

A DIALOGUE ON SLAVERY.

[FOR THE CANADIAN CHRISTIAN EXAMINER.]

A. Let us take a walk into the country,—the season is pleasant. The Indian summer is now come. The toils of harvest are over, and the woods and fields have prepared themselves for the approach of winter. Now is the most delightful part of the year. The warmth of summer, and the coolness of autumn, are found blending together to produce a season agreeable to all. Indeed I never enjoy an Indian summer without being pleased that I crossed the Atlantic for Canada.

B. I shall gladly accompany you, but you will allow me to choose a topic of discourse, as I have just been reading about slavery, and have felt a peculiar interest in it. This will afford us matter for conversation, and I confess I like a walk all the better that one has something instructive to converse about. And I shall relish this topic more highly that I know you have made it, in all its bearings, the subject of careful study.

A. You much over-rate my fitness to act as your instructor, but I shall gladly communicate to my friend my sentiments on the great question, the lawfulness of slavery. At the same time, I fear it is too deeply rooted in the world to be removed by the plainest arguments concerning its injustice.

B. But does my friend take for granted, that slavery is an evil,—for my part I had always understood there were many weighty arguments that might be urged in its behalf; and I have heard of slave-holders who professed a great zeal in the cause of religion, and who considered those as dangerous men who broached the idea of slaves being set free. I should wish my friend, therefore, to lay aside all idle declamation, and prove to me that slavery is opposed to the word of God. I disregard clamour on a matter of such grave importance, and will admit no lower standard than this in estimating the character of slavery.

A. I agree with you my friend, in your views as to the Scriptures being the standard whereby all controversies ought to be decided. At the same time there is such a principle as equity, which mere natural conscience requires to be observed in all transactions between man and man, and I know few

grosser violations of natural equity, than to claim the same right of property in a man's person, which one does in the case of an inferior animal. If this be equitable, it would be equity in another man to apply the same rule to the master, and reduce him to a state of servitude,—and thus, on the principle that might is right, every enormity may be vindicated.

B. I must confess I always looked upon arguments deduced from abstract reasoning as devoid of authority, and inefficacious in the settlement of questions where human interests and passions are involved. They may have all the aspect of soundness, but they want force, and men brush them aside as the cobwebs of sophistry, and go on in their usual course notwithstanding. So, if my friend would wish to carry my faintest convictions along with him, it will be needful to shew, on scripture premises and arguments, that slavery is opposed to the mind of God.

A. My friend observed that African who has just passed us,—well, let us suppose such a man in the presence of a jury of honest and intelligent citizens, to urge the plea of natural equity. To raise that arm with which his Creator has furnished him as well as his white brother, and in which the life-blood circulates with the same healthful play, and to plead the equity on which his claim to participate in the freedom of the commonwealth, rests,—and I am persuaded my friend would admit the equity of the appeal, and would feel, too, that there was no want of authority, save in the seared consciences of the holders of the slave. But, coming to the argument from Holy Writ, I suppose my friend will admit, that man's title to possess the things of this world, is rather of the nature of a chartered, than of an absolute right.

B. You mean to state, that the absolute right belongs to the Creator of all things, and man's right is a derived one, and must be discovered from the terms of the grant.

A. My friend has stated the distinction I intended to draw. The earth with its fulness belongs only to God, and his right to all things is absolute. Man's right of proprietorship must be limited, by the obvious interpretation of the grant. Had God granted to man only one out