

LETTERS  
TO  
REV. W. C. BUCK,  
IN REVIEW OF HIS ARTICLES ON SLAVERY;  
BY  
REV. J. M. PENDLETON

These letters were published originally in the Louisville Examiner.

BOWLING GREEN, Ky., }  
July 7, 1849. }

*Messrs. Editors:* The following is the first of a series of letters addressed to Rev. Wm. C. Buck, in review of his articles on "Slavery," which appeared in the Baptist Banner a few weeks since. Wishing my replies published in his own paper, I sent to him about a month ago the communication I now inclose to you; but it was returned to me by the last mail, accompanied with a polite apology for its long detention, and a courteous refusal to admit it into his columns. I do not complain of this. He has only exercised an editorial right. It is true that as he had said in his first article, that voters "should calmly and dispassionately investigate it [the slavery question] in all its bearings," I was led to conclude that in order to an "investigation," it might be well to have something said on both sides of the question. I thought, too, that "in all the bearings" of the subject, there might be some "bearings" favorable to Emancipation, and these I desired to present to the readers of the Banner. Many persons, I know, wish to hear but one side of a question that they may decide upon its merits, and it must be admitted that it is easier to decide before both sides are heard. Whether the decision is likely to be correct is another thing. Mr. B. lays down some principles, which, if carried out, would inevitably lead to the extinction of slavery in Kentucky; and yet his articles are referred to by pro-slavery men as a triumphant vindication of the system of slavery. I am anxious for his pro-slavery men to see that if those principles were acted out, Emancipation would take place. But they do not wish to be troubled with anti-slavery notions, and the Editor of the Banner is resolved that they shall not be so troubled.

*Messrs. Editors,* I throw myself on your clemency.

With all respect,

J. M. PENDLETON.

LETTER I.

REV. WM. C. BUCK:

*Dear Sir*—I have read with deep interest the articles on slavery recently published in your paper. I have aimed to bestow upon them the impartial consideration requisite to a proper decision of a controverted question. It is gratifying to me to be able to say that much of what you have written receives my hearty endorsement. Some of your views I think objectionable, and my saying so will, I am sure, give you no offence. You prize the privilege of thinking for yourself too highly, to refuse to accord it to others. Freedom of thought and freedom of speech are, in American estimation, two rights of incalculable value.

Will you, in your kindness, permit me to notice a few of the positions you have assumed? If my communications are not perfectly respectful, I hereby authorise you to commit them to the flames. And lest you may be disturbed by the apprehension that I shall draw too largely on your columns, I now state that I do not expect to write more than three or four sheets. It is proper, also, for me to say, that but for my absence from home, and other circumstances, you would have heard from me at an earlier day.

I perceive from your first article, that you have fallen into a very common but, as I conceive, unaccountable error. You refer to the question of slavery as "a purely political one," and on this account you are disposed to leave it "to the political press." Suffer me courteously but emphatically to dissent from this opinion. If any question more deeply and vitally involving morals and religion, ever came before the voters of Kentucky, I have yet to learn the fact. According to the Constitution and laws of the State, slave holders can, whenever they please, sever the marriage tie as it exists among slaves. You will say that slave marriages are not legalized.

This is true; but the absence of a legal tie binding the parties together, only stamps with greater odium the cruelty which is allowed to sunder the moral tie—the only tie that unites them. Slave-owners, too, have the power constitutionally and legally conferred, of dooming to hopeless separation slave parents and children. And this is not all. Masters and mistresses can, if so disposed, prevent their slaves from ever learning to read the Bible, or from hearing the Gospel preached. They can keep them in profound ignorance of God and salvation. Slaveholders in this Commonwealth are the depositories of this fearful power. On them is conferred this terrible prerogative. But you will perhaps say that the exercise of this power is an abuse of slavery, and that good men do not avail themselves of their legal right to use it. This view of the case is, I know, entertained by some, and it is an anodyne to their consciences. But let us look at it. To what does it amount? Evidently to this—that our Constitution and laws confer a power which good men will not exert, and, therefore, its exercise is restricted to bad men. This fact of itself supplies an argument of transcendent force in favor of taking away the power. If good men will not exercise it, bad men should not be allowed to do so. This is as plain as the sun in the heavens.

In view of considerations like these, how can the question of slavery be considered a "purely political one?" If morals and religion are not in inseparable association with it in some of its most important aspects, it would require some reflection to fix on a subject in which they are involved. I am aware that a misapprehension of this matter has caused many politicians and political editors to pour upon the heads of the anti-slavery preachers of Kentucky torrents of gratuitous abuse and superfluous denunciation. I trust, however, that the ministers who are numbered among Emancipationists, will exemplify the meekness of their Master, and like Him pray, "Father forgive them: they know not what they do." If preachers should not take an interest in a subject which has a most important bearing on morality and religion, I ask what topics should engage their attention and call their energies into action? But I need not elaborate this point. You in your first article admit what I contend for. Speaking of christian voters, you say, "Their views of it [the question of slavery] in a religious point of light, will necessarily have paramount control over their action as members of the body politic." This, I

affirm, should be the case. Religious considerations ought to have "paramount control" in determining the votes of christians. Again you say, "The subject is one of great moment in its moral, social and political bearings, considered either in reference to the slaves, their owners, or the country." Here also are we agreed. I insist, therefore, in view of your own statements, that it is an unfair presentation of the subject to represent it as "a purely political one." Many professors of religion, I know, speak of it as if it were on a level with 'tariffs,' 'national banks,' &c.; and this to me is a source of profound mortification. The idea that slaves are 'property' seems to have taken exclusive possession of their minds, and hence they overlook the capital fact that slaves are 'persons' as well as property. This circumstance, in my judgment; vitiates the reasonings of the pro-slavery party in Kentucky. But to proceed:

In your second article you expatiate on the philosophy of governments, and express sentiments, to a few of which I wish to call the attention of your readers. You employ this language: "*God approves of that system of things, which, under the circumstances, is best calculated to promote the holiness and happiness of men; and that which God approves is morally right.*" The italicising is your own, and it indicates the importance you attach to the position laid down. I am happy again to concur with you in opinion. Here, however, a great question arises for consideration and settlement. It is this: "Is the 'system of things' in Kentucky (slavery is embraced in this system) 'under the circumstances, best calculated to promote the holiness and happiness of men?'" You anticipate from me a negative response. Before heaven and earth I do answer in the negative. Do you not? I incline to think you do, because in your fifth article (to which I now refer without waiting to come to it in regular order) you speak of the pernicious influence which it [the system of slavery] has "exerted upon the social and moral interests of many in the country." Now, if slavery exerts a "pernicious influence" over the "moral interests" of a people, it surely is not promotive of "holiness." And you say that you do not regard it "as essential to the happiness and prosperity of the white population of this country!" If, then, it does not promote the "holiness and happiness" of the white people, it follows, without doubt, from your position, that, so far as they are concerned, God does not approve the system. The only remaining branch



of the question is this: "Does the system of slavery promote the 'holiness and happiness' of slaves? I am afraid I shall offer an insult to the good sense of your readers, if I attempt to show that it does not. It would be like showing that the sun is not the source of cold and darkness. One thing is certain: "If slavery as it exists in Kentucky, promotes the 'holiness and happiness' of slaves, ignorance is essential to 'holiness and happiness.' And if so, who can answer the following question? Why has God given us the Bible and the ministry of the gospel for our intellectual and moral enlightenment? this enlightenment being designed to promote our holiness, and, by consequence, our happiness?"

Another suggestion presents itself: Happiness is our "being's end and aim," and it can be secured alone by holiness. If then it could be established that slavery promotes the holiness and happiness of slaves, it would follow that as it does not promote the holiness and happiness of the white population it would be well for white people to be enslaved in order to their holiness and happiness. I write "the words of truth and soberness" while I say that so inextinguishable is my love of holiness and desire for it, that if I believed slavery promotive of it, much as I now detest the system, I would welcome the fetters of bondage, and smile on all the apparatus requisite to my deprivation of liberty. In explanation of this declaration, I need only repeat this Scripture: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

There is an additional thought worthy of consideration. Upon the supposition that slavery promotes the holiness and happiness of slaves, the continuance of the system requires the free to perform a work of supererogation. They must not only love their colored "neighbors as themselves," but better than themselves. You concede that slavery does not promote the holiness and happiness of the white people. Will you argue then, that the white people, in disregard of their own holiness and happiness, should perpetuate slavery with a view to the holiness and happiness of slaves? This, I say, would be a work of supererogation. No law, divine or human, requires as much as this.

But you know, and I know that slavery "promotes the holiness and happiness" of neither the free nor the slave population of Kentucky. This being the case, I, in accordance with your own position, say that God does not approve the system.

It is not a regard for the "holiness and happi-

ness" of slaves that prolongs the existence of slavery among us, but it is the *imaginary* interest of masters that makes them unwilling for Kentucky to become free. It is what the accomplished Macaulay would term the "omnipotent sophistry of interest." Alas for us that so ruinous an omnipotence can be predicated of the sophistry of interest!

In my next, I shall notice some things in your third article. With all courtesy,

J. M. PENDLETON.

LETTER II.

REV. WM. C. BUCK:

*Dear Sir:*—In your third article on the "Slavery Question," you take your readers back to patriarchal times. You refer to Abraham and say, "The fact is fully confirmed that Abraham owned servants, or slaves, (for they were slaves in the full sense of the term,) some of which were bought with his money, and some were born in his house." Again you remark that Abraham's servants "were verily slaves in the very sense in which that term is understood in our language." If the term "servant," as used in the Scriptures, is synonymous with the term "slave" as used among us, is it not remarkable that the Hebrew and Greek words translated servant are in no instance rendered slave? I think you will find the term slave in only two passages of the Bible, that is to say, Jeremiah 2: 14; and Revelation 18: 13. In the former passage it is in *italics*, which indicates that there is no word corresponding to it in the original, nor is there a corresponding term in the Septuagint or in the Vulgate version. In the latter passage the Greek term literally means "bodies," as any Greek scholar can see. I state these facts to show that it does not follow necessarily that Abraham's servants were slaves in the American acceptance of the word. I admit that the Bible refers to a system of servitude in connection with Abraham's family, but I affirm that there are points of material dissimilarity between that system and our system of slavery.—Now for the proof:

In the fourteenth chapter of Genesis we are told that when certain robber Kings had captured Lot and committed depredations on his goods, Abraham "armed his trained servants, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them." Would American slaveholders in similar circumstances adopt a similar course? Do not many of our States make it a penal offence for

Wilson's paper.

a slave to carry a weapon? You will perhaps say that the safety of the white population renders this prudential regulation necessary. If this be admitted it only shows the dissimilarity for which I contend.

There is another species of proof to which you cannot object. You concede that Abraham held his servants for *their* benefit, and not his own. This, I am aware, is your view, and I admire the benevolence that has led you to adopt it. But let me ask, Are American slaveholders influenced by considerations of benefit to their slaves to hold them in bondage?—is this the motive that controls them? Surely it is not, and if not, our system of slavery differs materially from patriarchal servitude.

I must content myself with one more proof of dissimilarity, though the subject is by no means exhausted. Abraham at one time apprehensive of dying childless, evidently supposed that in that event, his servant, the steward of his house, (whom you call his "slave" and still use the term) would be his heir. Is any regulation like this in slave States?—is the slave anywhere the heir of his childless master? Such a question will probably excite the risibility and the scorn of slaveholders. In view of the fact that if Abraham had died childless, his servant would have been his heir, I assert that patriarchal servitude and American slavery exhibit essential dissimilarities.

But suppose, for argument's sake, the two systems were substantially the same. What then? Would it follow that our system is right? By no means, unless it can be shown that whatever Abraham did was right. This, however, is a common argument. Slaveholders say,— "Abraham held slaves, and therefore it is not wrong for us to hold them." This species of logic might be employed to the great annoyance of its authors. It might be said Abraham had a son by his servant Hagar, and *therefore*, &c.— Abraham had concubines, and *therefore*, &c.— Abraham was guilty of equivocation, and *therefore*, &c. An argument which proves too much proves nothing.

You next proceed to the Mosaic law in corroboration of your views of slavery, and refer to the "Gibeonites" in proof of the "Divine clemency of slavery among the Israelites. A distinguished writer of Virginia, Rev. Mr. Stringfellow, in his treatise on slavery argues that the bondage of the Gibeonites was the fulfilment of the imprecatory prediction of Noah relative to his grandson: "Cursed be Canaan; a

servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." Let us examine this matter: The Gibeonites, as we learn from the ninth chapter of Joshua, were seized with consternation when the children of Israel entered into "the promised land." To avoid utter extermination they practised a deception on Joshua, meeting him in his triumphant march, and saying that they were from "a far country." Joshua "made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them," evidently under the impression that that they did not belong to any of the Canaanitish tribes. When the deception had been detected the "princes" were of opinion that the "oath" they had taken should be sacredly regarded, and that the Gibeonites should be made "bondmen, hewers of wood, and drawers of water." But for the "league" and the "oath" they would doubtless have been utterly destroyed. It had been repeatedly enjoined on the Israelites to "destroy all the inhabitants of the land." God let Abraham know that several centuries would elapse from the time he gave him a title to Canaan, until his posterity should take actual possession of it. Why this lapse of ages and generations? The reason which God himself gives is this:—"For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." The divine arrangement was that the fulness of their iniquity should be the signal for their destruction, and the Israelites were to be their destroyers—a fact which implicates the divine goodness no more than the destructions caused by plagues, pestilences and earthquakes. Now, it seems to me a little unfortunate for your and Mr. Stringfellow's side of the question to refer to the Gibeonites at all. Why were they made bondmen? *It was done in ignorant violation of the positive command of God.* You do not, you cannot believe that it would have been done had Joshua known that they were inhabitants of Canaan. This instance of "Scriptural slavery" without doubt had its origin in disobedience to God—disobedience induced, I admit, by the circumvention of the Gibeonites. Taking all the facts of this transaction into consideration, I am greatly surprised that you can draw from them any inference favorable to American slavery. I might with much more propriety infer that slavery is traceable to a disregard of the divine will. But Mr. Stringfellow insists that the Canaanites have been slaves from the days of Joshua until the present time. If this were so, I do not see what justification it furnishes for the enslave-



ment of Africans. Canaan was certainly in Asia when I was pursuing my geographical studies. If the curse pronounced by Noah on his grandson Canaan authorised the subjection of Canaan's posterity to bondage, (and this is all the authority contended for) how could the same curse contemplate the bondage of Africans who, though descendants of Ham, are not descendants of Canaan? I avail myself of a syllogism to expose the absurdity of the argument I am answering. Here it is:—Noah's curse justified the enslavement of a small fraction of the inhabitants of Asia. Canaan's posterity constituted that small fraction. Therefore it is right to make slaves of the inhabitants of Africa. This, if I understand it, is the argument. And is there a man under the sun who can see any connection between the premises and the conclusion? They are as distant as "from the centre thrice to the utmost pole."

I have often wondered that the apologists of slavery refer with such frequency to the Mosaic law, when it is evident that if a prominent regulation of that law had not been utterly disregarded there would have been no slavery in America. Moses says, "He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hands, shall surely be put to death." How were Africans first introduced into this country? They were stolen from their native land and brought here in chains. Those who stole them deserved death according to the law of Moses.

The same law provided for the freedom of the servant if any serious bodily injury was inflicted on him by his master. The loss of a "tooth," or the loss of an "eye," secured immediate liberty. There is no arrangement like this in any of the slave States of this Union. I fear the Mosaic regulations, though often referred to, are not heartily approved.

The law of Moses forbade the delivery of a runaway servant to his master. Would not such a regulation lead to the extinction of slavery in America?

Servants under the Mosaic law did not labor more than two-thirds of their time. The land rested every seventh year—and all the males of the Jewish nation were required to attend three feasts at Jerusalem annually. Many other religious observances consumed much time. The calculation is, I think, a moderate one that at least one-third of the time of Jewish servants was abstracted from labor. An arrangement of this kind would perhaps in twelve months con-

vince the advocates of slavery of the unprofitableness of the system.

The Mosaic law provided for the periodical emancipation of servants. Every fiftieth year liberty was proclaimed throughout the land "to ALL the inhabitants thereof." I know it has been said that this proclamation of liberty had reference to Hebrew servants, and not to those obtained from heathen nations. There is a capital objection to this view. Hebrew servants went free the seventh year unless they chose to remain in servitude, and submitted to the ceremony of having their "ears pierced with an awl." The phrase "all the inhabitants," I suppose, means all. How would American slaveholders fancy a periodical manumission of slaves? They would resist the introduction of such a provision into the laws of their respective States. After all, I imagine their admiration of the Mosaic statutes is by no means unqualified. The system of servitude under the Mosaic law was indeed benevolent compared with our system of slavery.

But suppose the strongest pro-slavery interpretation should be given to the statutes of Moses. Let, for example, Leviticus xxv., 44, 45, 46, (verses which pro-slavery men quote with great facility) be so explained as to make Jewish servitude and American slavery in substance the same. What would follow? That American slavery is right? Certainly not. Upon the supposition I have made, what authority had the Jews to buy slaves from the "heathen round about?" I answer the authority conferred by Jehovah himself through his servant Moses.—*Permission* was given them to buy—this was all—for no one will contend that an *obligation* to buy slaves was imposed on them. Jews, then, were justifiable in buying servants, because divine permission was given them to do so. Similar permission must be given to us Gentiles to justify our purchase of servants. But has such permission been given? Where is it to be found? It is not recorded in the annals of time. The Mosaic regulation was municipal, local, and had no reference to Gentile nations. One prominent design of the statutes of Moses was to keep the Jews a distinct people—separate from other people—and yet, marvellous to tell, one of these municipal statutes is, in the nineteenth century, referred to as if its operation were co-extensive with the world! How a Jewish local law, almost two thousand years after the abolition of the Jewish economy, can have anything to do with Gentiles, I am altogether

at a loss to conceive. But enough for the present. Faithfully yours,

J. M. PENDLETON.

LETTER III.

REV. W. C. BUCK:

DEAR SIR:—In the commencement of your fourth article you employ this language: "We wish our readers distinctly to understand that we admit that the institution of slavery, through the cupidity and rapaciousness of wicked men, has been awfully perverted and abused. That it has been the occasion of enormous and crying sins by both master and slave; and that we do not appear as the apologist, much less the defender of any perversion or abuse of the institution," &c. The system of slavery, then, according to your own concession is susceptible of perversion and abuse, and the perversion and abuse are induced by cupidity and rapaciousness. You restrict "cupidity and rapaciousness" to wicked men. I shall not call in question the propriety of the restriction; but I will say that it is to be feared that many men who are *reputed* good, Christians even, exemplify the cupidity to which you refer. I have heard professors of religion say that slave labor is comparatively unprofitable in Kentucky, and that it is much more lucrative "to raise negroes for sale." They absolutely speak of "raising negroes" as they do of raising mules, cattle, and hogs. The idea is horrible. Rational beings, on whose souls God has stamped immortality, are placed on an equality with beasts that perish. You will say this is an abuse of slavery. Very well. It is just such an abuse as the Constitution and laws of our State tolerate, and you are of opinion that they should remain unchanged. Your kindness will permit me to say that I consider you obnoxious to the charge of inconsistency. You are unwilling to be considered either the "apologist" or "defender" of any "perversion or abuse" of slavery; and yet you wish our present Constitution which permits the perversion and abuse you deprecate to remain as it is. Now it seems to me you ought either to become the "apologist," not to say the "defender" of the abuses of slavery, or advocate such a change in the Constitution as will correct the abuses of the system. Let the abuses, however, be corrected, and I predict that slavery will not exist in Kentucky for a generation. I shall perhaps say more on this point in another place.

You express the opinion that there is less "des-

titution" in countries in which slavery exists than in those in which it does not—that it would be better for the poor in Ireland to be slaves, &c. You say, "Take Ireland for an example, and suppose the Government had so provided that, instead of an oppressed and impoverished tenantry, subjected to the rapacity and heartless exactions of overgrown landlords, the poor of the country could have sold themselves for a given period to the wealthy, so as to make it the duty and the interest of the wealthy to provide for the health and subsistence of the slave," &c. Do you intend your readers to infer that the poor should be made slaves because they are poor? I would seriously object to an arrangement of this kind. So numerous are the changes which occur in the course of human events, that I would be constantly apprehensive of being placed in circumstances so necessitous as to require my enslavement. And you might be placed in a similar predicament, if indeed it be courteous for me to draw an inference from allusions you sometimes make to your pecuniary embarrassments. In such a case we would both oppose with all the intensity of a *personal* objection, the philosophy which would make poverty the basis of slavery.

You say could the Irish "have sold themselves for a given period to the wealthy," &c. Please observe your words, "*for a given period.*" Why this qualification of the sentence? Why not require them to become slaves for life, and also put the fetters of bondage on their posterity?—This would be something analogous to American slavery. If our system be defensible, let it be the model of every system that may be established, and even when a supposition is indulged in reference to slavery in Ireland or anywhere else, let our own "institution" suggest that supposition. But the poor in Ireland could not sell themselves as absolute slaves. They might become hired servants—but not slaves. Suppose a "wealthy landlord" were to propose to buy his poor neighbors, for a certain sum, with the intention of enslaving them, and they were to accede to his proposition. Just as soon as the contract was consummated and the money paid to the suffering poor; not only would *they*, but the very money received by them would belong to the landlord. The *quid pro quo*, the principle necessary to the validity of a contract, would be wanting. The bargain would be null and void. You are aware that Blackstone in his chapter on "Master and Servant" presents this view and shows the folly of attempting to



base slavery on a contract between man and man.

I proceed to notice your remarks in regard to the original purchasers of African slaves. And here I think you have drawn very largely on your imagination. You suppose that there were three classes of purchasers and that these purchasers "*are the representatives of three distinct classes of slaveholders in this country at this time.*" The first class of purchasers you suppose "selfish and sordid"—their object being to "enrich themselves." Pecuniary gain was the only consideration which operated on them. The second class, "from mere impulses of humanity—*love to their neighbors*—resolved to purchase all they could," &c. "The third class of purchasers," you observe, "were Christians, who did not only feel all the sympathy and generous philanthropy which influenced the *second class*, but looking beyond their temporal condition, miserable as that was, contemplated them as being without God and without hope in the world, and sinking down to the death that never dies; and in addition to, and above the impulses of philanthropy, their souls were stirred within them for the salvation of their souls as well as their bodies; they therefore resolved to buy to the utmost of their means."

What you say of your "second and third class of purchasers," I am somewhat at a loss to understand. I am tempted to believe you intended to present a fancy picture, and yet, from the sober strain in which you write, it seems you designed to state the facts in the case. But are they facts? Can you name a class of men who in the early settlement of America went across the Atlantic to Africa "from mere impulses of humanity" to purchase slaves, "believing that they could materially better their condition?" Does history contain a record of such a class? If so I am ignorant of the fact, and would gladly be informed. I would like to do honor to the memory of men whose "impulses of humanity" excited so much sympathy for the African race. Give me, if you please, the names of those who composed this philanthropic "class." They deserve a celebrity which they have not yet attained; and if, through your kindness, justice should be done them, *even at this late period*, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have brightened one of the hitherto dark passages of the history of the African slave trade.

"The third class of purchasers," you remark, "were Christians." The men of this class, it

seems, were men of philanthropic and religious sensibilities. They were specially concerned for the salvation of the souls of the Africans.—"They therefore resolved to buy to the utmost of their means," believing that slavery in America would be instrumental in emancipating the enslaved from the bondage of sin and Satan. Is it not strange that *religious* considerations prompted men to engage in a traffic which our Government has declared to be piracy? Christian sympathies are not accustomed to operate so singularly, not to say capriciously. Is it not wonderful that our Missionaries to the heathen in Asia have never thought of sending the benighted Asiatics to this country that the fetters of bondage might be riveted on their bodies for the good of their souls? You will not be offended if I ask you to give the names of the men whose religion suggested to them the propriety of investing their capital "to the utmost" in African slaves. I have never been in the habit of associating religion with the slave trade. It has appeared to me that the "gospel" and a "slaver," "Christianity" and "fetters," "prayers" and "chains," "praises" and "lashes," are terms which have no special affinity for each other. You will infer that I am rather incredulous as to what you say of your "second and third class" of the original purchasers of African slaves. This is true; but I hope it will not offend you. I know of nothing which can overcome my incredulity except historical facts well authenticated.

When you look thoroughly into the matter, I imagine that you will find that the original purchasers of African slaves were men of your "first class"—"selfish and sordid." I think you will see that it is needless to have more than one "class." The slave trade, if its history is not a fable, had its origin in cupidity, and the same cause, in the terrible energy of its operation, continues it even now, while England, France, and the United States are conjointly resolved to abolish it. What will the love of money not do?

Permit me to make another quotation from your fourth article. You say: "We maintain that that class of slaveholders, who are represented by the above class of purchasers, (the first class) and who are influenced by similar motives, whether they have purchased or inherited their slaves, are in a like condemnation." I would be glad for all the slaveholders in Kentucky to see this extract. You here admit that "selfish and sordid" considerations should not

operate on the slaveholder's mind. The object of your "first class" of purchasers was to "enrich themselves," and the owners of slaves who have the same object in view, are equally guilty with original purchasers, or as you say, "are in a like condemnation." Is not pecuniary gain the potent consideration which influences and controls the thousands of slaveholders in the State who oppose emancipation? I rejoice that there are many slaveholders who are among the most zealous friends of the emancipation cause. They are men of whom I am proud, and of whom the State may well be proud. But I affirm it is a general fact that pro-slavery men among slaveholders are prompted by what they consider their pecuniary interest to oppose the present emancipation movement. Their approbation of the system of slavery grows out of its supposed capability of producing dollars and cents. Take away the pecuniary advantages of the system and they will be the first men to denounce it. I fear you will have to place them with your "first class of purchasers," and declare them "in a like condemnation." I have already said that you lay down certain principles which, in their legitimate tendency, would have an important bearing on the extinction of slavery. This is one: You condemn the purchasers of African slaves who had in view their pecuniary interest, and not the good of the slaves. You condemn slaveholders who sympathize in purpose with these purchasers. Now I say that whenever the minds of slaveholders are brought to the conclusion that slaves cannot be held, or ought not to be held for the pecuniary benefit of masters the days of slavery will be numbered. Slavery cannot be perpetuated in Kentucky unless those in favor of its perpetuation consider it pecuniarily advantageous; and if this motive induces them to continue the system they will, you being judge, involve themselves in the same "condemnation" with the men whose names will go down to posterity in infamous connection with the African slave trade. Who would not deprecate such a condemnation? Yours truly,

J. M. PENDLETON.

LETTER IV.

REV. W. C. BUCK:—

Dear Sir: Near the close of your fourth article on the "Slavery Question," you express the opinion that there are "many thousands of slaveholders in the south who hope for the time when the slaves in this country shall be so ad-

vanced in the arts, in science and religion, as to be perfectly capable of self-government—*assured that when that is the case, they will be useless as slaves, that their owners will cheerfully surrender them to be transplanted by the Government to their fatherland for membership in the African Republic.*"

If I understand the import of your language, it is conceded that *ignorance* is essential to the continuance of slavery. You do not say so, in so many words, but the implication is irresistible. When slaves are "so advanced in the arts, in science and religion, as to be perfectly capable of self-government," you believe "they will be useless as slaves." How horrible must the system of slavery be if its perpetuation depends on the ignorance of the enslaved! Is the mantle of darkness to be thrown around immortal minds to prevent the rays of knowledge from dawning upon them? Are mental powers susceptible of indefinite improvement, to remain uncultivated. Are faculties to whose expansion it were folly to attempt to set limits, to be destined to dwarfish feebleness? And is it necessary to do this, to sustain and perpetuate the "most atrocious of all human institutions?" If there was no other argument against slavery, the ignorance which is so prominent an element of its existence furnishes one of resistless power. The injury which slavery does the immortal mind is transcendantly greater than that inflicted on the mortal body. It involves a *legalized* effort to close up the avenues of knowledge, and lay an embargo on mental illumination. This must be so; for according to your own doctrine, let slaves be instructed "in the arts, in science and religion," and they will become "useless as slaves." Here I must inquire how the slaves of Kentucky are to make progress in the knowledge requisite to self-government? There is no provision in our present Constitution for their instruction, and you wish the Constitution to remain unchanged. Are they *incidentally* to acquire knowledge in the absence of all systematic attempts to enlighten them? This would be flattering, indeed, to the capabilities of African intellect. But you will perhaps say that the present generation of slaves can never be qualified for self-government. Suppose this were the case. Would it follow that nothing should be done for the improvement of the next generation? And nothing will be done if our State Constitution is to undergo no change in reference to slavery. Why this mysterious prejudice against the colored race—prejudice directed not only



against the living, but in the violence of its strength, anticipating coming generations, and wantonly dooming them to ignorance and degradation, ere they emerge from the abyss of nothingness into existence?

But I must proceed to your fifth article, the greater portion of which is devoted to an exposure of the "assumption that the moral law requires all that the spirit of the Gospel can possibly incite to the performance of." I do not perceive that this sentiment, whether true or false, has any special bearing on the subject of slavery. It is needless, therefore, for me to say anything in reference to it.

You express the opinion again and again that "slavery is not a sin *per se*, a sin *in the abstract*, &c." I do not know exactly what is meant by "slavery in the abstract." The phrase, I imagine, is susceptible of different interpretations. For example, I once heard a distinguished Judge remark that "slavery in the abstract has no reference either to master or slave." If this definition be correct; you are certainly right in saying that "slavery is not sinful in the abstract." But I presume when you refer to "slavery in the abstract," you mean slavery separated from its abuses. I do not know that this kind of slavery would be very objectionable. Perhaps it would not; but it would be of short duration. I intimated in a former letter that slavery in Kentucky cannot exist for a generation if disassociated from its abuses. I think this demonstrable. The abuses of slavery include the separation of husbands and wives, parents and children, the ignorance of the enslaved, &c. Let the separation of slave families be made a penal offence, and a death blow is given to slavery. But few masters wish to sell entire families of slaves, and still fewer, perhaps, are willing to purchase entire families. Even the men whose infamous designation is "negro-traders," seldom buy a slave family. They make selections of individuals out of different families, regulating all their operations by a degree of gain. I think it certain that the buying and selling of slaves in Kentucky would soon cease almost entirely, if the separation of families were prohibited by statute. Take an illustration: Suppose you wished to buy a slave. If you could make the purchase *in the abstract*, you would do so. But if you had to take the whole family to get the particular individual you wanted, you would decline making any purchase at all. And so it would be of thousands in Kentucky.

Keeping the enslaved in ignorance is another of the abuses of slavery. Some are of opinion that they ought not to know very much about the Bible—ought not to read it, &c. A knowledge of the Bible, it seems, makes white people better and black people worse—that is, worse as slaves. If this be true, there must be some antagonism between the Bible and slavery. But this only by the way.

On the ignorance of slaves I need not dwell; for you admit that *intelligent* slaves are "useless as slaves." If, then, ignorance is one of the abuses of slavery, and if the correction of the abuse will make slaves "useless as slaves," and qualify them for "self-government," I ask you if the system of slavery can be perpetuated in Kentucky separate from its abuses? I believe that it cannot. Other abuses might be referred to. I might mention the fearful responsibility resting on Christian slaveholders, and the culpable failure of nineteen-twentieths of them to meet this responsibility. I will only say that if the professed christians of Kentucky who hold slaves, felt their religious obligations to their slaves as they should do, they would be universally in favor of providing, under the new Constitution, for a system of Emancipation. They would advocate such a system not merely with a view to the Emancipation of slaves, but with a view to their own Emancipation from their weighty, religious obligations. But, alas! they do not feel these obligations. Their estimate of immortal souls is a most imperfect one. Eternal realities are too frequently forgotten. I write these things in sorrow. The presumption is that a majority of the professors of religion in the State are opposed to Emancipation. I seriously fear that this fact will do more to promote infidelity than anything that has occurred since the settlement of Kentucky. It is not easy to conceive how *intelligent unconverted* men can feel much respect for the religion of those who are in favor of the perpetuity of slavery. Will not some, may not many draw the inference that the Bible is a book of fables, and that Christianity is a delusion? I hope not, but I must confess that there is in my mind a conflict between hope and fear.

You will permit me to say that what you have written about the sinlessness of slavery *in the abstract* may do great harm. The reason is obvious. Pro-slavery men have less logic about them than most other men. Hence when the position is established that "slavery is not of necessity sinful," that it "is not a sin in the ab-

abstract," pro-slavery men most ridiculously transfer their idea of the innocence of slavery in the abstract to slavery in the concrete. Because they can conceive of circumstances in which a master may hold a slave without doing wrong, they infer that there is nothing wrong in the system of slavery in Kentucky. They reason from what *might be* to what is. For example, they would say something like this: The slavery which sacredly regards the marriage union, cherishes the relation between parents and children, and provides for the instruction of the slave, is not sinful. Therefore the system of slavery in Kentucky, *which does none of these things*, is not sinful. Is this logic? Is it not rather a burlesque on logic?

In the latter part of your fifth article you express yourself as follows: "So far from considering African slavery as essential to the happiness and prosperity of the white population of this country, we have always regarded them as being mainly the injured party by its introduction and perpetuity. [perpetuity?] It may have contributed in setting and developing the productive capabilities of those portions of the South, whose climate and local peculiarities rendered them less favorable to the health of white than to black immigrants; and the wealth of many individuals has resulted from slave labor; but these and all other advantages, in our opinion, have been more than overbalanced by the peculiar character of the system of slavery in this country, and the pernicious influence which it has exerted upon the moral and social interests of many in this country. Slavery in this country, as defined by a certain class of laws, and as carried out in the practice of thousands of slaveholders, is not the slavery of the Bible, and cannot be defended by an appeal to its laws or examples, as we have briefly stated in another place. That kind of slavery which makes no provision for the improvement and moral training of the slave, which disregards the marriage relation and the common laws of humanity and justice, *is a perversion of slavery*, and has no more affinity to the slavery of the Scriptures, than socialism or concubinage has to the marriage relation, as recognized by the law of God. Such a system of slavery may justly be denounced as *sinful and only sinful*; and we doubt not that thousands are heaping to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, by such a system of slaveholding." This is strong language; as strong, I believe, as I am accustomed to employ; but many will consider it less offensive

than what I say, because I belong to the Emancipation party, and you have the reputation of being a pro-slavery man. Now, I ask with all courtesy, is not the system of slavery in Kentucky, such a system as you pronounce "*a perversion of slavery?*" What provision is made for the "improvement and moral training of the slave?" None at all. Whatever is done results from the promptings of individual benevolence. There is no statute requiring the improvement and moral training of the slave. And is not the marriage relation disregarded as it exists among slaves! To ask this question is to answer it. In more instances than we are apt to suppose, the "common laws of humanity and justice are disregarded," so far as slaves are concerned. Such a system of slavery as you describe, you pronounce "*sinful and only sinful.*" I will not say that our system in Kentucky is "*only sinful*," but I will say that your language authorizes me to affirm that there is a great deal of sin about it and in it. I fear that many, by means of this system, are, as you say, "heaping to themselves wrath against the day of wrath." How ineffable the absurdity that such a system should undergo no change! Who but a misanthrope would infuse into it the elements of permanency?

Yours, &c.,

J. M. PENDLETON.

LETTER V.

Rev. W. C. BUCK—

Dear Sir: I have already intimated that you sometimes draw largely on your imagination—Of this there is ample proof in the latter part of your fifth article. You employ this remarkable language: "We feel confident that there are multiplied thousands of slaveholders in this country, who hold their slaves in the fear of God, and whose conduct in relation to them is regulated by the law of Christ, remembering that they have a Master in Heaven, to whom they must render an account." I suppose it would require the multiplication of a thousand by a thousand, to say the least, to make "multiplied thousands." The production of such multiplication would be a million; and if my information is correct, the number of slaveholders in the United States does not amount to half a million! My impression is that there were about three hundred thousand before the annexation of Texas. If you make the necessary calculation, I think you will regret the extravagance of your language. Certain it is that there are not "multiplied thousands of slaveholders in this country



who hold their slaves in the fear of God." I apprehend the number is comparatively small. But it is not pleasant to find fault, and I proceed to make an extract which does credit to your head and your heart. You say, "while, therefore, we are constrained, from the testimony of the Bible, to believe that slavery as therein warranted and provided for, was benevolently provided for the benefit of the poor, still, in consequence of the extensive perversion of it, in this country, and its consequent evil influences upon the moral and social interests of the white population, who can but regard it as a social and political evil which calls for appropriate remedies and correctives." The sentiments you here express, rather than the rhetorical construction of the sentence, meet my approbation. I wish it were known from the Ohio to the Nueces that, in your judgment, "slavery" as "warranted" by the Bible, is a benevolent provision "for the benefit of the poor." Is this the kind of slavery we have in this country? Evidently not; for you speak of the "extensive perversion of it" among us. Slavery in America, so far as it is perverted from its original design (and the "perversion" is "extensive") is unwarranted by the Bible. This is your argument legitimately amplified. Now let me ask how much of the slavery of this country is "warranted" by the Bible? As its perversion is extensive, it follows irresistibly that not much of it can lay claim to a scriptural warrant. You admit the "evil influences" of slavery "upon the moral and social interests of the white population." Here also are we agreed. You regard slavery as a "social and political evil," and so do I. This evil, in your opinion, "calls for appropriate remedies and correctives." I concur in this sentiment, and so do the Emancipationists of Kentucky. The loud call for "appropriate remedies" has given origin to the Emancipation party. How you can reconcile what you say of "remedies and correctives" with the following language taken from your sixth and last article, is more than I can say. "We are opposed to any interference with, or alteration of the provisions of the present Constitution on the subject." [slavery.] If you feel this opposition "to any interference," &c., how can you say that slavery is an "evil which calls for appropriate remedies?" The present Constitution does not furnish these "remedies;" for it has been in operation fifty years, and still "remedies" are called for. The remedial virtues of the Constitution, if it has any, would have been discovered long since. It

is reasonable to suppose that a remedy would check and even eradicate a disease within fifty years. But there has been no check, no eradication, and still sapient doctors obstinately persist in giving the same prescription! The disease in the meantime is becoming more and more malignant; and those who would adopt a different treatment are considered reckless of the health of the body politic.

But you say that you are "opposed to all this movement upon the subject of slavery at this time, because it has not originated with the citizens of the State, but has been foisted upon us by the intermeddling of ultra Abolitionists of the North." Is there validity in this reason, or is it a reason at all? Does sound philosophy require that such a "movement" should be "opposed" because it originates in the North? If so, you ought to oppose our Foreign Missionary operations, for they originated in the North. You should array yourself against the American Peace Society; for its headquarters are at Boston. I hope you will not take offence if I say that your antipathy to the North reminds me of a good man who, under the promptings of an unreasonable prejudice, once incredulously asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But is it true that the present Emancipation movement originated in the North? I think it did not. There was a similar movement in 1792 and in 1799. Was it originated in the North? Was Henry Clay, who so eloquently advocated Emancipation before the formation of our present Constitution, an Abolitionist of the North? The truth is, the question of slavery has been agitated whenever the people have resolved on making a Constitution. It would have been discussed at any time from '99 to this day, if the organic law of the State had been changed. This would have been the case if a Northern man had never seen Kentucky. Is the present Emancipation party composed of Northern men? Some of the ardent friends of the good cause had the misfortune (perhaps you would consider it) to be born in the north—a circumstance, however, which involves no criminality. And I will take the liberty of saying that New England may well be ashamed of all her sons who oppose Emancipation in Kentucky. But are such men as Clay, Tompkins, Underwood, Graham, J. T. Morehead, Nicholas, R. J. & W. L. Breckenridge, Young, and a host of others, "ultra-abolitionists of the North? I presume an overwhelming majority of the Emancipation party never lived out of a slave State. Permit me respectful-

ly to suggest that the great question with every man, and especially with a minister of the gospel, should be, What is right? Deciding this question, let him *dare to do right* whether the North or the South, the East or the West, shall smile or frown.

I must make another extract which meets my hearty approbation. You say, "if we mean to benefit the slaves, let us do it *liberally and nobly*—*fit them for liberty, and then place them where they can enjoy it.* LET THE GOVERNMENT ADJUST ITSELF TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE CASE AND PERFORM THE DEED, AND ALL WILL CON-  
CURE." The italics and capitals are all your own. You seem to have adopted the Emancipation creed. I say with you, let the slaves be prepared for liberty and placed where they can enjoy it. This is the doctrine for which I have ever contended. You say, "Let the Government adjust itself to the requirements of the case," &c. I emphatically say, Amen, so let it be. I would rejoice to see the "government adjust itself" as soon as possible. I would be glad for the adjustment to take place in the formation of the new Constitution. This I do not expect, but I entertain hopes that the Constitution will be amendable by specific clauses, so that a clause providing for Gradual Emancipation may be submitted to the people at an early day. I think the "Government would then adjust itself to the requirements of the case." But if the Constitution does not provide for specific amendments, I trust it will be indignantly rejected by the people. In that case we would perhaps vote together. It is pleasant for friends to meet occasionally at least.

In your last article you express the opinion, that "God often overrules evil for good," and that by means of slavery in this country he is preparing a nation of enlightened and christianised Africans for independence and self-government in their own country." It is to me a

consoling truth that it is the divine prerogative to educe good out of evil. This God has often done, thereby calling forth the hallelujahs of his friends, and throwing his enemies into consternation. Suppose slavery is so overruled that good, great good to the whole African race should result from it. Will this prove it right? By no means. It was wicked, as you admit, in Joseph's brethren to sell him, yet God so overruled the unfraternal transaction as thereby to save the lives of those very brethren, and the lives of their posterity. So aggravated was the guilt contracted by Judas in betraying the Savior, it would have been "good for him if he had never been born;" but the betrayal was nevertheless overruled for good. The Jews crucified Christ. An Apostle tells us they did it with "*wicked hands.*" They incurred fearful guilt. But the crucifixion of the Redeemer has poured the light of hope on a world which would otherwise have been enveloped in the gloom of despair. The influences emanating from the cross are doubtless promotive of the best interests of the universe; but who can tell the depth of the criminality involved in its erection? I refer to these facts to show that if slavery were what John Wesley calls it—"the sum of all villainies"—God might in some way bring good out of it.—Some slaveholders pervert and abuse this doctrine. They say if God so overrules slavery as to bring good out of it, then it cannot be wrong.—They are not good theologians, or they would reason differently.

I have now filled as many sheets as I purposed to write, when I commenced this series of letters. I have aimed to be respectful, but those who have honored my communications with a perusal, must judge whether I have written in a becoming manner.

Yours, &c.

J. M. PENDLETON.



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