countries, acting together and for the same end! How disastrous to the hopes of Africa, should their opinions on this subject tend in opposite directions, neutralize each other, if not exhaust their strength in the fierceness of controversy or the bitterness of reproach and recrimination.

And here it may be important to state the moral principle which should govern the friends of the African race, in endeavors and enterprises for their benefit; and to show that it is the same which, by the Divine law, each and every man is bound to manifest in his conduct towards one and all of his fellow-men. It is simply that principle of justice and benevolence imbodied in the golden rule of the Saviour of the world. In its application to the inhabitants and descendants of Africa, there is no peculiarity, unless it lie in the strength of reasons which urge this application, on account of the greatness of their wrongs and the extremity of their miseries. Possibly, also, we may be specially bound to remedy evils which our own crimes or those of our immediate ancestors have produced. But, with these qualifications, our duty to the African race is the same owed by us to any other people in like circumstances.

The law of Christianity enjoining reciprocal and equal benevolence, universally and at all times, between man and man, is the sole foundation of human rights; and this general law can, in the innumerable cases not defined or settled by particular Divine precepts, be obeyed only by such acts and methods as an honest reason shall prescribe. The principle of this law, perfect and immutable, holds authority over all human society, but in its application to particular circumstances, conditions, and individuals of this society, varies endlessly, involves every question of expediency, and requires the exercise of our highest faculties, of the soundest and most sagacious judgment. No one can doubt the truth of this doctrine who will reflect upon his own conduct for a single day. Why bestows he alms upon *this* destitute person and not upon *that*, sustains this proposed measure for the public advantage and not that other, but in recognition of the fact that, in most of the actions and duties of life, Christianity governs by general laws, leaving human reason to study the lessons of experience, and to select and apply the means and methods of beneficence. In all domestic, social, and political life, and in ten thousand forms, this fact is manifested every hour; and while I see in it, for many reasons, a peculiar wisdom and a high moral discipline, I know that, had it been otherwise, and special laws dictated and prescribed each and every act of our lives, the world itself would not contain the books that had been written.

The rights of man imply corresponding obligations, and the existence of one or both between men presupposes human society. I am dealing now with the *morale* of the subject, and not with its artificial or merely legal aspects. No reasoning, then, on the rights of man, is of force or value, which treats him as solitary and alone, or which rests merely upon the dignity and immortality of his nature. Nor is it possible to discover, independent of a serious attention to circumstances and consequences, from the preceptive code Christianity, many of the rights of others, and of our particular obligations of duty; and not less rational is he, who, because God has left to him the free use of his limbs, confronts the steam engine in its velocity, or dares the wrath of all the elements, than he who, in his plans of benevolence, overlooks the fact, that not more perfect or unbending in principle than comprehensive and accommodating in the modes of its application to human society and human affairs, is the Divine law, regulating things on earth as in heaven, partially by exact definitions and rules, but mostly by purity of motive and the all-hallowing and benign influences of reciprocal and universal love. So far as any system of political or personal slavery violates the specific precepts or the general laws of Christianity, it must be condemned, and should be immediately abolished; yet whether such a system be for a time, on the whole, right or wrong, it is clear that the duties and rights of individuals invested thereby with authority, or bound to submission and servitude, are affected and modified by a state of things, which exists, perhaps (if they are in a minority) without their choice, and which neither one nor both of them find it possible to control. As they neither established the system, may not desire to perpetuate, and cannot abolish it, they must fulfil the royal law according to the Scriptures by such acts of mutual justice and kindness as are compatible with the necessities of their condition and the public welfare.

Men as individuals, and society as a body of individuals, are equally bound to do what they can to reform abuses, promote justice, and seek the perfectibility of all social and political institutions; yet, in regard to the means they adopt for these great ends, they must be mainly governed by their own judgments, deliberately and conscientiously formed under responsibilities to the Author of all wisdom, the Supreme Ruler of the world.

Much controversy in regard to slavery arises from the different meanings given by different writers to that term, some using it as synonymous with the act of reducing a free person to involuntary and perpetual servitude; others, as that system or institution of society which legalizes and makes hereditary this servitude; some as a wrong involving every crime committed towards slaves, where such an institution prevails; some as the mere condition of the slaves; and others as simply the relation existing between the individual master and his slaves, the effects of which must clearly depend very much upon the character of the persons and the peculiar circumstances of the case. Some deem slavery, however modified, and wherever existing, so entirely and intolerably criminal, that for its overthrow they would willingly hazard all consequences, and in their enthusiasm for what they term the inalienable rights of humanity, violate the rights of independent communities, the long-acknowledged and sanctioned laws of nations.

States and individuals are alike bound by the general and special laws of the Christian religion, and to hold or treat human beings as *mere* property I regard as a violation of the principles of that religion; yet it by no means follows that all masters, from the very nature of the relation they sustain to their slaves, are to be condemned, or that the State in which slavery exists is bound to proclaim immediate, unconditional, universal, and entire emancipation. The relation of master does not oblige the master to treat the slave as *mere* property. The state may repeal all laws which *thus* regard the slave, short of an act of unconditional and entire emancipation. Even the liabilities to evil to which particular slaves are exposed in the service of Christian masters in America may be less than those to which they would be exposed, at present, by an act of emancipation. But, it may be said, the liabilities to evil of particular slaves by emancipation could not exist, were there general emancipation. This may be true; but I am speaking of things as they are, and not as they might be, and of the modification of the duties of individuals by the condition of society. To illustrate, then, my meaning, the slave of a humane master

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XIV. Books

2. Report of Mr. Kennedy, of Maryland
H.R. report no.283, 27th Congress
3rd session, Washington, D.C. 1843