

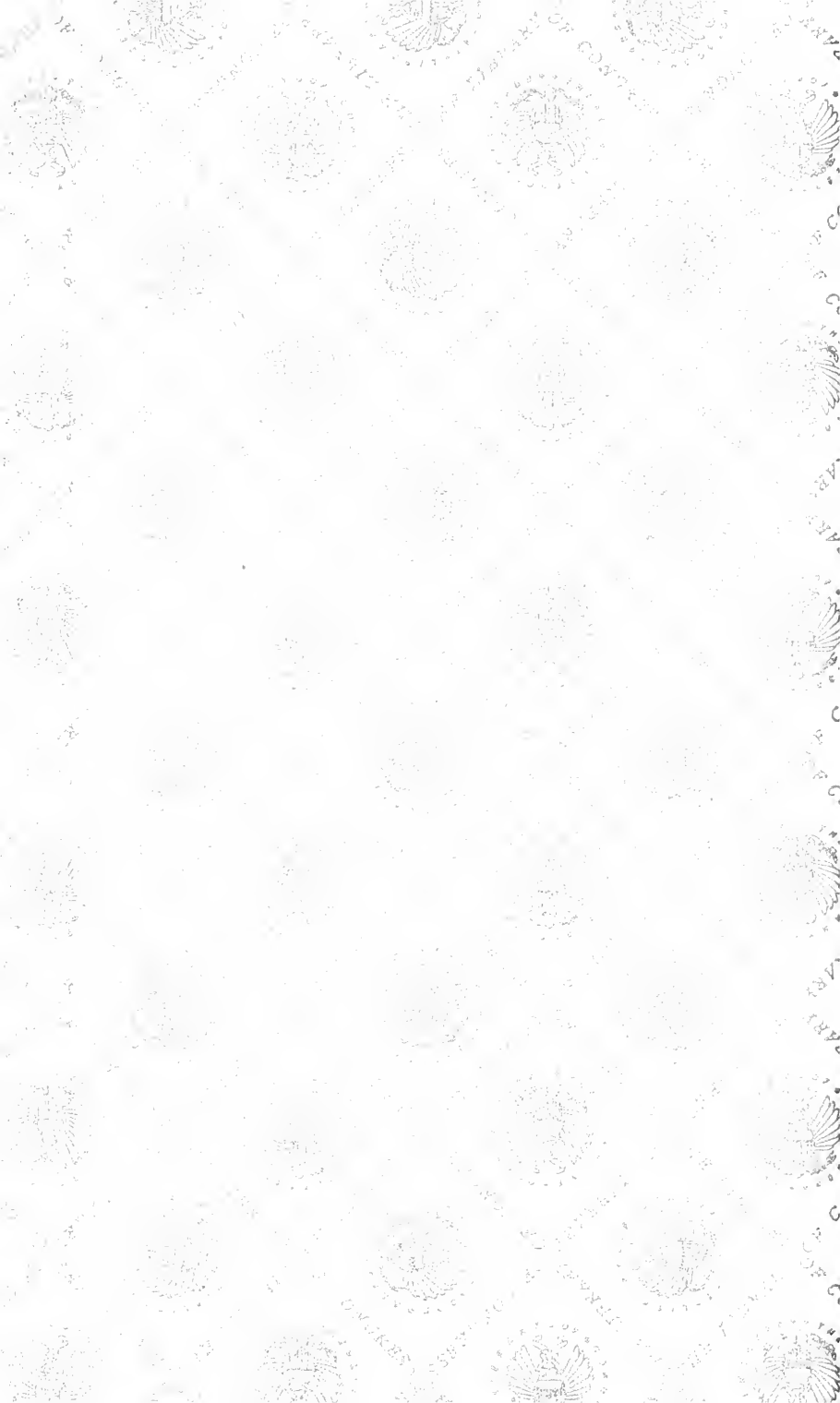
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R E P O R T

OF THE

COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE

WITH

SOUTHERN ECCLESIASTICAL BODIES

ON

S L A V E R Y ;

TO THE

GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF MASSACHUSETTS.

Published by vote of the Association.

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R E P O R T .

To the General Association of Massachusetts. The committee of correspondence on the subject of Slavery, would respectfully submit the following

R E P O R T .

YOUR Committee, as soon after their appointment as was practicable, addressed a general Letter, a copy of which is here appended, to thirty ecclesiastical bodies. These bodies, belonging to both divisions of the Presbyterian church, were, two presbyteries in the District of Columbia—four in Virginia—five in Kentucky—seven in Tennessee—two in Missouri—three in North Carolina—one in South Carolina—two in Georgia—one in Alabama, and three in Mississippi. Returns have been received from seven presbyteries; the substance of which we would now lay before you.

The letter directed to the “Orange” Presbytery, N. C., was re-mailed for the post-office in Salem, within eight days after it first left. In reply to a courteous inquiry for the reason—which inquiry one of the Committee had the interest to make of the southern post-master—a very brief, but a very smart line, on the smallest piece of paper, but with the largest possible postage, was received. It informed us, that the stated clerk of the Presbytery, a step-father of his, had authorized him to say, that “if any more communications of the same kind should be sent, they would be dealt with in the same manner.”

Our letter came back to us, also, from the "Western District" Presbytery, Tenn., with the remark written upon it, that "the Presbytery were fully convinced that no good could result from a correspondence on the subject proposed." The "Mississippi" Presbytery favored us with a guarded, though respectful notice, in which they state, that our communication was taken up for consideration at an appointed time, when it was "Resolved, that, inasmuch as the subject of slavery is not fairly within the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical bodies, therefore, it be not entertained." From the Presbytery of "South Alabama" we received a very frank and earnest answer. This is their letter :

"The mild and christian spirit of your communication has induced us, contrary to our usual course with documents on the subject of slavery hitherto received, to give you a respectful reply. We reciprocate the christian kindness and courtesy breathed throughout your letter to us. Upon the subject of slavery, however, we have not been able to arrive at the conclusion you have done, that slavery in itself is a moral evil, (and this is the only point we feel ourselves, as an ecclesiastical body, at liberty either to examine, or declare the result of that examination,) and therefore do not see the urgent necessity for its abolition so much insisted on. God has undoubtedly sanctioned and given laws for the government of this institution, and neither Christ nor his apostles have condemned, but rather, in their directions to masters and servants, have approbated it. However much our hearts might glow with feelings of philanthropy for this class of our population, and however ardent our desires to see them a free and enlightened people, we consider the door is not yet opened, and the day not yet arrived for such an event.

"You have asked us for our candid opinions and counsel on this subject, which we unhesitatingly give. Permit us then,

in christian candor to say, that the untempered spirit of abolitionism has added not a little in putting further off the day of slave emancipation from our portion of the country. We believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ offers the only remedy which can reach their condition, and relieve the slave from bondage, (if it is ever to be effected). But this has been more signally defeated in its application, through the movements of the abolitionists, than all the influence of infidelity and cupidity combined, as you will see by the following statements which we think have been the result of their efforts.

“1st. The number of slaves in the South renders immediate emancipation not only dangerous to themselves, but doubly so to the safety of the white population.

“2d. The efforts of abolitionists have awakened fear in the slave-holder for his personal safety and the safety of his property, thus combining every class of men, Christian and unbeliever, to hold them in closer bondage for common safety.

“3d. This has led on to cause State enactments which now preclude the hope of ever benefiting the condition of the slave spiritually or temporally, except to a very limited extent. In order to save our people from the influence of incendiary publications upon the slaves, the Legislature of Alabama have enacted :

“1st. That no free person of color or slave shall be taught to spell, read or write under a penalty of \$500, to the owner or teacher of said negro be he bond or free. Thus the Bible, the precious fountain of life, is a sealed book to the black population of this State. This is a crying evil, and chargeable to the abolitionists as the exciting cause.

“2d. The State has enacted that slaves shall not assemble except on their owner's premises, in numbers exceeding five, under pretence of any religious service, without its being an unlawful assembly and to be dispersed as such. And no

negro, free or bond, is allowed (under heavy penalties) to preach to, harangue or exhort, any assembly of negroes, unless there be present at least five slave-holders in such assembly. Thus, in order to prevent collusions from which insurrection might be planned, they are denied the rich blessing of religious worship among themselves.

“3d. The Patrol laws have not only been enacted, but executed with increased rigor. Privileges once more extensive are now denied. Even in going to and returning from church, they are liable to molestation. This has in a great measure grown out of a system of protection against the spirit of abolitionism.

“4th. The State has enacted laws which forbid any one to free or emancipate a slave within the State, except by special legislative enactment, and that too on the ground of some extraordinary act on the part of the slave. Thus, if every man in the State were to leave his slaves free, the laws would still hold them in bondage. *They cannot be freed.*

“The efforts of the abolitionists have diffused a general distrust of the ministers of the gospel throughout our country. Few are permitted to preach to the negroes free of suspicion, and these must be natives of the South, or those who have long resided amongst us. Their efforts have done more to perpetuate the bondage of slavery, than have the kidnappers and slave-traders of the African coast. We, who dwell in the midst of the slave population, and who ought to be as much respected for our piety and our opinions as those at a distance, see the fatal results and mourn over them, as they spread desolation over the spiritual and temporal welfare of the slave. We have remonstrated and expostulated with our brethren at the North, but expostulations have been unheeded, and treated with contempt, or our motives resolved into mere cupidity and avarice. You have asked us to advise as to your relation and duty, and how the emancipation of the slaves is

to be effected? Our answer to this inquiry is, we exhort you *to let it alone*—as every step you have already taken, has only rendered the condition of the slave worse than it ever has been, and has more firmly riveted the chains of bondage, and can never reach the object before you. We for ourselves feel constrained to act as we are now doing, not to touch or meddle with the subject of slavery as a moral or political evil, until God, in His providence, shall open the way before us to act, should He design their emancipation—and our deliberate and solemn advice to you is, *to let it alone.*”

A committee, appointed at a previous meeting, by the “Transylvania” Presbytery, Ken., submitted a report, which was adopted, to this effect. “We reciprocate the feelings of kindness you express towards us as servants of the same great Master and heirs of the same glorious promises with yourselves.” * * * * “But were we to attempt to answer your questions, with the fulness and candor which you desire, and which would be necessary to make our answer available for any practical and good purpose, we should be constrained to write a volume. We have, also, considerable diversity of opinion among ourselves on all questions touching this momentous subject—how then could we undertake to expound to you your duty on this matter, when we are not agreed among ourselves in reference to our own. We trust then, brethren, that you will not attribute it to any want of appreciation of your kind intentions towards us, and your conscientious difficulties as to your own course—nor to any deficiency of respect for your venerable body—nor to any disposition to shrink from proper responsibility, when we decline any attempt to give you an expression of our views on the points of inquiry which you have proposed.

“Much has been already written upon this subject, here and elsewhere, and we cannot aid you in making up your

own views of duty, further than to recommend you to do it in the fear of God, and in a kind spirit; availing yourselves of the information and views which have been already thrown before the public."

The Presbytery of "West Tennessee" take a position which, as it will be seen, is somewhat in advance of any thus far assumed by others. We present their whole letter.

"We have been appointed by the Presbytery of 'West Tennessee' as a committee, to answer, on their behalf, the communication which you were pleased to address to them.

"However we may differ in our views of duty in respect to the great question of slavery, in this we will agree,—that those who have obtained pardon through the same atoning sacrifice, and have by the same spirit of adoption cried, Abba, Father, to the same God, should communicate to each other, with frankness and freedom, their views on all questions concerning christian morality, and especially on those subjects, on which they are supposed to entertain opposite opinions.

"And, dear brethren, if we have the same measure of the spirit of Christ, which we believe from your communication has been bestowed upon you, a free interchange of views will be mutually profitable. Whenever distrust, on one hand, and angry denunciation on the other, begin to separate those, whose religion teaches them to bear each other's burdens, and to cultivate, above all things, fervent charity among themselves, well may we tremble for the ties, which have held together the repulsive interests of civil society.

"That the whole South is groaning under evils connected with slavery, is a fact, which we will neither deny nor disguise. We meet them wherever we go, and are compelled to contend against them in our daily labors, as ministers of the gospel and as Christians. We doubt not but a large majority of the South view slavery as a great political evil,

and few will be found, who believe the system has any foundation in justice or righteousness. Many are anxious to wipe forever from our political and religious character this foul blot ; but how this is to be done, so as to secure the best interests of all concerned, we have not yet found. We regard the interests of slavery, as it exists among us, as purely political, and therefore beyond our immediate control as Christians and christian ministers. We believe that the example of our Lord and his apostles clearly defines our duty in regard to slavery—at least, we feel safe in taking this as our pattern. During their ministration, slavery the most abject was authorized by law, and slaves were held by those, whom they acknowledged as christian brethren ; and yet they directed none of their efforts towards the immediate abolition of slavery ; but enjoined, on both masters and servants, the faithful performance of their reciprocal duties, in the relation in which they found them. We do believe this is the only safe ground. If, however, there be any other position more favorable to the slave and his master, to the good of the world and the glory of Christ, we trust that we are not unwilling to know it. Our ministers preach everywhere, that we should love our neighbor as ourselves, and many of them, to as great an extent, we believe, as any others, endeavor by their example to enforce the golden rule of morality: ‘ All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.’ And some of as bright examples of the fulfilment of this rule could be furnished from the relations of master and slave, as exist in any other relation in life. Where this exists, the evils of slavery are greatly mitigated, if not entirely destroyed. Strange as it may seem to those who have not witnessed it, yet it is true, that nothing but physical force could separate from their masters, a large proportion of the slaves of this country,—and we do

believe that a majority of our slaves are more contented, cheerful and happy than free persons of color among us.— We also believe, that the present condition of the slave, as protected and provided for, both by the laws of the land, and the best temporal interests of the master, is preferable to freedom itself, where the two races are citizens together of a common government.

“ You express your willingness, and even your *desire* to know our views of your duties and responsibilities in reference to this large interest. Our opinion is, that you can do much to ameliorate the condition of slaves at the South, if you will come and preach to them and their masters the glorious gospel of God our Savior. We greatly need just such men as you have, and we have now open before us a wide and effectual door. You can preach the Gospel without molestation to the slaves of even the ungodly. The Gospel is adapted to the wants of the world, and if faithfully preached, it will evince its tendency to correct whatever evils lie in its way. This, dear brethren, we believe is the most effectual means you can employ to counteract all the evils of slavery. We know not a single church, in all our land, which has no accommodations for the black population, and most of our ministers preach a portion of their time to the slaves. A minister from the North, who at this time has charge of one of our village churches, was quite surprised, when he was invited by two of the elders to preach to the slaves on the afternoon of each sabbath ; and he would have declined, supposing it to be unsafe, if these elders had not themselves been slaveholders. To his astonishment, he saw the slaves in the pews, and their masters occupying the seats allotted to the negroes. Now, brethren, come, and you may do likewise. You will find the slaves and their masters ready to receive you, and the Gospel you preach.—Come then, and help us to build our schools, our colleges, our theological

seminaries and our churches. Christ will give us success, and His gospel will purify the hearts of slaves and masters, and make them rejoice together as brethren beloved.

“ We would further say, that by emigration to the South, bringing with you enterprising and scientific farmers and mechanics, you will put free labor in competition with slave labor, and so reduce the value of slaves, and at the same time diminish proportionably the interest of the system, and strengthen its opposite. By this means, also, you may put the country into a condition for prosperity, when universal emancipation shall have taken place.

“ We have attentively observed the influence of discussion of this subject at the North, on the condition of the slave, and we are fully persuaded that it is injurious. Any direct action, which you can take at the North, will be viewed, by a majority at the South, as an unwarrantable interference with their prerogatives as sovereign States, and it will serve only to wake up a jealousy, that will abridge the privileges which the slave now enjoys. You, brethren, may as well hope to convert the heathen by discussing the folly of idolatry, in your ecclesiastical meetings, as to expect, by the same means, to secure the emancipation of our slaves. You expect to save the heathen only by self-denying and persevering labors among them. Adopt the same course towards slavery, and you may promise yourselves success. If the Gospel will not triumph over the evils connected with the system, the case is hopeless. The inference is easy. We leave it with you.”

The remaining communication, which we have to bring to your notice, is from the “Kingston” Presbytery, Tenn. and which also we will give entire.

“ You will accept our assurance of a sincere sense of obligation for the fraternal spirit of your communication, and of interest in the object it appears to have in view. And

though our delicate relations to southern society, of which you speak as matter of observation, are to us matter of perplexing experience, we do not hesitate to avow our sympathy with you on this subject, so far, at least, as your epistle makes expression of your views and feelings. We agree with you, that the ministry and the church of Christ are deeply involved in the responsibility of the existence of Slavery, and of its continuance, and of every degree of rigor with which the yoke of oppression is bound upon the neck of a suffering man, and trust we are, as individuals, willing to do whatever manifest duty dictates. As individuals, we are not called *master* by any human being. In our Presbytery there is not one, and in the churches under our care, there are but few, who consider the system of slavery, as it exists among us, in any other light than a sin against God and man, and detrimental to all the better interests of the community. And we hope that you will have the charity to believe that we do exert ourselves to the extent we deem our location and circumstances permit, in ameliorating the present condition of the slave, and encouraging those moral sentiments in the minds of the community, that may work his ultimate redemption. To what extent our public efforts can be carried on this point, you need to be here to know. More than one seventh of the population of our State are in bondage. Near another seventh are either present or prospective slaveholders. The influence of wealth and fashion give to the latter a preponderancy in our Legislative councils, whose jealous eye is never asleep on this subject; and in this country, the press, the pulpit and the post-office are attempted to be put under a kind of censorship, that would leave us only the ear of private confidence on this momentous subject. Public sentiment, however, in this division of our State, does not sanction these restrictions. This state of things, you will regret as much to hear, as we to say, has, in some part, been super-

induced by the imprudent measures of a few, unjustly imputed to the many, who cherish the spirit of emancipation. In short, between the excess of the few in the North, who would call your letter to us tame and nerveless, (you know them by this description,) and the perversions that are practised upon their words and deeds, by southerners, our work is rendered hazardous and difficult, if not impracticable. Suspicion is thus thrown upon every man, who attains to any high degree of reputation as an honest philanthropist.—Excesses of which he never dreamed, are unsparingly imputed to him, and often with too much success imposed upon the popular credulity; clearly showing that the slaveholding interest sees more to fear in the moderation of cautious men, than in the fierceness of the precipitate.

“The conviction has long been extensively prevalent among us, that we *must* dispose of the evil, or it *will dispose of us*; and beyond the spray of popular excitement, there is a sober, second thought from which something may be hoped on the subject. Throughout the eastern division of Tennessee, a small part of which we occupy, we find but few slaveholders who dare to *justify* the system, but barely venture to *palliate*, in their particular cases. And, indeed, many are to be commiserated in their misfortune as holders of slaves entailed on them by inheritance, and chained to them by laws prohibiting emancipation on any other condition than immediate expatriation.

“After these statements of our views and practices, it would be unkind in us not to notice your condescending request for any suggestions we may think proper to make, in reference to *your* relation to the subject; and we need say no more than what your own reflections will suggest, in view of all the facts we have presented. We think nothing can take a good effect, that does not come in the way of a candid, affectionate appeal to the conscience of the reflecting public.

In this way, and in this way only, can you reach the conscience of the master, or of those who make laws for his benefit. In this way only can you either alleviate or break the yoke. We hope you need not the suggestion, that every emancipation effected by means which would be considered, by the slavery code, as violence or fraud—every clandestine removal of a slave from the southern States, or detention unlawfully of a fugitive slave, greatly increases the rigor of southern slavery—multiplies the sufferings of the slaves, and throws the greatest obstacles in the way of their emancipation.

“With these expressions of our views and feelings, we proffer you our respectful and sincere regard, as your brethren and fellow-laborers in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Such, then, are the returns, which your Committee have received from different ecclesiastical bodies. They are fewer in number than could have been reasonably expected, even after allowing for all known, or any incidental causes that may have operated against us; though we feel that the effort has by no means been lost where we have heard nothing from it. Their average tone, however, considering the circumstances of the case, is very welcome; full as open and high as could have been anticipated, while some of their strains are beyond our own communication to them. Nor can it fail to arrest the attention of the Association, that these replies breathe the spirit of liberty—of liberty in personal feeling, no less than in respect to the oppressed—very much in proportion as the districts from which they come, and the men who send them, are themselves free from the entanglements of the system from which we would save them—a fact, as we conceive, that is to be laid up in the mind of every moralist, and to be made one of the fixed elements of reasoning on this whole subject. As our object has been to call the attention of our southern brethren to their duty

to the slave, rather than to instruct them in it, to appeal to their consciences, rather than to enter into discussion, the Committee have not thought it important to reply to these communications, as in one instance, at least, they were expressly and kindly invited to do. They do feel, however, that our responsibility does not end here. They feel, that we are to put forth new efforts for the bondman, till the strongest link of the last chain shall have been broken, and that a share of this labor, which still we would not undertake to parcel out, belongs to the General Association of Massachusetts. And if we should be invited or permitted to make a more specific suggestion, it would be this : *that the Association should now address the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church*, with whom we are in correspondence, and whose action upon the subject would be greatly felt by the numerous judicatories below, and all the churches within their limits. To such a course, your Committee can see no serious objection, while the great question itself, at issue, sends out all its appeals in favor of it. At first view, the plan would seem to be natural and feasible, both hopeful and effective, and why should it not be adopted ?

Does any one go back here so far, as to doubt the authority of the Association to act in such a matter ? We point him to one of its declared objects ; which is, “to co-operate with one another, and with *other ecclesiastical bodies*, in the most eligible measures for advancing the cause of truth and holiness.” We remind him of the practice of the Association on questions of a moral and religious nature, for the years that are past, as well as of the decided judgment and strong interest manifested on this subject, at its last three meetings. Should it be said, that it is hardly modest in us to assume that this would be the “most eligible” method of promoting the cause of truth and holiness ; that the embarrassments and the prejudices of southern ministers and ecclesiastical bodies render

such a step unpromising and unwise ; we reply in the sentiments and language of some of these very men. One Presbytery says, “ Those, who have obtained pardon through the same atoning sacrifice, and have by the same spirit of adoption cried, Abba, Father, to the same God, should communicate to each other, with frankness and freedom, their views, on all questions concerning christian morality, and *especially* on those subjects on which they are supposed to entertain *opposite opinions.*” Another Presbytery says, “ The ministry and the church of Christ are deeply involved in the responsibility of the existence of slavery, and of its continuance, and of *every degree* of rigor with which the yoke of oppression is bound upon the neck of a suffering man.” Should it be still urged, that these General Assemblies did recently take up the subject of slavery, only to lay it down again where it was before, we still reply. The fact, that they entertained the question, both so well and so poorly as they did, is a reason why it should be returned upon their hands. A large number of their influential minds are moving in this grand undertaking, notwithstanding the heavy obstacles that are known to obstruct their way. The members, too, of these bodies change from year to year ; while, progress must be made by such men, as sure as the earth continues to roll onward. Nor are we at liberty to cast the imputation upon our brethren, that our appeals will be in vain ; that, for the first time, light shall lose its brightness, and love, its warmth. Nor yet, would even a just apprehension of failure be the necessary measure of our duty. Until we have sent forth the voice of entreaty and admonition, it is ours—and we are answerable for its lost power.

Or, possibly, some one may venture to take the bold position, that we, at the North, have nothing to do with the matter of slavery. But does this mean, that the North did not lend her wealth, and her ships, and her restless activity, to

increase and perpetuate slavery? Does it mean, that she did not put her hand to that daring sentiment of the Constitution which recognizes the system, and pledges her—as far as that can do it—to uphold it by her courts, and her treasures, and her blood? Does it mean, that when that compact was formed, both parties did not look for the entire abolition of slavery before the present day? Does it mean, that this leaven of slavery has not always pervaded the policy of our government, and the interests of our whole country? Does it mean, that we are not regarded abroad as one people, in this reckless inconsistency and this huge iniquity? But still, we have nothing to do with slavery! And is it, for the graver and wider reason, that moral obligation does not travel beyond certain geographical lines? That, one is first made a New Englander, or a Carolinian, and afterwards, a religious being? First, with blind obeisance to custom and clamor, and then, with a conscience? Truly, truly, let them, who make a trade of politics and office, and hang on the smiles of men in power or the populace, put forth this plea—or them, who live to get gain, whether by their own manufactures and goods, or by the human limbs and the living soul which God hath made; but not those, who send missionaries to China, and the islands of the sea! We will not dare, though others should, to give a better definition of our “NEIGHBOR,” than that which has been given!

Or is it urged, again, that the spirit and measures of a portion of the people of the free States have been wrong and injurious? Then is the right spirit, and the right measures, demanded the more. But, with all due acknowledgment of what is claimed here, we would still inquire, whether it is not more pertinent and necessary, more healthy and profitable, to turn our minds in a different direction. There is another truth, which it is all important for us to note; all important for our brethren of the South, no less than for us,

and which must be preserved from the rising to the setting sun; a truth, which, in allegiance to God, we are bound to proclaim, if we cannot afford it in justice to a part of these reformers. It is this: no great moral enterprise has ever been undertaken in this world yet, that did not create a conflict, 'a din and a dust,' which they only can appreciate, whose consciences are sound, whose firmness is equal to the present, and whose faith enables them to 'bide their time.' And were angels to come down from the skies, to devise means and set them in motion for the deliverance of the slave; commissioned to give specific directions to the millions connected with the interest, calling each by name, and assigning a duty and a place to each, they would at first fail of great success; and that, very much in proportion to their rigid adherence to their instructions!

Your Committee would respectfully submit, whether it is right to allow our minds to be occupied by such foreign considerations. Is it more manly than Christian, is it more noble than wise, in such a body as the General Association of Massachusetts, and such men as the Orthodox ministers of this State, the lineal descendants of the Puritan preachers, to exhaust so much of their strength in complaining of other reformers, whether real or spurious, and to allow these to become, in any way, so much the standard of comparison? We would be permitted seriously to inquire, whether it is gravely proposed by them to stand still where they are, till this torrent, however strong and turbid, has passed by, before they can move forward their own victorious host.

LABITER ET LABETUR.

We are much agreed in our views of American slavery. Waiving the consideration of all welcome exceptions among the masters, passing by all poor abstractions and special pleadings, as an unauthorized and a wicked hinderance in such a broad undertaking, we are agreed, that, as a system,

a system of principles and influences, affecting all classes and all interests, the sun, in the whole width of his circuit and the length of his years, has seldom looked down upon one more wretched; upon a heavier calamity to mankind, a more flagrant crime against the individual, a bolder offence against God! We believe, also, that this system can, and must, and will be done away. But what are we now attempting, that, in any manner, corresponds to all this? At this stage of the enterprise, much of the influence must flow in from abroad upon the slave States; and it is equally clear, that the ministers of New England are better prepared, in some respects, to contribute to this influence, than our brethren in the other free States. But what are we doing? Are we true to the spirit of our fathers? Are we true to the spirit of our political fathers? For these last, whether North or South, had no more idea that slavery was to endure and strengthen itself as it has done, than our spiritual fathers had, that we are to bow our necks to the Romish Pontiff, or sit down contented with a corrupted Gospel, and a dead church.

Truly, our responsibility is very heavy, as our opportunity is very large. Let us not be deceived, in this grand matter: for God is not mocked; nor is the compassionate Redeemer untouched by sorrow. Verily, we must stand by the right and the true, come what may come; for God has so commanded. We must plead for the suffering and the dumb, for no man cares for such, and for such Christ died. We must stand unmoved, except by our own full convictions and upheaving emotions, serene with the testimony of the martyr's conscience, and patient with a prophet's faith. Deliverance will yet come to the captive, joy to the heart of every philanthropist, and blessings upon the heads of all the people of our land. Justice will yet have her day. Truth, the 'daughter of time,' that dear daughter of the skies, will speedily appear, and shall be welcomed by every State, and

city, and hamlet, throughout our wide domain. In a clear view of her coming—for even now she is upon the distant hills—we will ourselves rejoice and be glad, and go forth to meet her; we, who, by our very birthright, are to be her chosen servants, and her fastest friends. Base ends, partisan feelings, blind prejudice, morbid obstinacy, unhallowed strife—these, we will leave to others; for we have a great work to do on the earth, and our day hastens to its close. As in the broad and crowded city, the solemn watchmen, looking upward to the pure stars of heaven, and oppressed by the heavy stillness of midnight, are forced to wonder how its great heart could have beat a short time before to such schemes of pleasure and wealth, of pride and display, of selfishness and passion; so do angels, as they tread the walls of the golden city, wonder, and wonder again, at the childish and bold excitements of men, who are so soon to lie down in the deep solitude of the grave!

ALEX. J. SESSIONS,	} <i>Committee</i>
JOSIAH CLARK,	
ORIN FOWLER,	
JACOB IDE,	
	<i>of</i>
	<i>Gen. Assoc. Mass.</i>

APPENDIX.

COPY OF THE COMMITTEE'S LETTER.

To ——

DEAR BRETHREN IN CHRIST—We have been appointed by the General Association of Massachusetts as a Committee of Correspondence, should our intentions be favorably received by yourselves and others, upon the subject of Slavery. The doings of the Association in this respect are comprised in the following preamble and resolution.

Whereas, this Association, having repeatedly expressed their views respecting the moral character of slavery and the evils arising out of it, believe that a friendly correspondence with some ecclesiastical body, in some one of the slave States, might possibly have a favorable influence upon emancipation,—therefore,

Resolved, That a Committee of five be appointed to open such correspondence; and if practicable, report to this Association at the next meeting.”

And now, brethren, may we not address a few lines to you, in the execution of our trust, with a frankness and freedom answering to the honesty of our purpose and the kindness of our feelings. We are not unapprised of the difficulties by which you may deem yourselves surrounded in meeting our advances, but we should be very unwilling to think that the Association have really erred in proffering to you such a correspondence. For we remember that we are citizens with you of the same Republic—sharing very largely in the responsibility of having introduced the condition of slavery, and of having given countenance to it in the articles of our national confederation, as well as being constantly connected with it in still other forms. We realize that we are moral beings together—under obligations, from which nothing can release us, to exert for mutual good whatever influence may have been committed to us, and actually ever sending forth an influence for evil if not for good—that we are followers of a common Redeemer, to

whom we owe no debt more sacred than that we should be faithful to each other, while the day shall last—that we are even ministers together of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God—and we cannot believe that such a course is opposed either to duty, propriety, or true wisdom. We would inquire then, whether from the nature of their profession and position, as well as their numbers, Christians and Christian ministers in the slave States, are not charged with special responsibility, if not with the burden of the responsibility, in respect to this complicated and momentous question. Is it not very much within their power to accomplish the work, in which we would most readily assist, of calming the troubled waters of sectional jealousy, and political animosity, that, wrought into commotion by the presence of such an interest, have so often, and at times so fearfully beat against the bulwarks of our cherished Union. And is it not fully within their power, to give the right temper and tone upon this subject to all the religious intercourse and ecclesiastical action between themselves and their brethren of the free States.

We suppose, too, that you disapprove with us, of the system, as such, of slavery. We suppose that however much you may discriminate and distinguish, whatever modifications and exceptions you may make, you still feel that the system—as originated in cupidity and violence, as defined and constituted in the naked statute—has no real foundation in justice and righteousness, or even in true policy: that, at least, you would say here as did Paul, when addressing servants, if you “might be made free” from it, you would “use it rather;” and that you think it destined eventually to pass entirely and forever away. And we would therefore inquire, whether you might not do something towards its removal beyond what you are now doing, or have ever attempted. Has not the period arrived, when the moral and religious sentiment of the South should be gathered up and husbanded, embodied and strengthened, and systematically and religiously directed to this grand end—however men of the world and mere politicians may differ from you, or even hope that you are with them, in their limited views and unsanctified principles. We do feel, brethren, that this great and good undertaking ought to be commenced by you, and believe that we have in effect the immediate support of large numbers scattered throughout your own borders, as well as the recorded opinions, at former times, of your leading men in the affairs of State, no less than those of the Church. Were there no

other consideration to weigh down our minds and impel us to urge such a suggestion, this one, which is constantly present with us, would do it, viz., that you have the evil upon your hands to be disposed of, in some way or other; that it is greatly increased by every year's delay; and that in any event, it must soon force itself upon the anxious attention of all classes at the South; upon that of politicians and worldly men themselves, as well as of Christians and preachers of the gospel.

With the same intent and to the same end, we would express our willingness and our desire to receive light from you, as to our own particular responsibilities and duties. We would ascertain what, in your apprehension, is the exact and practical relation we sustain to this large interest. Are we under any present obligation in respect to it, and if we are, we would have you show us both the amount and the form of it: if we have any influence to exert upon it—and some we must have, whether we choose it or not—in what way can we expend it to the best advantage. Some ground here we must occupy, some attitude we must assume before the South, before the North, and before the world, and can you assist us in determining what it shall be. For we are somewhat assured, and are happy in the assurance, that we are disposed to occupy our just position, whatever it may be, unmoved by undue forces from either side of this contested and exciting question.

These are some of the thoughts, dear brethren, which we would throw out before you, as the organ of the General Association of Massachusetts, and which we do not doubt, are the thoughts of the whole christian community at the North, and really the sentiment of all classes and parties throughout the free States. They spring up of themselves, most naturally and easily, as soon as we begin to write. They spring from our truest and most sacred convictions, and so we trust they will be received; while we will accord to you the same generous freedom, and shall expect from you the same becoming frankness, in any communication you may be pleased to forward to us.

With true esteem,

Yours in the bonds and fellowship of the Gospel,

ALEX. J. SESSIONS,	} Committee of Gen. Assoc. Mass.
JOSIAH CLARK,	
CALVIN DURFEE,	
ORIN FOWLER,	
JACOB IDE,	

Salem, January, 1842.





