

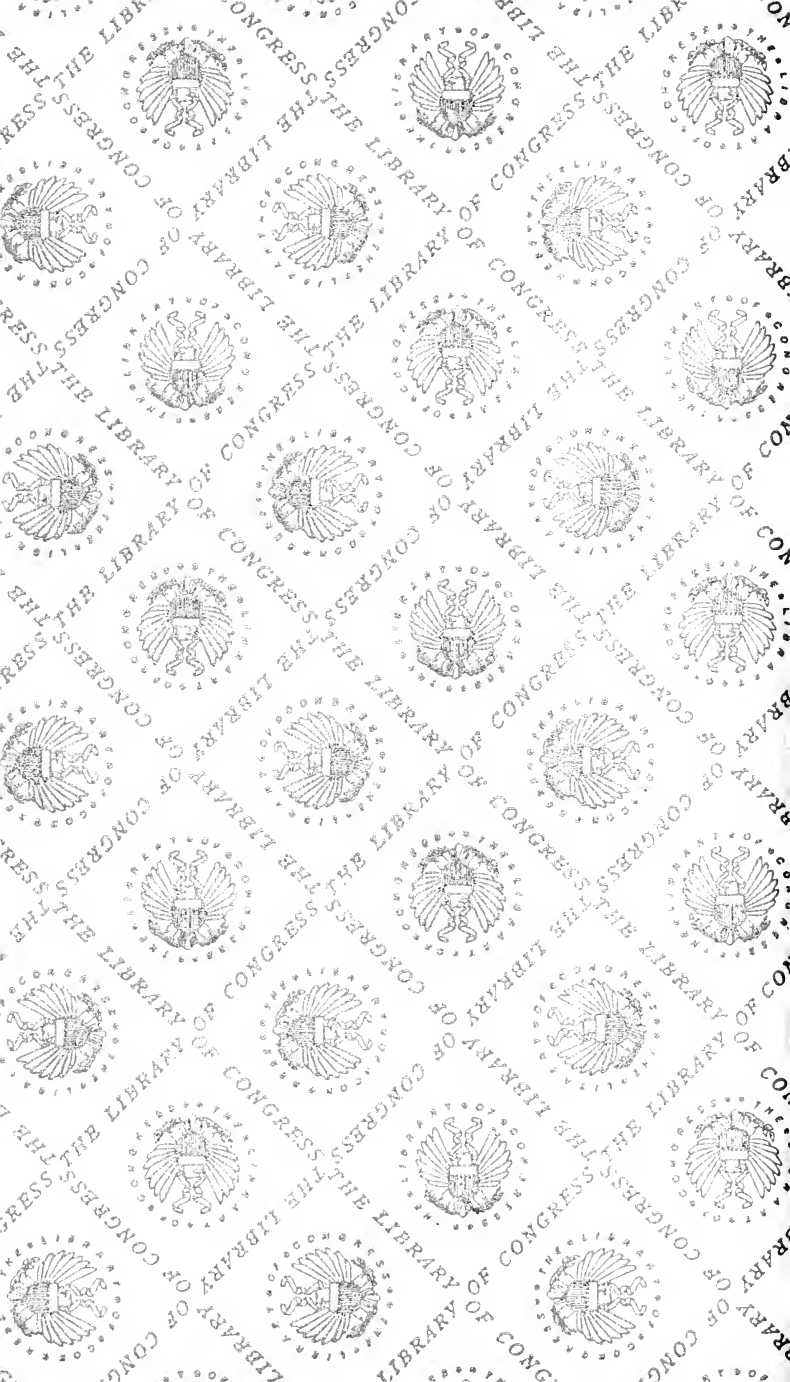
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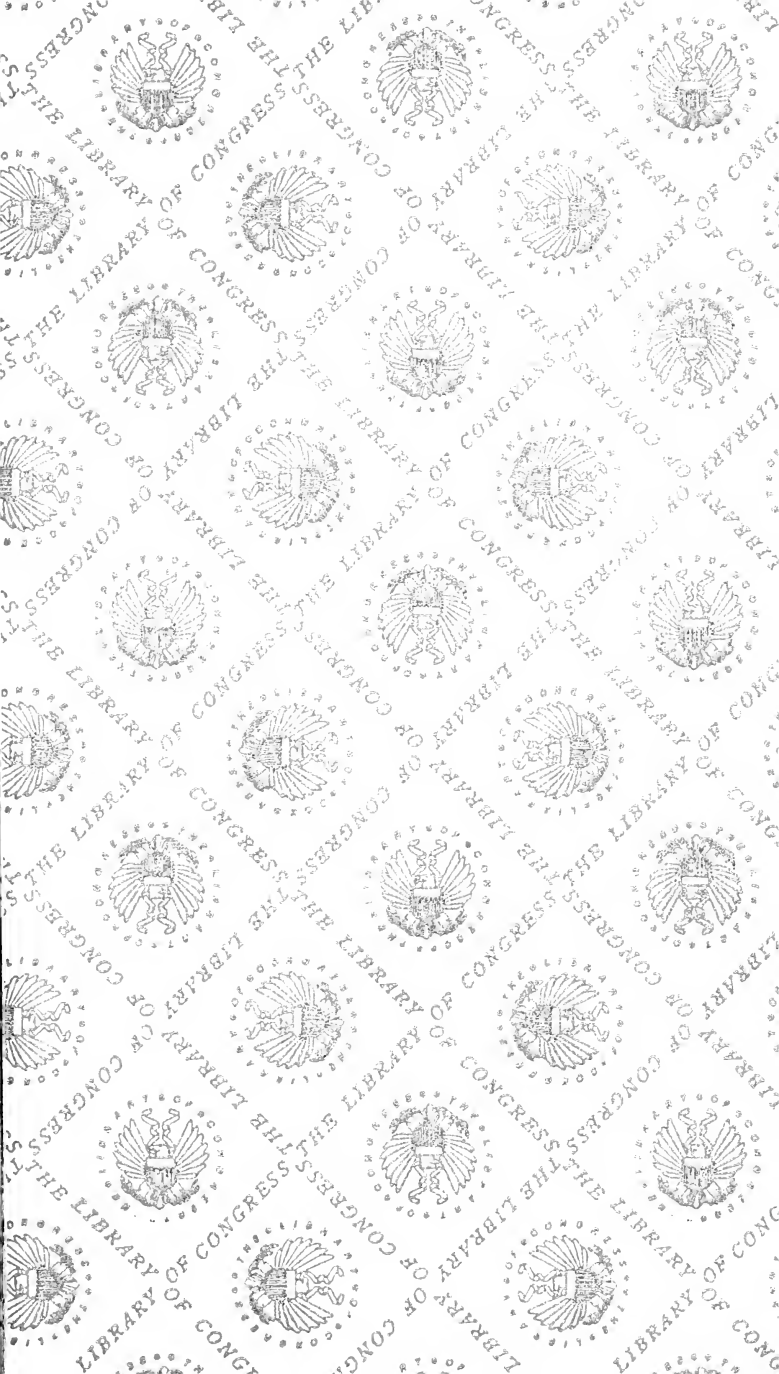
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H O M E M I S S I O N S

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S L A V E R Y :

A

REPRINT OF SEVERAL ARTICLES,

RECENTLY PUBLISHED IN THE

RELIGIOUS JOURNALS;

WITH AN

APPENDIX.

NEW-YORK:

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INTRODUCTION.

It has been thought desirable that a number of the articles in the religious papers, explaining and defending the recent action of the American Home Missionary Society in relation to Slavery, should be reprinted. In a convenient form they are here brought together. To several pieces from the New-York *Evangelist*, are added the able communications of Dr. Heacock to the *Genesee Evangelist*, together with a clear and forcible editorial of the *Central Christian Herald*. This last-named paper has been termed by the *American Presbyterian* the "melancholy exception." If so playful a use of terms may be allowed, it were really to be wished, that all exceptions were as unexceptionable. A noble service has been done by this well-conducted organ of several of our largest and most influential Synods. In the Appendix, several things will be found, of important bearing on the matter in hand, a matter destined, clearly, to the most thorough "ventilation."

This reprint has been thought the more desirable from the many misapprehensions and consequent mis-statements of the action of the Society. To refresh the reader's recollection, it may be well to quote here the resolution of the Executive Committee, as passed without a dissenting vote, Dec. 22, 1856.

"*Resolved*, That in the disbursement of the funds committed to their trust, the Committee will not grant aid to churches containing slaveholding members, unless evidence be furnished that the relation is such as, in the judgment of the Committee, is justifiable, for the time being, in the peculiar circumstances in which it exists."

By what manifestations of sentiment on the part of our constituents this was called forth, is variously shown in the following articles. The Committee found themselves under the necessity of clearly defining their position. What it should be, was the subject of earnest and protracted deliberation. The result was, a determination to take no extreme course. They could not think, on the one hand, of refusing aid to all churches containing slaveholders. Nor, on the other, of making appropriations with no respect whatever to the character of the churches built up. They adopted the middle course, of deciding upon each case as it should arise. Their design is not, as

some have fancied, to call *individuals* to account. The Committee have to do not with individuals, but with the *Church*. It is to the Church aid is granted, It is the character of the Church that is to be settled. It is from the Church that information is to come—just such information as those concerned please to give. On that the Committee act, in the use of the discretionary power conferred on them by the constitution, and which, from the beginning, they have exercised in relation to a great variety of matters. So uniformly have they exercised it, in methods so entirely analogous to that now complained of, and with such general approval of their constituents, that the present outcry has seemed to them not only a novelty but a wonder.

Were not the subject so grave a one, it would be amusing to observe the Protean character of the objection on the ground of *discipline*. At first, the course proposed by the Committee was discipline proper. They had constituted themselves a “judicial” body. As the discussion went on, it was discovered that it was *not* “discipline in the proper sense,” but it was virtual discipline. The latest version of the matter is, that, though not exactly discipline itself, it yet “subjects the discipline” of the churches to some sort of “review.” This objection, too tenuous at first, to bear the force of the most slenderly constructed syllogism, has evidently reached the vanishing point. Additional light as to its futility, and in regard also to the baselessness of the “compact” theory, will be found in the Appendix, in the extract from the able discourse of the Rev. Mr. Patterson. The reader will see how fully that extract accords with the view of the nature and relations of the Home Missionary Society, taken in the first letter to the *Evangelist*.

It is, perhaps, hardly worth while to say much of the intimations thrown out in certain quarters, that Dr. Hatfield and the other Presbyterian members of the Committee have been made the dupes and tools of the Congregationalists. It is charitably conceded that they meant well. But they were outwitted, blindfolded, and misled—in brief, made fools of! This view, it is presumed, is the result of temporary excitement, and will not be persisted in. Various portions of the following compilation have a bearing on it—especially the correspondence in the Appendix. Nothing can be clearer than the desirableness of the Committee’s action in relation to the best interests of the Presbyterian Church. Says the Stated Clerk of one of the Presbyteries in Illinois: “Few at the East, in our Church, are aware of how much we have lost in this State, by our connection with, and support of slavery. Many already have gone, and others are anxious to be out of the connection. Their bond of attachment is greatly weakened for the Church, some of whose members openly practise and boldly justify the system, while others acknowledge its errors,

but deny the power or propriety of touching it, and are unwilling that any other body should. The Lord grant you wisdom, grace, and strength to abide by and defend the stand taken." This is but a specimen of the testimony which has been constantly coming to us from various parts of our Church. As Presbyterians, we could not hesitate. The idea of separating the action of the Committee from the general subject of slavery is purely visionary. Some sensitiveness has been manifested at the expression of the opinion that opposition to that action will be, *in effect*, pro-slavery. It has strangely enough been thought *uncourteous*. As if, while we concede the best of motives to an opponent, we may not show him that his position has an evil tendency—a tendency contrary, it may be, to his own wishes and designs, but not on that account a whit the less evil. Nothing is more common in the history of the calmest and best tempered theological controversy. Witness the voluminous discussions about the comparative moral tendency of Calvinism and Arminianism. The best of men do sometimes unwittingly favor, what from their hearts they abhor. There can be no question, however, on which side the great majority of reasonable yet earnest anti-slavery men will range themselves. The voices already uttered make this quite clear. Some good anti-slavery men will doubtless take a different position. Yet though they mean it not, they will render "aid and comfort," as we are constrained to believe, to the pro-slavery interest. Already the South are counting on the strong *ecclesiastical* tendencies of some of them, as binding them to their cause. "Ultra abolitionism," says a writer in the *Philadelphia Christian Observer*, "obtains almost no sympathy from the *purely Presbyterian element* in our Church." And he goes on to argue for a union of the "conservatives," as he calls them—that is, being interpreted, of the men of strong ecclesiastical leanings—with the pro-slavery men. A majority, he thinks, would thus be secured, and it would be no evil if "the abolitionists" should be driven off. "An excellent plot," this, and "full of expectation." It will lack nothing, probably, but achievement. A true denominational spirit, such as men of the wisest and most catholic views are ever ready to promote, is gaining ground among us quite rapidly enough. For a normal growth, it could hardly be more rapid. Those who most discreetly favor it, will not, we are persuaded, be so lacking in sagacity, as to desire to link it, and by consequence our Church, with the cause of slavery.

The emphatic approval of the Committee's course in so many quarters, has led to a change of tone in some who oppose it. Instead of the confident prediction, that our Church will be "a unit," fear is now expressed, that there will be unhappy division. And the Committee are accused of being troublers of Israel. It would be un-

gracious to reply, though they might in truth, in language not unlike that of the old Tishbite. The fact is, the Committee regarded most carefully the prevalent sentiment of our Church. They sought to walk by the lights which it had furnished. They went no further than the General Assembly had repeatedly gone. The course they took was, in the judgment of the Presbyterian members, eminently avorable to the interests of their Church. There was every reason to believe that it would receive among us a general approval. But or the unhappy course of the *American Presbyterian* and the *Evangelist*, there would have been no considerable opposition to it. And even now, with all the clamor that has been raised, the indications of public sentiment confirm the Committee in the view they first took. If trouble of any sort shall occur, let the responsibility rest where it belongs.

In all these remarks, however, let no charge of sinister motives be understood. We would be emphatic on this point. We accord to our brethren the same honesty of purpose that we claim for ourselves. We believe that they greatly err, and so we feel bound to say. Yet we would say it in love. We would say it, too, with no distressing apprehension about the future. The "ventilation" of this subject has been, in some quarters, indeed, a little Borean. Yet gentle summer airs, we doubt not, will succeed—airs redolent, to the utmost, of heavenly charity. And the Great Master, who, we believe, has a glorious mission for our beloved Church to accomplish, will overrule, we trust, to her good, even the mistakes of her friends.

NEW-YORK, *May*, 1857.

A. D. S.

P. S.—Since the above was written, the Protest of the Philadelphia Home Missionary Society has made its appearance. It is certainly a remarkable document. Its first and fundamental position, the *proton pseudos* of the whole is, that the Executive Committee have adopted a *new principle* in relation to the ecclesiastical standing of ministers and churches—that whereas good ecclesiastical standing was once conclusive, it is no longer so regarded. The facts of the matter are directly the reverse of this—facts so often and so variously stated, so patent to all who have any considerable acquaintance with the affairs of the Society, that their being overlooked in such a document is quite a marvel. The only way, however, to dispose of such facts, is persistently to ignore them. The truth is, it is our Philadelphia brethren who would introduce an entirely new principle, that of making clean papers final as to all moral matters, with reference both to ministers and churches. It is they, not the Committee, who are for "a radical change." The section of the Protest which relates to *slavery agitation*, is very significant. One needs to pause over it to assure himself that it is not one of the editorials of the *Journal of Commerce*. It will be thoughtfully pondered by all who would understand "the signs of the times."

ARTICLES OF DR. A. D. SMITH.

I.

From The Evangelist of March 19, 1857.

THE HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY AND SLAVERY.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE EVANGELIST : A recent number of the *American Presbyterian* has been kindly sent me—I presume by the esteemed Editors—containing somewhat extended and severe strictures upon the late action of the Executive Committee of the American Home Missionary Society. It was sent me, doubtless, as one of the members of that Committee. They say of a previous article that they had forwarded it to *all* the members, and they seem to have expected a response of some sort. What may be said officially on the subject, I cannot foretell. That will be determined in due time, and in a legitimate way. I am at liberty, however, as an individual, to utter my own views ; and “ it is borne in upon my mind,” as the old Covenanters used to say, that I ought to do so. I crave a little space in your columns for that purpose. What I have to say, shall be over my own signature. My humble name is of little moment ; but I may as well write thus—for in these times, as has been well said, “ nothing is anonymous.” I would, besides, commit no one but myself ; and I am quite willing that with the statements and arguments I have to offer, my name should be permanently linked. I write with pain at the thought of differing from some brethren whom I highly regard ; yet with the mitigating hope that when the matter is fully understood, we shall see eye to eye. The action of the Committee is abundantly defensible. The assaults upon it are based upon the gravest misapprehension as to both facts and principles—misapprehension so signal and so singular, in some respects, that I can only account for it on the ground of that haste with which newspaper articles are apt to be prepared. Let the subject, then, be ventilated. Let the winds of discussion have free course. The air shall be cleared thus of blinding vapors, and be filled with glad sun-light.

To just practical views on any subject, it is essential that the underlying theory be right. So, eminently, as to the matter in hand. I ask, then, at the outset—for plain though the point is, it seems necessary to call attention to it—What *is* the American Home Missionary Society ? What is the fundamental idea of it as a benevolent organization ? It is a *voluntary* Society, confessedly. And how, in the nature of things, must a voluntary Society be controlled ? Plainly by the *will* of its constituents, or, what is the same thing, by its own will. Its very designation implies that. It is self-determining. It does as it pleases. Ad-

vised it may be—subject to all sorts of suatory influences; but *controlled* by no other earthly power. Its will, clearly ascertained, must be obeyed by all its functionaries; and be regarded by all who have to do with it as, in relation to its own acts, the ultimate arbiter.

But who, we may next ask, are the *constituents* of the Society? The individual contributors to it, and those only, beyond a doubt. In other words, the members; for according to the sixth article of the Constitution, the membership is composed of the regular contributors. The Society is no confederation of organic bodies—no league of District Associations and Presbyteries, or General Associations and General Assemblies. Admirably was this point elucidated in the *New-York Evangelist* of July 19, 1855. I am the more disposed to call attention to that exposition, as it was not only the voice of the able and worthy Editors, but had the sanction also of the circle of ministerial brethren who at that time were aiding the paper by their counsels and contributions. The ground taken, I well remember, was deemed very important to the interests of Presbyterianism. It was as follows:

“The A. H. M. Society is not, and never was, a representative of ecclesiastical bodies, or the organ of any one or more of the evangelical churches in the land. It is a voluntary association of individuals, organized at ‘a Convention of the friends of missions from all parts of the United States,’ held for the purpose in the city of New-York, May 12, 1826. These ‘friends of missions’ met together, not as Congregationalists, or Presbyterians, or Dutchmen, or Scotchmen, but as Christians. There was no nice adjustment, as the *Herald* affirms, [the *Congregational Herald*,] of denominational rights and claims. They acted as individuals, or as representatives of voluntary Societies already in existence. They bound none but themselves, and those who should afterwards choose to coöperate with them on the broad ground of a national institution. All others were left free to pursue their own course, and choose their own channel of contribution and disbursement.”

That is the true doctrine, as it was in the beginning, as it is now, and as it must continue to be, so long as the Home Missionary Society retains its voluntary character. I have a fresh feeling of thankfulness to the *Evangelist* for this felicitous presentation of it. On this ground the Society has always stood. It has acted as representing not organisms, but individuals. Whatever individuals, whether Congregational, Constitutional Presbyterian, or, as often happens, of the other great branch of the Presbyterian family, regularly contribute to it, become members. When they choose to discontinue their donations, their membership ceases. If any ecclesiastical bodies are pleased to recommend it, they recommend it, of course, as it is—as a voluntary and independent Society, as having perfect self-control. So has our General Assembly approved of it—not dreaming surely of gaining thus authority over it. This is clear from the very quotation made by the *American Presbyterian* from the action of the Assembly of 1855. They “distinctly declare that it is not their intention * * * to interfere with the proper functions of the A. H. M. S.”

If because of such action, which has obviously only a moral force, and because of the fact that a large number, a majority, if you please, of our individual communicants, have seen fit to contribute to the funds of the Society, and thus become members, it has sometimes been called the organ of the Assembly, it must have been only in some general and popular view, not surely in the sense of its being subject to that body. For, in that view, as other ecclesiastical bodies stand in like relation, it would not only lose its own proper independence, its very selfhood—it would have “many masters.” No one has taken a more decided stand against the theory of “a compact,” than our Philadelphia brethren. They have spoken boldly and earnestly for a true freedom in this regard. They will not be offended if we say to them: “Be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” “Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”

To complete my theoretic statement, it only remains to ask, *How is the will of the Society's constituents to be ascertained?* What is the Executive Committee to regard as setting it forth? By what, thus considered, are they to be bound? Not, surely, as some have strangely seemed to suppose, by whatever may happen to be issued from the office of the Society. The *Presbyterian* is singularly at fault on this point, and, I regret to say, even the *Evangelist*. Not by the speeches that may happen to be bound up with the Report. Not by the letters from missionaries, or the geographical and statistical statements that are often found in like juxtaposition. Not, I will add, by the sermons, or addresses, or published disquisitions of the Secretaries. Nay, I will speak more broadly, not even, *as a finality*, by their own utterances, or their own acts. For that would make them a light and a law unto themselves. That would be, as to the point in hand, like a man's lifting himself from the earth by his own waistband.

Let there be no misconception of the point I here make. I mean not to deny that consistency is desirable in all the outgivings from the Missionary Rooms. Nor do I intend to hint that there has been any failure in that regard. In the proper place I shall have something to say on that head. I design not to question that rules once adopted should be acted upon *so long as they remain rules*. What I affirm is, that past expressions of opinion, even by the Committee, are not to be regarded by them as embodying, for all time, the will of their constituents. They may be found to have been erroneous, and so of course must be corrected. Or a change may occur in the views of the great body of those whose almoners they are, and to that change, ministerial as their office is—employed as they are to distribute *trust funds*—they are sacredly bound to conform. Their *rules* of course may on that ground be altered. Whatever ecclesiastical bodies do not like such change, are at liberty to disapprove of it, and any individuals who please, to withdraw from the Society. Forgetting, if we can, the “human chattels,” this is a free land.

The position I have thus taken has been, from the beginning, just that of all the voluntary Societies in the land. By no “petrified wisdom” have they been guided. No stereotyped

policy has been theirs. Progress rather has been their watchword. It would have been a shame to them—it would have been out of harmony with the age, and out of fealty to their Divine Patron—had it been otherwise. Changes have been constantly occurring, progressive changes I mean, in the views they have expressed, in their financial arrangements, in their official apparatus, and in their plans of operation. Let the history of the American Tract Society, in its growth from the little mustard-seed—of the American Bible Society in its magnificent career—of the A. B. C. F. M., in its glorious ministry to the nations—and of other noble Societies too numerous to mention, bear witness on this point. In all these changes, the will of the constituency, duly ascertained, has been the supreme authority. Nothing has been done inconsistent with that. And whatever the past, when that has called for a change of policy, sooner or later, that change has been made. Rip Van Winkle has, in these last days, few descendants.

Having spoken thus negatively as to the way of ascertaining the will of our constituents, let me speak now positively. And first of all, it is to be gathered from the *Constitution*. That, so to speak, is the immanent volition, the generic purpose of the Society. In other words, it is its *organic law*. Nor, be it observed, has any thing else that character. The *Presbyterian* says, very erroneously, of a certain "document" in the Appendix to the last Report, that it "is to be regarded as organic." I merely note this in passing, as a specimen of that paper's misapprehension of fundamental principles. Of the proper import of said document, I shall speak in another connection. The *Constitution* only is organic. By that, as the supreme law, the Executive Committee, and all their fellow-functionaries, are bound. Since it is but the expressed will of the constituency, *they* of course can change it; but as it stands, it may not be infringed.

As to subordinate points, I observe, in the *second* place, points not specifically settled in the *Constitution*; points which may vary with circumstances, about which the will of the constituency may change, and in all probability—as according to Galileo, the world still "moves"—must change, that will is to be ascertained in other ways. In various ways, such as common-sense will suggest. A part of our constituency is in New-England. We must keep our eyes and ears open then, to the indications of popular feeling in that quarter—of the best popular feeling, I mean—that which sustains us, that which puts into our hands *trust funds*. I do not say it would be wrong to read the newspapers and see how the elections go. I even ventured to look the other day—though not exactly in my capacity as a Committee man—at the account of the last New-Hampshire election. It would certainly be proper to examine the religious prints—such as the *Congregationalist* and the *Puritan Recorder*, and the *Vermont Chronicle*, and the *Congregational Journal*, and the *Christian Mirror*, and the *Maine Evangelist*. No "uncertain sound" do these papers give. I would turn over the records of the Ecclesiastical Bodies, and read particularly their resolutions. There can be little doubt, I

think, so far as the matter in hand is concerned, as to the views of our New-England contributors. Passing to the Presbyterian region, I would first "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" that noble document of 1818, the unanimous utterance of both branches of the Presbyterian Church. Blessed be the memory of good old Dr. Ashbel Greene. Why does not Philadelphia build him a statue? I would read the iterations and reiterations of that document by successive General Assemblies, down to the very last, including the emphatic action at Detroit—the declaration that Slavery in general is a disciplinable offense, and should be tolerated only in exceptional cases. I would con, too, the numerous utterances of inferior bodies, including the recent ones of the Western Synods. With all these, and a multitude of other accessible clues to public opinion, there can be no doubt, I think, as to the will of the great majority of our Presbyterian constituents. So at least we judge, at the Home Missionary Rooms.

In referring to the action at Detroit, let me add here, to correct a misapprehension which seems to possess some minds, I do not speak of it as law, or even as of a judicial character. True it is, that the principles of discipline which it announces, *are accepted and adopted in a large part of our communion*. I lately heard of an instance in one of our strongest churches, in one of our large cities, in which a slaveholding professor asking for admission was told officially: "We shall honor your letter, but the moment you come under our jurisdiction, we shall make inquiry into your case." In hundreds of other churches a like position would be taken. I quote the Detroit action, however, simply as an index to the sentiments of our Presbyterian contributors. Grant that it is not *law*—still, is it not *light*? It is not judicially *binding*—we understand that, we have nothing to do with it in that relation. But is it not *illuminating*? From it, and a thousand other tokens, it is my firm conviction that if the whole Church could be polled, three out of four of those who contribute to our funds would give a hearty verdict for the Committee's action. Already the testimonies in its favor are clear and decided. Says one of our most highly esteemed ministers at the West, in a recent letter: "I heartily rejoice in the stand you have taken on the subject of Slavery." Says another in the same quarter: "I rejoice at your new position on Slavery, and I do most cordially hope that our Church will not quarrel with you for it. It is *good, all good*." Says another farther North: "I rejoice in the stand taken on the subject of Slavery." And another still, says, it is "evidently sound, Christian, and conservative," and "it must meet with cordial acceptance from our Northern churches." The *Presbyterian* has heard the voice of the *Central Christian Herald*, the organ of the Synods of Ohio, Cincinnati, Indiana, and Wabash, speaking as it ought from the Queen City of the West.

I beg pardon for dwelling thus long on fundamental principles, though their practical aspect has, I think, been very apparent. It will be still more apparent, as I pass now in the light of them, to consider more directly the action of the Committee.

1. I begin with the position, that as to the great principles

involved, *there is in this action, nothing new.* It may indeed be considered as in some sense an advance. But it is only an application, in a different relation, of the very principles we have long been acting upon. For many years past we have declined to sustain any slaveholding minister. We have done this as intrusted with sacred funds, of which the Constitution expressly provides (Art. 4) that we "*shall have the disposal.*" We have done it as responsible only to our constituents, and in accordance, as we have believed, with the will of a vast majority of them. We have not felt ourselves bound by the mere fact of good church standing. We have gone further. However good that standing, we have often, *on moral grounds*, refused to put men on our roll, or being upon our roll, we have stricken them from it. Our rule is, indeed, less stringent as to churches, than it has been as to ministers. If it be discipline in the former case, much more in the latter. Would the *Presbyterian* have us employ slaveholding preachers? Would our constituents allow it? If we deal thus with the minister, why not with the church? If he, an intelligent, educated man—and *rectus in ecclesia* too—may not be left unquestioned to his own discretion, shall no questions be asked in regard to the people? In distributing our funds, are we to make fish of the clergy and flesh of the laity? Magnanimous laymen, I am sure, will ask no such thing. It may be said, the minister preaches, and you must look well to his character because of his office. But if we are to inquire what sort of Christianity is *uttered*, may we not ask, too, what sort of Christianity is *built up*?

2. The Committee, I remark further, *had full power to take this action.* Here we come to the chief argument of the *Presbyterian*, but partially adopted, I am happy to see, by the *Evangelist*.

First, it is said, we have *broken our own Constitution.* This is indeed a serious charge. If true, we are guilty of a gross breach of trust, and should be called to account, without delay. But how have we broken it? Why, says the *Presbyterian*, "the Constitution is *national.*" The word "*national,*" it happens, is not in that instrument. But what if it were? Is the "*National Insurance Company,*" in our good city of Gotham, bound to insure every body in the nation? Or does it merely give policies to any who make application *in accordance with its rules.* It has certain limitations, I believe, as to *extra hazardous edifices.* The *Presbyterian*, however, though it employs this cant word, so current in certain relations and for certain uses, does not base its argument upon it. It rests upon the fact, that both Presbyterians and Congregationalists from various parts of the country have united in the support of the Society. But what of that? It is, indeed, by formal designation, "*The American Home Missionary Society,* and its object is declared in its Constitution to be, to assist congregations that are unable to support the Gospel Ministry, and to send the Gospel to the destitute *within the United States.*" But is it bound, therefore, to assist *all* feeble congregations, who may please to apply, even of the Congregational or Presbyterian connection? May it make no discrimination in the appropriation

of its funds? I need not supply the answer which common-sense will suggest to every one, and with which its whole history accords.

The *Presbyterian* cites in this connection two extracts from the publications of the Society. The first is from the appendix to the last Annual Report, p. 101. It is spoken of as "organic," though as we have already shown it has no such character. It is perfectly impotent on the *Presbyterian's* behalf, and that for two reasons. First, if it meant what that paper ascribes to it, it would have, as we have proved, no restraining force as to the adoption of a new rule. But, in the second place, our brethren greatly misapprehend it. It does indeed, declare, that the A. H. M. S. regards "the ecclesiastical bodies as *the appropriate judges of the standing of their own ministers.*" So, of course, they are. Our first inquiry always is, when a minister asks to be employed, is he in good standing in his Association or Presbytery, and that, manifestly, the ecclesiastical body must decide. Unless good ecclesiastical standing be ascertained, we appropriate no money. But the settlement of this point does by no means conclude the matter. There are other questions to be asked, *as to the adaptedness of the man to our object.* Not as to his relation to his Presbytery or Association, for we have nothing to do with that, except to learn from the proper authority—"the highest authority," as the *Presbyterian's* quotation rightly terms it—what it is; but as to his relation *to the trust funds we have to dispose of.* These questions have respect often to moral or religious character, and must of course be decided—for their own purposes, and according to the best information accessible to them—by the Executive Committee. That I am right in this interpretation, is evident from the further statement in this same quotation of the *Presbyterian*, that the advice of an Ecclesiastical Committee "has the same influence with the Society as that of a Board of Agency appointed by itself." Yes, the same influence. Advisory only as to the final decision—such is our uniform practice—that resting with the Executive Committee. Resting with them, even when it may turn on some point of moral fitness. As to encouraging "sectional feelings," to refer to another part of the quotation—we have no desire to do it. We believe slavery to be properly local, and freedom national. We have churches now in the Slave States, and we hope still to have. Notwithstanding the sad declension of proper anti-slavery feeling at the South, there is still righteousness and truth there. Noble spirits there are, who in their struggle with the great iniquity, invoke our aid. But be all this as it may, we must do our duty, in humble reliance on the God of righteousness.

I have but a word to say of the other quotation of the *Presbyterian*. It is from the *Home Missionary* of Dec., 1855, p. 284. I need not burden your columns with it. I may say of it as of the other, it has no *authority*. It is not even an utterance of the Executive Committee. The articles in the *Home Missionary* are no more submitted to them, or specifically authorized by them, than the sermons which their Secretaries preach. But, more

than this, the extract has *no relevancy to the point in hand*. It relates simply to the free exercise of "denominational preferences," as to the sort of church to be formed in a mixed community. It has no more to do with the appropriation of money to slaveholding churches, than with the theory of light, or the nebular hypothesis. Any body can see this, who will take the trouble to turn to the article. The *Presbyterian* will see it, if it will but give its spectacles a fresh rub.

A word will be in place here, as to the quotation by the *Evangelist*, said to be from "the report" of the year 1853. That quotation would amount to little, were it even, *as it is not*, the voice of the Executive Committee. We do not *now*, be it remembered, "make the exclusion of slaveholders from communion a condition of missionary aid." Not at all. The "province" of the Executive Committee, besides, may be variously modified, as has been shown, by new manifestations of the will of its constituency. But waiving all considerations of that sort, interpreting the extract as you please, it is not an authoritative utterance. It is not, in any exact and proper sense, "in the report." It is in the appendix to the Report, with a variety of other matters, quite unofficial, and put there by no act of the Executive Committee. It is an extract, besides, from the *Home Missionary*; and it was through mere inadvertence, certainly, that the Executive Committee are represented as responsible for it. I say inadvertence, for the *Evangelist* understands the matter. In an editorial under date of June 26, 1856, referring to certain articles in the *Home Missionary*, which it regards as not according with the views of the Committee, it says: "We knew that they had not been submitted to that Committee for discussion or approval. They were published *without the authority of that Committee*; they are republished in the Annual Report without that authority." * * * "Of course the Executive Committee can not see all that is published in the *Home Missionary*." And again: "Nor is the Society itself, by any authentic act, to be held responsible for their avowal or publication." So clear was the *Evangelist* as to this point, that it even complained of this state of facts. Though the Executive Committee are not, as we have shown—as, indeed, hardly need have been shown—forbidden to change, on due occasion, their own rules and methods, yet the *Evangelist*, to use its own language, "did see, we think, in the year" 1856, that such extracts as it now adduces, are not the action of that Committee, and so can not be regarded as an authoritative announcement of its views and principles. I speak now, understand me, only of an *oversight*. I hint not the slightest suspicion of intentional misrepresentation. I know the Editors of the *Evangelist* too well for that.

The second position of the *Presbyterian*—its Malakoff in the argument—is, that we are "in direct conflict with the constitution of the Presbyterian Church." But how, pray? What have we, as a voluntary Society, empowered only to disburse, as seems best to us, our own funds, to do with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church? What *can* we have to do with it, any

more than with the Constitution of the American Colonization Society, or even of the United States? There it stands, fair and glorious as ever, living by its own vitality, carried out by its own functionaries, obeyed by its own subjects. We, as a voluntary Society, are not bound by it, nor have we control over it. We have nothing to do with it, as a *Society*, except as in its luminousness it may aid our discretion. We have no power to enforce it; we have no power to break it. As to us, as a theologian would say, it is not an object of power. The fallacy of the charge lies upon its surface.

But in forming opinions, and acting upon them, as to the character of the ministers and churches we aid, it is said, we are undertaking *discipline*—ecclesiastical discipline. Do I understand the *Presbyterian*? Is it possible it means to affirm that we are to make no inquiry about character, or none beyond the mere fact of good ecclesiastical standing? That a place on the Presbyterian roll, or the presentation of clean papers, concludes the whole matter? Does it imagine we have ever acted thus, or ever shall act thus? I would like to know how it would have had us deal with a score or two of cases which I could cite from our history. With a Presbyterian minister, for example, found to have, Mormon-like, three living wives, and stricken from our list on that ground, though in good ecclesiastical standing for years afterward? Should the clean papers have bound us to the unclean man? How as to a bigamist of the Congregational connection, in the same category? How as to a minister, of good enough church standing, but whose *physical standing*, as he went to the pulpit, was, through strong drink, of the most precarious sort? How as to a case which much perplexed us, of a minister living apart from his wife? Cases like these may, indeed, be rare ones; but they *are* cases, and there are enough of them both to settle the principle and show its importance. Is it said, why not give information to the proper ecclesiastical authority? The Executive Committee, I reply, has not the function of Grand Jury, or Prosecuting Attorney to all the Congregational and Presbyterian ecclesiastical bodies. It has nothing to do with tabling charges. Were it to undertake that work, a storm would be raised, compared with which the present outbreak is but a gentle zephyr. We do inquire, and we must inquire, if we would be faithful to our trust, about character, and act on the result of such inquiry. We inquire even about churches, and a variety of results may compel us to withhold aid. We have refused it, for example, because of a state of dissension, which seemed inconsistent with the best use of our funds. We withdraw it, by a general and standing rule—and so does the Philadelphia Home Missionary Society, as the *Presbyterian* will learn by reference to the "General Principles" prefixed to the Report of that Society for 1856—when churches deal unrighteously with their clerical servants, by not fulfilling "their previous pledges" to them. We do this, and so does the Philadelphia Society, whatever be the ecclesiastical standing of the Church. We grant no aid to churches, stand as they may, who do not receive members on the principle of rege-

neration. All this, and more of the same sort we do, in virtue of our discretionary power, as the functionaries of a voluntary Society. And the like, in principle, is done by all the voluntary Societies in the land. Does the *Presbyterian* fancy that "clean papers" would settle the question of employing agents, preachers, colporteurs, etc., or otherwise appropriating funds—the question, I mean, so far as moral and religious character is concerned—with the American Bible Society, the American and Foreign Christian Union, the A. B. C. F. M., the American Tract Society? If so, it has only to step up to the offices of those Societies, and discover its mistake.

The truth is, there is in this charge about discipline, the most chaotic confusion of thought. Our brethren—I say it with respect and affection—have not got through even the first demiurgic day. They confound things which are entirely different. Why, discipline, our Constitution says, is "the exercise of that authority * * which the Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed in His Church." Not in a voluntary Society. No voluntary Society has it, or in the nature of things *can* exercise it. No act or judgment of our Society lays claim to it. We *can not* touch the ecclesiastical standing either of ministers or churches, nor do we profess to. What we do is *disbursement*, not discipline. It is the management of our own funds, not the changing, or annulling, or any way affecting the ecclesiastical standing of any one. The fact shows this, *versus* all theory. There they stand—scores, perhaps, of those whom we have refused to aid, on one ground or another of a moral sort—still *recti in ecclesia*. In that regard we had no authority to affect them—we did not profess to affect them—we have not affected them. Can any thing be clearer? What would you do with a hypochondriac, who, as some have done, fancied himself magically *disciplined* out of his manhood into a thing of glass? You would endeavor to show him that, in point of fact he was not glass—that he was still a man among men. You would pinch him, perhaps, or in extremities stick a pin into him, to show him that he was still flesh and blood. And if you could only get the fact into his head, the fancy would collapse by an inevitable law.

But, says the last *Presbyterian*, referring to a quotation from a letter of one of the Secretaries: "The language is, consciously or unconsciously, *judicial*; the *Committee are to pass judgment*." Indeed! Is all judgment under the sun ecclesiastical? Can no "Daniel come to judgment" without becoming an ecclesiastical body? It is written: "Judge not that ye be not judged." But the new gloss is, judge not, lest ye become a Session or a Presbytery. Let our Congregational friends beware of a metamorphosis as certain as one of Ovid's. Has an individual, or what is the same thing in principle, a voluntary association of individuals, no right to give or withhold funds on the ground of character, as it shall stand in their own estimate? Do you undertake to restrain or coerce them by the mere exhibition of clean papers, forbidding them to exercise their own independent and final judgment, because forsooth that would be discipline? Undertake it with

some of our high-minded laymen, undertake it with any voluntary association, and the views we have presented would have prompt practical confirmation.

The *Evangelist*, with its wonted sagacity, sees the untenableness of the *Presbyterian's* position. It virtually concedes the whole ground. "Of course," it says, "the Committee has a perfect right to inquire into the general character and standing of any Church asking its patronage. Of course, if any Church is notoriously guilty of immoral practices or heretical doctrines, they have the right to decline aiding it." This, for substance, is all we ask for. But the *Evangelist* interposes a special plea—I use the term in no disrespectful sense. It may "*inquire*" about a Church; but if I comprehend the *Evangelist's* position, it must not inquire *particularly*. It must be a sort of *realistic* inquiry. To use its own language, it must be a " *cursory inquiry.*" It must rest in generals and in notorieties, and not be very searching at that. If a statement is made to the Committee, that a church applying for aid, or under its care, is guilty of heresy or immorality, it may be received and have weight, provided only no particulars are given. If only a general dishonesty be charged, or a general adulterousness, or a general intemperance. So, I suppose, as to a minister. If only Madame Rumor be, as she loves to be, loud-tongued and vague, she is conclusive authority. No specific statements are to be sought for, or permitted. If aid is refused on such process, it is quite allowable, it is not discipline. But if the subject is carefully and particularly looked into, with the best lights at command, so that no wrong be done, that is an abomination, that is discipline. This, surely, is mitigating the matter with a vengeance. As to the *Evangelist's* remarks about our method of getting information, I will simply say that, while it is not at all judicial, either in a legal or ecclesiastical sense, it is various, such as any one's good judgment would naturally suggest, and such as is constantly adopted by all the voluntary Societies.

Enough, perhaps, has been said on this point of *discipline*; but, I beg, Messrs. Editors, before I leave it, gently and fraternally to turn the tables. *It is the theory of the Presbyterian that would make our Society ecclesiastical.* To regard good ecclesiastical standing as the end of all inquiry, would make us the mere sub-treasury of the ecclesiastical bodies. The old nursery rhyme which Daniel Webster applied to the function of the United States Sub-Treasurer, would pretty aptly set forth ours:

"There sat the king a counting out his money."

We should have little of importance to do but "counting out our money" at the virtual bidding of the Associations and Presbyteries. We should lose our proper character as a voluntary Society. We should become the mere appendage of a various ecclesiasticism. As to the most important part of our work, we should be absorbed into it. How long do you suppose such laymen as are now on our Executive Committee—to say nothing of the ministers—would consent to stand in such a subordinate and

almost mechanical relation? A dozen wooden men, constructed as ingeniously as a modern corn-planter, would drop out the money about as well.

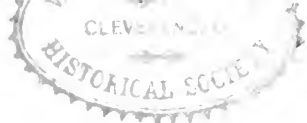
3. My third and last point is, that *our action is expedient*. The interests of *the Society* demand it. A pressure has come upon us from our constituency, the supreme power in the matter, which we can not resist. For lack of such action, our supporters have been leaving us—and without it they would in future leave us in still greater numbers. With this tendency of things, the great principles of righteousness, the movements of God's Providence, and the general progress of public sentiment accord. Our action has not been hastily taken, but with all deliberateness—with such deliberateness, and such full conviction, that you may rest assured, *it will not be reversed*.

It is expedient, I add, for the *Presbyterian Church*. While I would be rigidly impartial in the Committee, I do not forget that I am a Presbyterian. I love the Church to which I belong. On my youthful brow her hand was laid in the solemnities of ordination, and for more than twenty years, I have ministered at her altars. If God please,

“For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.”

It is because I love her, that I rejoice in this action. Our brethren may be assured that it was no Congregational plot. It will be more a gain to us than to the Congregational connection. Most decided and earnest was the approval of it on the part of the Presbyterian members of the Committee. Noble laymen were for it—conservative men, far removed from fanaticism—who have grown gray in the service of the Presbyterian Church. No one was more heartily in its favor than the excellent Stated Clerk of our General Assembly, who is not apt to be at fault on an ecclesiastical point, and whose devotion to the honor and welfare of the Church is known and read of all men. That it came out first through a Congregational channel, was undesigned and unexpected on the part of the Committee. It would in due time have been given to the public, through all appropriate channels, not as a sectarian thing, but as a wise measure for the Society, and though impartial in its nature, of the happiest bearing on the true interests of our Church.

The question may be raised, *on general grounds*, whether it may not be best for our Church to adopt ecclesiastical Boards. Whenever it is raised, I shall give to it, as an individual, the closest and most candid attention. But it will be a woeful day for the Presbyterian Church, when it cuts loose from the American Home Missionary Society, leaving it to the Congregationalists, because the flag of freedom floats above it—because it declines to aid, not all churches in which there are slaveholders, (for that is not our action,) but churches in which such

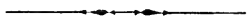


slaveholding is harbored as has been visited by our General Assembly with a seven-fold condemnation—such slaveholding as all sound moralists condemn, and as is becoming more and more an ill savor in the nostrils of all the world. This is no time for us—this time of Dred Scott decisions, when slavery is on its winding way to Bunker Hill—this time of Ross letters, and of a general Southern apostasy—to be manufacturing emollient cataplasms for the wounds of the peculiar Institution, or fragrant anodynes for its pains. I do not believe our coming Assembly at Cleveland will give itself to such work.

A word more and I have done. The fear is felt in some quarters, that if our Assembly does not disapprove the action of the Home Missionary Society, some of the Southern churches will leave us. This might be borne, but for the superadded apprehension, that some of the Northern churches will follow suit—will go over perhaps, to the Old School connection. The *Philadelphia Christian Observer* has in time past, I think, hinted some such peril. And it may possibly apprehend it now. But has it looked at the signs of the times in that quarter? Did it hear the speech of Mr. Woods, of Mississippi, in the last General Assembly? Has it read Dr. Hodge, but recently out, on the 6th chapter of the Ephesians? Does it fancy that our Old School brethren are always to have, in this regard, “the smooth surface of a summer’s sea?” Does it not see, even now, the waxing ground swell? Has it thought of the old adage about the leap from the frying-pan? Where will secession take place? I should like to have the quarter pointed out. It is a pure phantasm, depend upon it, this fear about the Northern churches, with not enough in it to frighten a child in the nursery.

I thank you, Messrs. Editors, brethren esteemed and beloved, for the space you have accorded me—or have accorded rather to the important subject on which I write. I shall not probably trouble you again. I commit the suggestions herein offered to you and to our Church, in the calm confidence that the truth will not only prevail, but will come a great gainer out of the ordeal through which it is passing.

ASA D. SMITH.



II.

From The Evangelist of April 16, 1857.

HOME MISSIONS AND SLAVERY.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE EVANGELIST: It is ordinarily a delicate and unpleasant task, to call in question the views of a paper in its own columns. Of a paper, especially, so justly and highly esteemed as that for which I now write. The regret I felt, however, at connecting with my strictures on the *American Presby-*

terian, a dissent from some of your own positions, has had divers alleviations. Not the least of these has been the courtesy I have met at your hands. Making no account of a few expressions, to which I give a charitable interpretation, the *Evangelist* has borne itself, in this slight passage at arms, with such a true knightliness of manner, that I have almost fancied the age of chivalry present again.

Another mitigation has been the large and fundamental concession early made, and, I am happy to see, still unretracted. "Of course," said the *Evangelist* of March 12, "the Committee has a *perfect right* to inquire into the general character and standing of any church asking its patronage." "A *right*," be it observed. Not, it "may take a liberty," according to the softer phraseology to which the *Evangelist* of March 26 resorts. "*Taking a liberty*" and having "*a right*," are two very distinguishable things. Especially, if the "*right*," as is very properly said, be a "*perfect*" one. Nor is it a right for an "extreme case" only, but as I have quoted above, for the case of "any church asking patronage." But *why* make "inquiry?" Not surely from a mere historical curiosity. The Committee is not a Historical Society. Obviously, to ascertain whether the character of the church is such that funds can be properly appropriated—inquiry with reference to an alternative. The right to inquire—unless it be a perfectly idle one—implies the right to act on the result, to vote funds or not vote them, according to the facts ascertained. So, indeed, the *Evangelist* distinctly admits. "Of course," it adds, "if any church is notoriously guilty of immoral practices or heretical doctrines, they have the *right* to decline aiding it." The Committee may, then, withhold an appropriation, and that to a church in good ecclesiastical standing, *even on the ground of heresy*. There is no escape from the suicidal force of such concessions. The term "general" does not help the matter. Unless the *Evangelist* resorts, after all, to the *realistic* view, my reference to which was by no means a mere "joke," there must be something of *individualism* in the inquiry. Unless it be of the most generic and vague sort, relating, as I said, only to "a general dishonesty, or a general adulterousness, or a general intemperance," and taking note only of Madame Rumor's most shadowy phantoms, it must have more or less to do with particular facts. The *Evangelist* does not deny this, though it is a little vague on this matter of vagueness. It attempts to escape, however, under cover of the term "*visitorial*," used more than once in its later articles. Literally, of course, the word has no application. The Committee make no visits. They are not an itinerant body. They are quite sedentary, as I can testify from some wearisome experience. They do inquire, indeed—as the *Evangelist* says they have "*a perfect right*" to do, even as to the matter of heresy—"into the character" of churches asking their patronage. But they claim no control over those churches. They control simply the funds intrusted to them. If information is furnished, it is furnished voluntarily. They can not compel it. They dream not of doing so. In respect

to slavery, as in regard to other matters, pertaining to "character," they take such information as, in the way of letters, statements, or otherwise, may be laid before them. They decide, in view of it, not what the church shall do, or the Presbytery, or Association, but simply what it is wise for *them* to do with the funds, of which, according to the Constitution of the Society, they "have the disposal." As faithful men, can they do less than this? They are clearly sustained in it by the large and just concession aforementioned—a concession which so long as it stands unrevoked, must be greatly damaging to the *Evangelist's* cause. It is like a huge leak in a ship's bottom, past the power of oakum, however skillfully inserted.

I am further consoled in my reluctant dissent from the *Evangelist*, by the fact that the "discipline" theory, of which so much was made at first, is now explicitly abandoned. In the article of March 12, the ground was distinctly taken, that the inquiry proposed by the Committee was a disciplinary process. The question in hand, it was said, could not be determined "except in the way of a *judicial* process." The Executive Committee, it was further observed, "now propose to erect *themselves* into a tribunal to investigate and decide it." "The presumed delinquent is to be placed *at their bar*." He is to be called on "to plead." "The church must *plead its cause* before the Committee." "The party to be *tried*" is further spoken of. The "rules of evidence and forms of process" which "the Committee may have prescribed to themselves," are asked for. The Committee is referred to again as "a body entirely new *in its judicial character*," and as undertaking "to put in execution the Assembly's rules of discipline." All this seemed very strange to me, as it did to many others. This confounding of a simple affair of *discretionary disbursement*, with the very different matter of *ecclesiastical discipline*. I was at a little pains to refute it, feeling, the while, much as if I were trying to prove that there was an essential difference between a circle and a square. It gives me great pleasure now to see this theory given up. Says the *Evangelist* in its last article: "*We do not say that they [the Committee] have themselves exercised discipline in the proper sense.*" Wisely and magnanimously admitted! I felt sure that the clear eye of my old favorite would by and by see things as they are. Let it be understood that the guns of the *discipline* battery, properly so called, are now spiked. Let notice be taken of it by the Philadelphia papers, who with less sagacity than their New-York collaborator, are still trusting in them.

The *Evangelist* says, however, that though the Committee do not themselves discipline, they yet dictate discipline to the churches. They dictate to them "whom they shall receive or retain as their members," and they claim the right to determine as to individual members, "whether the church ought or ought not to reject them from their communion." The Committee, I reply, dictate nothing to the churches. They decide simply as to their own funds. They leave the churches to do as they please with their individual members. Whether to retain or re-

ject them, it is the province of the churches to determine. Whether it be fitting and wise to appropriate funds, it is the province of the Committee to decide. When, according to the *Evangelist's* admirable admission, they "decline aiding" a church, because it is "guilty of immoral practices or heretical doctrines," they assert no authority over that church, nor any over its Presbytery. They simply exercise authority over the moneys intrusted to them. So cautious are they about interference with the functions of others, that when they refuse to commission a minister on the ground of moral character, as not unfrequently happens, they say nothing about the case to the ecclesiastical body with which he is connected. They assume no prosecuting function. They do not even inform. A like course they pursue, as to the relations of a church which they decline to aid, to the Association or Presbytery. Their aim and care is to keep on their own premises, *to judge and act simply with reference to their own objects, and in their own sphere.*

It is with some regret I have observed in the *Evangelist* divers misstatements of my positions and arguments. They are not designed, I am sure. I shall earnestly beg the privilege of regarding them as inadvertences. Let me crowd into brief space a notice of some of them :

1. I am spoken of as "ungraciously" intimating that you have "an issue with our Congregational brethren." I intimated no such thing. How could I? Did I not know, Messrs. Editors, that one of you came to your present post from a useful and honored pastorate in the Congregational Church, and that the other was of a truly liberal and catholic spirit? Speaking to you, I said "*our* brethren," alluding of course to those brethren at Philadelphia, who, with a zeal which I know how to make allowance for, are writing about "Congregationalism," having "Presbyterianism 'on the hip' at last." I desired kindly and honestly to allay their fears.

2. In referring to the *Evangelist's* quotation about the "province" of the Society, I said it amounted to "little." I used the expression carefully. *I know that the author of that quotation, now in a better world, did not intend by it what the Evangelist interpreted it to mean.* Nor in the Committee at large has such an interpretation ever been dreamed of. Taken in connection with other parts of the document, and with other papers on the same subject, the real meaning could easily be reached. In a single sentence I hinted at it. Yet there was something of ambiguity in the language. It was liable, taken by itself, to be misunderstood. So I gave the widest latitude. I waived all question about the meaning. I allowed the *Evangelist* to expound as it pleased, resting my argument on a broader basis. Mean what it might, it was not authoritative—as your own paper has clearly shown. Nay, had it been even a *rule* of the Committee, it would not have been a finality. We have no law of the Medes and Persians. This was the pivot of my argument. Yet the *Evangelist* has put the matter as if it turned on a point of exegesis.

3. I argued that it was absurd to talk of the Committee's exercising discipline, because, in the nature of things, they had "no power" to do it. "Power" was the word used over and over again. Your statement of my argument is: "It is impossible for the Committee to do what they have no right to do; because they have no *right* to do it." How happened it, that the word *power* slipped out, and the word *right* slipped in? The *Evangelist* knows the difference between *might* and *right*. It was no intentional misrepresentation, I hold myself to believe. Yet it made nonsense of an argument which, properly stated, could not be answered, and under the force of which the *Evangelist* has retired from its foremost position.

4. In setting forth the nature of the Home Missionary Society, I said it was a *voluntary* association. I am represented as making it "an *arbitrary* Society." The expression, "perfectly arbitrary," is used. As if in claiming for it self-control, or that it was "controlled by no other earthly power," I claimed that it was under no moral obligation! That it might disregard all rights, and set aside all law! As if to say, that a being has a will, and determines his own conduct, is to say that he has no conscience! Could the *Evangelist* imagine me so "asinine and anserine," to borrow one of Sydney Smith's phrases, as to affirm any thing like this? Yet so it has represented me. I not only said no such silly thing, but, in various forms, directly the contrary. I spoke of the Committee's being bound by the constitution, and by the will of their constituents. Nay, by their own rules, "so long as they remain rules." I virtually admitted, that the Society would be held by any "compact" into which it had really entered. This, indeed, is acknowledged, in singular contradiction to the general misrepresentation. I spoke of its "fealty," in common with other Societies, to its "Divine Patron." The "wretched fallacy" of which the *Evangelist* speaks, is no offspring of my brain. It is an ill-favored changeling, of quite a different paternity.

5. I am represented in the *Evangelist* of April 2d, as intimating that "the *churches* have no right to be heard." There is an unhappy, I will not say designed, equivocal here. If "churches" in their organic capacity are meant, whether particular or general, then, of course, according to the *Evangelist's* doctrine, as before quoted, no less than mine, they have *no control* over the Society. I have not said, however, that they should not be "heard." I have pointed to their utterances, as indicating the will of our constituents. If by "churches," those individual members are meant, who contribute to our funds, and thus enter into our constituency, I need not say how earnestly I have insisted that with all diligence we should inquire after their views.

6. I am represented, again, as holding that "*Popular Feeling*, as expressed in all sorts of vague popular ways," is to indicate the will of our constituents. I did say, that will was to be ascertained by us in all available methods. And as they are part of the people, and in many quarters, a very important and controlling part, I would not close my ear to any utterance of the

vox populi. My language was, however, "the best popular feeling, that which sustains us and puts into our hands trust funds." Please look again at my article, and see if you dealt fairly with it. And as to the indications I referred to, are they indeed all "vague?" Are our excellent religious papers "vague?" Is there vagueness and uncertainty in the solemn acts of ecclesiastical bodies? Are the declarations of our General Assembly, as Dr. Ross terms them, "Delphic words?" How otherwise can we ascertain the will of our constituents? The Society, you say, "is never, in point of fact, brought together." At the annual meeting, but few assemble. By your own showing, then, I have pointed to the best accessible indices of the will of our constituents. Nor have I the least apprehension that a gathering of the whole of them would convict me of mistake in regard to it.

Of your argument, or suggestion rather, as to the "rights of minorities," I need say but a word. We have no vested funds. Past donations have gone to past uses. Our resources are our current contributions; and the present contributors, with the comparatively small number of life-members, are our constituents. Suppose, now, a tenth part of them are conscientiously opposed to the course of the Society. What are their "rights?" Why, they may cease to contribute, and thus, as to most of them, cease to be members. To them, of course, the Committee will cease to be responsible. Have they any other "rights?" True, if the Committee have been guilty of a breach of trust, they can call them to account. But can they say to the nine tenths who approve of the course taken, your consciences must bow to ours, or you must leave the Society? That would be the *despotism* of the minority.

A brief allusion may be allowed to the various suggestions of both the *Evangelist* and the *American Presbyterian*, as to the extremes to which the Committee may go. If they may take slaveholding into consideration, it is said, who knows but they may look after dancing also, and the use of strong drink, and Sabbath-day travelling, and the holding of stock in Sabbath-breaking corporations? "Suppose," says the *Presbyterian*, "the Committee adopted a rule that every minister employed by them must be educated at Oberlin, ordained at New-Haven, or be examined in theology by that Committee?" This is truly frightful, and a great many other frightful things might be added. They might require their missionaries, in proof of their soundness, to answer the editorials of the *Presbyterian*, or to enter the lists with the *Christian Observer*. Or, taking a hint from the *Evangelist*, they might set their faces incontinently against the beard movement and the Kossuth hats. We have in all this the old sophism, the argument against a good and necessary use from possible abuses. Its best refutation is simply to identify it.

The *Presbyterian* of March 26th, in replying to my Letter, begins by intimating that there is no argument in it. As a conscientious paper, doubtless, it felt bound to state that at the outset. It can only style it argument, it gives us to understand, on the ground of that "courtesy" which so adorns its own columns.

The wonder is, now, that it should have been so excited by my poor inanities. That such a St. Vitus' dance should have resulted from my harmless pellets. Several friends to whom I have shown the paper, esteem it a psychological phenomenon. It really did not become the *American Presbyterian*. It should have taken pattern from its more dignified neighbor, the *Christian Observer*; for whose gentlemanly bearing in this matter, whatever difference of opinion there may be between us, I am truly thankful. It was very kind in the *Observer* to speak so favorably of the manner of my letter. I can say most unfeignedly, I take no credit to myself. But for restraining grace and a good cause, I might have fallen into the error of the *Presbyterian*. That paper should seek for itself some moral nerve. Excitements are wearing. It should spare its strength. It has a great work to do to bring our beloved Church into the pro-slavery traces. It aims to be a great power in the land, and great powers are always calm. Witness the forces of nature.

As my arguments were no arguments, it is not strange that the *Presbyterian* has either not stated them at all, or has given them in so many instances, mutilated or misshaped, caricatured or transformed. Had they been arguments, it would certainly have been well to state them truly. As it was, however, a true statement might have misled the readers. In the exercise of that "private judgment," which, according to a certain faith, is not to be trusted, they might have perversely thought them arguments. In view of the peculiar character of the *Presbyterian's* reply—especially as my main points, being no arguments, are quite untouched by it—it does not strike me as calling for further notice. I shall be quite satisfied if those who read it, will read also my Letter. If they even fail of that, I shall not be greatly troubled. The piece carries with it, to great extent, its own refutation.

With a rapid *resumé*, I shall relieve your patience.

1. I would recall the point, that, "as to the great principles involved," there is, in the action of the Committee, "*nothing new*." So the *Christian Observer* judges. So, if I understand it, the *Presbyterian*. It has long been a rule with us to employ no slaveholding minister. On other *moral* grounds we have often, from the beginning, declined to aid both ministers and churches. If, in applying old and recognized principles to the subject of slavery, progress has been made, it has been clearly and imperatively called for by the great apostasy at the South, so manifest in the Ross Letters, and otherwise, and by a consequent progress of feeling and sentiment on the part of our constituents.

2. Our course, as above stated, being well known, the Society has, again and again, *received the approbation of the General Assembly*. Is the *Presbyterian*, which so plainly intimates that all the real Presbyterian blood is to be found in its veins, and the veins of those who think with it, about to be disloyal? Has it no respect for the Supreme Judicatory of our Church? Does it mean to be a "New Light," and by dint of argument and re-

buke, bring off the Assembly from "the old paths?" "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change."

3. The action of the Committee is in *perfect harmony with the oft-repeated action of the General Assembly*. We had even thoughts, at first, of using the very language of the Detroit resolutions. We mean nothing more than those resolutions mean, fairly interpreted. The *Christian Observer* intimates, indeed, that there is no "light" in them. It sometimes happens—that respected print will pardon me for saying—that "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." We mean nothing more than the many previous utterances of the Assembly mean. Will the Assembly find fault with us for walking by the lamp which itself has provided?

4. Our action, be it observed, as to its bearing on Slavery, is *not extreme*. There is nothing of fanaticism in it. It is mild, conservative, and every way reasonable. No one, it seems to me, who truly dislikes the "peculiar institution," can object to its spirit. There is nothing to prevent the Society's still aiding churches at the South, unless it be a sort of slaveholding condemned by all sound morality. Or we can send ministers to the destitute regions there, as we often do to the West, to gather churches. If the South want a pure, untrammelled Gospel, and will abide the preaching of it, the action of our Committee will not withhold it.

5. To be consistent in opposing the Committee's action, you must oppose *all limitation in relation to Slavery*. All slaveholding churches must be aided, be their views and practices what they may. The members may be in the habit of separating families—of selling infants from the breast—of virtually sundering, among their slaves, the marriage tie—of not permitting them to learn to read God's Word. There may be no discipline in this regard, and the pastor may not be allowed to utter the voice of rebuke. These are not fancies, Messrs. Editors. From the letters of our missionaries I could quote things which would make your ears tingle. There is no need, as the *Evangelist* argues, of any nice inquisition into *motives*. The things moved, the overt acts, are quite sufficient. As in one case of which I have been credibly informed, *church-members may be sold to pay the pastor's salary*. Yet if the church stands on the roll of the Presbytery, you must not refuse aid. You may ask no questions about the sort of Christianity you are helping to build up. You may not refuse to commission a slaveholding minister with clean papers, though his roll of human chattels be ever so large; though his spirit be such, that he can say with an eminent clergyman of the South, he would as soon buy a slave as a leg of mutton. Is the *Evangelist* prepared for this? Is our Church prepared for it?

6. You must go further. You must have *no limitation on moral grounds*. You must ask no questions in that relation, if only clean papers are furnished. The objectors to the Committee's action can find no logical standing-place short of that, no ground that will not be found a very slippery one. This the *Presbyterian* sees, and so, in its last number, goes the whole. It

says, with emphatic Italics: "*They can not refuse aid to any minister or church on the ground of immorality, when the minister or members of the church are in good standing in their own body.*" This is the *Ultima Thule*, which all who side with the *Presbyterian* must sooner or later reach. The minister with three living wives, the clerical bigamist, the preacher intoxicated in the pulpit—all real cases, before alluded to, and all *recti in ecclesia*—must bear our Commission, and have the money of our constituents, and go forth as stewards of the mysteries of God, and as ensamples to the flock!

7. The matter in hand *cannot be separated from the subject of slavery*. The two things are bound together by a more than Gordian knot. Not even the keenest of the Philadelphia blades will suffice to cut it. Opposition to the Committee's action *will be esteemed pro-slavery*. And while I touch not on motives, while I doubt not that some honest and excellent anti-slavery men may be misled, just as I think the *Evangelist* is, I must still say, in force and effect, *it will be pro-slavery*. The working of moral instincts shows this. It gives gladness and encouragement to the apologists for human bondage. It sends sadness to the heart of the friends of freedom. And were it to prevail, were our General Assembly to fall in with it, we should be reminded again, and more emphatically than ever, of old Delphi. We should be understood as eating our own words. The pro-slavery stigma would be almost ineffaceably upon us. The danger of secession in the field of our main strength would be greatly increased. So feeling, in common with others of my Presbyterian associates in the Committee, and desiring the welfare of our Church, I have been pained at the position of some of my esteemed brethren. In due time, and on other grounds, let them propose, if they see fit,—what, indeed, the extreme views of the *Presbyterian* would naturally lead to,—that we surrender the Home Missionary Society to the Congregationalists, and form for ourselves an Ecclesiastical Board. Such a proposal would doubtless receive all proper consideration. But a movement of that sort in the present connection, would be of most disastrous bearing.

8. Opposition, however, *will prove fruitless*. Such is the impression made on me by many indications of opinion. True, several prints on the Atlantic, favor the wrong side. But the only paper in our connection which is formally and properly an ecclesiastical organ, the *Central Christian Herald*, published for the large Synods of Ohio, Cincinnati, Indiana, and Wabash, under the care of a Committee appointed by them, stands firmly and ably for the truth. And I have private letters, spontaneously written, from ministers and laymen, at various points from the Mississippi to the Hudson—the list including two, at least, of the past Moderators of the General Assembly, with others of the most distinguished and influential men of our Church, all uttering the same sentiment. Says a pastor in Wisconsin, of my Letter: "It is the truth, and the churches in all this North-west are prepared for it." Says one of the most prominent ministers in Ohio: "You will be sustained." Says an eminent pastor in Western New-York: "The action was manifestly right, and mani-

festly unavoidable." "The wonder is, that any defense should have been called for, or necessary." Says one of the most influential Elders in the Synod of Albany: "I hasten to express my hearty approbation of the statements, principles, and conclusions contained in your article on the powers and action of the A. H. M. Society." Says an eminent Elder and Jurist in New-Jersey: "I write out of the fullness of my heart, to find there are some, and especially that you and your associates in the Executive Committee, have courage enough to take your stand on the side of truth and righteousness." Says the Pastor of one of our largest and most influential churches, not a league from our City Hall: "You are right, and will be sustained." Says one of the clearest and most potent thinkers in our Church, and I might add, in the land: "I can not well refrain from writing you one word, to say, that I rejoice in the present position of the Home Missionary Society, and believe their action, so far as I can apprehend it, timely, judicious, and righteous." He condenses the whole argument into a single sentence, thus: "As if I, a good Presbyterian, could not inquire, quite particularly, about a church member's, or a church's character, in order to give away ten dollars judiciously!!"

I will not trouble you, Messrs. Editors, with further extracts. I am greatly obliged to these and other brethren for their good and encouraging words, and to you for allowing me thus to make mention of them.

ASA D. SMITH.

P.S.—The foregoing article was prepared for your last paper, and before I had seen the editorial in that number on the same subject. Having attentively read that editorial, I perceive nothing in it which calls for further remark, except a mistake about the position of the *Central Christian Herald*.—That paper, in its issue of March 19, which you doubtless overlooked, takes the very same ground in regard to discipline that I have maintained. "The *Evangelist* and the Philadelphia papers," it says, "call their action [the Committee's] *disciplinary*. This is absurd. Disbursement of funds by a voluntary Society, is no more disciplinary than the distribution of a man's own money to benevolent objects is disciplinary."

III.

From The Evangelist of April 30, 1857.

TO REV. HENRY A. NELSON.

MY DEAR BROTHER: I have had occasion of late so to trespass on the public ear, that I doubt if any thing but your letter would have opened my lips again. So far, indeed, as the line of discussion into which I had been drawn, was concerned, I saw no necessity for further remark. But your voice comes to me

over the prairies and the mountains, like the tones of some dear old melody. It puts you by my side again. It brings back old communings. Touching my mind as your utterances always must, it touches my heart no less, and words drop unbidden from my pen.

I rejoice to see, just as I expected, that with whatever change of place or of circumstances, you are yourself still. To you belongs not the old saying: "*Tempora mutantur, nos illis mutamur.*" You abhor still, as in other days, the system of American slavery. It is still, in your view, "an unrighteous and oppressive system, and is opposed to the prescriptions of the law of God, to the spirit and precepts of the Gospel, and to the best interests of humanity." You are determined by the grace of God to bear solemn testimony against it. I am thankful that God has given you such vantage-ground for this purpose. St. Louis gleams to my eye, in the light of her recent demonstration, as one of the brightest gems on the brow of the South. God bless her in her new movement. God bless you in helping it on.

It gives me great pleasure to find, that as touching the main principle involved in the recent discussion, you and I are at one. If I needed confirmation, such concurrence would give it. You accept the statement I have made of the nature of a voluntary Society. You admit the *right* of the Committee, on conviction of duty, to do as they have done. By no ecclesiastical difficulties—no gossamer fancies about *discipline*—is your clear and logical mind disturbed.

Nor are you moved by the objection, started by some, that the proposed rule should have been adopted not by the Committee, but by the Society. You understand not only the Constitution, but the history and usages of the Society, too well for that. You know that by the organic law, it is not the body for the transaction of the main business. It is too multitudinous for such a function. It is, in that respect, quite unlike the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. At the annual meeting, according to the Constitution, it appoints the officers and Directors. These, with the Life-Directors and the Directors *ex officio*, appoint the Executive Committee. To that Committee the Society's business is intrusted. They are to "*appoint missionaries, and instruct them as to the field and manner of their labors.*" They are to "*have the disposal of the funds.*" True, it is a primary and inherent right of the Society—or of as many of its hundred thousand members as can be got together at the annual meeting—to raise, discuss, and settle, any question pertaining to its interests. In point of *fact*, however, it has never done this. It has given no instruction to the Executive Committee. It has prescribed to them no rules. Whatever changes have been made, under the Constitution, the Executive Committee have made. In the adoption of the recent rule, they have trenched upon no right of the Society. They have gone counter to no usage. They have but followed an unbroken line of precedents. They have exercised no other or greater authority in the case of churches, than they have long exercised in that of ministers. Nay, on other

subjects, in reference even to churches. Here and there a mind may be perplexed on this point, but to you it is clear.

Nor are you moved by the sophism, that not to render aid to every church that asks it, *be its character what it may*, is to withhold the Gospel from the South. The general commission is, doubtless, to preach the Gospel to every creature. But are we to conclude thence, that in the case of an individual, or a particular Society, no selection or limitation is to be allowed? That the A. H. M. Society is bound to send ministers to all sorts of churches at the South? The fact that men are *sinner*s, it is said, only shows their need of the Gospel. But what if they will not receive the Gospel—pure, uncorrupted, untrammelled—the whole Gospel—the Gospel of Him “in whose life the *law* appears”—and to whom men are truly led, only by the law as a “schoolmaster?” When that “schoolmaster” attempts to go “abroad” at the South, what if he be interfered with, and bidden to omit some of his most important lessons? What if this be done by a congregation? You say, rightly and forcibly, you would have us take “care that the *physician* shall be free from the disease, and shall have no smell of it in his garments.” You indorse heartily our rule in that regard. But what if the patient insists on having his own way? What if he objects to the physician’s mode of practice, setting at naught this particular medicine, and forbidding the application of that? Your answer is virtually at hand. You propose to send him only to those “who will *receive him* and *give him opportunity* to apply the Gospel remedy to their souls.” Herein you speak scripturally. For we read of the apostles shaking off the dust of their feet, and fleeing from one city to another. Christianity is, indeed, to be built up. But what kind of Christianity? Are no questions to be asked on that head? Is no care to be taken that it be given to men, undiluted, uncurtailed—that it come to them through right channels, that it be cast in no misshapen mould? As to the minister, you would have us be cautious; for by him the truth is to be proclaimed. But you remember, also, that the *Church* is “the pillar and ground of the truth.” And I am happy to see that to the general propriety of discrimination in regard even to churches, your letter contains no objection. You virtually admit, indeed, that there may be cases in which aid should be withheld. There are some cases, you think, however, on which the particular rule we have framed will bear hardly. And so thinking, you have difficulty, also, with the manner in which it was adopted. On both these points, you will allow a few remarks, beginning with the last.

As to the rights of minorities, my views were briefly expressed in my last letter to the *Evangelist*. I quite agree with you, that there should be “due respect” to their consciences. And you will quite agree with me, that there should be “due respect,” also, to the consciences of the majority. It is not for us to *weigh* consciences—that belongs to God. We can only *number* them. If seven men are equal owners of a certain railroad, and six of them believe it would be sin against God to run the cars on the

Sabbath, it will hardly answer for the seventh to say: "You may understand that it is my part of the property that trenches on holy time." Or: "Your six consciences must, at all events, succumb to mine."

You express a doubt, however, whether adequate pains have been taken to ascertain the views of our constituents. I can assure you, my dear brother, that to few subjects within our sphere has more careful attention been given. Nor have we lacked means of information. We are not omniscient, indeed. We can not pretend to know the views of every body. Yet, as to the general subject of our relations as a Society to slavery, views and opinions have been reaching us from a thousand quarters. You surely are not ignorant of the diligence with which the American Missionary Association has kept the matter before the public. You have not forgotten what discussion of the general principles involved, in public and in private, in imposing quarterlies and lighter hebdomadals, the action of the American Board occasioned. Could you read our correspondence, you would have still further light. You speak, however, of publishing the particular resolution we proposed to adopt, of putting it into the papers, and calling for "a free discussion." This would, indeed, have been a novel movement. We should have had the credit of initiating a truly unique method of settling the delicate and difficult questions so frequently arising in our benevolent Boards. Information may, as I have said, be gathered from the newspapers, in regard to public sentiment. Yet I can not but express a doubt about this particular use of them. It suggests to me, you will pardon me for saying, Macaulay's shrewd remark about "an army commanded by a debating club." I can not question that your clear judgment will, on further reflection, come to a similar view. As to consultation with the Missouri Home Missionary Society, I have only to say, that Missouri is but one of the twenty-five States in which we have missionaries. It would have been very difficult formally to consult all our auxiliaries. We have never done this in a specific case. It has never been thought necessary. It has never been expected. Had we done it, however, in this particular instance, there can be no question about the result. We had much light, as to the general subject, even from Missouri, as you will see in the sequel. Nor do I think that further inquiry would have made any material addition to it. Of this, at least, you may be assured, that if yourself, or any brother like-minded, was not particularly consulted, it was from no lack of the most affectionate and respectful consideration.

I will only add, as to the adoption of the rule, that we were forced to it, not by a sudden impulse, but by a steady, long-continued, and ever-increasing pressure. A pressure, too, which we had no right to disregard, coming, as it did, not from "out-siders," but from our constituents. The attitude and aspect of slavery at the South, is, by no means, what it was. The fact of a great and general apostasy—not without exceptions, I am happy to believe—is patent to all men. Once the position of Dr. Green's resolutions was almost universally held. Slavery, it was admitted,

is abnormal, a sad excrescence, a gangrene upon the body social and politic, "utterly inconsistent with the law of God," and "with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ." The only question raised was about the way of getting rid of it. Even in 1844, a distinguished clergyman, in a Slave State, wrote to us in approbation of our rule respecting ministers. "I told him," he said to us, in reference to a particular applicant, "you had done right. You would not have funds to help any of our churches, if you had aided slaveholding ministers. * * You had better not dirty your Society by touching the filthy thing." But how changed now is Southern sentiment, with its abrogation of compromises, its Kan-as outrages, its general Slavery propagandism, its Dred Scott decisions, its suggestion, even, of the revival of the slave-trade. We have, indeed, to borrow your allusion, borne with it, and dug about it. But alas! instead of good fruit, it has brought forth Minority Reports, Pro-Slavery Speeches in the General Assembly, Ross Letters, and other like defenses of the "peculiar Institution." With Calhounism in the State, has come Calhounism in the Church. Dr. Ross's views are not, I am sorry to say, "peculiar" to himself. Slavery is accepted, "as it is," as an Institution of God, standing on the same foundation as the domestic economy, and of happy influence, both temporal and spiritual. To this altered state of things must not our action be adapted? Are our constituents unreasonable in asking, as the great majority of them do, that in disbursing, at the South, the funds put into our hands, we make inquiry as to the sort of Christianity we are propagating? And if any rule is to be adopted, what milder, more moderate one, could possibly be thought of? What happier mean between extremes could human wisdom devise?

You think, however, there are some cases—exceptional ones—in which the working of the rule will be infelicitous. Without entering minutely into the specifications you make, it will suffice to offer three general suggestions.

1. *You must trust the discretion of the Committee.* You know who they are. Leaving myself out of view, I am quite willing to commit to your judgment the question whether the wisdom, candor, and fidelity of such men may not be relied on. Or, if they can not be trusted, let others be put in their place. I have no authority to indicate, beforehand, just how the rule will be applied. Yet I can adopt, confidently, what is said in the Home Missionary for May: "If the relation of these ministers and churches [those applying for aid] to slavery is such as, in the opinion of candid, impartial Christian men, entitles them to sympathy and assistance, we believe that the facts which indicate this will be communicated, as they will be received with pleasure, and the aid they need will be liberally bestowed." I add, with the paper from which this extract is made: "If the facts furnished do *not* indicate this, may not the friends of this Society decide for themselves, whether they will dispense their charities to these, or other objects?"

2. *There is no general law, that may not, in some possible cases,*

have an unpleasant bearing. The laws of electricity are all good, but a stroke of lightning, however normal, may be a serious inconvenience. The law of gravitation is an admirable thing. But if I lose my footing on a flight of stairs, I may wish it were suspended in that particular case. Even if under the wisest working of our rule, there should be some instances of hardship, you are too good a logician to infer thence a condemnation of it.

3. There will be *fewer cases*, I apprehend, that even you would deem justly exceptional, *than your remarks would lead us to suppose.* Not burdening the columns of the *Evangelist*, with extracts from the letters of missionaries in other States, let me quote from some in Missouri. One of them who had made an effort to procure "white help," and in consequence was accused of being an abolitionist, says: "The church has voted that they are convinced I am no abolitionist, that I came among them to preach the Gospel and not to promote abolitionism, that they have confidence in my Christian character, and in my zeal, but that owing to the state of popular feeling, I can no longer be useful among them." Another, who has labored in the State faithfully for eight years, says: "It seems to me that the Pro-Slavery sentiment has so much increased in my church, I had better go where I can have more sympathy, and where no mean espionage is practised. I am satisfied that Eastern men, who will not swallow Slavery, head and horns, had better not go into the Slave States to preach. They can do more good elsewhere." Another says: "I never heard of a case of discipline where a slave was concerned. Nor do I think it would be an easy matter to induce a Session to take up such a case, unless it was one of the most flagrant character. There is a good deal of difficulty in the way of bringing the principles of the Gospel to bear with specific reference to the question of Slavery. I do not think it could be done from the pulpit, in any place in Missouri, save St. Louis." He adds: "I have never alluded to Slavery by name in the pulpit." Another writes: "Outside of the church, recently, there has sprung up, causelessly, an excitement on the subject of Slavery. An irreligious man, falsely threw out the suggestion, that I had been prevented from holding meetings in his neighborhood, because of my abolitionist principles. This, you well know, whether true or false, would spread like wildfire, especially in this community. Other trivial things were magnified, and distorted, until some of our trustees and leading members seemed entirely to forget the rules of Christian or even of common courtesy; and the result is, that it would be useless for me to stay longer here, or perhaps in the State." Another was obliged to leave his field of labor from regard to "personal security." "I therefore withdrew," he says, "without unseemly haste, with deliberation and dignity, still certain that if I had remained ten days longer, there would have been insult, threats, and perhaps physical violence to myself."

With facts like these coming to us, with the general change in public feeling at the South, and with a corresponding change in the feelings of our constituents, how was it possible for us to do

less than we did? I have said that our action "will not be reversed." In this, as you remark, with your usual felicity of language, "I speak advisedly." Yes, not boastfully, or arrogantly, but *advisedly*. A very respectable print in this city, the *New York Observer*, has predicted that "the resolution will be reconsidered and rescinded, or explained away before the meeting of the General Assembly in Cleveland." A new proof this, that the age of prophecy is past. Let the friends of the Society everywhere be assured, that *there will be no treading back*. The voice of our constituents, I am confident, will bid us stand firm. I spoke in my last letter to the *Evangelist*, of private communications. We are beginning to hear from the great West, the reverberation of Presbyterial thunder. The *Central Christian Herald* of April 16, says: "All the Western Presbyteries, as far as heard from, indorse the *Herald* and the A. H. M. Society by very decided votes." Among them I note the Presbyteries of *Indianapolis, Madison, Ottawa, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Franklin*, embracing many of our most excellent and influential ministers. And I have just learned that the Presbyteries of *Pennsylvania* and *Utica* have taken unanimously a similar stand. These are among the many indications confirmatory of our judgment respecting the public sentiment.

A word on your reference to certain remarks in "the latter part" of my first letter to the *Evangelist*. These had reference to the effect on our Church of a separation from the Home Missionary Society on account of its recent action. On thoughtful review, I would rather repeat than retract them. Even the opposition to that action, though it comes, in some instances, as I have freely admitted, from anti-slavery men, is, to great extent, from a different quarter, and, come whence it may, *has a Pro-Slavery bearing*. Of the religious papers circulating among us which take that side, excepting only our esteemed *Evangelist*—which, the more we esteem, the more do many of us regret its course in this particular case—not one, I believe, is, at present, thoroughly and decidedly on Anti-Slavery ground. The *New-York Observer* rejoices, with exceeding joy, at the opposition to our resolution. "It is," says that paper, "*one of the most gratifying and encouraging signs of the times*." It says, in tones not to be mistaken, that, while a decided Anti-Slavery feeling prevails and increases, yet the churches will not bow the knee to the Baal of Abolitionism." That is to say, in opposing our action, Constitutional Presbyterians are coming over to the *Observer's* views on the subject of Slavery. While, in common with yourself, I have on some points differed widely from the *Observer*, I have always thought it a shrewd print. And I see here a fresh proof of its shrewdness. Depend upon it, my dear brother, whatever be the motives of those concerned, the force and effect of things will be as the *Observer* intimates. There will be an effort, I learn, in the coming Assembly, to secure a condemnation of the Society's action. There will be a willingness on the part of some to pass almost any "stultified abstractions" about Slavery, if such practicalities as the Society's resolution may be rebuked. For the sake of a

clear *practical* gain, sagacious men are often willing to forego mere abstractions. It is my hope and trust, however, that our Assembly will take no such step. It would, I am confident, work great injury to our beloved Church. We have, as you say, a noble record. Let not its lustre be dimmed by any shadow of degeneracy. Our fair fame was put to a sore trial at the last Assembly. I hope, in some respects, never to see such another. I have large expectation of the next—that it will utter no doubtful voice, that it will walk by the great lights of other days, lights that shine with a more welcome brightness for the very mists that have been gathering around us.

I must stay my pen, however, taken up not to enter upon a controversy, but merely to utter a brotherly response to your kind and courteous letter. May the blessing of heaven be ever upon you—as it was in your Eastern field, so and more abundantly in your new Western home.

ASA D. SMITH.

ARTICLES OF DR. HEACOCK.

I.

From the Genesee Evangelist of April 16.

THE HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE GENESSEE EVANGELIST: I am not willing that the late articles in your paper should go out as expressions of the sentiment of Western New-York, on the action of the Committee of the American Home Missionary Society.

They do not express the sentiment of some, and, I believe, a majority of the most influential pastors among us, nor do I believe they can obtain the indorsement of our Presbyteries and Synods. I wish especially to disclaim the whole statement and animus of the following:

“ We expect to see the General Assembly nearly united on this issue; and we again repeat, that the Committee will retrace its steps, and retreat from its present position, or we shall be forced to withdraw our coöperation. It is not our Church that is to be divided or distracted by this measure, but the Society itself will be visited with that dividing force and curtailment of its usefulness, which the friends and sustainers of the action evidently expected would fall upon the Presbyterian Church. We say again, that we desire no such results; and if the issue is pressed, we shall be constrained to believe that this is the time that Providence has marked for our Church to inaugurate a more thorough system of united and consistent denominational action.”

The position of your paper is such, that I fear this language may be taken as expressing public sentiment here. Against such

a supposition, I wish to enter, and I believe many will join me, my most emphatic and unreserved protest.

(1.) You say, "The Committee will retrace its steps and retreat from its present position, or we shall be forced to withdraw our coöperation," and so the issue is taken, and the gauntlet thrown down, and the alternatives stated. But, my dear sir, are you sure the Church is prepared for either of these alternatives which you have put? We venture humbly to think and say, she is by no means prepared. She is not thus about to justify the evil prophecies of her enemies. There are those on either side of us who are waiting with hungry expectancy to see us enact this folly, and wrong, and ruin upon ourselves. But may God disappoint them. And what is the cause of all this tumult? Why, the Committee of the Home Missionary Society has been laying down a rule to govern the disbursement of Missionary funds, which some body is anxious to construe into a violation of our Constitution, and an attempt at discipline. And a prejudice is being zealously excited by this cry of invasion upon the prerogatives of the Church. Now, "constructive discipline" is a crime as unknown to our laws as "constructive treason." And yet, perhaps, it may serve as a wedge to rend us apart from the Home Missionary Society, and that on an issue abhorrent to the moral sense of nine tenths of our communion. What is this issue? It is not the sanctity of our Constitution—that is the ostensible one—but it is not the real one. The *American Presbyterian*, a paper established with the intent of ignoring Slavery, and inflaming the denominational spirit, wishes our Church also to follow its lead; and that is the real issue. They might as well have attempted to ignore the yellow fever at Norfolk. It is the determination to ignore the whole subject of slavery, practically—to pay our money to sustain and extend the growth of churches who hold slaves, contrary to the Detroit Resolutions, who refuse to answer the questions of the Assembly, to build up and sustain such churches without inquiry, question, or consideration. And how would the formation of a Church Board remedy this matter? Would that Board say to us, you have only to pay your money; to inquire where it goes, will be an unconstitutional exercise of discipline, flat treason. Is the General Assembly prepared to stultify itself by such action? We think not. Already the old refrain is lifted up that slaveholding communities need the Gospel, and that it is wrong to refuse to preach the Gospel to sinners. Is it to refuse to preach the Gospel to polygamists that we refuse to sustain churches and ministers who admit that sin into their communion? No. It is to refuse earnestly, solemnly, to preach another Gospel, that we be not accursed. We do not, therefore, refuse to sustain churches, who fellowship unjustifiable slaveholding, refuse to preach the Gospel among them, but offer to preach it in its purity and love. This Anti-Slavery item is the hinge of the whole matter. "*Hinc illæ lachrymæ.*" Hence these tremendous protests about the constitution and discipline—an alleged attempt at the one and invasion of the other.

Those who desire, on denominational grounds, separation from

the Home Missionary Society, and those who desire that separation on pro-slavery grounds, doubtless think, as you say, that this perhaps is the fitting occasion and opportunity on which to rally for such a purpose. But who is to be gratified by either issue you propose? The pro-slavery adherents. If you could drive back the Home Missionary Society from their position, it is but another concession to the rampant spirit of Slavery; if you could rend us from them on account of this action, it would be an equal concession to the same spirit. Is our Church ready for this? Can she afford such a concession at this day? It would make her weaker than a rope of sand. And all this for an act of "constructive discipline," attempted upon her members by the Committee of an honored and voluntary Society, among whom are our best and staunchest men! What folly! The General Assembly will not make that Society an offender on a technicality, for a word—and such a word—a word which but reëchoes her own often-repeated testimony against the sin and wrong of Slavery. In our next, if you permit us this, and will another, we will consider the question of discipline and the constitution.

BUFFALO.

G. W. H.

II.

From the Genesee Evangelist of April 23.

THE HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE GENESSEE EVANGELIST :

DEAR SIR: No more odious charge could have been made against the Committee of the Home Missionary Society than that of the assumption of the powers of Church discipline, and an attempted invasion of the Constitution and prerogatives of our Church. The men who made it knew well that such a charge was the most inflammatory appeal which they could make to the just pride and self-respect of the Church; it was well suited to rouse even the most calm and moderate men of the Church. There was good reason to expect an explosion might follow. But what now, if this charge be found to be a forced and exaggerated one; then the clamor which has been raised is libellous and shameful, and will one day recoil upon themselves.

1. Now is this charge that the Home Missionary Society, by its Committee, has invaded the Constitution and prerogatives of our Church—is this simply true? or is it true only by construction? Is it true only by a forced and perverted construction of the purpose and aim of certain of their acts: acts, mark you, which they were bound to do in the honest and wise exercise of their functions as the disbursing agency of a great Missionary Society. As such a disbursing agency, they had certain respon-

sibilities which, as honest and careful men, they were bound to meet. Was it for them just to lavish out, without care or inquiry, the contents of that Treasury? No; they owed a solemn religious duty in that matter, not to aid or abet any corrupt religious communion, whether corrupt in doctrine or in practice; that duty they endeavored to discharge simply as a responsible, intelligent, not blind, disbursing agency, disclaiming with all their hearts any thing other or farther. But "no matter," cry a score of voices, shouting furiously, "they have gone farther." "They have," "they have," "they have virtually enacted discipline." Now we bring and hold you to the question of the fact of this statement. How have they enacted discipline? Have they separated any body from our communion? Have they suspended any body from Church relations? Have they excluded any body from our Church judicatories? Nay, have they shut any body away from our peculiar Church funds? Where then and to what profit the Church Extension Committee? No, you can not allege any of these things? They have done nothing of the kind. They have not touched, nor wished to touch any of these points. Every Church, every member is as fully in the fellowship of the Church and her communion, and in the enjoyment of all her franchises as ever; unless the enjoyment of missionary funds be one of these franchises. And who would allege that? This charge, then, of discipline is a forced and erroneous one, and should be branded as such. If these men will stand so strictly for every jot and tittle of the Constitution, so shall they stand as strictly for the truth, and nothing but the truth. If they will construe largely and loosely for effect, we insist upon it, they shall construe strictly and legitimately as to the fact. The action of the Home Missionary Committee does not at all touch the ecclesiastical standing of a single Church in our communion. But you say it does affect their relation to our funds? Well, then! *why do you not meet them fairly on that issue*, and not on the odious and unreal charge of attempting discipline. You well knew that such a charge would excite the *odium ecclesiasticum* against the Committee in the mind of every Constitutional Presbyterian; and so it was considered safer to meet their action on this factitious ground than on the real and true ground. And, therefore, about this point, the whole clamor has been raised. Now no Presbyterian man would be ready to defend the Home Missionary Committee in an "act of discipline." But that Committee has done no such thing. What have they done? They have refused to disburse missionary funds on certain moral grounds. Now meet that act on its real and alleged grounds, and almost to a man our Church will stand with the Committee, when their act is put on its true grounds. But if you get up a mistaken and invidious charge of discipline—throwing dust in the eyes of men—you may get a temporary verdict, but facts will reverse it. On the issue you have made, of course, every Presbyterian would stand with you. The only trouble about the matter is, *there is no such issue*. You have got a fictitious and unreal one in the place of the true and real one.

But, perhaps some one will say, I do not want that irresponsible, voluntary Society outside of the Church, to manage this matter of funds. Well, then, put your objections fairly on that ground, and they will be frankly answered or allowed.

Another may say, these Home Missionary funds are in part contributed by our members, and the General Assembly should have a voice in their disbursement. But how, if the individuals who have contributed these funds, are willing to leave them in the hands of this voluntary Society? Is the General Assembly to step in, and insist upon the right to disburse the funds of members of our communion, though not committed to her, because they are her members; perhaps, at the same time, she had better undertake a general supervision and disposal of all their pecuniary affairs.

2. But suppose you could alienate from the treasury of the Home Missionary Society every dollar of funds contributed by Presbyterians, and get them into other hands, are you sure that the contributors would permit you to do any different with them than this Society has done. Many Presbyterian men feel that they are already as much connected with this subject of slavery, as they can conscientiously afford to be.

We have found that the evil can not be reached by any direct measures of discipline under the Constitution. There is no chance of initiating discipline in the primary bodies, and we can get no questions answered. Now to all this we calmly submit—having reached the limits of constitutional action, we stop there. We say, we are sorry this evil is among us. We are sorry any of our Churches are even by rumor implicated in this matter. But we can get no legal proof—we can institute no constitutional measures which will reach and rid us of this matter. We do not believe in excision. We will not violate the Constitution to reach the greatest supposed offender. We feel, too, that we are not responsible for offenses which we can not reach, nor for our constitutional connection with them; having testified against them, and having done all which was constitutional to free ourselves from complicity with them. It is so in civil life. For there cannot be obligation where there is no ability; where there are no functions and powers, we can not be guilty for not using them. The Congregationalist may say, that is a fault of our polity—so it is of their own. They could not discipline a slaveholding Congregational Church in the South, nor can we one of ours only under certain conditions. Are their Churches independent by their polity, so are ours to this degree, *under* our polity. Here conscientious anti-slavery men among us have rested, saying, We have done all we could do in wisdom and love; all any Church could do; more than any other Church has done. Discipline must be initiated in the primary bodies. *We* can not therefore initiate discipline, and we are not responsible if it is not begun. But the contribution and disbursement of our funds—that is a thing *we* do, and are to do; and for the way and manner of doing which we are responsible; this is an act of the masses of the Church through their agencies. In this, and as to

this, there is a responsibility on me and you, on each and all. I am not responsible if discipline is not commenced against unjustifiable slaveholding as supposed to exist in a particular Church in Mississippi. But I am responsible if I contribute my money blindly and without question, and permit it to be disbursed to sustain Churches where I have reason to believe this kind of slaveholding is admitted to their fellowship and communion. That is my act; it is intelligent and voluntary; it is something I might have foreborne, and I am responsible for it. Now, we say, there are hundreds and thousands of Presbyterians who, as to this matter of Slavery, do not feel that their constitutional relations forbidding discipline, would compromise them—who *would* feel that this function of disbursement, if exercised without inquiry or limit on this question of slavery, would compromise them. They would have nothing to do for a moment with an arrangement which should bind them blindfold to contribute and to permit the disbursement of their funds, asking no questions for conscience' sake in this matter.

And if such questions are to be asked, what difference does it make as to alleged discipline, whether asked by a Church Board, a Church Committee, or the honored Committee of an honored voluntary Society? Suppose these moneys and this matter of disbursement to be committed to a Church Board or Committee. Many think this a panacea for all evils. What then? May this Church Board or Committee ask these questions and adopt such a rule? And if they do not adopt such a rule, they will disburse but little funds.

Now look at the alternatives. (1) If they do adopt such a rule, then the cry of unconstitutional discipline would be raised against *them* also. A Church Board or Committee has no more right surely to discipline churches than any other Board or Committee. Then (2) they must relinquish the rule. They must stop all inquiry. What then is to be done? Constitutional discipline, we have seen, is impossible—that is in the hands of these very Churches concerned, and so also is disbursement, for you cannot refuse to disburse these funds; that would be virtual discipline—discipline with a “money penalty,” as says the *Presbyterian*. What then is to be done? Why, nothing! You are sold and gone—“cork and sinker.” You have only to shut your eyes and ears, and open your hands; and in a most expressive phrase, “go it blind.”

These Churches, over whom some are thus disposed to throw a triple shield, have now “virtually” the sword of discipline in their hands. Give them this constitutional right, unquestioned and unquestionable, to our Church funds, and then they will have both “purse and sword;” which I should call having “virtually” the whole, while we are hopelessly, helplessly, for good or ill, bound to them. “Oh! wretched men that we are, who will deliver us?”

When you have constructed this iron wheel, perhaps you will bind the free limbs of the Church to it. Perhaps not.

BUFFALO.

G. W. H.

ARTICLES OF THE CENTRAL CHRISTIAN HERALD.

From the Herald of April 23, 1857.

HOME MISSIONS AND SLAVERY.

As the discussion upon the recent action of the Executive Committee of the Home Missionary Society goes on, the *real question* at issue before the Christian community, is becoming more and more evident. Stripped of all disguise, it is simply this: Shall a *slaveholding Christianity* be sustained by the pecuniary contributions and moral influence of the American Home Missionary Society and its numerous contributors? Shall they lend their influence to uphold and propagate a form of religion which recognizes the rightfulness of slavery, maintains that the Gospel sanctions it, and teaches that piety and slaveholding are entirely compatible? Or shall they say, firmly and decidedly: "Such teachings and such practice can receive no countenance from us, as they do not from the Scriptures?"

To this question, viewed from one side, the Christian community at the North have already given an emphatic answer. With few exceptions, the refusal of the Home Missionary Society, some years since, to aid in the support of *slaveholding ministers*, has received their warm approbation. They saw at a glance, that it is vain to expect such ministers to preach a pure Gospel, and that their example and influence, even if they should say not a word, would inevitably foster an adulterated Christianity.

The same question, precisely, has now come up in another form. Shall the benevolent contributions and the moral influence of the North be given to the support of *slaveholding churches*, or what amounts to the same thing, to churches which receive slaveholders, retain them in their communion and practically declare that slaveholding is no bar to the fellowship of the church? Is a church which takes this ground and sets itself to propagate such a practical apostasy as the genuine gospel of Christ, *worthy* of encouragement and aid? Is such a church, sanctioning and sustaining as it does the system of slavery, "holding forth the word of life," or misrepresenting the principles and spirit of the religion of Jesus?

Suppose a church in Utah should receive polygamists, does not every one see that it becomes thereby a *particeps criminis*, and that though its creed were as orthodox as the Westminster Catechism, it would indorse in that very act, the iniquity of that corrupt community, and lose its power to protest against it? A sort of gospel might, indeed, be preached within its walls, but it would not be the gospel of Jesus Christ. Repentance might be preached, but it would not include a turning from the sin of polygamy. There would be a worm at the root, and the inevitable

result of such an exhibition of the Gospel would be a spurious Christianity.

In these remarks, we have used the words slavery and slaveholding in the same sense in which they are used in the laws and the ordinary intercourse of the Southern States. Both the Detroit resolutions of the General Assembly, however, and the recent action of the Home Missionary Society assume, as they should, that slaveholding may sometimes exist in *form*, when it does not in *fact*—that a case may occur in a church, in which the relation may be temporarily sustained, not only with no sinful intent, but even with the decided protest of the church, and each of its members against the system. For such cases, ample provision is made. Let the facts be stated to the Committee, so that as the responsible agents of the donors to the Home Missionary Society, they can be assured that they do not use these sacred funds in supporting a slaveholding Christianity, and aid will not be withheld. On the other hand, if such evidence is not furnished, how can the Committee and the donors whose funds they expend, be secured against the danger of indorsing and helping to propagate a slaveholding and slavery-defending Christianity, and thus doing a grievous wrong?

The pretense that the action of the Committee is disciplinary, we pronounced from the first, absurd. After wading through the interminable articles on the subject, in the *American Presbyterian* and the *New-York Evangelist*, we are more convinced of it than ever. What is discipline? It is the act of a church or some other ecclesiastical body, suspending or excluding *from the Lord's Supper*, and from the fellowship of the body exercising it, one or more persons charged with delinquency, or adopting some measure which will lead to it, unless repentance follows. Have the Executive Committee done this, or any thing like it? Have they excluded any individual or any church from the Lord's supper? Have they, in a word, altered, or in any way affected their church standing? The very statement of the question is sufficient to show the emptiness of the pretense.

It is true that the refusal of the Committee to aid in the support and extension of a slaveholding Christianity, implies a rebuke upon churches which stand upon this miserable basis. But so does the recent work of Albert Barnes. So does every word of remonstrance and entreaty which comes from our Presbyteries. So does the general judgment of the Christian world, and the various modes in which it finds expression. If this moral influence—this steady protest in word and deed—be discipline, the more of it the better. There is not a church at the South which ought not to welcome it, and to add its own influence to that of the Christian world in protesting against this legalized iniquity, or any participation in it. So far from being an infringement upon others' rights, it is the simple exercise of our own. Far distant be the day when extravagant notions of church prerogatives shall question the right of those who give for the spread of the Gospel to refuse, if they see proper, to contribute to extend the area or strengthen the power of slavery.

APPENDIX.

I.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Rev. R. Adair, Corresponding Secretary of the Philadelphia Home Missionary Society, to Rev. A. D. Smith, D.D.

PHILADELPHIA, March 17, 1857.

REV. ASA D. SMITH, D.D.:

DEAR SIR: The Executive Committee of the Philadelphia Home Missionary Society have under consideration the recent action of the Executive Committee of American Home Missionary Society on the subject of slavery, and perhaps it will be laid before our annual meeting in April. In this city and vicinity there is but *one mind* among the ministers and laymen on this subject. All regard it as the introduction of a *new* policy in the administration of the American Home Missionary Society, and one that conflicts with the constitution of the Presbyterian Church. The wonder has been expressed here that Doctors Smith and Hatfield, being Presbyterians, could sanction such a measure. And supposing you may take views of the subject which have not occurred to us, and which led you to sanction it, we would esteem it a favor to know them. We desire in our contemplated action to avoid every thing that might mar our harmony with the Parent Society, and on this account we are anxious to know your views of the subject as Presbyterians. You will, we trust, appreciate our motives in making this inquiry, and let us hear from you as soon as convenient.

Yours truly,

ROBERT ADAIR,
Cor. Sec., Phil. H. M. Soc.

Reply to the foregoing.

NEW-YORK, March 20, 1857.

REV. ROBERT ADAIR:

DEAR BROTHER: Yours of the 17th inst., reached me yesterday. Before this can reach you, the inquiries you propose will have been substantially answered through the press. You will learn my views from an article in this week's *Evangelist*. And though I write over my own name, and commit no one but myself, you will learn the views of *not a few others* in this quarter. The more I think of the matter, the more I am confirmed in those views. As to their essential correctness, I have little more doubt than I have of one of the demonstrations in Euclid. Nor can I question that our Church will sustain them.

I very much regret the position of the *American Presbyterian*. It is under a great misapprehension. I think I see what excited the fears of our brethren. It was unfortunate that our action should come out in just the way it did. But that was unintended on the part of the functionaries here, and unexpected. As I say in the *Evangelist*, so say I to you, it was *no Congregational plot*. We, on the Presbyterian side, were heartily for it, not only as Committeemen, but as *Presbyterians*. We believed the best interests of our Church called for it. If Congregationalists, deeming the Society pro-slavery, go over to the "American Missionary Association," they still remain Congregationalists. But if *our* members or churches go over, there is, as to Presbyterianism, *but a step between them and death*. The next step is into the Congregational Church. The post of observation at which Dr. Hatfield and myself stand, enables us to see this, and causes us *to feel it*. Besides, we hear the cry from the length and breadth of the Great West—our main field, where, if anywhere, our great harvest is to be gathered—for a decided, unequivocal position on the subject of slavery. They are about weary of "Delphic Oracles." So far from their not liking our recent mild, conservative action, I am not without fear that they will think it not decided enough. It is already pronounced a mere *brutum fulmen* by the extreme section of the anti-slavery press. Nothing less, I am sure, would answer. Nor may our contributors be called, as the *Evangelist* styles them, "outsiders." If they, our constituency, are not *insiders*, I would like to know who are. They have the clearest right in the world both to speak and to be heard.

Besides, our action is, I repeat it, *in principle*, nothing new. You will see my views on this point in the *Evangelist*. So Dr. Converse views the matter. His position here is the only consistent one. I honor him for his consistency. He would have us appropriate money to slaveholding churches, without any inquiry in that regard. On the same general principle, he would have us employ slaveholding ministers. Would the *Presbyterian* have us do that? It must, to be consistent.

"As to the Committee's exercising *discipline*, I need, perhaps, say nothing more. Unless my brains have oozed out through some invisible aperture, or have become softened so that I should call in my family physician, there is a distinction in the nature of things, the very distinction I have drawn, between *disbursement* and *discipline*—between the management, in the way of giving or withholding, of funds intrusted to our discretion by our individual contributors, and the exercise of ecclesiastical authority, the inflicting of *ecclesiastical censure*. This distinction can never be set aside. I mean no reproach upon my esteemed brethren at Philadelphia. Their pure and clear minds have not well considered this point. On due reflection, I will not permit myself to doubt, they will see it as it is.

"As to separating the action of the Committee from the great question of slavery—or the question as to our Church, of pro-slavery or anti-slavery—*it cannot be done*. The two things are bound together by a more than Gordian knot. It can not even be cut. I know the keenness of the Philadelphia cimeters, but they are not equal to the task. You will find it so. Even an attempt, in our Assembly, to make the separation, would do us harm. It would remind the world again, as well as Dr. Ross, of old Delphi.

And now, before I close, allow me to say a word on another point, which my regard for my Philadelphia brethren forbade me to

introduce into my printed article. You write *now*, wishing to know the views of Dr. Hatfield and myself, "*as Presbyterians.*" It is very kind of you. I cannot speak for brother Hatfield by authority; but I presume I may say, we are both greatly obliged to you. It certainly implies, that you not only regard us as Presbyterians, but suppose we have some views in that relation, worthy of some little consideration. That you do not quite suspect us of having had our eyes put out, and being set to grind in the Congregational mill. We are obliged to you for such charitable and brotherly thoughts. But then you remind me of looking to the stable-door *after the horse has escaped*—of opening, *for the first time*, negotiations about the grounds of war after a pitched battle has been fought. Why could not the *Presbyterian* have waited a little? The heavens would not have come down? Why did not some one write to brother Hatfield and myself—not to speak of other intelligent Presbyterians, our official associates—before the paper had committed itself? Why, in so important a matter, could not some little conference have been asked for? I will leave myself out of the question—though all my ministry, and more than a score of years, has been spent in the Presbyterian Church. I trust I have not been wholly unmindful of its interests. Nor have I been indifferent to the matter of coöperation with Philadelphia. Some of the brethren will remember that, when a deputation came here on the subject of the *Publication House*, I was not slow to raise my voice in its behalf. But leaving myself out of view, surely Dr. Hatfield might have been somewhat confided in. It could not be fancied that *he* had forgotten the interests of our Church. Why were not his views sought for? It was affirmed, I know, by Dr. Converse, that the new Philadelphia paper was designed as a sort of autocratic institution, a central power to rule and regulate the Presbyterian Church. But that was said, probably, in a moment of excitement. That view is not, I am sure, to be rested in. The good and charitable Doctor would himself, now, I am bound to believe, hardly persist in it. Why, then, was the battery prepared, unmasked, discharged—a Sevastopol fire—without any consultation with New-York? It carries me back again to my school-boy days, when, after Pedagogus had promptly and thoroughly belabored some offending or suspected urchin, he would say to him: "What now do you think of it? Don't you think you deserved it? I should like to know your views, *as a good, dutiful schoolboy.*" And when you say, as you do in your letter, "We desire to avoid every thing that might mar our harmony with the Parent Society," it makes me think again—excuse the allusion—of the aforesaid Pedagogus, saying to the whipped boy, "I did it with the very kindest feelings. It will not mar the harmony between us. You will love me for it?"

If the matter was thought worthy, as I hear, of two days' deliberation at Philadelphia, could not an hour be given to our little city? You will find a feeling here not represented in the *Evangelist*. I would speak with the utmost kindness of its present worthy editors. But the paper, as you know, and as has been proclaimed in its own columns, does not sustain now the relation it had some time since. The relation, I mean, to an advising and contributing circle of ministers.

I have written, as you see, freely and frankly. On all this subject, I have a window in my bosom. You may show what I have written to any body you please, only hold to the legal rule, *if you show any of it show the whole.* I write with love and respect for my

brethren of your city. I write with hope, too, that the good Philadelphia ship, though she may have careened a little, "where two seas meet," will yet lift herself up, and move on her way majestically as ever.

In which hope I send greeting to you, and to all the dear brethren who may care to know what my poor cogitations are.

Very fraternally yours,

ASA D. SMITH.

P. S.—In a letter just received, from an eminent and very influential minister of our Church in the West, he says: "As to the action of your Society, one word. Your Committee can defend it on the ground, that it is called for by the contributors of the Society." He adds: "You will be sustained," etc.

Dr. Hatfield's Reply to a similar Letter.

NEW-YORK, March 20, 1857.

REV. R. ADAIR:

DEAR BROTHER: It would have been better for the brethren at Philadelphia to have examined their witnesses before coming to a decision, and making the decision public. You will see from the *Evangelist* how Dr. Smith and myself regard the action of the Executive Committee. The fullness of his statement removes the necessity of an extended reply on my part to the inquiries made in your letter. We are prepared to defend the Committee in the action, anywhere and everywhere, as Presbyterians and as Christians. We are becoming increasingly sensitive on the subject of slavery. My own opposition to it is deepening daily. In every lawful and honorable way, I shall resist its encroachments. I am sick to the heart of the attempts to keep every Northern Church and its Pastor silent on the whole subject. A few more such letters as Dr. Ross has written, if read at all, will produce such an utter loathing of the system, and of our connection with it, as to make us rejoice at any constitutional means of separating ourselves from all fellowship with slaveholding churches.

As a matter of policy, if nothing more, it is vastly more to our interest to retain the Great West, than the feeble and plague-stricken South. The speeches of Drs. Reed, Boyd, and Ross, with others of the same kind, in the last General Assembly, have already wrought us deep injury. The next Assembly will be told of it. The free West will be heard then. Our brethren at Philadelphia are deceiving themselves, if they think there ever will be peace in our Church, so long as our ministers and elders attempt to defend or justify the continuance of slavery in the churches of our denomination. Our only hope of peace is not in getting rid of the agitation, but of the gangrene itself.

I am for no unconstitutional action. I am a Presbyterian—increasingly so. I love the Church, and shall abide by her principles, so long as I am honored with an humble place in her ministry. But if the South insist on the alternative of utter silence on our part, or their withdrawal from us, I do not, for a moment, hesitate to choose the latter. They must not, can not, should not prescribe to their brethren. It is too much in the spirit of their own institutions. If they can not bear our rebukes, they must retire. So say an increasing number among us in New-York and the West. The Kansas

outrages and the late decision of the Supreme Court have roused up a spirit at the North and West, which says: "If compromises are unconstitutional, so be it. No more compromises in relation to moral evils—away with the evil itself." Depend upon it, such is to be the tone of our Church.

Our Executive Committee can not possibly take one step backward on this subject. They have been years in coming to this position. It is not the work of a moment—not a mere impulsive movement, to be repented of. And they will be sustained.

With kind regards, as ever, to the brethren,

Yours, in the Lord,

EDWIN F. HATFIELD.

II.

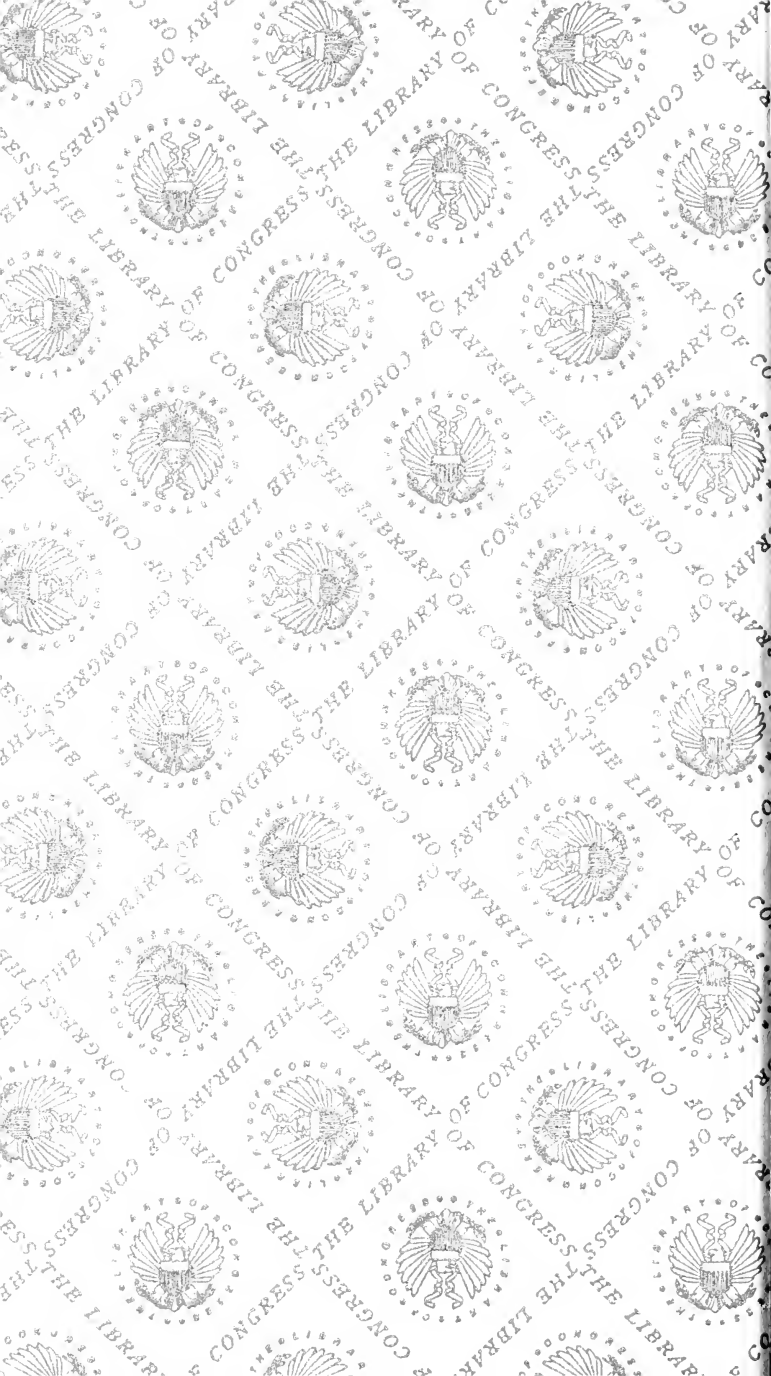
NATURE AND RELATIONS OF THE HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

*From a Sermon, by Rev. Robert W. Patterson, before the
General Assembly, May, 1856.*

"Twelve months since, for the first time within almost a score of years, our General Assembly boldly asserted the right and the duty of deciding for itself what measures should be devised to provide for the feeble churches under its care, and to further the Home Missionary work in departments which seemed to have been neglected. This was done in all good faith toward the Home Missionary Society, with which our particular churches and our Presbyteries have been accustomed to cooperate. It was assumed that the American Home Missionary Society was a voluntary organization, as it always professed to be, entirely independent of the General Assembly, although brought into being and liberally supported by members of the Presbyterian Church. It was assumed that the Presbyterian and the Congregational denominations were not at all, *as bodies*, partners in any missionary association, while most of the members of these two denominations were known to have long cooperated together, *as individuals*, with the understanding that they would avail themselves of the same Society as their common agency in the Home Missionary work, precisely as far as it should be found to accomplish the high Christian purposes which they had in view, and no further. It was therefore assumed that the General Assembly was bound by no compact, expressed or implied, to make the Home Missionary Society its exclusive organ and agent in the prosecution of Home Evangelization by the preaching of the Gospel. It was assumed that the same General Assembly which maintained a Board of Domestic Missions during ten years after the organization of the American Home Missionary Society, was, of right, *as independent of the Society in 1855 as it was in 1835*. And yet it was conceded that the American Home Mis-

sionary Society was one noble agency for the spread of the Gospel in this land, entitled to do its own work according to the best judgment of its managers, and worthy of the cordial and liberal patronage of all our churches.

"This is the true ground. The Home Missionary Society is *not in bondage to the Presbyterian Church*, neither is the Presbyterian Church in bondage to the Home Missionary Society. It is well for the interest of both, that they should clearly understand this important truth. The Home Missionary Society was perfectly competent to decline compliance with the requests made of it by the General Assembly in 1852. And so, on the other side, the General Assembly of 1855 was perfectly competent to make provision for necessities on the Home Missionary field which, in its judgment, were not adequately met by any existing agency."





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