

B. Most certainly; but how were Jews required to act in reference to each other?—Was a Jew not permitted to make a slave of one of his own religion?

A. *Without his own expressed consent*, when an awl was thrust through his ear, no Jew might be made a bondsman. The Lord was pleased to give an express prohibition to the nation of enslaving any of their brethren.—That my friend may distinctly understand the nature of the law on this point, I shall quote the following words from the book of Leviticus. “And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and he be sold unto thee, *thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond servant, but as a hired servant, and as a sojourner shall he be with thee*, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee, and then shall depart from thee, he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his father’s shall he return, *for they are my servants which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt, they shall not be sold as bondsmen, thou shalt not rule over him with rigour*. My friend will observe, that the reason here given, defines the application of the law. This reason is the redemption of Israel from Egypt,—and who does not know that this work was only the shadow of a greater work which God accomplished for all nations? And if the lesser work could be made the basis of a local prohibition against slavery, so must the greater work be of a prohibition co-extensive with the world itself. Had no reason been given for this prohibitory law, there might have been some doubts whether it was to be enjoined on christian nations, but when a reason for it is discovered in the redemption by Christ,—one more stringent than that which imposed it upon the Jews, the law must be acknowledged in its fullest import, as binding on all people.

B. But ought nations to enforce this law?

A. Undoubtedly,—it is as much binding upon them as upon individuals. Each individual is bound to observe it, and the corporate body, in their legislative and judicial capacity,

are bound likewise. From this they cannot free themselves without lying open to the charge of national infidelity.

B. I remember a few passages of Holy Writ, which I think may well be written under that beautiful testimony which my friend has adduced against modern slavery, the prohibition to the Jews of enslaving their brethren, because the Lord had brought them out of Egypt. “Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him, the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.” “Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong,—that useth his neighbour’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.” “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Compared with Luke x, 29—37.—These texts, and others that might be given, demonstrate, that slavery, by whatever nation it may be practised, is a violation of the revealed will of God. There is still one particular on which I desire the opinion of my friend—May a nation not gradually abolish slavery?

A. No. God hath spoken in his word, and the obedience thereto ought to be prompt and immediate. Prudent measures ought assuredly to be taken, but the abolition act ought not to be delayed. All history bears testimony to the truth, that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. And let those who would follow a temporizing expediency, be warned by the fate of Pharaoh. All the arguments they bring forward in favour of keeping in bondage their brethren the Africans, could have equally been urged by him in favour of keeping the Israelites in bondage,—he could have spoken of the rude violence done to private rights,—of the disruption which their liberation would make in the centre of his kingdom,—he could have said, also, that he was not the author of slavery; but all this availed him not, and heathen though he was, he stands out a fearful example to rulers, of refusing obedience to the commandments of God.