

The Gospel applied to the Fugitive Slave Law:

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED TO THE

THIRD CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY OF HINGHAM,

ON SUNDAY, MARCH 2, 1851.

BY OLIVER STEARNS,

MINISTER OF THE SOCIETY.

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To the Rev. Oliver Stearns.

HINGHAM, March 24, 1851.

DEAR SIR, — The undersigned are of opinion, that the Sermon recently preached by you, upon the subject of the Fugitive Slave Law, contains a most valuable and instructive discussion of the moral and religious questions practically raised by that Act before the tribunal of every individual conscience. And we regard as of the highest importance whatever tends to help us to just convictions touching the duty we owe to God and our afflicted brethren, in connection with our duty as citizens. Tendering to you, therefore, our thanks for the benefit already derived from the Sermon alluded to, we respectfully request you to place in our hands the manuscript for publication.

Faithfully yours,

GORHAM LINCOLN
J. A. ANDREW
JNO. O. LOVETT
JOSEPH SPRAGUE
DAVID H. ABBOTT
PEREZ LINCOLN
DAVID LINCOLN
EBEN GAY
ISAAC WINSLOW
DAVID ANDREWS
GEO. LINCOLN, JUN.

To Deacon Gorham Lincoln and others.

April 15, 1851.

GENTLEMEN, — I have received your communication, requesting a copy of a Sermon preached by me on the Fugitive Slave Law for the press. Thanking you for the kind terms in which you have expressed it, I will comply with your request.

Your friend and servant,

OLIVER STEARNS.

SERMON .

COLOSSIANS, m. 17:

"AND WHATSOEVER YE DO IN WORD OR DEED, DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD AND THE FATHER BY HIM."

We are to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus.

We are to do nothing in which, with the thought of Jesus in our minds, we cannot invoke God's aid.

We are to acknowledge ever the divine Mastership of Jesus, appealing to his authority as paramount to all other in questions of duty. We are to ask, What is the mind, the intention, of Christ? How do his precepts and life apply to this or that case in which we are to act? And, when the world inquire why we maintain a particular principle or pursue a particular course as Christians, we ought to be able to answer, that we act in obedience to the truth as it is in Jesus, whom God sent into the world to shed light on human duty.

We are to converse and act consistently with the character of disciple of such a Master, and as if the spirit, the feelings, the principles, of Jesus governed us. Do we perceive some dreaded calamity impending over us, we must remember the submission of Jesus ; we must bow ourselves to meet it, and seek through its influence to enter into deeper communion with God in Christ. Or do we behold any of our brethren for whom Christ died suffering wrongfully, robbed of rights, and seeking deliverance and redress, we ought to vindicate their cause and relieve their suffering ; remembering him who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

In doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, it is implied that we shall do what the spirit of his life and instructions require, though we find no precept verbally applicable to the case. He could not give precepts verbally corresponding to a ten-

thousandth part of the cases of human conduct. For the most, he declared great general truths, and set forth the great ends of human life, leaving us by their light to discern the right way. And when, feeling these truths and keeping in view these ends, we desire to act always so as to promote the regeneration of individual and universal man, and God's true glory, — when we thus ask all things in Christ's name, the Father will direct us. Christ spake no w.»r.l. which has come down to us, expressly enjoining our present use of Sunday; and if it were legitimate to argue from the *silence* of Jesus, as is done in other cases, we might, in his name, convert it to secular purposes forthwith. His treatment of the Jewish Sabbath banished it with circumcision and the smoke of animal sacrifices ; but we know not that he ever spoke of Sunday. Yet *he* consecrates Sunday; and his disciple, seeing the need of it for the ends of Christ's mission, finds Christ's spirit enjoining its separation from common employments, and feels himself as much forbidden by Christianity to turn over this day to the pursuit of business or revelry, as to lie or steal. Christ's spirit may instruct us as clearly, and bind us as solemnly, as if he were here to-day orally teaching us.

By doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, I understand also that we must follow him without questioning, except to know the way to which his precepts and example and spirit point. To find this way and to walk therein, taking humbly God's allotment in it, is each one's great concern. We are to act and speak as our whole Christian education moves us to do, and to trust, without too curiously exploring the future. When at Christ's last interview with the eleven apostles, after his resurrection, he foretold to Peter the destiny of a sufferer for the truth, and this apostle was prompted to inquire concerning the fate of his fellow-disciple, "Lord, what shall this man do?" Jesus rebuked the curiosity: "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." Christ may now mark out for us, if we love the truth, as he did for Peter, the path of duty so clearly, that all questioning about its influence on our own or others' future, beyond what God chooses to reveal, will be useless and impertinent.

I have made these remarks upon the text as preliminary to a brief discussion of a question which is forced upon our consideration. We are called upon by law and by the magistrate to assist in re-enslaving some of our fellow-men who have escaped from bondage. Can we do it in the name of the Lord Jesus? It is a practical question. There is no possibility of being neutral. By word or deed, we all give support to, or withhold it from, the Fugitive Slave Law. I affirm that no one can, consistently with Christian obligations rightly understood and felt, render it the least, either active or moral, support.

As Jesus left no precept or example literally applicable to the subject, we must seek his mind in the general truths he taught, and in the whole spirit of his instructions and life. And I shall found my argument on the admission, that the gospel was designed ultimately to burst the bonds of the slave. Reasoning with a Northern conscience, I reason on this admission ; and I shall refer to a pamphlet, entitled "Conscience and the Constitution," on account of the high authority under which it was issued, and of the peculiar statements and admissions it contains. Mr. Stuart says of Christ, that "he took care to utter truths, and establish principles, which, in their gradual influence, would banish slavery from the face of the earth ; but he would leave the completion of the work to time, and to the slow but sure operation of the principles which he inculcated." He also addresses to slaveholders, and prints in Roman capitals to arrest their attention, the second great commandment, and the golden rule, and the declaration of an apostle that God hath made of one blood all nations of men, and another declaration that the one true God is the God, not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles, He tells slaveholders, "It is impossible for any man to say that he does as he would be done by, in case he subjects his neighbor, a human being, to slavery." Yet he charges those who think differently from him, in regard to our present duty, with *ignoring* the bearing upon it of the word and life of Christ and the apostles. I do not ignore it.

Jesus did not command the immediate abolition of slavery, in so many words. He did not assail directly the law of society which authorized it. Therefore, it

is argued, that we may now, at the command of the magistrate, deliver up a fellow-man to the slave laws of the region from which he has emigrated. I say, the inference is not just. Why did not Jesus enjoin in express terms the abolition of slavery? The answer is as applicable, in the main, to the case of his apostles as to his own ; although, as a general remark, I would say that I do not admit their words and conduct alone to be always of final and decisive authority, as I believe those of Christ to be, legitimately reasoned from and applied. Jesus could not do every thing. All things could not be done at once. There must be an order, a progression, in all spiritual work. The question of the rightfulness of slavery was not raised, as it has been since ; and he did not raise it, because there was no Christian basis for any decision which might abolish it, as there is now. Theological must precede moral reform. The Christian basis of it was to be laid. It was not merely that Jesus would not come into conflict with the magistrate. He foretold such a conflict to the apostles, and bade them not fear it. With all his caution, he was himself charged with sedition, as he foresaw. He raised one exciting question, one controversy, which shortly hurried him to the cross. It related to the fulfilment of God's purposes by his people. It was his work to separate as many as he could from the Mosaic ritual, to eliminate the universal truth from Judaism, to break down the partition between Jews and Gentiles, and to form that nucleus of Christian truth, around which spiritual and moral reforms should gather from all nations. Time did not give scope for, nor were divine truth and love acting under the limitations of a human frame equal to, more than this work. He was a sacrifice to it.

Slavery then existed throughout the Roman empire, of which Judea was a part. It was sustained by Roman as well as Jewish law. Palestine was not a free state on the borders of a slave-state. There was no free state in the Roman empire. No one to whom Christ spoke had any voice in legislation or in the administration of government. There were no principles of religion and humanity sufficiently recognized among the rulers of the world or the ruled for Jesus or the apostles to appeal to them against servitude. All but Judeaⁱ were sunk in polytheism and

its debasing vices, with which the encounter was to be a death-struggle. Slavery then, bad as it was, did not stand out in glaring contrast with every thing around it, as it does now and in this country. Oppression was everywhere. Bondage was but a part of a mass of vicious institutions and customs. It was an item of a vast sum of evil. It was not prominent, though it was deep. For this reason, it did not the moral harm it does now. It did not so degrade those who participated in it as it would ourselves; just as our vicious habit out of many does not so degrade and judge an ignorant, miseducated child, as a similar vicious habit alone would degrade and condemn a well-educated man. It was not a foremost evil to be grappled with first by those who were commencing the regeneration of a world. Roman slavery is hideous enough to us who see it by the reflected light of modern freedom; but, though it was just as really a violation of God's law, it was not, relatively to all life around it, so great an anomaly, and so corrupting to the individual mind and heart, as slavery is now in a Christian nation.

Now, unless we are in circumstances like those of the communities and persons that Christ and the apostles taught; unless we are just emerging from polytheism, or learning the rudiments of Christianity, their silence about the wrongfulness of slavery does not permit us, in Christ's name, to help to enslave a human being. The question is, Have they been *silent to us* about it? It is admitted that Christ designed to overthrow bondage. "He took care to utter truths, which, by their gradual influence, should banish slavery from the earth." Through this "gradual influence," then, a time would arrive when a Christian disciple could no more help to enslave a human being, than he could lie or steal, with a good conscience. Christianity began very early to abolish slavery. It has been long teaching the rights and responsibilities of men. This nation has declared the inalienable rights of man. The Constitution of our State recites them, and that recital of them terminated bondage here. And we claim for Christianity, rightly, the credit of doing all this. When will the time arrive, through the gradual operation of Christ's principles, for a Christian conscience to debar all moral participation in slavery, if it be not now come? To whom will it ever come, if it have not already come to Mr. Stuart, and to you and

me,—to the churches of the Pilgrims, and to the theological seminaries of New England ? It has come.

Whatever allowance charity may suggest for the influences of custom and education upon some who dwell in the darkest portions of our country (and I am ready to make some such allowance), there is light enough here. And the compunction felt in the present crisis, and all the special pleading to make Christ and the apostles support the Fugitive Law, only prove that they are speaking with terrible emphasis in our moral nature, and forbidding us to do this abomination in the name of the Lord Jesus.

I shall be told, however, that the apostles were not wholly silent on the subject. I am told not to ignore their instructions to masters and slaves. I will not ignore them. “Servants, be obedient to your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart ; with good will doing service, as to the Lord and not to men ; knowing that whatsoever good thing a man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.”* “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that your Master also is in heaven.”** “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward.”† These quotations include the substance of the teachings of the apostles on this subject.

Now, if the apostles in these instructions meant to sanction slaveholding at that time, or meant to approve the idea of property in a human being, so that their allusions to slavery can be fairly construed to abridge the natural right of any human being now, then they meant to sanction the whole of Roman slavery, except so far as they prohibited some abuses attending it, in express terms. If these instructions imply a moral tolerance of the law of property in

* Ephesians vi. 5-9.

** Colossians iv. 1.

† I Peter ii. 18.

a human being then prevailing, they equally imply a moral sanction of the law then in force giving the master the power of life and death over the slave. The apostles did not forbid in express terms the slave-trade, then legal, and carried on in the islands and ports of the Mediterranean ; therefore, according to this argument, they authorized it. They did not attack the law then forbidding slaves to marry; therefore they not only sanctioned for all time the idea of property in a human being, but deprived slaves of the protection of Christianity in the relation of marriage.

The argument proves too much, and therefore fails. It is destructive of the gospel itself.* These instructions implied no approval or tolerance of the “chattel-principle.” They applied chiefly to the relation of service, and will always be needed to enforce a religious fidelity in that relation. They applied to servants, to slaves as servants, and to servants who were not slaves ; and there were many of this last class. They are permanently applicable to the intercourse of employers and employed,—to *service*, which, when rights are recognized, is not derogatory but honorable to man. The minister of a parish, the agent of a railroad or manufacturing corporation, the clerk of a mercantile house, the public officer, the person employed on the farm, in the shop, or in the household, is each a servant, and ought to do his duty “with good will” and from a religious motive, as a service to Christ, while it is owed by contract to man. And the exhortation to masters to give unto their servants what is just and equal, seems incompatible with the idea of their being chattels. It recognizes in them a right of property, and conveys an implication opposed to the fundamental idea of slavery. Let that injunction be complied with now in this land, in a pecuniary sense ; let masters offer to their slaves, *in wages*, what is just and equal according to the common sense of working people, and it would bring American slavery to a speedy end ; for most bondmen

* See Dr. Wayland's Sixth Letter to Dr. Fuller. In reference to the supposed sanction to the system of domestic slavery derived from the words of the apostles, Dr. Wayland justly remarks, that, “if the religion of Christ allows us to take such a license from such precepts as these, the New Testament would be the greatest curse ever inflicted on our race.”

would soon purchase their own bodies and souls by the sweat of the brow.

But the instructions to servants were, partly, and so far as given to slaves, precepts of non-resistance; expedient in their helpless situation, and in the feeble condition of the infant church, but nowise annulling any one's natural right. They are to be construed in the same manner as the non-resistant precepts of Jesus, which few interpreters have received literally and absolutely, and as annulling the rights which they teach us sometimes to waive for the sake of accomplishing a greater good. A Christian now may, for a time, submit to a wrong, and yield a personal right, for a higher ulterior good than its instant vindication would be. But this does not annul his right, nor oblige him always to forbear vindicating it, nor release others from the obligation to do him immediate justice, so far as lies in their power. Were you and I reduced to slavery in a pagan community, I could exhort you to make the relation of service as pleasant to yourselves, and as profitable to your masters, as possible, so long as you could not escape from it, by a daily exhibition of the Christian virtues; to be subject to the froward as well as the gentle ; to be faithful to every trust reposed in you, not as an acknowledgment of your masters' claims, but in justice to yourselves and to Christ. I would counsel you, as constituting a band of missionaries among the heathen, to resist no wrong, but to use the opportunity to commend and propagate the true faith. But, in doing this, I might not intend to make void (and could not make void) any of your natural rights, or those of your posterity, or to prohibit any and every attempt to recover them when Providence should appear to favor it. And, although I might not at once assail the barbarian law under which you were held slaves, it might become my duty, or that of my successors, to assail it when the Christian faith should be publicly and generally received and professed in that community. Thus the instructions of the apostles to slaves annulled not their natural right, nor the duty of others to help them to obtain it, so soon as that duty should come to light by the more perfect operation of Christianity. The apostles, then, cannot fairly be understood to have declared or implied the rightfulness of slavery. They taught what, it is

admitted, would lead to a conviction of its wrongfulness. A time would arrive when it would come into such relations with received truth, and with all social circumstances, that it must be felt to be sinful ; — when the apostles, if living, or their successors, if commanded to aid in enslaving or re-enslaving a human being, would refuse obedience. Indeed, the case of helping to deliver a fugitive from a Free State into bondage could not happen in their experience; and therefore nothing they said to masters or slaves in their circumstances applies, on this point, to our circumstances, applies to such a case.* And, if they taught what must at length lead to the conviction of the sinfulness of slaveholding, we cannot doubt, that, at this distance of time and in our advanced stage of Christian progress, if dwelling with us and summoned to acknowledge by a distinct act the doctrine of property in man, they would say, with their old devotion to truth and in the spirit of their ancient martyrdom, “We ought to obey God rather than man;” and would suffer any penalty rather than here subject a fellow-being to a system which one of the most distinguished interpreters of their writings, Mr. Stuart himself, declares it impossible for one man to subject another to, and do as he would be done by.

There is nothing in the silence or the words, then, of Christ and his apostles which authorizes a disciple now to lend an active or a moral support to the Fugitive Slave Law ; nothing to annul or lessen the obligation to do as we would be done by, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. There is no evading the radically unchristian and iniquitous character of such an action, except by attempting to throw the responsibility upon those who demand it. This has been done. It is said, that, when we help to return a man to servitude, the merit or demerit of the act attaches solely to the State whose laws make him a slave. And, strange enough, this is said by those who would

* The case of the return of Onesimus to Philemon is not parallel to the rendition of a fugitive under the present law. It is not certain that he was a slave ; for the word *doulos* means also servant, and was applied sometimes to a freed man. But, if a slave, Rome was not a *free* community. It was not in the power of the Christians to protect him there ; and he might wish to return to his former home, especially when he knew he would go as a Christian convert to Christian brethren, and have every church-privilege. Paul asked, and confidently expected, Philemon to receive Onesimus, “not as a servant, but above a servant, and as a brother beloved.” The action appears to have been, in spirit, not a compliance with slave-law, but bringing together two persons for their mutual help and happiness.

hold me responsible for whatever consequences may follow a refusal to support the Fugitive Slave Law. With glaring inconsistency, I am to be held accountable for consequences which I do not intend, but which others, offended by my refusal to do wrong, threaten, and may bring about ; but I am to be acquitted of all guilt for the natural and proper effect of my action, the enslaving of a fellow-being, which I know will follow it. It is a poor evasion. Suppose the Turkish sultan had surrendered the noble Kossuth to Nicholas and Austria, and to an ignominious death, and said to the world, "I am not responsible : I only gave him up to the laws of Austria,"—what should we say, but that he had added a contemptible falsehood to contemptible cowardice?

When I bring before me the condition to which the law in question consigns its prey, I say of it, as Mr. Stuart says of the law in some Slave States forbidding to teach slaves to read,—I say of the whole system as he says of an incidental but essential policy of its supporters, —"In such a case, obedience to a human law is crime: it is treason to the majesty of heaven and earth." I advise no one to resist it by force ; but I cannot obey it. To do so, I feel that I must deny in one act all that is most precious in my religious and political education, all that I believe, all that it has been the business of my mature life to teach. Reared in the belief of the divine origin of the Christian law of life, and of the truth contained in the Declaration of Independence, that all men are born with inalienable rights, and assenting with my whole soul to the preamble of the Constitution when it sets forth its own design and the true end of government to be to establish justice, if I could open my lips to cheer on the infamous slave-hunt,—if I could point out to the pursuing officer the fugitive's way, — if, after three quarters of a century, I could do that which the framers of the Constitution would not name in that instrument, I should be false to the noblest truth I have learned and loved. There is a Law higher than any law of man, when it enjoins what Christianity forbids. And whatever may be said of the danger of obeying individual conviction, or of the evils which have flowed, and may again flow, from perverted consciences, I cannot submit to the dictation of any man, or body of men, in an action so vital to

the soul as that now demanded. I will obey government in all things lawful, all things not immoral and inhuman ; but no further. I know of no other rule of life for a Christian than to obey the will of God as revealed to himself in Christ's gospel, interpreted dispassionately, and with the best aids to be obtained. And I know of nothing, at this time, so likely to pervert both reason and conscience, as the attempt to reconcile with this gospel any active or moral support of this law.

A distinguished divine remarks,* that “there is such a thing as a law of conscience which is above any constitution, any compact, any advantage whatever. If I were required to blaspheme God, to tell a lie, to avouch here in the presence of God that to be true which I knew to be false, I firmly say I would not do it to save my life, or your lives, or the life of a whole nation. Or if the Southern people were idolaters, and would make no compact with us but on condition that we would worship their gods, I say that we could not do it. Or if they were worshippers of Moloch, and demanded as the condition of Union with them that we should send to them a hundred of our children every year to go through the fire to their idol, I say we could not do it.” I accept this ; and when I think of asking God's aid and Christ's spirit in rendering up a being like myself to a condition which “contradicts the first and fundamental principle of the Bible, that all are of one blood; which degrades men made in the image of God into brute beasts; in which all the sacred social relations of life are destroyed ; in which ignorance, profound and nearly universal, is the lot of the great mass held in bondage ; which is a degradation of a whole class of a community below their proper rank as men ;”**— when I think of giving, by a distinct act, a moral support to such a system, I feel that by doing it I should blaspheme God and Christ ; I should tell a lie ; I should help to bind the victim for Moloch; I should participate in the worship of a false god ; I should give a moral support to as iniquitous and inhuman a system as I know. It is this moral support

* Dr. Dewey, in his speech at Pittsfield.

** I have copied the heads of a description of slavery in the Southern States by Mr. Stuart, omitting the worst from considerations of delicacy.

which they want who demand this act of me. It is the “principle of the thing,” not the property, they care for. Now, precisely on account of the principle, I would not do it, though I *knew* consequences would follow my refusal worse than any which I deem very probable, or which I think would be at all likely to happen, if all good men of the Free States would firmly and at once make that refusal. I would not do it to save my life or your lives ; and it is inconceivable that a “nation's life” can depend on my doing what is abhorrent to Christian morality. There are immoralities not to be compared with consequences, as there are no scales for weighing the soul against the world. I will make any sacrifice to avert danger but that which no bribes or threats ought ever to extort from a man.

The divine quoted says: “I feel for the poor fugitive, and I will do what I can to save him from his fate. . . . His going back is a thing most painful to *me*. But . . . I would consent that my own brother, my own son, should go ; ten times rather I would go myself, than that this Union should be sacrificed for me or for us.” That a man whom no domestic ties imperiously bound, and carrying with him the solaces of the gospel and the Christian sympathies of all he left behind, could go voluntarily, and take the external condition of a slave, if that would preserve our peace, and overthrow oppression, I can conceive. But that he should put himself into the darkness and hopelessness of that condition is impossible. The comparison of such a case to that of the fugitive is nothing to the purpose. Suppose Massachusetts should compel him to go in the fugitive's stead, and to remain, what then? Would he name any consequences in mitigation of the moral atrocity? Or would he consent that his own brother or his own son should be compelled to go as a peace-offering? Brother or son, I thank him for the word. It gives the true test. I look around me : I try to think of some head of a family torn from it by violence, for no crime, by a fate to which drowning at sea or perishing of fever would be a blessed boon; or of some young man with bright hopes preparing for the business of life, or of some fair young woman, — of my own child,—put into actual slavery, with all its liabilities; I think of hopes blasted, of faculties stifled, of

mind extinguished, of the doom on posterity,— and of this as a peace-offering, —and that I should consent to this. No! not to save the Union,—not to save any thing, — not to save the universe. For where is God? Where is the soul? Where is law, the law which has its seat in the bosom of God? Where is man's moral nature? Where is left any thing worth saving? I consent to that! As soon would I consent to turn this house of our solemnities into a heathen temple, to become the priest of pagan rites, to help you to bind my own child on the altar and slay him as a sacrifice to appease the anger of an unknown God, that we might then go to our homes in the hope to dwell there in peace and safety. Thus I should feel about delivering a brother or a child to the fate of slavery. According to Christ, the fugitive is our brother or our child: he is the victim, the human peace-offering to an unknown God, to be sacrificed that you and I may prosper. And these victims to be offered by hundreds annually! I should look upon the dismemberment of these States as one of the greatest political evils. But I can never yield principle to threatening clamor about disunion ; nor can I measure the infinite with the finite, or weigh prosperity against the deepest demoralization.

Finally, I distrust the expediency as much as I abhor the morality of the Fugitive Law. There are consequences of doing wrong, —fearful judgments which overtake communities and governments who trample divine law under their feet. A course of policy which has to “conquer” the blessed “prejudices” of our religious and moral education, which wars against human nature, which is in conflict with all the spiritual and ethical instruction we are seeking to diffuse, by our religious associations, through our growing country, offers no stability. Justice is the only firm basis of peace.

I believe the fundamental principles of religion and morality to be involved in the question which is now forced upon our consideration. In those deliberate determinations of our lives which are of great significance and widest influence, it becomes us to act in such a manner as we shall look back upon without regret for ever. “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

ⁱ Nor was the moral state of Judea more auspicious than that of the rest of the Roman empire to so radical a reform as the abolition of slavery would have been at that time. It involved the question of the equality of Jews and Gentiles. The rigorous perpetual Hebrew slavery was that of persons of Gentile origin. I think those who have controverted Mr. Stuart's position, — that the command in Deuteronomy, not to deliver a bondman, who had escaped, unto his master, applied only to those who fled from surrounding nations to the Hebrews, — have not made out their case. At the same time, I think the spirit and the reasons of that command apply now to our duty to fugitive slaves. For, if Mr. Stuart's description of American slavery be true, society in the Slave States, *as regards this institution*, as well deserves to be accounted heathen in comparison with the laws and privileges of Massachusetts, as did the society of idolatrous nations in comparison with that of the Hebrews. But I agree with Mr. Stuart, that “there was no seventh year and no jubilee year to *heathen* slaves.” This was a part of the wall of partition which, as Mr. Stuart justly observes, *He* came to break down who proclaimed one common God and Father of all. And to try to break it down was to aim a blow at all slavery. It was also to begin a reform more radical than would be the legal abolition of the chattel-principle in these United States, which have *nationally announced* the doctrines requiring it. The question of the true function of the Messiah's office, and of Jesus' claims to be received in it, was first and fundamental then. Concerning the permission given in Lev. xxv, to purchase heathen slaves, Mr. Stuart exclaims, with rather extravagant joy, “There it stands (and even abolitionists cannot abolish it), that the Jews might have slaves *ad libitum*.” What then? Why, says Mr. Stuart, slaveholding, if God permitted it, is not a *malum in se* (a sin in itself). But it is idle to dispute about words. Sin is *sin* to those possessed of principles which show it to be such. Just as much it follows from the permission referred to, that the African slave-trade to Christian nations is not a *malum in se*. Nevertheless, we hang the foreign slave-trader as a pirate ; and Mr. Stuart says, “No one can reason from the case of the Jews to the case of men who lived after the coming of Christ.” As little can we reason from then case to that of the rendition of fugitives to-day. But there arises a deeper question still. There runs through all the reasoning of Mr. Stuart and others (of Dr. Dewey, in one point, in his letter to the editors of the *Christian Enquirer*), an assumption that one cannot admit the divine mission of Moses, without admitting the sanction of divine revelation for whatever he permitted. I deny this assumption. The question arises, Cannot one admit the divine mission of Moses, limited to a few great truths, and to one or two great and special ends, without being logically obliged to concede that he had the special sanction of God for all his permissions, for his policy in all its details; that God permitted Hebrew slavery in any other sense than that in which he has permitted, and still permits, *all evil*, in his progressive providence, which from it all educes good?