

GENERAL ASSEMBLY (N. S.) OF THE  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE  
UNITED STATES.

## DISRUPTION ON SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.

We give the following account of the action of the Assembly on the subject of Slavery, and the results of the action, somewhat abridged from the columns of the *American Missionary*. We believe that this is only the beginning of important movements with reference to the subject of Slavery. We trust the time may soon come when the Churches in the United States generally shall assume a more decided and unequivocal position in regard to Slavery than they have hitherto occupied:—

The late meeting of this body at Cleveland, commencing May 21, was, as anticipated, an interesting and important one; in its results, the most important, we think, of any ever held by it.

The discussion of the subject of slavery and the relation of the Presbyterian Church to it, constituted the principal feature of the meeting. Twenty-seven memorials from nine different States, all but one non-slaveholding, were received and referred to the Committee on Bills and Overtures. The report of this Committee was made by Rev. Dr. Allen of Cincinnati, Monday afternoon, May 25. It did not satisfy any one, with the exception perhaps of Rev. Mr. Wallace from Philadelphia, a member of the Committee, who apologized for his Southern brethren, and attributed moderate views, that were afterwards repudiated by nearly or quite every Southern member of the Assembly.

The position of the Southern Churches on this subject was presented by Rev. T. H. Cleland, from Kentucky, in a paper having the signature of twenty members. They "do not believe that the system of American slavery, as an appointment of God, stands precisely, in all respects, upon the same footing as the family relation"—or that it was from the beginning; but that it stands in the same category with that relation, in the fact that it is ordained of God, for wise purposes, to be overruled for his glory in the elevation and final redemption of the African race, and in the fact that, like the family relation, it is a subject of Divine legislation. They use the following explicit language:

"When we say that the slaveholding relation is right, we do not mean to say that every system of slavery is right, as it may have existed in other ages and in other countries, but only as it now exists with us, and under the circumstances in which we are now placed. When we say 'it is right' for our churches to hold slaves under the present circumstances, we mean to say that they are acting consistently with the spirit and letter of the Gospel in so doing. And were we to assert the contrary, as the resolutions under consideration would have us assert, to wit; that we hold slaveholding to be wrong, it would place us before the world as destitute not only of the spirit of Christianity, but as being bereft of every principle of moral honesty."

This is the most unqualified, shameless justification of American slavery, a system justly characterized by Wesley as "the vilest that ever gaw the sun," that we recollect ever to have heard as emanating from any number of professedly Christian men.

Professor Allen's substitute to the Committee's report, amended by Mr. Kendall, and finally adopted by the Assembly, asserts that the Presbyterian Church has, from the beginning, maintained an attitude of opposition to the institution of slavery, quotes its declarations given at various times, from 1787, to 1859, and says:

"Occupying the position in relation to this

subject, which the framers of our Constitution held at first, and which our Church has always held, it is with deep grief that we now discover that a portion of the Church at the South has so far departed from the established doctrine of the Church in relation to Slavery, as to maintain "it is an ordinance of God," and that the system of Slavery existing in these United States is Scriptural and right. Against this new doctrine we feel constrained to bear our solemn testimony. It is at war with the whole spirit and tenor of the gospel of love and good will, as well as abhorrent to the conscience of the Christian world. We can have no sympathy or fellowship with it; and we exhort all our people to eschew it as a serious and pernicious error."

This paper was adopted by a yeas and nays vote of 126 against 26—two not voting. Subsequently, twenty-two Southern ministers and elders, headed by Dr. Ross,—himself once a slave—entered a protest against this action, because past General Assemblies, while asserting that the system of slavery was wrong, have "affirmed that the slaveholder was so controlled by State laws, obligations of guardianship and humanity, that he was, as thus situated, without censure or odium as the master."

A Committee of ten, four of whom were from the Southern churches, was afterwards appointed, "to confer on the subject of slaveholding, and the peace and harmony of the church. . . ." Of this Committee, two had signed the protest, and subsequently they, with another member of the Committee, signed the call for a convention to form a new Assembly.

After the close of the Assembly, the Southern delegation issued an address. They declare the action of the Assembly to be such a violation of the constitution of the church, as to render their adherence to it undesirable and impossible; also, that there is so much of the abolition spirit pervading other churches of the same standard of faith, that they cannot expect peace on this subject by uniting with them.

They wish to form an organization which shall not be liable to any other division from this exciting subject; they therefore invite all Presbyterians, from all sections of the country, to meet in convention in the City of Washington, on the 27th day of August, 1857, for the purpose "of organizing a General Assembly in which, it will be distinctly understood, the subject of slavery will not be introduced."

Rev. Dr. Burns.—We referred to the favorable reception which had been given to the Rev. Dr. Burns, and the Rev. Mr. Fraser, by the late General Assembly of the Free Church. The following extract will show what sort of reception Dr. Burns received from his old friends in Paisley.

"Rev. Dr. Burns in Paisley.—This reverend gentleman, who is at present on a visit to this country, in the prosecution of a mission in connection with the Canadian Church, has been during the past week in Paisley—for about thirty years the scene of his active ministerial labors.—On Sunday he preached twice in Free St. George's, his late place of worship, the building being filled by his former hearers, and many of his friends and admirers from all the religious denominations in town. The services were of a peculiarly interesting character. At the close of his eloquent discourse in the forenoon, the reverend Doctor referred in touching terms to his former connection with Paisley, and the lively interest he had in it, and would ever continue to feel for its welfare, temporal and spiritual.—On the changes which had wrought since his departure from among them, the doctor spoke most feelingly. The admission in the forenoon was by ticket, to secure accommodation to the congregation proper; but in the evening, nearly an hour before the beginning of the service, a crowd

sufficient to have filled the building twice over had assembled outside, and disappointed crowds turned away, and wait another opportunity of listening to a man who was honored and revered by all while he lived among them, and whose departure was looked upon as a severe loss to the community at large. Although twelve years have elapsed every one was surprised to witness the freshness and vigour still retained by the venerable doctor, little bodily decay having been sustained by him."

Several articles have to be omitted owing to the amount of space occupied by the Synodical Reports, &c.

THE MINUTES.—Parcels of the Minutes will be forwarded without delay to all the congregations.

ALLANVILLE.—The Rev. John Irvine has been inducted as Pastor of the Congregation at Allanville.

HARRINGTON.—The Rev. W. Meldrum, formerly of Vaughan, has been inducted into the pastoral charge of the congregation at Harrington.

## Missionary Intelligence.

## LETTER FROM REV. G. STEVENSON.

BANGORAH, April 17th, 1857.

My Dear Friend,—Since I last wrote you the Bengali year has come to a close. The last month of the year coincides with the latter part of our March and the former part of our April. On the three last days of the year, the most cruel and delusory of all the Hindoo festivals annually takes place. It is in honour of Shiva the Destroyer, and is signalized by the public exhibition of practices alike shocking to humanity and revolting to Christian feeling.

I went along with my fellow-labourer, Bar-kuntha Nath De, to the neighbouring village of Bangong, to witness the two closing days of the festival, or as it is called by the natives the Doorga Poojah. The principle which actuated me was that of which the Prophet speaks in Lamentations iii. 51: "Mine eye affecteth mine heart." I wished to have my heart drawn out in deeper compassion for the perishing multitudes around me, and in more enlarged commiseration for their miserable condition. In relating shortly what I witnessed, my desire and prayer is that this may be the effect produced on those who read the account.

On the evening of the second day of the festival, I went to witness the inhuman and abominable custom of boring the different parts of the body; and on arriving at the place where this horrid cruelty was practised, I saw one man holding an iron bar in his hands, and on looking more narrowly I perceived that his tongue was slit, and that the iron bar was put through the incision which had been made in his tongue. In this dreadful state, the man enduring the most racking pains, was moving on amidst a dense body of people who appeared gratified with the horrid spectacle. Turning away with heart-lathing from this sight, my attention was next arrested by the sight of several men, amongst whom were two boys apparently of fourteen years of age, with squares driven into their shoulders from which the blood was seen to flow, and judging by the anguish depicted in their countenance, the pain endured by these wretched victims of cruel superstition must have been extreme. Around these sufferers, and marching in procession with them, was a band of musicians, who with tom-toms and drums, kept up a dreadful noise. Close to this group I saw another revolting sight—a man