?) judicial tribunal in our country, the black man, whether slave or nominally free, has " no rights that the white man is bound to respect." But perhaps the State, having thus crippled and rendered helpless, both in body and soul, this unfortunate race, is specially tender of them, and does not exact a responsibility disproportioned to their ability. Just the opposite. I have no time to show how unequal and cruel are the penal laws of the slave States. One example may suffice. By the laws of Virginia, sixty-eight crimes are punishable with death if committed by a slave ; if by a white free person, only four crimes are punishable with death. Nor have I time to enumerate the evil influences upon the white man—to show how it makes labor dishonorable ; makes free schools utterly impossible ; makes slaveholders indolent, insolent, tyrannical ; tempts them to licentiousness by supplying a race of unprotected females ; rewards vice by making offspring follow the condition of the mother, thus offering a premium for unbridled lust ; deprives the Northern citizen of all right to speak or print freely, or to travel freely, in the South, if he be a known friend of the black man ; imprisons our innocent seamen ; sells our citizens for their jail fees ; turns us all

into bloodhounds to hunt fugitives from bondage, annulling and exactly reversing the higher law of God, "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant that has escaped from his master unto thee"; corrupts and blunts the moral perception of leading men in the Northern Church, until President Lord, Prof. Stuart, Dr. Adams, and the great majority of Doctors of Divinity, cannot discern its sinfulness; and everywhere excites a cruel prejudice against the colored man, until at least two of the leading churches of Boston will *not* permit a negro to occupy the same floor with the white man at divine worship; thus practically saying they would rather his soul should be forever lost than gain salvation on an equality with themselves.

But why dwell on this point? "Every man knows that slavery is a curse. Whoever denies this, his lips libel his heart. Try him! Clank the chains in his ears, and tell him they are for *him*; give him an hour to prepare his wife and children for a life of slavery; bid him make haste, and get ready their necks for the yoke, and their wrists for the coffee chains; then look at his pale lips and trembling knees, and you have nature's testimony against slavery."

What, then, is the duty of the American Church in regard to slavery? If the incorrigible sheep-stealer be excommunicated, shall the incorrigible man-stealer escape? If those who countenance sheep-stealing be deemed worthy of excision, shall the accessories of man-stealers be authenticated as Christians in good and regular standing? How much, then, is a man better than a sheep?

There is one thing the Church has not yet done--one measure to which it has never resorted. It has never taken the decisive step of excommunicating acknowledged supporters of slavery. It has never cut off all church association, connection and fellowship with those individuals and churches that knowingly and persistently countenance slavery. That is, it has not treated slavery as it professes to treat *all* sin. It has made an exception in favor of the open or silent upholders of slavery--makes

especial saints of them. Witness the great Nehemiah Adams.

Now, in the name of eternal justice, and with all the seriousness of one who believes that endless consequences hang on the decision of the present hour, I ask by what right the Church suppresses its condemnation of this vast system of wrong? By what right does she blast with her anathemas the characters of all true Abolitionists? By what right does the professed Church of the living God fold to its bosom in fraternal embrace the man-stealer, or his accomplice in crime? By what right does it turn a deaf ear to the cry of the stolen and helpless African? By what right do you, professing Christian, walk to the communion-table of our dying Lord, arm in arm with one whose every step is on the bondman's soul?

Suppose the fugitive slaves in Canada, being a majority, or the actual slaves of Carolina, being a majority, should enslave the whites there; and, being professing Christians, should desire to be fellowshipped as such! Is there a Church in the North that would not feel insulted and shocked by the proposition? Yet no ingenuity can show that black slavery is any better than white slavery.

What, then, are the alleged reasons for neglecting to dissolve all the religious bonds that connect us with the slaveholder and his open and silent supporters? There are two reasons to which, I believe, all others may be reduced, for I will not answer the *blasphemy* which makes Christ and the Apostles to have countenanced the atrocity.

First, it is asserted that some slaveholders are Christians; that their sin is one of ignorance, and we ought to be charitable towards them. Christian sinners! My charitable evangelical brother, you are not so illiberal as to deny that there are some Christians among Unitarians or Universalists: why not fellowship these? You answer that their doctrines are erroneous. But can any false doctrine be more fundamentally hostile to the spirit and teachings of our Savior, more fatal to our Christianity, than to hold that man may become property, and be rightfully bought and sold like an ox or a sheep? Is it

not as bad as a denial of total depravity or endless future punishment? Did God give his only begotten Son to die for furniture or real estate? Did our blessed Redeemer shed his blood for cattle? Can He, in the person of the slave, be sold like a calf in the shambles of oppression? Alas! that there should be any need of asking a professing Christian such a question as that!

You still insist that some slaveholders are Christians; that their sin is of the head, and not of the heart; and that they are entitled to be treated as Christians, in obedience to the dictates of charity. But is it thus you deal with *other* Christians, guilty of the sin of ignorance? Are there not Christians who neglect to comply with the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper? Are there not some who, unconscious of the deep sin they incur, partake too freely of the intoxicating cup? Are there not some who, for a like reason, practise gaming, or habitually frequent theatres? In the name of consistency, how can you refuse to recognize publicly as Christian the character of such sinners, while you at the same time publicly treat the slaveholder, or his abettor, as a true and unblemished disciple? Have you charity for no sinners but slaveholders? What kind of charity is that which accepts the plea of ignorance as a sufficient excuse for the sinful practice of slaveholding, but instantly rejects it as insufficient to excuse the other sinful practices?

The slaveholder's sin that of *ignorance*! How came he so ignorant? Have the thunders of God's word never startled him from his dreams? Has the Christian Church stifled the utterance of Christian truth? Have you neglected to warn him of the frightful danger he incurs of everlasting punishment? Have you been faithless so long? Will you not, then, instantly make amends for your long delay, by warning him now in the most effectual way you possibly can do it, by solemnly withdrawing Christian fellowship from him until he repent? Hasten, Christian, for charity's sake, to undeceive the slaveholder, by letting the light of your stern and solemn condemnation flash upon his sin! It is no kindness, but cruelty,

to him to keep calling him your Christian brother. It is not clarity, but the exact opposite, to allow him any longer to remain self-deceived as to his true character, conduct and position. He misinterprets your meaning, and is comforted in his sin. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put light for darkness, and darkness for light; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." Hear Paul, 2d Thess. 3, 6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye *withdraw* yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly."

Perhaps you answer by comparing such radical anti-slavery action to the conduct of the disciples who came to Christ, saying, "Master, we found one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." To which our Savior answered, "Forbid him not." The case is totally different. I complain of the countenancers of slavery, that they do *not* cast out *the* devil. Sundry little imps, like dancing, horse-racing, gambling, card-playing, they indeed exorcise most vigorously with a zeal worthy of a bigger cause. But the great, fashionable, national, omnipotent devil, the personified "sum of all villainies," is *not cast out at all*, but is coaxed, flattered, taken by the hand, lovingly led to the baptismal font and the communion table, and called a Christian brother! "What fellowship hath Christ with Belial?"

A word more in regard to charity. What kind a charity is that which heeds not the four millions oppressed, while it welcomes the oppressor? which is tender as a girl's heart to the feelings of the tyrant, but deaf as an adder, blind as a Pharisee, heartless as a stone, to the miseries of his victims? For be it remembered, it is the *respectable* sinner that gives most encouragement to sin. It is the *respectable* rumseller that most supports intemperance. It is the *respectable* wine-drinker, theatre-goer, gambler, liar, swearer, whose example is most ruinous. And it is, in a præminent degree, the professedly *Christian* slaveholder, and the professedly *Christian* apologist,

that are most responsible for the continuance and the immense progress of this great wrong. It is the professed *Christian* that gives it character. If *he* countenance it, people think it must be all right. *He* inspires the Legrees with boldness. *He*, and not the profane, not the vulgar, not the brutal task-master, slave-breeder, slave-hunter, gives respectability and assurance to this sin.

In this light, how fearful the mistake of that Christian minister who occupies an equivocal position—facing both ways, execrating the crime, but fellowshipping the impenitent criminal—with one hand dealing heavy blows against the abstract sin, but with the other pointing to the actual sinner, and saying, in actions that speak louder than words, “That man is a true disciple of Christ.” Men do not fall into open gulfs, but into covered pits. An acknowledged teacher of Bible truth; his mission to show by precept and example the path to heaven; his lips touched with fire, like Isaiah’s, to kindle a flame against all wrong; an almost idolized shepherd, to whom the lambs of the flock turn lovingly for light, and guidance, and spiritual food; an ambassador of Christ, sanctifying the circle in which he moves; standing as an angel by the bed of the sick and the dying, at the marriage and the funeral, at the baptismal altar and the table of our common Lord; kneeling with the penitent and the sorrowing; usually foremost in works of charity; generous, kind-hearted, loved, trusted, implicitly followed as a pillar of cloud and fire through the wilderness of this world; possessed of learning and culture; a pattern man, a model Christian; what a responsibility is his! What a power to lead right! What a power to lead wrong! Where he goes, the multitude think it safe to go. What he does, the multitude think it right to do. Into his pulpit he invites the pastor of a Church that contains slaveholding members in good and regular standing! He even gives money to sustain Churches of slaveholders! Not satisfied with this, he encourages his people to do the same! Or in some other of a hundred ways he publicly recognizes the slaveholder, or the apologist or countenancer of

slavery, as a true brother in Christ. All the while, his voice is as thunder against slavery *in the abstract!* Where now are your moral distinctions? Who shall guide me, when sun, moon and stars give a wandering and uncertain light? The moral vision of well-meaning but uninformed church-members is confused, their moral sense is blunted, their moral standard is lowered, their conscience is lulled asleep, in reference to the wickedness of slavery, just in proportion as such a minister stands high in their esteem and confidence. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

I say it is the professedly *Christian* slaveholder who, by his example, presses, with tightest grip, the throat of the black man. Nay, it is the professedly *Christian Church*, which treats the persistent and wilful apologists for slavery as brethren in good standing, that, by its example, crushes its iron heel deepest into the black man's heart. With pious hands it forges, rivets, twists to the bone, the chain that cramps his body and soul. Lips perfumed with prayers, and honeyed with texts of Scripture, forbid the slave to learn to read the name of Christ! Eyes streaming with philanthropic tears for the benighted heathen in foreign lands cannot see the four million perishing heathen in our own country! Hands locked in the dear fraternal clasp of the slave-monger cannot loose that blessed hold, even for an instant, to try to give the sweets of freedom or the bread of life to the enslaved and starving millions! *Charity* forbids it! They may go to perdition first!

Charity to the *Christian* slaveholder! to the *Christian* countenancer of slavery! If he *be* a Christian, he will cheerfully consent to be excommunicated rather than have Christianity saddled with his sin. The true follower of Christ will not allow, if he can prevent it, that his wickedness should be charged to the account of his Master. His language will be, "Do not sully the white robe of Christianity by making it a cloak for my iniquities. Let no man suppose that my wrong deeds are permitted by the Church. If my equivocal position be a stumbling-

block in the path of truth, let me be removed, rather than the right be impeded. If my presence bring scandal upon the Church by-reason of my weakness, let me be removed, and the good name of the Church restored." "I could almost wish that I were accursed from Christ, for my brethren and the Church's sake." Romans, ix., 3.

Secondly, it is alleged that to attempt to cut loose from all complicity with slavery, would involve awful consequences; it would carry us we know not where; perhaps outside of all religious organizations—perhaps, out of our Churches; it would associate us with Abolitionists and fanatics, "publicans and sinners"; it would tend to Garrisonianism and "infidelity"; it would shiver the Church; destroy our influence; subject us to ridicule, contempt and enmity; and, after all, we might not succeed in getting entirely free from the sin—&c., &c. To all such argument, there is one short and decisive answer. What business have you to look at a question of duty in the light of mere expediency? Here is a sin to be repented of and renounced. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." Your work is to follow Christ, no matter where he leads you. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Here is a plain, moral obligation resting upon you: how dare you hesitate, or reckon the consequences? When you gave yourself up to God, was it with a stipulation that you should serve him only so far as it might be easy and safe? or had you a prior contract with the devil, which you did not cancel? Away with such a time-serving, eye-serving, sneaking, whimpering Christianity! Listen to the Great Teacher: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." And again: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it."

Do you answer that the Church, as it is, must be

regarded as, on the whole, a great instrumentality for good, though she may come far short of her duty in this matter? Do you say that therefore you would do better to support it just as it is than make a great outcry and agitation, and so run the risk of breaking it in pieces? Do you affirm that the Church as it is enjoys manifest tokens of the divine favor, increasing in numbers and wealth and influence? Be not deceived. Such are not the tokens of God's blessing which our Savior enumerates. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you falsely for my sake." "*Woe* unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did your fathers of the *false* prophets." So it must be in a corrupt age like this. I do not say that the Church is not, on the whole, a blessing. Possibly, Mahometanism, Mormonism or Paganism is better than no religion. Possibly, God over-ruling the wickedness, many sinners may be converted under an apostate ministry. But the chances are that a corrupt tree will hardly bring forth good fruit. Christ told the Pharisees that they made their proselytes two-fold more the children of hell than themselves. A corrupt Church may seem to be accomplishing much for him, prophesying in his name, and in his name casting out devils, and in his name doing many wonderful works; but at the last there comes the terrible "I never knew you! Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity!"

However glorious the American Church may have been in past generations, its present position must be judged by the light of this. A great conflict has arisen between true Christianity and the mightiest of despotisms. For more than a quarter of a century, the Church has been implored to throw her enormous weight into the scale, and decide the struggle in favor of the right. Rev. Albert Barnes has said that there is no power outside of the Church that could sustain slavery an hour were it not supported in the Church. But where does it stand? What position does the professed living, visible body of Christ occupy in this contest? Behind Russia, behind piratical Algiers, behind despotic Austria, thirty years

behind those whom it stigmatizes as "infidels!" *Behind* them? It is opposed to them. It is in fellowship with the man-stealer, and with those who countenance man-stealing.

By its professions, it would lead the gathering hosts in this great battle against oppression. It remains to be seen whether it will *at last* wheel into line. Its position is watched with intense interest; for if it side against Christ, it cannot consistently rebuke *any* sin. False, shrinking, time-serving, pusillanimous, double-dealing in regard to the "*sum of all villanies*," can such a Church have the impudence to rebuke *smaller* offences? With the enormous beam of slavery, projecting visibly from its own eye, will it dare to profess to see motes in the visual organs of other sinners? Swallowing this huge camel without a sign of choking, will it strain out the little gnats that come in its way? I have heard the triumphant and scornful laugh of a Mormon, as he bade the evangelical Christian look in a mirror, and see the lineaments of a Pharisee who countenanced the traffic in human bodies and souls. Shall the Church—the bride of Christ—thus muzzle her own lips? Then, hereafter, when lesser sins fling defiance in her teeth—when swindlers and blasphemers knock at her doors for admission—when bloody hands demand the communion bread, and lying lips claim the consecrated wine—when lust and shame and violence present themselves at her altar for solemn baptism—when heathen polygamy, or caste, or licentiousness, or idolatry, or any crime, flaunts its banners in her face—let her be *dumb* as she is *now*. Or if she dare utter a word of remonstrance, let her expect the stinging rebuke, "Hypocrite! countenancing this million-fold robbery, concubinage, dethronement of God! look HOME!" "Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost *thou* steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost *thou* commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost *thou* commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest *thou* God?"

A very pious and prominent deacon of one of our most

influential Churches told me he regretted this anti-slavery agitation in the Church, because it was impossible as yet to come anywhere near the Christian standard, and we must tolerate many sins. It was enough, he said, that when we joined the Church, we thereby professed a hostility to all sin. Great imperfections existed, but he thought it better to go on with the good work of saving souls than to disturb the quiet of the Church by introducing an agitation that might excite angry feelings. As to his first point, that we must overlook many sins because our Christian attainments are so low, and the Church is well-nigh dead in trespasses and sins, it only shows more clearly the need of instant action. As to the second, that we did our duty in this matter when we joined the Church, it is unworthy of the deacon; for it is the argument of those who are wilfully ignorant, superlatively lazy, and grossly self-deceived in regard to the effect of uniting with the Church.

“They hear not—see not—know not; for their eyes
Are covered with thick mists—they *will* not see.”

As to the third argument, that we must have peace in order to save souls, the Scripture doctrine is, “*first pure; then peaceable.*” When the Church is deeply guilty, it cannot have peace. “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” To a corrupt people, Christ ever says, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I am not come to send peace, but a sword.” Peace in a degenerate and wicked Church! It is the stupor of a fainting man, already in the embrace of death. The more vital religion it has, the greater the agitation will be. Saving souls! The stagnant waters of this Bethesda must be *troubled*, before they can have a healing power.

Do you ask, “Where ought the line to be drawn which is to exclude the guilty favorers of slavery? If it is a slaveholder, and B admits him to his Church as a true Christian, and C fellowships B, and D fellowships C, and so on, where must the line of excommunication be drawn?” Answer: Each case must be judged in the light of its own circumstances. Substitute for the word slaveholder,

the word murderer, pirate, burglar, or adulterer, and deal with slavery as with any other great crime. For, in view of the fact that this huge diabolism is making more havoc of Christian character than any other, in view of the fact that full half the visible Church in our land is enlisted in its active support, that more than anything else it is bringing scandal upon religion, and multiplying infidels and atheists in the Church and out of it—surely it ought not to be treated with any ordinary severity.

You ask, "*What can I do?*" You can protest against this cruelty to Christ's little ones, in public and in private. You can investigate and diffuse anti-slavery truth. You can repudiate pro-slavery publications. You can rebuke those who shrink from the practical application of anti-slavery preaching. You can encourage the despised and persecuted friends of the slave. You can reform or renounce a pro-slavery Church, and join or help form a true Church. You can pray and labor for the bondmen.

You dare not do this plain duty, for fear it will rend the Church? Who made you controller of the destinies of God's Church? How dare you, like Uzzah, stretch forth your hand to steady the ark of God? The principle on which you refuse to expel slavery, for fear of disturbance, would make—is making—the Church a sink of pollution. No, the devil must be cast out; the "dumb and deaf spirit" that sanctions the devil must also be cast out, though it cost foaming, convulsions, agonies.

You want peace in the Church, and so you will quietly tolerate slavery, and trust to the simple gospel to eradicate this evil in God's good time? Have forty years of toleration begun to eradicate it among the Cherokees? Have two hundred years of toleration begun to eradicate it in the Southern States? Peace with slavery in the Church will be fatal. The Church will go down, and ought to go down, if it persist in hugging this sin. What brave, generous youth will join a Church like that? The work has already commenced. It is a fearfully significant fact that the very words "Christian" and "infidel" have almost exchanged meanings. How many a think-

ing man would rather be known as an infidel philanthropist than a Christian slaveholder! What a satire in the popular lines,

“Man is more than constitutions; better rot beneath the sod
Than be true to Church and State, while we're doubly false to God.”

In conclusion, Christian brother, study this subject. You have no right to be ignorant of duty. The sin of ignorance is one of the crying sins of the American church-member. Follow the right as fast and as far as you see it, *regardless of consequences*. Every man who, by any act or omission of his, allows the inference to be drawn that he recognizes the slaveholder, or the wilful apologist for slavery, as a true Christian, stands on the platform that is crushing the helpless bondman down to ruin here and hereafter. No matter what the intention; no matter what the language. Good wishes, brave words, cannot off-set the fact that his foot is on the bondman's neck—his weight is grinding him in the dust. In God's name, *stand off from your fallen brother!* Lift him up if you can. But if you cannot do that, see to it at least that you add not a feather's weight to his chain, lest his blood forever stain your soul. Thunder in the ears of a deaf Church and a dumb ministry their duty to the enslaved. Bear them in the arms of your faith and love to the dear God who made us all. And thou, blessed Savior, our elder brother, Son of God, Son of man, with thy mysterious nature keenly sensitive to every pang the humblest feels, help us to hear and heed thy voice, saying, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”



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Treatment Date: May 2010

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