

**ESSAY ON SLAVERY; AS CONNECTED
WITH THE MORAL AND PROVIDENTIAL
GOVERNMENT OF GOD; AND AS AN
ELEMENT OF CHURCH ORGANIZATION.
WITH MISCELLANEOUS REFLECTIONS
ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY**

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Essay on slavery; as connected with the moral and providential government of God; and as an element of church organization. With miscellaneous reflections on the subject of slavery by Thomas J. Taylor

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THOMAS J. TAYLOR

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For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.--ROMANS viii, 3, 4.

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INTRODUCTION.

In this age of improvement, and in a world abounding with great, greater, and greatest men, we feel no small degree of embarrassment at the thought of passing the ordeal of public scrutiny in the character of an author. Such an idea, in the commencement of those sections which form the first part of this work, was not entertained, no, not even dreamed of, either in our sleeping or waking hours. Circumstances, however, have somewhat strangely conspired to lead matters on to this end, and which are as follows:—

Since the days of our youth we have been an unworthy member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In the recent agitation of the abolition question, (which is one with which we sympathize, when restricted to proper limits,) the leaders of that movement, in its ultra form, together with those who follow in the wake, have seemed to feel and act as if they thought they had a special mission from God to denounce—not only as thieves and robbers, but as the synagogue of Satan, and many other like grave charges—those churches, and the members of those churches which, as an evil, tolerate the relation as in agreement with the Scriptures. Having been thus personally, repeatedly assailed, both from the pulpit and the press, as also the Church with which we stand connected, in the acceptance of challenges loudly and frequently given, we volunteered the defence of our Church against the charge of pro-slaveryism. Our first number was published, and the second forwarded for publication, and as

it was retained on hand some four weeks before the editor leaked out his purpose to rule me out, by this time we had written the greater part of what is embraced in the first part of this work.

Having thus made some progress in the investigation, we desired, for our own satisfaction, as we should have opportunity from other cares, to push our inquiries through the subject, and ascertain, so far as our capacity would bear us out in its examination, whether or not we were in error, in the views entertained relative to the strictly Scriptural position of the Church.

It thus being known to some, who desired the further publication of my manuscript; and to others, on whom the author obtruded some of his numbers for critical remarks as to doctrine, &c., and who thought it deserved a more permanent existence than an ephemeral appearance through the newspaper press, led to their preservation and arrangement in regular and consecutive order, till I had passed through what I regarded the Bible view of the subject, and had made an application of its general teachings, principles, and spirit, on the subject of slavery, to the principles and spirit of the Methodist polity. This being done, other questions, naturally arising out of the subject, pressed themselves on my attention, and which have also been written out, under a conviction that they would be of some importance to the world.

In this way it has swelled up into the shape of a little volume, and, as such, is likely to come into public notice. How extensively, and whether for good or for ill, time must determine. Of one thing, however, we (to change our phraseology before we use up all the capital *I*'s the printer may have) are deeply conscious,—that we have sought only the truth, from the first to the last, and through every intervening step in this investigation; in which we have condensed our thoughts in as small a compass as was practicable, in the examination of this subject in its connexion with God's moral and providential government of the world.

Had we looked merely at the surface of things, we possibly should have been conducted to the same, or like conclusions with the ultra abolitionists of the day; namely, that slavery is too outstandingly and palpably wrong for a revelation from God, under any circumstances, to make any tolerant allusion to it. Some way then would have been sought to explain away those passages which seem to recognize, and which appear to have been designed for, the government of the relation; and failing in this, as we think every rational mind must do, the next step would have been, as we fear many of them have done, to reject the Scriptures, on account of such monstrous doctrines—so repugnant to our natural rights, and contrary to the voice of reason—as a revelation from God.

But when we endeavour to penetrate and look beneath the surface, and regard it as a part of an administration that takes hold of this world in its connexion with an eternal state; that has more reference to the general than the individual good,—the good of eternity, than the good of time; or, in other words, the greatest good, or greatest amount of good, upon the whole, of all concerned, for both time and eternity; it appears to us not only to be free from the objections alleged against it, but as commending itself to us as an exhibition of the united wisdom and goodness of the moral Governor of the universe, in making the best of circumstances in this as in all other matters connected with the defection of this revolting province of his dominions; and of the truth of which we think the reader will be fully satisfied, by the time he shall have patiently and carefully passed through this little work.

And we would here admonish him, that we think the various parts are so dependent on, and so calculated to illustrate and strengthen each other, that he cannot well understand the subject in its complex character, without an attentive and careful perusal of the whole. We make this remark for the benefit of those who examine a book as many do a newspaper—pick it up,



cast a cursory and careless glance over its columns, and if the eye should catch nothing that suits their fastidious taste, throw it aside as a failure. Thoughtful minds—especially at this juncture, when the whole country, from the centre to the circumference, feels its importance; and our national councils, as well as our Church organizations, are trembling to their foundations under its fearful power—will need no such admonition. And if, as we think it does, it shall be found to present the subject in a Scriptural and rational light, and perchance in a somewhat different, if not in an entirely new light, to what it has ever been presented to the world, it will be read with anxiety; and that too without much solicitude as to whence it is, or the peculiarities of its literary dress. This leads us to make a remark in reference to style.

It being the first-born of our pen for public scrutiny, we think we may, with some confidence, claim the indulgence of the sober-minded. And as for the fastidiousness of that taste that will bow down and worship a jackdaw, because dressed in a peacock's feathers, we do not feel a very ponderous solicitude about gratifying it.

That some portions of the work, in point of style, may pass for all our expectations or pretensions, we have no doubt; but that other portions of it, in which we have had to do with men and things that seemed to call for some severity or humour, may be regarded as coarse and common-place, and thus deficient in correct taste, we are fully aware. After all, in this disordered world there are some coarse and vulgar ideas; and as words are the signs of ideas, in writing about them, plain, unpretending men may very naturally fall into this error.

We have felt some anxiety lest, in some of our points of conflict with those avowing slaveholding under all circumstances to be a bar to Church fellowship, we have sometimes expressed ourselves in a way that may be regarded as too severe, and as favouring the principle and practice of slavery. This, however,

we hope the intelligent reader, on looking carefully over the whole ground, will be fully satisfied is not our position; and as to what may be the seeming point, it is to be set down either to the weakness of our common nature, or as an honest trial to throw off the weight of an untiring effort, for opinion's sake, to crush and take from us what little reputation we had, because we had, on this subject, the astounding impudence to think and speak for ourselves.

Had we been base enough to suppress our convictions of truth, and surrender the dominion of our conscience to the ignorance, zeal, and bigotry of the Western leaders of the new organization, possibly we might now enjoy a reputable standing among those mistaken brethren. But, in that case, we should have had so great a sense of personal meanness as to be without a conscious sense of personal rectitude in our own bosoms; a sacrifice, with us, entirely too great at which to purchase the favourable regards of any body of men, let alone, so far as we know them, the master spirits and composing elements of that faction.

A thought or two more to the ultra brethren or extreme men—men occupying extreme ground, both in the North and South. Without suffering your feelings to be too much implicated in what you may deem the strong ground taken against your respective positions, examine these pages in the light of a prayerful desire to learn and know, that you may practise the truth; it can do you no harm, but the contrary; to hold and practise the truth will always, on all questions, do us good. If a first reading is not satisfactory, read it over again. And should you find that we are in error, point it out, so as to satisfy us of that error, and we trust we shall have candour enough to renounce and retract it. If, on the other hand, as we think will be the result, you shall be conducted to the conclusion that our position is Scriptural, reasonable, and therefore true, let not the pride of position or opinion deter you from embracing and avowing