

“Farther, it is opposed to the great summary rule which Christ has given to guide his disciples, in every country and in every age. ‘All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the law and the prophets.’ (Matt. vii. 12.) This rule is so clear that no Christian can misunderstand it; it is so just, that no Christian can reasonably object to it; it is so short that none need forget it; it is so beautiful that no sanctified heart can fail to admire it; it is so comprehensive as to include the whole range of relative duty; and withal it goes back to the beginning of God’s revelations to man, and comes forward through all their successions. It is ‘the law and the prophets;’ it is the spirit of the law, and the spirit of the prophets, as well as the spirit of the Christian dispensation; and if it applies to all things whatsoever we would that men should do unto us, surely it applies to slavery. Then what does the slaveholder say to it? Is he willing that any other man should make him a slave, or make his wife a slave, or make his children slaves? Does he think it right that his slaves should treat him and his, as he is treating them and theirs? If he does not, how can he, or any one for him, hold up his head among Christian men, and plead that slavery is agreeable to the Word of God? Men have sometimes talked of holding their fellow men in slavery for their good. They may as well talk of picking their pockets for their good. What! are we to do evil that good may come?—are we to rob our brother of his property in himself, in order to promote his well-being? The best thing that can be said in defence of such reasoning is, that it is the miserable subterfuge of a desperate cause, and can never pass current, except among men who have lost the use of their understandings. If it be meant to apply to a rare case—a thing of fancy rather than of fact—we have nothing to do with it here; and if it be meant as a palliative of slavery, nothing but stupidity can acquit it of profaneness.

“Once more, slavery is opposed to the frame of spirit which the Bible requires in order to fellowship between God and his people. When Israel of old complained that their fastings, or their religious exercises in general, were disregarded, they got this for a reply;—‘Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?’ (Isaiah lviii. 4, 5, 6.) Here you see we are distinctly told, on the one hand, that the man who tramples on his fellow man—who smites him with the fist of wickedness—who usurps a power over him which is inconsistent with equality of rights, thereby excludes himself from fellowship with God, however sound his speculative belief, or however flaming his profession of piety; while, on the other hand, the man whose faith disposes him, in obedience to the will of God in Christ, to loose the bands of wickedness—to undo the heavy burdens—to let the oppressed go free—to break every yoke—is accepted of God, and taken into the secret of his love; because this shows his heart to be really contrite. Here then is a principle brought out—a principle plainly opposed to slavery in every form of it to be found on earth; namely, that the true worshipper of the Most High—the man who has the grace of God dwelling in his heart, and bearing there its native fruits—not only ceases from being personally an oppressor, but divests himself of the power to oppress. He breaks the yoke of oppression and casts it away from him, be it a slave law or what else you please. The above, you will observe, is a quotation from the Old Testament, and so bears with peculiar force against those who are so very prone to seek shelter there. It tells them that, even under Moses, there is no shelter for them, and therefore none anywhere else, unless they shall venture so far as to affirm, that the Christian dispensation is more earthly in its nature, and less searching in its requirements, than was the Mosaic.