





A REVIEW  
OF THE  
OFFICIAL APOLOGIES

OF THE  
*American Tract Society,*

FOR ITS  
SILENCE ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.

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FROM THE NEW-YORK DAILY TRIBUNE.

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NAPOLEON once remarked that it was wiser in a government to give bad reasons for an unpopular measure than to remain silent. Silence in such cases is supposed to arise, either from a disregard to public opinion, or a conscious inability to satisfy it; on the other hand, a defence is a flattering appeal to the judgment of the public. While many will be unable to detect the false logic of the defence, the partisans of the government will insist that the argument is irresistible, and pour obloquy on all who fail to acknowledge its force. The Rev. gentleman who at the last anniversary began his speech with declaring "that there was no occasion for an apology for the Society," and concluded with the exhortation "never, never apologize," evinced more impulsive zeal than sound judgment.

The Society had been arraigned at the bar of the public for its avowed neutrality on the Slavery question and all the immoralities necessarily connected with human bondage, and likewise for its careful expurgation of Anti-Slavery sentiments from its reprints. Eminent Christians, both lay and clerical, secular and religious newspapers, individual churches and ecclesiastical bodies, had all remonstrated against this course. But the advice of the Rev. orator was followed, and the managers, in their dignity, gave no sign that a murmur of dissatisfaction reached their ears. At length a city church, and one of undoubted evangelical sentiments, voted to discontinue for the future its usual congregational collections for the Society. Matters now began to look serious. Extra exertions had indeed thus far prevented a diminution of funds, but many of the contributors were dissatisfied, and the example just set might be extensively followed. Silence had not suppressed agitation, and it was high time to adopt Napoleon's policy,

and to give *reasons*, whether good or bad. But what reasons could be given? It might indeed be said, and we believe with great truth, that the Publishing Committee being divided in opinion as to the immorality of Slavery, and each having a veto on every tract, it was not in the power of the Committee to publish a word against Slavery. But such an avowal would startle and harass a vast number of the friends of the Society, and lead to an effort at the next election to purge the Committee of its Pro-Slavery members. Again, it might be urged, that the officers, indeed, had no sympathy with Slavery, but it was their duty to avoid lessening the funds of the Society, and thereby impairing its usefulness. Hence they deemed it inexpedient to offend their slaveholding friends. All this might be true, but it would be avowedly doing evil that good might come, acting on the maxim that the end sanctifies the means. A singular expedient was adopted. On the 6th February last, an address to the public was issued under the title of "Circular." It bore the signatures of the President, of the six members of the Publishing Committee, the five of the Distributing Committee, the six of the Finance Committee, and of the four Secretaries. It was moreover accompanied by a certificate of the unanimous concurrence of the Executive Committee. Thus was the document invested with all the official authority that could be given to it. Care was taken to save the dignity of the Society, by avoiding, in this elaborate and official apology, the appearance of a defence. Not a word acknowledges that a complaint has been uttered against the Society, not an intimation is given that the signers are conscious of the existence of a slave! The circular is not to vindicate the Society, but to inform the public. It is issued "to answer inquiries which have been made, and perhaps remove erroneous impressions known to exist in the minds of some."

We are told that the fundamental principle of the Society is found in the first article of the Constitution, namely :

"This Society shall be denominated the American Tract Society ; the object of which shall be to diffuse a knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of sinners, and to promote the interests of vital godliness and sound morality, by the circulation of religious tracts, calculated to receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians."

Every thing proposed for publication is, by the Constitution, to be submitted to the Committee of Publication, which "shall contain no two members of the same ecclesiastical connection, and no tract shall be published to which any member of that Committee shall object."

"Tracts on particular immoralities," are issued which the Committee judge to be "scriptural and adapted to be useful and to be approved by all evangelical Christians." "The Committee are especially precluded from presenting those aspects of any subject that involve

the community in sectional or political strife." This, we suppose, is expressed as an opinion founded on views of expediency, as no constitutional authority is quoted, nor is any constitutional provision with regard to sectional sins, as Mormonism, for instance, known to exist.

"All works of living authors are issued on their own sanction. Authors in the mother country have, in some instances, as the Memoir of Mary Lundie Duncan, confided the abridgment of a work to the discretion of the Committee." Then comes an argument on the right and necessity of occasionally abridging the works of deceased authors.

Such is a fair, honest summary of the arguments of the circular, amounting virtually to this brief apology: "We can not publish against Slavery, because no condemnation of it would be calculated to receive the approbation of *all* evangelical Christians, and for the same reason, in our reprints, we omit all reflections on Slavery; thus abridging the works of living authors with their own consent, and of deceased authors in virtue of our right to abridge their books."

This very dignified apology, in which all allusion to the subject which called it forth was adroitly avoided, failed, it would seem, to satisfy one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society. He wrote to the Secretaries to know "how far the Society bears its testimony against the evils of Slavery, and on what ground it refrains from more boldly denouncing the system, whoever it may offend, and whatever may be the consequences." To this letter a reply was returned the 12th of March last, signed by the senior member of the Publishing Committee, the Rev. John Knox, D.D., and the senior Secretary, the Rev. W. A. Hallock. Thus a high official character was given to the letter, which, with its publication, warrants us in regarding it as the second apology put forth by the Society. The document communicates the unexpected intelligence that—

"The idea that this Society has been silent as to the evils of Slavery can be entertained by no one who has read its publications." This is indeed strange news, and it is to be regretted that the publications referred to had not been pointed out. Next we are told that the works of the Society, "like the moral and religious works of our language generally, and the Holy Scriptures, make frequent allusions to the subject (Slavery), never approving it or apologizing for it." Should a tract containing all the passages of the Bible relating to Slavery be deemed useful, there would be no objection to its publication. The executive officers of the Society as individuals have no sympathy with Slavery."

"How far can the Society go in showing the evils of Slavery? We answer: Its charter allows it to go so far as evangelical Christians in the Northern and Southern States can approve the publications it may issue, and no further." Then comes the constitutional provision already quoted. "But has not the Society published on intemperance and other social evils what many evangelical Christians do not approve? It

has not, so far as we know!" In a note we are informed that Mather's Essays, in which allusions to Slavery were omitted, was published from an English edition not containing said allusions. The alteration in Gurney was made at the suggestion of the Committee, with the consent of the author. The Memoir of Mary Lundie Duncan was intrusted to the Committee by the author, to be abridged at their discretion.

We have abstained from interrupting our account of these two apologies by comments, wishing the reader to understand fully and fairly the ground on which the Society rests its defence. It is now time to examine both the logic and the truthfulness of the defence.

The Society was formed, as intimated by its Constitution, for the purpose of promoting Christian faith and Christian practice, by the publication of religious tracts. But all Christians are not of the same faith, hence their division into distinct denominations, defining in creeds and standards the doctrines they severally hold. On comparing these creeds, certain important doctrines are found to be contained in many of them. These doctrines thus alike held in common by many Protestant denominations are called evangelical, and those holding them are designated as "Evangelical Christians." The Society was formed by persons claiming this appellation, and it was agreed that the doctrines to be inculcated should be those only held in common by the denominations to which they severally belonged. To secure fidelity to this agreement, each member of the Publishing Committee was given a veto on every tract, and no two members could belong to the same denomination. The tracts were to be calculated to receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians, that is, of all who held the evangelical doctrines. The denominations represented in the Committee are understood to be the Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, Methodist, Dutch Reformed, and Calvinistic Congregational. Of course no tract can constitutionally conflict with any thing contained in the standards of these sects, and this is all that can be rationally understood as required by the provision respecting the approbation of *all* evangelical Christians. Questions of doctrine are settled by reference to creeds and standards, but not questions of morals. On such questions there is no necessary agreement or opposition between any two denominations represented in the Society, and hence there is no possibility of ascertaining the assent of *all* the members of the six denominations on a point of practice—dancing, for instance—as there is, on a point of doctrine. Yet, on one question of morals, and one only, it has been found convenient to put a construction on what is called "the fundamental principle" which was never contemplated, which is both *absurd* and impracticable, and which the Publishing Committee has, from the



organization of the Society to the present day, in practice utterly repudiated. The construction is, that tracts inculcating "sound morality," and of course rebuking antagonistic vices, must, like doctrinal tracts, be calculated to "receive the approbation of *all* evangelical Christians." In other words, the Society may not condemn as immoral any habit or practice in which one or more Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians and others, may indulge, and which they may contend is good and lawful. Of course, the Society must confine its rebukes to such vices only as are peculiar to "outside barbarians," and "sound morality" is to be urged on Papists, Quakers and Unitarians, but not on evangelicals! All erring Presbyterians, Episcopalians and others are constitutionally shielded from the Christian admonitions of the Society.

The Circular intimates that only such tracts are issued on "particular immoralities" as are adapted "to be approved by *all* evangelical Christians," and Messrs. Hallock and Knox expressly avow their ignorance of any tract on intemperance or other evils which many evangelical Christians disapprove! It is surely extraordinary that these gentlemen are unconscious that the opinions inculcated by the Society in regard to total abstinence, dancing, works of fiction, etc., have been controverted by vast multitudes of evangelical Christians, including not a few of their clergy. Let us examine some of the tracts against "particular immoralities," and judge for ourselves whether it is in human nature that the thousands and tens of thousands thus censured should approve of the infliction. In each of the six denominations there are very many who not only dance themselves, but send their children to dancing-school. They are thus addressed:

"O Christian parent! pause and pray long and earnestly, and you will never consent that a child of yours shall be seen in a ball-room. 'Their children dance' is a characteristic, not of Christian families, but of those asking, 'What is the Almighty that we should serve him?' Brethren are grieved when you teach your children that which grieves them when done by yourself."—*Dancing as a Social Amusement.*

We have a tract against the "Theatre, the Circus, and the Horse-race," just as if none but heretics attended such places. Another against "Fashionable Amusements," not calculated to receive the approbation of all evangelical young ladies and gentlemen. We have most pungent addresses to distillers, yet we can scarcely believe the Committee never heard of the famous evangelical distiller, Deacon Giles, nor of his exceeding wrath against a reverend reprover of his business. The fraternity of evangelical distillers and retailers is by no means small, and yet the Society has again and again severely

scourged these men, without even inquiring whether they *all approve* of the castigation.

Probably not one in five Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and others, practice total abstinence from all intoxicating liquors, while multitudes vindicate their moderate use as scriptural, and warranted by the example of our Lord himself. Nevertheless, the Committee, as if forgetful of the constitutional provision, issue a tract in behalf of total abstinence; nay, so far from regarding the approbation of all evangelical Christians as indispensable, they assail the very Church herself, embracing the six denominations, and charge her with being bewitched and asleep:

“Our next opposition is from a band clothed in white, enlisted soldiers of the Church; engaged in every good work of benevolence, they come to intercede for the monster (moderate drinking), and oppose our enterprise. What can be the meaning of this? Oh! where lies this astonishing witchery? What has put the Church to sleep?”

Novel-reading, although common among evangelicals, is freely denounced.

One of the most universal of all habits is the use of tobacco. Whatever else may be said against this habit it has rarely indeed been deemed immoral. Bishops, priests, deacons, elders and communicants smoke, chew and snuff. Probably three fourths of all the male subscribers to the Society indulge themselves in this habit. Nevertheless, *the very same Committee* who tell the public that even tracts on “particular immoralities” must be adapted “to be approved by all evangelical Christians,” sent forth nearly simultaneously with the Circular, the following counterblast to tobacco, not, it would seem, particularly adapted to prove very fragrant to evangelical nostrils:

“What Christian can indulge himself in the habit of using tobacco—a habit which benumbs the moral sense, as well as pollutes the body, that temple which is designed for the indwelling of the Spirit of Truth? How long are the sacred altars of God to be polluted with this unhallowed offering, and the garments of the priesthood to remain uncleansed from its defilements?”

Verily, the American Tract Society is a “peculiar institution.” It wages a vigorous and often a ruthless warfare against the occupations, amusements and habits of untold multitudes of evangelical Christians; yet it can not lift a finger or utter a whisper against the atrocities of a little band of slaveholders, not because they are not immoral, but because the Constitution requires that *all* they publish shall be calcu-

lated to receive the approbation of *all* who belong to evangelical denominations. But we forget: Messrs. Knox and Hallock aver that "the idea that the Society has been *silent* as to the evils of Slavery can be entertained by no one who has read its publications." Pity it is, that we are not informed what evils of Slavery have excited the indignation of the Society, and when its long silence was broken. If the Society has rebuked any of these evils, did it violate the "fundamental principle," or did they discover evils which evangelical slaveholders consent should be reprov'd? Such a discovery is too curious and interesting to be withheld from the public. We may get a hint of the evils of Slavery, on which the Society has been, and is, and intends to be, silent, from the nature of its alterations in its reprints.

1. MATHER'S ESSAYS. This book, we are told, was reprinted from an English edition. Now, the edition copied contained the following: "Oh! that the souls of our slaves were more regarded by us! That we might give a better demonstration that we despise not our own souls, by doing what we can for the souls of our slaves. How can we pretend to Christianity when we do no more to Christianize our slaves?" The Society's edition in this passage substitutes "servants" for slaves.

2. GURNEY ON THE HABITUAL EXERCISE OF THE LOVE OF GOD. In the English edition we have: "If this love had always prevailed among professing Christians, where would have been the sword of the Crusader? Where the African slave trade? Where the odious system which permits to man property in his fellow-men, and converts rational beings into marketable chattels?" Instead of this, we have in the reprint: "If this love had always prevailed among professing Christians, where would have been the sword of the Crusader? Where the tortures of the Inquisition? Where every system of oppression and wrong by which he who has the power revels in luxury and ease at the expense of his fellow-men?" It is admitted that this alteration was made at "the suggestion" of the Committee—that is, at their dictation, and as the condition of re-publication.

3. MEMOIRS OF MARY LUNDIE DUNCAN.—It seems the author "intrusted this work to the Committee to be abridged at their discretion." This discretion was exercised by expunging various Anti-Slavery sentiments, together with a poetical address to George Thompson. The following very harmless passage was cancelled with others: "We have been lately much interested in the emancipation of slaves. I never heard eloquence more overpowering than that of George Thompson. I am most thankful that he has been raised up. Oh! that the measure soon to be proposed in Parliament may be effective!" The author, we are told, was "anxious her daughter's views on Slavery should fully appear;" but as this could not be, she consented that the book should be published by the Society in its present mutilated form, rather than be wholly suppressed.

4. MAMMON, by the Rev. John Harris. Speaking of covetousness,

the author says: "Its history is the history of Slavery and oppression in all ages." In the Society's edition, the word "Slavery" in this sentence is expunged.—P. 78.

So it seems not even a hint may be given that there is any covetousness in the conversion of millions of immortal beings into articles of merchandise!

In how many more instances foreign books have been mutilated to please evangelical slaveholders, can only be ascertained by a laborious investigation.

The more we examine the practical application of the "fundamental principle" to "particular immoralities," the more strange and eccentric does it appear. The American Tract Society has, it seems, full liberty to rebuke evangelical Christians—

For sending children to dancing-school—but not for sending them to auction.

For reading novels—but not for preventing multitudes from reading the Bible.

For covetousness in general—but not for compelling others to labor for them without wages.

For trading in intoxicating liquors—but not for trading in the bodies and souls of their fellow men, or even of their fellow Christians.

For attending horse-races—but not for driving men and women under the lash to the cotton and sugar fields.

For drinking wine—but not for robbing millions of all civil and religious freedom.

For wearing costly apparel—but not for rendering a vast population legally incapable of owning a single garment.

For visiting the circus—but not for annihilating, by law, the marriage relation.

For smoking and chewing tobacco—but not for upholding, vindicating and extending a system of compulsory ignorance and degradation, and of unparalleled injustice and cruelty.

It is now time to turn to a painful example of human frailty, as exhibited in the last apology. In that document the Rev. Messrs. Knox and Hallock assure the public that "*The executive officers of the Society, as individuals, have no sympathy with Slavery.*" As this averment is part of the defence made in behalf of the Society for the silence of its tracts against Slavery, it surely is meant to be understood that *none* of the officers of the Society, and especially none of the Publishing Committee, have any sympathy with Slavery. If all the officers but *one* were ultra Abolitionists, yet if that one belonged to the Publishing Committee, and sympathized with Slavery, then, as he would have a veto on every tract, the publications would be as silent about this giant sin as they now are.

One of the colleagues of the Rev. Dr. Knox in the Publishing Committee is the Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Adams. This Boston divine is the author of a book entitled "A South-Side View of Slavery." The book has been extensively noticed and reviewed in both secular and religious journals, and the third edition had been issued prior to the date of the last apology. It is surely taxing public credulity too severely to intimate that Messrs. Knox and Hallock were ignorant of the character of this notorious book, written by their own colleague, and one of the most important "executive officers" of the Society. A few extracts from the third edition will enable the public to judge how far the certificate of the two reverend gentlemen, that the executive officers of the Society, as individuals, have no sympathy with Slavery, is creditable to their candor and veracity. We shall arrange the extracts under appropriate heads, leaving our readers to make their own comments.

**SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY FOR SLAVERY.**—"When the Hebrew nation was organized by the Most High, He found among the people masters and slaves. He could have purged out slaveholding by positive enactments; He could have rid the people of all slaveowners by making their dead bodies fall in the wilderness. Instead of this, he made Slavery the subject of legislation, prescribed its duties, and protected the parties concerned in the performance of them."—P. 190.

"It was to a Philemon that Onesimus was returned; it was to Abraham's house that Hagar was remanded. While the abstract principle of ownership is defended by these examples, he who uses them to the injury of a fellow-being will find that God has stores of vengeance for him."—P. 195.

Slavery "is not assaulted (in the Bible), but the sins and abuses under it are reprov'd. Slavery itself is nowhere assailed."—P. 196.

**SLAVES HAVE, IN FACT, WAGES.**—"The accusation against Slavery of working human beings without wages must be modified, if we give a proper meaning to the word wages. A stipulated sum per diem is our common notion of wages. A vast many slaves get wages in a better form than this—provision for their support for the whole of life, with permission to earn something."—P. 51.

**NOT MUCH WHIPPING.**—"In a well-regulated Southern household, as in a well-ordered family of children or a good school, the rod is out of sight. It is seldom alluded to—threatenings are rare; but the knowledge on the part of each servant, child and pupil, that there is a punishment in reserve for the last resort, will have a salutary effect."—P. 94.

**SEPARATION OF FAMILIES NO GREAT MATTER.**—"The separation of families seems to be an inevitable feature of Slavery, as it exists at present." When the master dies, "no one child, perhaps, can afford to keep them together; perhaps he has no children, then they must take their chance of separation to the widest borders of the Slave States. But here individual kindness mitigates sorrow and distress.

We must remember that slaves are not the only inhabitants, nor slave families the only families in the land, that are scattered by the death of others. What would become of our families of five or ten children, should their parents die? Can we keep our children about us always? Do none but black children go to the ends of the Union, and become settled there?"—P. 77.

**GREAT RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF SLAVES.**—"Their acquaintance with the word of God is to a great extent through oral instruction, yet in all that constitutes Christian excellence, and that knowledge of God that comes directly from Him, they have few superiors."—P. 57. "The negroes are as faithfully and thoroughly instructed in the word of God as any class of people."—P. 59.

**SLAVES VERY RELIGIOUS.**—"Probably in many places at the South a larger proportion of the slaves than of the whites have given evidence of being the children of God. The religious condition of the slaves surprises every visitor. The number of communicants in proportion to the whites is frequently astonishing."—P. 53.

"Of all the situations in which human beings can be placed favorable to the salvation of the soul under faithful efforts on the part of teachers, it is difficult to conceive of one better suited to this end, and in fact more successful, than the relation of these slaves to their masters."—P. 60.

**SLAVES VERY HAPPY.**—"One can not be long at the South and not see for himself that the perfection of human happiness in a serving class, is found among certain slaves. Instances come to mind of servants in whose condition nothing is wanting to promote happiness in this world and preparation for the next."—P. 92.

"To go from their (English emigrants') cellars and garrets in Boston and New-York, and look upon the southern slaves enjoying not only the necessaries, but, in towns and cities, the luxuries of life, indulged with the comforts, and even in many cases, with the superfluities of dress, the most cheerful class of people that meets the eye of the stranger in this or any land, and everywhere enjoying the influence of pure religion, makes one consider what misplaced pity there is in British lamentations over American Slavery."—P. 180.

**EMANCIPATION DEPRECATED.**—"The conviction forced itself on my mind at the South, that the most disastrous event to the colored people would be their emancipation, to live on the same soil with the whites."—P. 119.

"Instead of regarding the South as holding their fellow men in cruel bondage, let us consider whether we may not think of them as the guardians, educators and saviours of the African race in this country."—P. 141.

**FUGITIVE SLAVES.**—"That compassion for a fugitive slave which leads one to abrogate the constitution of society is not benevolent, nor does it secure respect from any but radicals."—P. 136.

"Whatever our repugnance to Slavery may be, there is a law of the land, a Constitution to which we must submit, or employ suitable means to change it. While it remains, all our appeals to a 'higher law' are fanaticism."—P. 128.

**MASTERS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO BRING THEIR SLAVES NORTH.**—“It seems hard, if some good understanding can not be had, to the effect that travellers from the South, visitors, are to be protected in the enjoyment of services rendered by members of their families. Now they must stay at home, or leave their favorite servants behind them. Are we afraid that the sight of the happy relation subsisting between masters and slaves will make our people in love with the institution? We must put a stop to the unlawful seizure of colored servants passing with their masters through a Free State.”—P. 156.

“Philemon travelling with Onesimus was not annoyed by a vigilance committee of Paul’s Christian friends. True, the disciples had not enjoyed the light which the Declaration of American Independence shed on the subject of human rights.”—P. 199.

**HAPPY MORAL INFLUENCE OF SLAVERY.**—“Spiritual rappings, biology, second adventism, Mormonism, and the whole spawn of errors which infest us do not find subjects at the South. There is far more faith in the South, taken as a whole, than with us.”—P. 46.

**THE SUFFERING SOUTH.**—“We have been the assailants, she [the South] the mark; we the prosecutors, she the defendant; we the accusers, she the self-justifying respondent.”—P. 128.

**ADVICE TO THE NORTH.**—“The best thing which we at the North can do to pacify the country, to help the colored race, to prevent further Nebraska measures, and promote our common interests, is to reconsider our feelings and conduct in times past toward the South. A penitent state of mind becomes us.”—P. 156.

Such is the man who, as the Rev. Messrs. Knox and Hallock certify, has no sympathy with Slavery! Such the man who represents the Evangelical Congregationalists in the American Tract Society! Such the man who, as the sentinel of the Slave power, keeps watch and ward over the press of a great Christian institution, that no word may escape from its types in reproof of a system regarded by nearly the whole of Christendom as the sum of all villainies! The position held by this man as the censor of the Tract press, the extraordinary certificate given him by his two reverend colleagues, and the wretched quibbling official apologies lately issued, all combine in illustrating the withering influence of Slavery on the moral sense of even professing Christians.

The American Tract Society has now assumed an attitude of defiance to the Anti-Slavery sentiment of the North. Should that attitude be maintained, the Society will before long be compelled to look to the plantations of the South for its chief support.

THE  
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY

DENOUNCING  
ANTI-SLAVERY AGITATION.

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THIS Society, when asked to rebuke American Slavery; solemnly avers that it is restrained by its Constitution from publishing any thing not "calculated to receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians." It seems, however, utterly unconscious of any constitutional restraint when rebuking such Christians for dancing, smoking, etc. It has lately taken the liberty, notwithstanding the Constitution, of making an indirect, but very malignant, charge against the vast multitude of evangelical Christians engaged in exposing the exceeding wickedness and injurious consequences of American Slavery. Dr. Adams, the pro-Slavery censor of the Tract press, had already rebuked these Christians, and called on them to repent of their evil ways, but he did not accuse them of infidelity. Our democrats and doughfaces are perpetually denouncing the anti-Slavery agitation as treasonable, and as tending to the destruction of the Union, for it is by this craft that they get their offices, yet even they have not the effrontery to call it infidel; on the contrary, with them it is *fanaticism*. But what says the American Tract Society on the subject? In the leading editorial of the *American Messenger* for February last, the editor gives an account of some of the feats of infidelity. He tells us: "Infidelity begat 'red republicanism,' and redder 'socialism,' on the continent. Infidelity imported the principles which strike at the root of social order, domestic purity and national security. Infidelity fans the flame of sectional jealousy and hate."

Here we have the doings of infidelity in Europe and America. The reader is at liberty to understand the principles *imported* by infidelity, and which are dangerous to social order and national security, to be anti-Slavery or not, as he pleases; but as to the last occupation ascribed to infidelity there can be no doubt. The only question which, at the present day, can possibly be said to excite *sectional* jealousy and hate



# NEGROES AND RELIGION.

## THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH AT THE SOUTH.

### MEMORIAL

*To the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.*

RIGHT REVEREND AND REVEREND FATHERS AND BRETHREN—We pray leave to address you on a subject of the profoundest interest to our beloved Church, and particularly to our Southern Dioceses.

The inscrutable decrees of Providence have committed to us the charge in things spiritual, as well as temporal, of the colored biped mammalia, now several millions in number, who are domiciled among us. You know with what pious vigilance and devout fidelity our Zion has cherished and protected those black and yellow lambs of the flock, striving ever to keep them from going astray and to make them daily more abundant in good works. We have indeed labored without ceasing, and not wholly in vain, to make those thus entrusted to our Christian rule, good and faithful servants; sparing no means that could promote this our godly endeavor. To keep them unspotted from an unbelieving world, we have denied ourselves the happiness of sharing with them our stores of profane knowledge, and have made it a felony to teach them to read. That they might not be hindered in running the race that is set before them, we have forbidden them to cumber themselves with worldly goods, and to retain even the fruits of their daily labor, and we have ourselves borne the added burden without complaining. The task of mortifying the flesh and bringing it into subjection, which even the great apostle of the Gentiles was compelled to perform for himself, we have taken off their hands and performed for them. That they might learn not to set their hearts on things of this world (which passeth away like a shadow), we have ordained that their domestic ties should be transient, and that they, with or without their wives and children, be kept in free circulation as the basis of trade. And we have labored generally, in the spirit of Christian love, to assimilate them to that order of created beings which is commended in Holy Writ as superior even to the favored people of old, for that "it knoweth its master."

And thus we may say, without boasting, that the Christian graces of humility, long-suffering, and submission to wrong (so difficult of attainment) are nowhere manifested on a larger scale than by this generation, though by nature stiff-necked and untractable. And it is indeed a blessed thought that these biped millions, who might at this day have been herding with their families around them, in contented degradation,

"Where Afric's sunny fountains  
Roll down their golden sands,"\*

and bowing down before Mumbo-Jumbo, or Baal, or that hideous idol Boo-Ghoo-Boo, now sit where the light of Evangelical truth and Apostolical order shines on those who own them, and where they daily learn that all help in adversity comes from God alone, and not from man.

But to make the system of the Church more self-consistent and harmonious, and to adapt her ministrations to these tender lambs of her flock and to Southern Churchmen, we hold certain changes in her liturgy and discipline to be indispensable.

Our attention to this subject has been specially awakened by the in-

\* Wm. Gilmore Sims

roduction, during your present session at Philadelphia, of a "Canon" absurdly mis-called "of Discipline," so ignorantly and mischievously framed (we would fain believe without actual malignity of purpose) that, under its proposed provisions, a dozen or more mulatto (not to say negro) communicants, if unfortunately eye-witnesses of the commission of a crime by a deacon or presbyter, might actually have been admitted to testify to the fact, and thus to subvert the whole social and political fabric of Virginia or South Carolina. Though this insane or unchristian novelty (which disturbed our peace) was promptly rejected by a unanimous Southern vote, the mere fact that it was put forward is enough to suggest gloomy forebodings, and entitles us to demand of the Church securities for the future, and such changes in Ritual and Order as shall suit both to Southern institutions. Can it be doubted that communicants not credible under oath require a special Liturgy?

It is to be observed that the *whole* Prayer-book is intended for homogeneous congregations of responsible beings capable of forming domestic ties and enjoying personal rights. It is, therefore, as a whole, unfit for congregations, where the front pews *own* the free sittings—assemblages composed in varying proportions of two classes of Christians, one of which bought the other yesterday and may sell it to-morrow.

But waiving this for the present, certain prominent details require immediate change.

For example, the promise and vow of the marriage service: "I, M., take thee, N., to be my wedded husband, and to have and to hold \* \* *till death doth us part*," is a mockery when uttered by one of this beloved but subordinated race. We cannot bear thus to put unreal words into the mouths of those so dear to us. It should be amended to read: "till death, or my owner, his executors, administrators, or assignees, do us part." So, too, the demand: "Wilt thou, ———, keep thee only unto him so long as ye both shall live?" and the answer, "I will," should be improved by adding to the words "I will" some form of *protestando* reserving the legal rights of the owner, present or future, of either party, with which the voice of the Church expressed in the present service seems to conflict. This apparent conflict is still more painfully conspicuous where the officiating clergyman is required to say: "Those whom God hath joined together *let no man put asunder*." Volumes of fanaticism and unbelief are latent in these few words. Where the officiating clergyman himself owns either the bride or bridegroom, this declaration might be construed (most unreasonably, but with some plausibility) as in some sense estopping him from any future exercise of his rights as a Christian and a patriarch, even at considerable pecuniary loss. In every case he is thus made the mouthpiece of a revolutionary doctrine that blasphemes the rights of property and distinctly implies the existence of that Anti-Christian fiction, a "Higher Law." Such profane utterances may suit the atmosphere of other communities, rank with Fourierisms and Free-loveisms, and every social corruption. But no Church that openly proclaims them can flourish within *our* borders.

Another remedy is submitted which may allow of our leaving this service (so touching and beautiful when used in its proper place) unchanged for the present. Since the Church hath inherent power to loose as well as to bind, your Honorable Body may, in its wisdom, create and establish a fourth subordinate order of the Ministry, specially to exercise the function of loosing, and to administer the Rite of Divorce from time to time with due solemnity to colored couples who have been married in the usual form. This fourth order might be styled that of sub-Deacon, Acolyte, Exorcist, *Hastarius*, or simply *Auctioneer*. Any person experienced in the duties of that useful calling, and "apt and meet for his smartness and godly conversation to exercise that ministry

duly for the edifying of the Church," should be ordained by the Bishop for this particular office, to which other minor duties might judiciously be added. For these, useful hints may lawfully be borrowed from the experience of another and ancient branch of the Church; and we refer to the "Discipline of the Order of Flagellants" (*Disciplina et Regula Ordinis Flagellantium*, 4to., Rome, 1567), as embodying practical suggestions of much value. A suitable "Form of ordaining Auctioneers" should stand in the Prayer-book immediately after that for ordaining Deacons. A tasteful symbolism would dictate the presentation of a hammer to the candidate by the Bishop (as the New Testament is delivered to the newly ordained Deacon), with the solemn words, "Take thou authority to divorce colored persons in the Church at public or private sale, for cash or on credit, and also to knock them down if thou be thereto licensed by the Bishop himself." There should be also an appropriate and very brief service introductory to such sales, concluding with a suitable exhortation to the parties.

The rite of Confirmation, or laying on of hands, also needs regulating. For the avoiding of scandal, persons of the African denomination must be sternly repelled from that ordinance. The peace of Jerusalem may be disturbed if Episcopal hands are still to be brought into physical contact with the heads of these dear children of the Church, except in the way of paternal chastisement. Whatever benefit these black but precious vessels may derive from Confirmation would be far outweighed by the damage the Church would sustain if a chivalric and impulsive public should visit one of her chief ministers with the indignity of tar and feathers for demeaning himself to administer it.

The Litany, too, contains phrases that tend to mischief—the prayers, for instance, to be delivered "from hardness of heart and contempt of Thy Word and commandments," and that "all Christian rulers and magistrates may have grace to execute justice and maintain truth." Properly understood, these are, of course, prayers that we may not fall into the delusion of imagining ourselves bound to mitigate the severity and brutality (falsely so called) of our eminently humane and evangelical "Slave Code," and that the civil authority may be strengthened to maintain and develop it to the end of time. But these supplications have been known to stir up distressing doubts and misgivings in diseased and over sensitive consciences. The prayer for "all who are desolate and oppressed" is so manifestly liable to perilous misconception that its use can no longer be tolerated.

The service for the burial of the dead needs comparatively little change to adapt it to Southern institutions. But in the passage "Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God, in his wise providence, to take out of the world the soul of *our deceased brother*," &c., the last quoted three words are unmeaning, offensive to our instincts, and in conflict with the great fundamental ideas of our social system. "This deceased biped," or "this defunct individual black man," or words to that effect, should be substituted. In the solemn offices of religion, aught *unreal* should be studiously avoided.

There are radical defects in the "Prayer for a sick person," and the "Office for the visitation of the sick." Both are inapplicable to the case of sickness occurring among these colored objects of our love. Both assume that the patient, and not the proprietor of the patient, is the person chiefly interested in the patient's recovery. The Church's interest is for the former alone. She turns coldly away from the sorrow and trial of the owner, without a single prayer that he be spared the loss or enabled to bear it with resignation—though it may reduce him from the estate of a gentleman, by compelling him to labor for his own subsistence. Should this be so?

Fearing to weary you by pointing out specifically all the additions and changes which the Prayer-book requires, we pause here, only hinting at a few further questions too important to be overlooked.

Should not provision be made (according to the ingenious suggestions of a distinguished Northern Churchman), in cases where a parish church needs repair or enlargement, for raising the necessary funds by the sale of a sufficient number of colored communicants?

Should not the want (at present so deeply felt) of Collects against Peace, for Dis-unity and against the inroads of education and intelligence, be at once supplied?

Can the present mode of collecting alms at the Offertory be so improved as to enable charitable Christians, anxious to give abundant alms of their substance, but temporarily deficient in the circulating medium, to slip a colored person or persons into the alms-dish, without unseemly noise and confusion?

Should not a commination service, like that of the Anglican Church, or a form of cursing or excommunication, like the austere and beautiful composition attributed to Ernulphus, be inserted into the Prayer-book, for the warning and intimidation of black Christians who may be tempted by Satan to think of unlawful emigration toward the ungenial regions of the North?

In view of the vast distinction between ourselves and the class in question, from which we have abstracted all the attributes of humanity which can be affected by human legislation, is it not meet and right that a change be made in our present Communion Service? The Roman Church administers that sacrament to the laity in one kind only. Would it not be consistent with the true spirit of our institutions to administer the same to colored communicants in *neither* kind only?

We submit these grave points for your deliberation, and ask for such prompt action upon them as may preserve the peace of the Church, and vindicate the rights of Southern gentlemen and Christians.

And your memorialists will ever pray, &c.

Charleston, S. C., Oct. 1, 1856.

#### NOTE.

For the comfort of such Southern Divines as may not possess the critical acumen in detecting literary frauds evinced by their Baltimore Brother, the following paragraph from a New York Journal is annexed to the above Memorial:

**SLAVERY IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH.**—We have not seen for many a day a more exquisite piece of satire than that which will be found on the first page, in the form of a petition, purporting to have been addressed to the late General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States. Punch himself never let fly a sharper pointed or better aimed arrow at Hypocrisy and Cant than this which comes from the quiver of an anonymous writer in *The Tribune*. That the arrow hit the mark we have evidence both amusing and striking in the fact that a dignitary of the Church in a slave State, utterly oblivious of the obvious truth that the petition was intended as a burlesque, thought it incumbent upon him to expose it as a forgery! Here is his ludicrously solemn objurgation from *The Tribune* of Tuesday:

"SIR—Some one has sent me a number of *The Tribune* for October 29, the fifth page of which, in the third and fourth columns, contains an article headed 'Negroes and Religion,' 'The Episcopal Church at the South,' and purporting to be a 'Memorial' addressed by members of that Church to its late General Convention.

"The piece is a gross and base forgery, and honesty and comity to a large body of your fellow-citizens require of you its exposure as such in a place at least as conspicuous as that which you have allowed it to occupy in your widely circulated columns.

"AN EPISCOPALIAN.

"Baltimore, Nov. 1, 1856."

The indignant "Episcopalian," as we happen to know, is a Bishop! The world does not often get a chance to laugh at a better joke than this.

is the Slavery question, and this is the flame which the American Tract Society declares is fanned by infidelity!! If it be true that infidelity is raising its voice against the iniquities and abominations of American bondage, it has in fact become more Christian than cotton divinity, which insults the Almighty, revokes his precepts, and degrades his Holy Word by making it the warrant for the foulest injustice, the vilest cruelty.

The Tract Society well knows, and will yet have bitter experience, that the anti-Slavery agitation is the fruit of deep Christian feeling, and that men of pure faith and holy lives are engaged in it. Yet, in language too plain to be mistaken, the *American Messenger* intimates that this agitation is the work of infidelity!! Yes, thousands and thousands of evangelical Christians are thus vilely slandered by a Society, or rather its Publishing Committee, who, with solemn face, assure the world that they can not, with a good conscience, publish any thing not calculated to meet the approbation of ALL evangelical Christians!! How long will evangelical Christians support a religious press under the censorship of NEHEMIAH ADAMS?—*National Anti-Slavery Standard*.

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## COMPLAINT AGAINST THE TRACT SOCIETY.

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THE American Tract Society prepares, publishes, and circulates tracts against every sin forbidden in the decalogue, except that particular form of sin which involves the violation of the entire code—the sin of subverting the family relation, reducing the image of God to a chattel, and robbing a man of himself.

The charge is not that they decline circulating the writings of “modern fanatics” on this subject. They equally avoid circulating the testimonies of Hopkins, of Edwards, of Wesley, of Grotius, of Hannah More, of John Locke, of John Jay, of Dr. Primatt, of Dr. Price, of the Abbe Raynal, of the Abbe Gregoire, of James Beattie, of Dr. Adam Clarke, of Archdeacon Paley, of Edmund Burke, of Dr. Johnson, of Bishop Horsley, of Bishop Porteus, of Dr. Robertson, of Bishop Warburton, of Thomas Scott, of Granville Sharp, of Thomas Clarkson, of Fowell Buxton, of Dr. Dick, of John Angell James, of

the Christian poets, Cowper, Pollock, and Montgomery. The volumes of general Christian literature, since the beginning of the African slave trade, furnish, it would seem, no suitable materials from which the Committee of the American Tract Society, with all their tact and skill in the art of pruning, could cull an eight-page tract against human chattelhood, against slaveholding, against the slave system, or even in relation to those topics.

More marvellous still: In all the ranks of the learned, the wise, the good, the discreet, of our own age and nation, who cherish the American Tract Society as an instrumentality for teaching human relations and duties, for admonishing an erring world of its sins; among all the writers on whom the Tract Committee depend, and to whom they look for tracts adapted to the times we live in, *not one*, it seems, has been prevailed upon, or has succeeded, in furnishing a page of instruction upon a subject in respect to which, it is said, imprudent and rash writers are leading Christians astray! What a wonderful condition of things is this! What sorcery has paralyzed this arm of the Church—the arm that should wield the Christian press, amid the influences that corrupt and destroy?

But this is not the worst of the case. The Society is not merely guilty of neglect—it commits a positive injury. By its mutilation of books, it compels the common Christian literature of the English language to bear false witness. By its garbled biographies of the sainted dead, by its suppression of their earnest testimony against Slavery, by its smothering the expression of the purest Christian affections of their hearts, it hides the distinctive traits of their Christian character, and falsely holds them up as specimens of the kind of piety that expresses no abhorrence of slaveholding.—*History of Slavery and Anti-Slavery*, pp. 213-14.



