

tomed to yield prompt and even cheerful obedience, is to assail the deeply-rooted prejudices of the people; and as its defenders protect themselves by seeking refuge behind the bulwarks of popular prejudices, the attack must be prompt and vigorous. The institution has many years since taken deep root in the affections of the people, and if it now appears to be an evil, and if it becomes necessary to eradicate it, it will be necessary to strike at the root of the evil. It will be of little avail to cut down the old Upas tree, around the stump of which may spring up a thousand shoots more hurtful to the health of the body politic, more mischievous, more insalubrious, more destructive of human progress and human happiness, emitting a more noisome effluvia, a more poisonous miasma, and becoming a more noxious pestilence, than any which the people of our State, and indeed the people of our whole country, have ever yet been afflicted with. No, sir, it is my humble judgment that the tree should be taken up by its roots, and we ought not to allow any time for the growth of offshoots; and after pulling it up by the roots from the ground which it has so long cursed, it may be well to sever the limbs from the body and the body from the roots, and make a bonfire of the whole thing. Then let gentlemen not hesitate to strike at the very root of this time-honored but accursed evil.

It is a question not yet solved to the entire satisfaction of some individuals as to what may be the root of this evil. Some think, and perhaps correctly, that *personal interest*, though antagonistic to public interest, is the correct answer to the query. Others think that it is a firm and even honest conviction on the part of the friends of the institution, that the institution is of divine origin, and has long centuries ago received the indorsement and sanction of high Heaven itself, and is in perfect agreement with the will of Almighty God and the teachings of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. Whichever solution of the query as to what may be the root of the evil is correct, certain it is that to attack the morality of slavery is to touch the tenderest sensibilities of those who are friendly either to its extension or simply its perpetuity in those districts or States where it has or may claim an existence.

I am of the opinion that if it shall appear that slavery is a moral evil—that it is contrary to the letter or only the spirit of the teachings of the moral law—whether it be a public benefit or a public evil—we, as a Christian people, as a Bible-reading and Bible-believing people, are bound, as we expect to meet the negro at the bar of Heaven's high court—as we hope to be saved from the pains and penalties beyond the portals of death, consequent upon a failure on the part of men in the performance of duties which they know and understand to be duties imposed upon

them, either of omission or commission—as we hope for an unmixed and never-ending happiness after we shall have put aside these mortal bodies—are bound, by every feeling of humanity, every sentiment of philanthropy, every sense of justice and every principle of right, to demolish the institution, and to do so at as early a date as may be practicable. Some of the best men who have ever lived in modern ages, or in even more remote periods of the world's history—some of the ablest philosophers and most learned divines—some of whom were personally interested in the institution and others of whom were not—have believed, and many now living, believe that slavery is a moral evil; and I regard their opinions as being entitled to great weight and the most respectful consideration. It is therefore perfectly proper, and right, and competent for this Convention to make inquiry into this branch of the subject; and as this Convention is composed of Christian men, I deem it their duty to make the morality of slavery the subject of their first and most scrutinous inquiry.

The friends of slavery argue that slavery must be right, because it was an established institution in the days of Abraham, and that Abraham himself was a slaveholder; and furthermore, that inasmuch as Abraham was immediately taught the moral law by his Almighty Maker, the great law giver of the universe, slavery must necessarily be of divine origin. They furthermore argue that inasmuch as slavery was a political institution among the Jews, and regulated by the law of Moses, as handed down to him directly from Heaven itself, it has the sanction of Heaven for its continuance. They further argue that as the Saviour of the world was not an abolitionist, and did not say directly that slavery was morally wrong, and because his great apostle, Paul, on one occasion addressed himself to slaves, and directed them to "obey your masters in all things," &c., therefore slavery is morally right, is of divine origin, and ought to be perpetuated and extended. Upon these three propositions is based all the argument in favor of the morality, and indeed the divinity of slavery. I will proceed to examine these propositions in detail.

First, then, as to Abrahamic slavery, if I may be allowed to call it such.

Now, sir, I undertake to say that Abraham was not a slaveholder, but little, if anything, more or less than the chief of a tribe. He was the master of his tribe as the Emperor of the French is the master of the French people; as Victoria is the mistress of Great Britain; and as the President of the United States is master of the great American nation. Abraham was but the chief magistrate of his tribe, possessed of powers not without limitation, and was the chief of his tribe, very likely by the consent of a large number of his people, and only for the good of his people—not for his