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The Question of Slavery.

Speech of Rev. John A. Collins,
of the Baltimore Annual Conference,

Before the General Conference of M. E. Church of its Session in Indianapolis, Indiana, on the proposed Change in the Discipline in Relation to Slave Holding by Members of the Church.

MR. PRESIDENT:—Permit me to respond to what I consider the highest compliment I ever received in my life—referring to Dr. Thompson's expressions of regard, especially in view of Mr. C's position in the General Conference of 1844. I know that I have friends who cherish me in their hearts, but to have such assurance of confidence and respect by Dr. Thompson, whom, as a man, I have learned to esteem and honor, is a compliment indeed; and, sir, if it is any gratification to him to know from one so humble as myself, I will tell him that I manifested my estimation of him in 1852 by voting for him for Bishop. I should be glad if my Creator had made me just such a man as he, although I cannot accord with all his views.—But I shall differ from him as I shall from any other brother—fairly, calmly, and with no bad feeling, for this is no occasion for such feeling. Though I am a man of tolerable strong nerve and some self-possession—not easily moved—yet I find it difficult to command myself when I look at this General Conference and contemplate the momentous issues involved in the measure under consideration. We had many and long sittings on this subject in the committee on slavery, and though it might be supposed that a question of this kind, disturbing as it does the nation and the church, might give rise to unpleasantness, I am happy to say that such was not the fact, and also that, loving every brother on that committee with whom I had acquaintance prior to its constitution, there I learned to love him more, and to place all its members in my heart, though we differed widely on the question before us. Sir, I am not here to enter the lists as a mere polemical gladiator—not to attack my brow, if I could, with a trophy won as an able debater. All this is beneath the occasion. A great question is before us—one of deep interest to the church, requiring for its proper and safe adjustment all the wisdom, prudence and piety of which we are capable. I approach it, sir, in the fear of God, and I trust animated with a just sense of the responsibilities involved.

The discussion, it seems to me, sir, has proceeded on the other side on the supposition, that there are in this body two distinct parties; one antagonistic to slavery, and the other supporters of it as right in itself, or as a divine institution. One, as ultra abolition; the other, as ultra-slavery. Now whatever may be the fact, as to the first named, it is a thorough mistake as to the second. There is not a pro-slavery party on the floor of this conference. I am not here to defend slavery as a system from the Bible, or any other source.—I am not here to make that issue. Not at all, sir. The brethren representing the Baltimore conference are not pro-slavery men; nor are the honored people I in part represent. They neither desire or expect us to take that position. Why is it that the Baltimore Conference stands where she does? Why did she not go South? Why maintain her allegiance to the Methodist Episcopal Church in these United States? What is the reason? The answer is obvious. We do not affiliate in sentiment and policy with that Church on the vexed question; but occupy the old conservative ground in reference to it. The section of country with which I am most familiar, was traversed by an able man, who publicly declared slavery to be a divine institution, existing by divine right, and traceable in all the ramifications and relations of society. Another, equally eminent, took pretty much the same ground, whom I met, and with whom I discussed the issues raised between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Our people did not go with that church, and why?

If we had chosen to connect ourselves with the "Methodist Episcopal Church South," stars and garters awaited us. In that event, in all probability, Baltimore would have been theemporium of that church, so far as its publishing interests are concerned. There, probably, its Book room would have been located, as also, its mission rooms. And yet we did not go.

Again: the stand we took brought upon us misrepresentation and the bitterest persecution. We were denounced as belonging to an abolition church. The political press, in some quarters, let loose its blood hounds upon us, and pursued us. Some of our preachers came near being mobbed; but we stood our ground. We had one circuit nearly crushed out by the miserable rolling-line policy which was put in operation. It was a frontier circuit, bounded on one side by the Rappahannock river. Did we give up, even that territory? No, sir, when it was dangerous to go there, when our preachers were almost driven off, when nearly all our members left us and took the Churches with them, some half a dozen in Warrenton, and a few more noble spirits scattered through the circuit, remained firm in their attachment to the old church, and I stood with them in weal and woe, with tongue and pen, and all the influence I could exert. The Baltimore Conference continued to extend to them its fostering care; and though our people in Warrenton lost their house of worship, they conceived the desire of building another, which, at the time and under the circumstances, seemed a hopeless undertaking, yet they persevered, the Conference helped them, the house was completed, I had the honor of dedicating it, and notwithstanding the prognostications that nobody would be there, the people came from all directions, it was filled to its utmost capacity—the Methodist banner was unfurled, it waves there still in triumph, and there may it float in all time to come. And the result of all this, that like the

Phoenix, the Circuit has risen from its ashes, and promises to be one of the best in the Conference. Now, sir, is it just, is it fair, is it righteous, that a Conference—a people who have thus in peril and multiplied difficulties, stood by the old landmarks—the Methodist Church—by the discipline, as handed down to us by the fathers, should be oppressed by the measure before us—that will paralyze all their efforts, and send disaster and ruin in all their borders? Will this General Conference requite them for their devotion in this way?

1st. I shall in the first place, before coming to the discussion of the main question, notice some points made by Dr. Thompson, in his speech on yesterday. I wish to break the force of that speech, adorned as it was with classic beauty and refined taste, which I think can be done with a simple replication.

And first, he alluded to the Hebrew practice in the cases of fugitive servants who fled from their pagan masters to their jurisdiction. By the law or custom of the Jews, the fugitives were not returned; so neither were servants who fled from them sent back. In reply I state, the Jewish government was a theocracy—the most simple form of government, next, if not equal, in this respect, to absolute despotism.—This is not the case in the United States. Ours is a complex system of government. We have Federal and State authority. The national government exercises executive, legislative and judicial powers; so do the States in their respective spheres. In several of these States slavery is sanctioned by law; and the Constitution, which is the bond of union for all the States of the Confederacy, does contain unquestionable provisions in relation to slaves, or persons held to service or labor; and these provisions constitute the compromises of that instrument. Three-fifths of the slave population are represented in one branch of the National Legislature—they may be taxed; and provision is made for their recovery if they flee from the service of their owners. The church of God is found in the slave holding States; and I submit, sir, that though this was an eloquent passage in the Doctor's speech—finely put and eliciting hearty responses—it is not applicable to us—in our peculiar circumstances and under our form of government, which I believe to be the best the world ever saw.

In the next place, Dr. Thompson referred to the emancipation of slaves which has taken place in the Eastern and Northern States, and attributed it wholly to the high moral sentiment that prevailed there. I admit that there is a pure moral sentiment in New England and the North as elsewhere; that it has as much influence there as any other part of the globe; aye, more, that it has done vast good in its outward spread. I am willing to grant as much in this connection, as can be claimed, or ought to be granted. But, I am far from believing, that the emancipation of slaves in the East and North, was brought about simply by the influence of moral sentiment. State policy had a large share in it. The soil of New England, and the North, except in detached portions, is not adapted to slave labor. It could not be made profitable there. As a general rule, grain growing countries are not suited to slave labor, which can only be employed advantageously and profitably where cotton, sugar, hemp, rice, or indigo is the staple product. And there can be no doubt, this law had its influence in accomplishing the emancipation referred to. To prove this, that this was not the result of a moral sentiment superior to that which prevails in the Southern States, I have simply to call your attention to the ordinance of 1787, by which slavery was prohibited in the whole of what was then called the Northwest Territory, out of which five powerful States have been formed—Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and I believe Iowa, whose stars now compose part of the bright galaxy that embellishes the National flag. Who was the author of that ordinance? Thomas Jefferson, a Virginian—a man whose fame fills the world. He wrote it in 1803 or 1804, and though it did not pass at that time, it was adopted with a slight amendment, as to the time it should go into effect, by the Congress of the Confederacy, which sat contemporaneously with the Convention that framed the Constitution in 1787. That ordinance, the production of a Southern man, voted for by Southern men, has formed the basis for freedom in the five States I have named.

Since Ohio has become a State efforts have been made, either in her Legislature, or in Conventions, to form or re-model her Constitution to introduce slavery, but they were unavailing. When Indiana was a Territory of the United States, the Territorial Legislature petitioned Congress to suspend the operation of the ordinance of '87, so far as it bore upon Indiana; in order that slavery might be admitted into the Territory. The petition was presented in the House of Representatives and referred to a special committee, of which John Randolph, a Virginian, the owner of 300 slaves, (which he manumitted at his death) was chairman, who reported in substance, that the ordinance of 1787 had worked well, relieving the Territory affected by it, of a great incumber, and that it was improper to suspend it or comply with the prayer of the petitioners. The report was adopted and by the aid of Southern votes, Indiana was preserved from slavery and came into the Union as she now remains, a free State.

3d. Dr. Thompson says that slavery is on the increase; that it has more power than it formerly had. I beg to say that if this is true the Methodist Episcopal Church is not responsible for it as the Doctor intimates. Slavery is the creature of civil not ecclesiastical law, and is beyond the direct control of church action. Religion—the Methodist Episcopal Church is not the author of it—nor is she accountable for its existence. She has exerted a beneficial influence over it in many respects. Whatever truth there may be in the remark "that slavery is on the increase," when applied to certain portions of country, I doubt very much its applicability to that part of slave territory with-

in the bounds of the Baltimore Conference. You will be surprised to learn, that in Baltimore City Station, according to the testimony of brethren well-informed on the subject, there is but one slaveholder, and it is doubtful, from the same authority, if there be one.

We have in our conference a colored membership of between 15,000 and 20,000. In the city of Baltimore alone, there are between 3,000 and 4,000 members in our church. They have good churches, they sing sweetly, pray powerfully, and have among them many excellent local preachers. They have their Sabbath and day schools. You may tread the streets of Baltimore and you will not meet a single colored beggar. There are beggars in that city, but they are not found among the descendants of Africa. It may be safely said, that slavery is not on the increase in Baltimore. Brother Griffith says it is on the decrease. [Several voices, true.] Our people there, are well-informed and intelligent. They know they can hire labor cheaper than they can buy it, and be responsible for the clothing, feeding and sustaining a family of slaves, who are able to do service or not. I will make a suggestion to Dr. Thompson, worthy of consideration, that with all the increase of slavery, as he supposes, and the great value of slave property, Southern people, instead of selling them and pocketing the money, in many cases, manumit them by scores, and provide from their own means, for their comfortable subsistence in Liberia, or some other colony, until they are able to take care of themselves.

2d. I believe it is admitted—given up by the chairman of the committee on slavery, and the friends of the report submitted by him—that it makes a new term of membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church, namely, non-slaveholding. [Several voices, among them Dr. Raymond's, no, no.] Then, sir, I shall proceed to prove it from the report itself, now on your table and under discussion.

1st. The first answer to the question, "what shall be done for the extinction of the great evil of slavery?" contains the following provision, "wherefore, no slaveholder shall be eligible to membership in our church hereafter, where emancipation can be effected without injury to the slave." Does not this seek to make "emancipation a condition of admission into our Church? is not that a new test? Was it ever made before? If it was, I have not been able to discover it. I have studied the Methodist discipline: have tried to understand it, having been an administrator of it in different relations; and if emancipation was ever a condition of admission, it has escaped my notice. It cannot be found in the book. It is a perfect novelty. Dr. Raymond cannot escape this conclusion.

2d. In the second answer to the question above stated non-slaveholding is sought to be made a term of membership in a two fold application, as follows: "whenever a member of our church by any means becomes the owner of a slave, it shall be the duty of the preacher in charge to call together a committee of at least three members, who shall investigate the case and determine the time in which such slave shall be freed, and on his refusal or neglect to abide by the decision of said committee, he shall be dealt with as in case of immorality." Now, sir, in the slave holding part of our Conference, and I presume it is so in all our Conferences in slave territory, a large portion of our members do not hold slaves. They might become slaveholders by inheritance or gift, and would they not by this requirement be brought before a committee and if they refused to appear, or would not abide by the decision of the committee, would they not be tried for immorality, and if convicted be expelled from the church? No one can dispute this, and hence I say, this feature, if adopted, makes a new term of membership for those now in the church, and in addition has the odious character of an "ex post facto law." It does this to all intents and purposes. It never was done before. Furthermore, there are members of our church at present slaveholders, who are liable under the proposed chapter, (read it again) "whenever a member of our church by any means becomes an owner of a slave, &c." If then the number of slaves held by a member be added to, either by inheritance, gift, or natural increase, he is to be arraigned or dealt with in case of refusal or neglect, as if guilty of immorality. Could language be more explicit, and does it not indisputably establish the point we have made?

3d. The third answer to the question quoted provides for giving slaves by their masters "such compensation for their services as may, under the circumstances, be just and equal." That makes a new test, and why? It changes entirely the relation of master and slave, and puts the slave in the position of a freed-man. [A voice said several.] I am rejoiced that you say Amen: it gives your endorsement to what I have stated. I repeat it, this passage does, in effect, make non-slaveholding a term of membership in our church. The proposition is true of each of the points separately and of all combined. They are like four hooks tied together, which I have seen persons fish. You are to be caught on one or the other of them—there is no escape.

There is another feature of this report, sir, to which I wish to call attention. It is this, "to protect them (the slaves) in the observance of the duties of the conjugal and parental relations." This is to be made the duty of owners. I think this, sir, a gratuitous reflection upon my people. I never knew an instance in the bounds of the Baltimore Conference, in which a member of our church wantonly, or for mere gain, separated husband and wife—parent and child. I have tried my own recollection and can find none; and have called on Brother Griffith, whose memory is as tenacious as a tar barrel, and he does not remember such an occurrence. Professor Nady informs me that a man in St. Mary's county, Maryland, belonging to the Methodist Church, sold a child from his mother, for which he was tried and expelled.

This is the only instance of the kind that has come to my knowledge. Our people would feel such an enactment as a reproach and an act of unmerited kindness. They do respect, as far as can be done, the conjugal and parental relations among their servants, and regard them as much and as sacredly as any members of this Conference can possibly do.

III. Having established, as I think, clearly and beyond dispute, that the report of the majority of the committee on slavery does seek to make non-slaveholding a term of membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church, I shall proceed to show, in the next place, that such a test, as the discipline now stands, and under the general rule, as it now reads, is wholly unconstitutional.

1st. To understand the constitutional question properly it is necessary to refer briefly to the history of the church, especially as regards the organization of the present general Conference; which is not a body of the same ecclesiastical powers, as that of the same designation, which sat prior to 1808. Anterior to 1808, the General Conference was composed of all the eldership, and possessed unlimited powers. It was under no constitutional provisions, either of prohibitions or of grants. At the date above given they (the elders) in Conference assembled, organized the delegated General Conference, to which they did not transfer all the powers they possessed, but placed it under restrictions. They fixed the limits beyond which the delegated body cannot go, except in the mode prescribed in the restrictions themselves. These restrictive rules secure our articles of Religion—the ratio of representation in the General Conference—the Episcopacy, or the plan of itinerant, general superintendency—the general rules of the United Societies—the privilege of our preachers and members, of trial, and appeal; and the appropriation of the proceeds of the Book Concern; all of which enter into and form the constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church, under which it has been acting and by which it has been controlled since 1808. We must be confined to that period and since. We have no power that was not then given us. Our authority is supreme only within the limits of the charter. We have no right to do as we please. The general rule on the subject of slavery which is placed under the control of the constitution, is sufficiently explicit as to the relation that institution sustains to the Methodist Episcopal Church to the extent of the sense and meaning of the rule. The General Conference may go in making regulations for the Church, but no farther. The action proposed by the majority of the committee on slavery seeks to accomplish under the rule, as it is, what cannot be done unless it be essentially changed; to do it, therefore, without the change is unconstitutional.

2nd. Simple slaveholding never was a term of membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

1st. The measures adopted by the Christian Conference in 1784, when the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States was organized, were confessedly the most stringent in our record; and yet, even in them, there is a remarkable drawback, in the form of a note, which reads, "these rules are to affect the members of our Societies no further than as they are consistent with the laws of the States in which they reside." This took off the stringency of these enactments from members residing in the Southern States; in fact, they were taken from their application altogether, and then it was added "and respecting our brethren in Virginia that are concerned, and after due consideration of their peculiar circumstances, we allow them two years, from the notice given, to consider the expediency of compliance or non-compliance with these rules?" What a provision! And to show that the Conference at that early day made a plain and palpable distinction between slaveholding and "buying or selling" slaves, the question is asked: "what shall be done with those who buy or sell slaves, or give them away? and the answer is peremptory, "they are immediately to be expelled; unless they buy them on purpose to free them." Mark the distinction! It indicates what has been called here the "vannus." It is the key to unlock the meaning of the fathers. (See Emory's history of the Discipline, page 44.)

But these measures were all suspended in six months, and why? Dr. Coke made a journey south, and became convinced that they were improper, and in 1785 the suspension was perfected by the Conference because "they would do harm." Dr. Coke upon his own authority first suspended these rules, and states the fact and gives the reason for doing so in his journal, though they were passed by a conference. I doubt, sir, if you or the bench of Bishops would do the same; and the transaction displays the simplicity of government and the administration of the day.

3d. In further proof of this point, in 1789 the general rule first went into the discipline in these words, "the buying or selling the bodies and souls of men, women or children, with an intention to enslave them." In 1792 the rule reads "the buying or selling of men, women or children, with an intention to enslave them." I am glad of this change of phraseology, and that "bodies and souls" are left out. You can't enslave the soul of a man—as that belongs to God. The Apostles had their feet fastened in the stocks in the inner dungeon, but their souls were free; so of the servant of whom we have heard whose master sought to prevent his going to church or even serving God. While sick and being treated by his master and charged with hypocrisy, he turned over in his bed and exclaimed—"thank God I am free; died and went to Heaven!" No, sir, you cannot enslave the soul; but under the rule of 1789 and 1792 slaves could be held by members of the church by inheritance or gift without violating it. A reference to the circumstances of the times will fix its signification. The slave trade was then a rife and the traffic was obviously alluded to. Let it be remembered that this rule is of American origin. Mr. Wesley did not make it, it is

not among his general rules, and down to this time the Wesleyan connection has no such rule. That body has a number of Missionaries in slaveholding countries and no directions or instructions are given them interfering with the relation of master and slave; on the contrary they are ordered to respect that relation. Their instructions are simply to preach the gospel.

But what of all this, sir; it has no force upon us, though much stress has been laid upon the action of our fathers at these periods. What they did, we may not, we cannot do. After the revolutionary war which separated the States from the mother country, the articles of confederation which had feebly held them together during its continuance proved to be so feeble—such a rope of sand—that they were superseded by the constitution, which formed a more perfect government; and who would appeal now for the interpretation of a law of the land to these articles of the confederacy? The constitution, which subverted them, is the supreme law of the country to which all others have to conform. So in our church government; we cannot go back farther than 1808, when our constitution was established, and we must be governed by its provisions in all our enactments and regulations. Now what is the state of the case under this constitution? 1st. For the first time the general rule in reference to slavery reads, "the buying and selling of men, women and children with an intention to enslave them." It was given this form by the body that made this General Conference, fixed its powers, and guarded them by constitutional restrictions. In this form it went into the discipline under new guards. 2d. To prove that it was not intended to apply to Slave holding in the membership and make the opposite a term of communion the same conference of 1808 struck from the discipline all that related to holding slaves by private members of the church, enacted in 1796, (see Emory's History of the Discipline, page 275—answer to the questions, "What regulations shall be made for the extinction of the crying evils of slavery?")

This makes it clear that the framers of the Constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church, did not make, did not intend to make, non-slaveholding a term of membership, else why strike out these regulations? It was done of set purpose, namely, to conform the Discipline to the rule. 3d. The chapter, which is a mere statute, to carry out the provision, in the Constitution, with respect to slavery confirms this view. There is nothing in that chapter touching non-slaveholding as a term of membership. It simply refers to official relation—nothing more. Under certain circumstances, fully stated, a man may not sustain an official position if he be a slaveholder, but under no circumstances does that fact affect his membership in the church. 4th. The efforts which were made, just prior to the meeting of this General Conference, by sending round to the Annual Conferences resolutions proposing to change the general rule, so as to make it include slaveholding, is conclusive as to the judgment of the authors of the resolutions of the Conferences who voted for them—and of the Church in these quarters—that it does not, in its present form, contain that feature. And yet, in the measure before us, the attempt is made to do substantially the same thing by mere enactment without changing the rule, the effort to do which signally failed in the constitutional process! Is it right, is it lawful, to do that indirectly unconstitutional, which could not be done directly and constitutionally? 5th. The proceedings had in relation to the rule, concerning the use of spirituous liquors, is corroborative of the ground herein taken. It was desired to make it more stringent, and the trial to do so was commenced in 1836, and a proposition to change or suspend the rule was sent round to the Annual Conferences, which failed to receive the requisite vote. It was started again at the General Conference of 1849 and passed round the Conferences, and in 1844 it was found that it still lacked the required vote; in this Conference, however, an attempt was made to put the change into the discipline, irrespective of the constitution. I raised the constitutional objection myself, which defeated it; and it was once more referred to the Annual Conferences, and in 1848, having received the constitutional vote, it went into the discipline. It was not attempted to put in a chapter containing the desired provision, by a mere majority vote, as in the matter under discussion, leaving the general rule unchanged. The constitution was respected in this instance, and nothing was done until its provisions were complied with. The cases are parallel—both the rule on spirituous liquors and the one respecting slavery are in the same category of general rules which are a part of the constitution; the action on them should be alike, save that the latter should be more carefully and delicately handled than the former, and certainly nothing on the subject to which it refers should be put in the discipline, nor clearly embraced in its true import and signification.

To offset the constitutional argument it has been contended that Baptism and proper confession of faith, have been made terms of membership without the change of a general rule, therefore non-slaveholding may be. The instances are not analogous. Baptism is an acknowledged sacrament in our creed, and we have regular articles of faith, as a church, which by the first restriction are made part of the Constitution. Baptism and conformity in faith to these articles may be made terms of communion without infracting constitutional provisions. Every member of the church should be baptized—should agree with us in faith. The General Conference has a right to require this; and the regulations adopted for this purpose simply put it in force. This is the universal rule.—As regards then, the regulations making baptism and confession of faith requisites for admission into our church, there is not only no

conflict with the Constitution, but they were necessary to give proper effect to constitutional provisions. I come to the conclusion to which I hope every member of this Conference will come, that the measure before us does make a new term of membership and seeks to do it in an unconstitutional way. You were right, sir, in the warnings put forth in the address of the Bishops in reference to measures of unconstitutional bearing. You might have said it more strongly.

The constitutional argument against the proposed chapter may be summed up as follows: 1st. The general rule respecting slavery which reads "the buying and selling of men, women and children with an intention to enslave them," does not in letter or spirit prohibit slaveholding by members of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

2d. The general rule above stated is guarded and protected by the fourth restriction upon the powers of the General Conference, which says "the General Conference shall not revoke or change the general rules of the united societies."

3d. Nothing can go into the discipline on the subject of slavery exceeding the obvious sense and meaning of the general rule.

4th. The measure reported by the majority of the committee on slavery does exceed "the sense and meaning" of the general rule; it makes non-slaveholding a term of membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church, which is neither provided for nor sanctioned by said rule.

5th. To engraft the said measure or chapter upon the discipline the general rule must be changed, which can only be effected by compliance with the proviso to the sixth restriction which requires a vote of two-thirds of the General Conference, concurred in by three-fourths of all the members of the several annual Conferences.

6th. It is not proposed by the majority of the committee on slavery to change the general rule for the admission of their measure, or to wait the constitutional action thereon, but simply to pass it by a majority vote of this body, and thus force it upon the church.

7th. To do this is clearly and indisputably, unconstitutional. It would be an act violating directly the constitution of the church, the only safe-guard of the rights and privileges of the members thereof.

It is due to candor to say that I shall vote against the other resolution reported by the majority, which asks a change of the general rule, so as to make it apply to slaveholding, though it looks to accomplishing it in a constitutional way, which I admit you have a right to do if you can. But I beg you to pause before it is done, for the moment it is, a large portion of the people of our Conference is unchurched, and the balance will make common cause and go with them.

IV. Non-slaveholding or emancipation never was a term of membership in the Christian Church, at least of any leading denomination of Christians.

The friends, or Quakers, and some other comparatively inconsiderable denominations, may be exceptions to this position, but not of sufficient strength to break the force of it.

1st. It is, to say the least, exceedingly doubtful whether any ecclesiastical body, claiming to be a branch of the Church of Christ, has the right to establish a term of communion not laid down by himself, or which has not the divine warrant. What authority has any denomination of Christians to create terms of admission into Christ's fold? He fixes these himself, and has delegated to none the authority to add to or take from. Whatever therefore has not been established by the Redeemer, or has not the divine appointment or sanction, may not be made consistently with proper submission to the Head of the Church, a test of membership therein. The visible Church is not independent.—It cannot do as it pleases, or legislate tests to accord with its peculiar views and opinions.—Christ is the only Lord and law-giver of his people. Claiming to be a depository of his doctrines, and within its sphere a representative of himself, every branch of the true Church is bound by his laws and must be governed by the terms he laid down, without making its own.

I say this, sir, in full view of the objection that may be stated as to class-meeting, and remark further, that if you cannot deduce this fairly from the word of God, especially in view of the itinerant character of our ministry, which interferes somewhat with the pastoral relation, and show that it is an essential auxiliary in executing fully that relation under our government, then it is not of divine authority, and is a mere conventional rule or privilege, that may be attended to or not, without jeopardizing membership.

2d. The question has recently been mooted as to whether slaveholders were admitted into the Apostolic Church. We leave this fruitless discussion to those whose tastes it may suit.—The truth of the matter seems to be this, after all that has been written upon the subject.—The apostles were wise, discreet, holy as well as inspired men. They had but one aim, but one purpose—to fulfill their glorious mission "to preach the Gospel to every creature." They operated upon the world, as they found it, in its civil and social relations;—proclaimed "the unspeakable riches of Christ"—the soul-saving doctrines of the Cross alike to persons in all conditions and relations of society; and when they became converted, doubtless admitted them indiscriminately to the fellowship of the saints;—and the ordinances of God's house. They did not meet in council to fix upon and multiply terms of communion to suit changing notions in Church or State. There was, it is true, a council held in Jerusalem, of which we have an account in the 15th chapter of the Acts, which was composed of the apostles and elders, convened to settle a question which had been raised by some "Pharisees who believed" and taught that Gentile converts should be "cir-