

THE CHURCH AND SLAVERY

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The Church and Slavery by Albert Barnes

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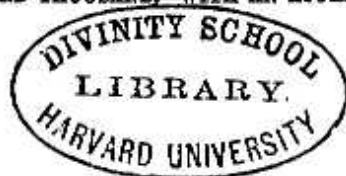
ALBERT BARNES

**THE CHURCH
AND SLAVERY**

THE
Church and Slavery.

BY
ALBERT BARNES.

THIRD THOUSAND.—WITH AN APPENDIX.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.....	5
PREFATORY NOTE.....	9
CHAPTER I.	
THE GENERAL RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO SLAVERY.....	12
CHAPTER II.	
THE ACTUAL INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.....	28
CHAPTER III.	
THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH AT LARGE ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.....	41
CHAPTER IV.	
THE POSITION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BEFORE THE DIVISION, IN 1838, ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.....	49
CHAPTER V.	
THE POSITION OF THE 'NEW-SCHOOL' OR 'CONSTITUTIONAL' PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.....	67
CHAPTER VI.	
THE CONSTITUTIONAL POWER OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.....	122
CHAPTER VII.	
THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH AT LARGE ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.....	158
CHAPTER VIII.	
THE CONSEQUENCES OF A PROPER POSITION BY THE CHURCH AT LARGE ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.....	169
APPENDIX.....	183

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE are times when it is important that every man, however humble may be his name, should express his views on great moral, political, and religious subjects. Public sentiment is made up of a great number of individual opinions, as earth and ocean are made up of a great number of individual particles of matter. The opinion of each individual contributes to form the public sentiment, as the labour of the animalcule in the ocean contributes to form the coral reefs that rise above the waves.

Public sentiment controls our land; public sentiment will ultimately control the world. All that error, tyranny, and oppression demand is a strong public sentiment in their favor; all that is necessary to counteract their influence is that public sentiment should be right.

The present is eminently a time when the views of every man on the subject of slavery should be uttered in unambiguous tones. There has never been

but one thing that has perilled the existence of the American Union, and that one thing is slavery. There has never been a time when the Union was really in danger until now. There has never been a time when the system of slavery has been so bold, exacting, arrogant, and dangerous to liberty, as at present. There has never been a time when so much importance, therefore, could be attached to the views of individual men; when so much could be done in favor of the rights of man by a plain utterance of sentiment; when so much guilt would be incurred by silence. It cannot be right that any one who holds the system to be evil in its origin, evil in its bearing on the morals of men, evil in its relations to religion, evil in its influence on the master and the slave—on the body and the soul—on the North and the South, evil in its relations to time and in its relations to eternity, should so act that it shall be possible to misunderstand his opinions in relation to it,—so act that his conduct could be appealed to as implying an apology for the system. The circle in which he moves may be a limited circle; his views may influence but few of the living, and may cease to be regarded altogether when he is dead; but for the utterance of those views, and for the position which he takes on this as on other subjects, he must soon give an account at a tribunal where silence on great moral subjects, as well as an open defence of what is wrong, will be regarded and treated as guilt. No man, therefore, should allow himself on these great questions to be in such a position that, by any fair construction of his life and opinions, his influence, however humble it may be, should be made to sus-

tain error and wrong, or be of such a nature that his name can be referred to as furnishing a support for cruelty and oppression.

As it is true that the only thing that ever has threatened to destroy this Union, or that now threatens to destroy it, is slavery, so it is true that the only thing that alienates one portion of the land from the other is slavery. In language, in customs, in laws, in religion, we are, and always have been, otherwise, a united people. We have a common origin. We all look to the same "fatherland," and we all claim that the glory of that land, in literature, in science, and in the arts, is a part of our common inheritance. We look back to the times of the Revolution; and, whatever wisdom there was in council, or whatever valour there was in battle, or whatever there was that was self-sacrificing in the cause of liberty, is a part of the common inheritance of this generation. Our railroads spread a network over all the States, making them one. Simultaneously through all the States of the Union the telegraph bears to millions of minds at once what is of common interest to all. Some of our great rivers roll along through vast States, Northern and Southern; and by our location, and by all the varieties of climate and soil constituting mutual dependence, we are designed by nature to be one people. On the question of slavery only are we divided. This question meets us everywhere, generates all the bad feeling there is between the North and the South, subjects us to all the reproach that we encounter from abroad; and it is the source of all that tends to produce civil strife, to cause alienation and dis-