

1 TIMOTHY, VI., 1, 2.

"There is another passage, however, which is alleged to be favourable, and has been sometimes quoted with an air of triumph,—'Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and *his* doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise *them*, because they are brethren; but rather do them service; because they are faithful, and beloved, partakers of the benefit.' (1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.) Here, for the sake of brevity, I shall assume, that the reference is to a state of legalized slavery, although the word rendered servant settles nothing here any more than in the Epistle to Philemon. But take it thus, and two cases are referred to.

"First, That in which a Christian is the slave of an unbelieving master; and in this case the slave is required to count his master worthy of all honour, that is, of all the honour which is due to him by the law of Christ, for more, surely, will not be contended for; and what is the reason assigned for this? Is it that slaveholding is in itself a righteous thing? No, it is, 'that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed;' or, that Christian slaves may not, by rendering evil for evil to their cruel masters, bring down disrepute on the holy name by which they are called, but, on the contrary, may cause the gospel to be admired, by the patience and forgiveness it enables them to exemplify in very trying circumstances. Is there any thing here which justifies slaveholding? Do I justify the man who injures me by patiently bearing and forgiving the injury? No man will venture to say so who has any respect for the Word of God.

"The second case is that of the converts who have believing masters; and what is required of them? They are required 'not to despise their believing masters, because they are brethren, but rather to do them service, because they are faithful, and beloved, partakers with them of the benefit.' And what is the amount of this exhortation? Just exactly what we would expect, on the supposition that, between the parties, and in virtue of their mutual faith in Christ, slavery was abolished, and free service came into its place. The slave, being now no longer a slave, but raised to the rank of a free servant, and taught to consider himself and his master as brethren and equals in Christ Jesus, might be tempted to forget himself, and fail in that deferential obedience which is due to his master even from a free servant. Nothing was more likely to happen, especially in transition circumstances; and so says the apostle, with the care and the forethought for which he was so eminent, let not believing servants despise their believing masters, because they are not now tyrants but brethren in Christ, and forbidden by him to exercise severity; but let them rather, on this very account, and actuated by the spirit of the gospel, be more industrious, and more respectful, than they were before. Such is the plain and obvious meaning of these two verses; they cannot be made to bear an opposite, let men twist and torture them as they will; and instead of being favourable to slavery, they tell us, that the instant an owner and his slave become believers in Jesus Christ, that instant, the ownership of the one and the slavery of the other are laid under Christian interdict.

"In short, the Bible has but one voice on this strangely contested subject; and all who believe the Bible would have but one voice about it, were they but to follow the simple rule of taking the passages which are more obvious, to explain those which are more obscure. There is one passage, for instance, which cannot be easily misunderstood, and is enough of itself to settle the matter. 'Masters give unto *your* servants that which is just and equal.' (Col. iv. 1.) Take this passage along with you, as you search the Word of God, bring it near to obscurer passages, that you may see them in the light it sheds on them, and there is no fear of your coming short of the right conclusion. Let all believing masters give unto their servants that which is just and equal, and then may proclamation be confidently made, that there is not a Christian slaveholder on the face of the earth.