

“The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, having taken into consideration the subject of slavery, think proper to make known their sentiments upon it to the churches and people under their care.

We consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ, which enjoin that ‘all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.’ Slavery creates a paradox in the moral system; it exhibits rational, accountable, and immortal beings in such circumstances as scarcely to leave them the power of moral action. It exhibits them as dependent on the will of others, whether they shall receive religious instruction; whether they shall know and worship the true God; whether they shall enjoy the ordinances of the gospel; whether they shall perform the duties and cherish the endearments of husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbours and friends; whether they shall preserve their chastity and purity, or regard the dictates of justice and humanity. Such are some of the consequences of slavery—consequences not imaginary, but which connect themselves with its very existence. The evils to which the slave is always exposed often take place in fact, and in their very worst degree and form; and where all of them do not take place, as we rejoice to say in many instances, through the influence of the principles of humanity and religion on the mind of masters, they do not—still the slave is deprived of his natural right, degraded as a human being, and exposed to the danger of passing into the hands of a master who may inflict upon him all the hardships and injuries which inhumanity and avarice may suggest.

From this view of the consequences resulting from the practice into which Christian people have most inconsistently fallen, of enslaving a portion of their brethren of mankind—for ‘God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth’—it is manifestly the duty of all Christians who enjoy the light of the present day, when the inconsistency of slavery, both with the dictates of humanity and religion, has been demonstrated, and is generally seen and acknowledged, to use their honest, earnest, and unwearied endeavours, to correct the errors of former times, and as speedily as possible to efface this blot on our holy religion, and to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout Christendom, and if possible throughout the world.

We rejoice that the Church to which we belong commenced as early as any other in this country, the good work of endeavouring to put an end to slavery, and that in the same work many of its members have ever since been, and now are, among the most active, vigorous, and efficient labourers. We do, indeed, tenderly sympathize with those portions of our church and our country where the evil of slavery has been entailed upon them; where a great, and the most virtuous part of the community abhor slavery, and wish its extermination as sincerely as any others—but where the number of slaves, their ignorance, and their vicious habits generally, render an immediate and universal emancipation inconsistent alike with the safety and happiness of the master and the slave. With those who are thus circumstanced, we repeat that we tenderly sympathize. At the same time, we earnestly exhort them to continue, and if possible to increase their exertions to effect a total abolition of slavery. We exhort them to suffer no greater delay to take place in this most interesting concern, than a regard to the public welfare truly and indispensably demands.

As our country has inflicted a most grievous injury on the unhappy Afri-

cans, by bringing them into slavery, we cannot indeed urge that we should add a second injury to the first, by emancipating them in such manner as that they will be likely to destroy themselves or others. But we do think, that our country ought to be governed in this matter by no other consideration than an honest and impartial regard to the happiness of the injured party, uninfluenced by the expense or inconvenience which such a regard may involve. We, therefore, warn all who belong to our denomination of Christians against unduly extending this plea of necessity; against making it a cover for the love and practice of slavery, or a pretence for not using efforts that are lawful and practicable, to extinguish this evil.

And we, at the same time, exhort others to forbear harsh censures, and uncharitable reflections on their brethren, who unhappily live among slaves, whom they cannot immediately set free; but who, at the same time, are really using all their influence, and all their endeavours, to bring them into a state of freedom, as soon as a door for it can be safely opened.

Having thus expressed our views of slavery, and of the duty indispensably incumbent on all Christians to labour for its complete extinction, we proceed to recommend, and we do it with all the earnestness and solemnity which this momentous subject demands, a particular attention to the following points.

We recommend to all our people to patronize and encourage the society lately formed, for colonizing in Africa, the land of their ancestors, the free people of colour in our country. We hope that much good may result from the plans and efforts of this society. And while we exceedingly rejoice to have witnessed its origin and organization among the holders of slaves, as giving an unequivocal pledge of their desires to deliver themselves and their country from the calamity of slavery; we hope that those portions of the American union, whose inhabitants are, by a gracious providence, more favourably circumstanced, will cordially, and liberally, and earnestly co-operate with their brethren, in bringing about the great end contemplated.

We recommend to all the members of our religious denomination, not only to permit, but to facilitate and encourage the instruction of their slaves, in the principles and duties of the Christian religion; by granting them liberty to attend on the preaching of the gospel, when they have opportunity; by favouring the instruction of them in the Sabbath-school, wherever those schools can be formed; and by giving them all other proper advantages for acquiring the knowledge of their duty both to God and to man. We are perfectly satisfied, that it is incumbent on all Christians to communicate religious instruction to those who are under their authority, so that the doing of this in the case before us, so far from operating, as some have apprehended that it might, as an incitement to insubordination and insurrection, would, on the contrary, operate as the most powerful means for the prevention of those evils.

We enjoin it on all church sessions and Presbyteries, under the care of this Assembly, to discountenance, and as far as possible to prevent all cruelty of whatever kind in the treatment of slaves; especially the cruelty of separating husband and wife, parents and children, and that which consists in selling slaves to those who will either themselves deprive these unhappy people of the blessings of the gospel, or who will transport them to places where the gospel is not proclaimed, or where it is forbidden to slaves to attend upon its institutions. And if it shall ever happen that a Christian professor in our communion shall sell a slave who is also in communion and good standing with our Church, contrary to his or her will, and inclination, it ought immediately to claim the particular attention of the proper church judicature; and

unless there be such peculiar circumstances attending the case as can but seldom happen, it ought to be followed, without delay, by a suspension of the offender from all the privileges of the church, till he repent, and make all the reparation in his power to the injured party."

*Resolved*, That fifteen hundred copies of this report be printed or published in the newspapers.

The committee appointed to ascertain from the Treasurer the amount of money in his hands, belonging to the funds of the Theological Seminary, and also an account of all the receipts and expenditures since the establishment of the institution, reported: Whereupon

*Resolved*, That the sum of two thousand dollars be, and is hereby appropriated from any unappropriated moneys in the hands of the Treasurer of the contingent fund, for the purpose of completing so much of the edifice as may in the judgment of the Building Committee of the Board of Directors, be necessary for finishing the public rooms, and for the actual accommodation of the students of the Seminary, and otherwise.

The committee appointed to examine the records of the Synod of Philadelphia, reported, and their report was read. After some discussion, the Assembly adjourned till 4 o'clock, P. M.

Concluded with prayer.

4 o'clock, P. M.

The Assembly met and was constituted by prayer.

The minutes of the last session were read.

Mr. Zachariah Lewis, the alternate to Dr. Rodgers, appeared in the Assembly, and took his seat as a member.

The consideration of the report of the committee appointed to examine the records of the Synod of Philadelphia, was resumed, and after considerable discussion, their report being amended, was adopted, and is as follows, viz:

*Resolved*, That the minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia be approved to page 10, second volume, except a resolution expressing the opinion of that body on the subject of appeals.

The committee appointed to report to the Assembly the amount of the moneys collected by the agents appointed by the last Assembly to solicit donations for the Theological Seminary, reported, and their report being read, was adopted.

Whereas it appears from some of the reports of committees appointed to examine the Synodical books, that several of the Synods have neglected to send up their records to this Assembly,

*Resolved*, That the said Synods be, and they are hereby enjoined to be careful to send up their records to the next General Assembly.

The first annual report of the United Foreign Missionary Society was laid on the table, together with their address to the three denominations united in their society; and the following amendments to the constitution of said society, were approved by the Assembly, viz:

1. That the third article be so altered as to make the whole number of managers eighteen, instead of twelve, exclusive of the officers.

2. That to the fifth article be added the following clause, viz: 'And any person presenting to the society a donation of not less than one hundred dollars, shall be a director for life, and entitled to a seat and vote in the Board of Managers.'

3. That an article be added after the fifth of the original instrument, to read thus: 'The President, Treasurer, and Secretary, of any society auxiliary to this, shall be, *ex officio*, members of the Board of Managers.'