

gentlemen justify the latter by instancing the former?

Before leaving this part of the inquiry which I am now making in regard to the morality of American slavery, I would, if I could, impress upon the minds of gentlemen this important consideration, to which I have already adverted, viz: that the patriarchal system was not a system of absolute slavery—that the servant was not in the strictest sense of the term a personal chattel, and that the system, whatever it may have been, was absolutely necessary for the good of the whole people, and for that reason alone was justified, or rather tolerated by the moral law. But the institution of slavery, as it exists in the American States, is not necessary to the good of any party, either the negro or the white man, and is only suffered for the benefit of the few, and this sufferance is at the expense of the many. So far from being beneficial, it is a curse to all sides, (as I shall endeavor to make appear before I sit down,) and therefore contrary to both the spirit and the letter of the moral law, which I shall also make more fully appear before I have done with the subject.

Now, sir, a word in reference to the institution of slavery as it existed under the Mosaic dispensation.

If gentlemen will take the pains to examine the difference between the servitude regulated by the Levitical law and the absolute slavery as it has heretofore and even now exists in the Southern States of America, they will find the difference as marked as the difference between the latter and the patriarchal system of servitude, and perhaps even more so. And here I will read from the twenty-first chapter of Exodus, verse 2 to 11, inclusive, on which is founded the great bulk of the argument in favor of the morality of slavery and of the proposition that slavery is of divine origin:

“2. If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.

“3. If he come in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him.

“4. If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.

“5. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:

“6. Then his master shall bring him unto the judges: he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door-post: and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.

“7. And if a man sell his daughter to be a maid-servant, she shall not go out as the men servants do.

“8. If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he

let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her.

“9. And if he hath betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters.

“10. If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.

“11. And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money.”

Now, sir, can any gentlemen perceive in these texts anything to establish the truth of the proposition that slavery is of divine origin. If any gentleman thinks he can, I have to say that he perceives it by a disorganized action of his intellect; for this language does not even intimate any such thing. When Moses wrote the law by which the Jews were to be governed till the coming of Shiloh, he found slavery already an established institution among the nations of the earth and even among the Jews themselves. At that remote period of the world's history something like slavery, as I have already remarked, seemed to be necessary, and the law of Moses was intended not to establish as an institution already established, but to mitigate its horrors and cruelties; and if you will examine the law which I have just read in your hearing, it will be easy to perceive that the effect of it was to abolish slavery rather than to perpetuate it. “If a man buy a Hebrew servant, six years shall he serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.” The servant was to serve till the beginning of the sabbatical year and no longer; so that if the service began but one year before the sabbatical year the service was to continue but one year, after the expiration of which the man was in all respects free.

Now, sir, it must be remembered that a Hebrew could never be a slave for life to a Hebrew, except he made himself such by his own voluntary act, and even in that case his children could not be born slaves. It must also be remembered that whenever a Hebrew became a slave it was because of an indebtedness which he was too poor to liquidate in any other way than by placing his services at the disposal of his creditor, and in that case his servitude could be of no longer duration than six years, and in most cases a much shorter period of time was necessary; after which the debt was paid and the man became free to all intents and purposes. If gentlemen will please bear these facts in mind, I will call their attention to the fact that any Canaanitish slave might become a Hebrew by subscribing to the Abrahamic covenant. Many Gentiles did become Hebrews by the rite of circumcision, and thus they necessarily became free under the Jewish law, and thus too the effect of the law, as I have already observed, taken as a whole, was to abolish