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TIMOTHY

**THREE PRIZE ESSAYS
ON AMERICAN
SLAVERY**

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Abraham Baldwin**

**Three Prize Essays
on American Slavery**

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Three Prize Essays on American Slavery

PREMIUM OFFERED

A benevolent individual, who has numerous friends and acquaintances both North and South, and who has had peculiar opportunities for learning the state and condition of all sections of the nation, perceiving the danger of our national Institutions, and deeply impressed with a sense of the importance, in this time of peril, of harmonizing Christian men through the country, by kind yet faithful exhibitions of truth on the subject now agitating the whole community, offered a premium of \$100 for the best Essay on the subject of Slavery, fitted to influence the great body of Christians through the land.

The call was soon responded to by nearly fifty writers, whose manuscripts were examined by the distinguished committee appointed by the Donor, whose award has been made, as their certificate, here annexed, will show.

PREMIUM AWARDED

The undersigned, appointed a Committee to award a premium of one hundred dollars, offered by a benevolent individual, for the best Essay on the subject of Slavery, "adapted to receive the approbation of Evangelical Christians generally," have had under examination more than forty competing manuscripts, a large number of them written with much ability. They have decided to award the prize to the author of the Essay entitled, "*The Error and the Duty in regard to Slavery*," whom they find, on opening the accompanying envelope, to be the Rev. R. B. Thurston, of Chicopee Falls, Mass.

They would also commend to the attention of the public, two of the remaining tracts, selected by the individual who offered the prize, and for which he and others interested have given a prize of one hundred dollars each. One of these is entitled, "*Friendly Letters to a Christian Slave-holder*," by Rev. A. C. Baldwin, of Durham, Conn.; the other, "*Is American Slavery an Institution which Christianity sanctions and will perpetuate?*" by Rev. Timothy Williston, of Strongsville, Ohio.

Asa D. Smith,

Mark Hopkins,

Theodore Frelinghuysen.

May, 1857.

THE ERROR AND THE DUTY IN REGARD TO SLAVERY

BY REV. R. B. THURSTON

The great and agitating question of our country is that concerning slavery. Beneath the whole subject there lies of course some simple truth, for all fundamental truth is simple, which will be readily accepted by patriotic and Christian minds, when it is clearly perceived and discreetly applied. It is the design of these pages to exhibit this truth, and to show that it is a foundation for a union of sentiment and action on the part of good men, by which, under the divine blessing, our threatening controversies, North and South, may be happily terminated.

To avoid misapprehension, let it be noticed that we shall examine the central claim of slavery, first, as a legal institution; afterwards, the moral relations of individuals connected with it will be considered. In that examination the term *property, as possessed in men*, will be used in the specific sense which is given to it by the slave laws and the practical operation of the system. No other sense is relevant to the discussion. The property of the father in the services of the son, of the master in the labor of the apprentice, of the State in the forced toil of the convict, is

not in question. None of these relations creates slavery as such; and they should not be allowed, as has sometimes been done, to obscure the argument.

The limits of a brief tract on a great subject compel us to pass unnoticed many questions which will occur to a thoughtful mind. It is believed that they all find their solution in our fundamental positions; and that all passages of the Bible relating to the general subject, when faithfully interpreted in their real harmony, sustain these positions. It is admitted that the following argument is unsound if it does not provide for every logical and practical exigency.

The primary truth which is now to be established may be thus stated: *All men are invested by the Creator with a common right to hold property in inferior things; but they have no such right to hold property in men.*

Christians agree that God as the Creator is the original proprietor of all things, and that he has absolute right to dispose of all things according to his pleasure. This right he never relinquishes, but asserts in his word and exercises in his providence. The Bible speaks thus: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein, for he hath founded it. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture" – ourselves, therefore, subject to his possession and disposal as the feeble flock to us. Even irreligious men often testify to this truth, confessing the hand of providence in natural events that despoil them of their wealth.

Now, under his own supreme control, God has given to all men equally a dependent and limited right of property. *Given* is the word repeatedly chosen by inspiration in this connection. "The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth hath he *given* to the children of men." In Eden he blessed the first human pair, and said to them, in behalf of the race, "Replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. Behold, I have *given* you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed." This, then, is the original and permanent ground of man's title to property; and the important fact to be observed is the *specific divine grant*. The right of all men equally to own property is the positive institution of the Creator. We all alike hold our possessions by his authentic warrant, his deed of conveyance.

Let us be understood here. We are not educing from the Bible a doctrine which would level society, by giving to all men equal shares of property; but a doctrine which extends equal divine protection over the right of every man to hold that amount of property which he earns by his own faculties, in consistency with all divine statutes.

This right is indeed argued from nature; and justly; for God's revelations in nature and in his word coincide. It is, however, a right of so much consequence to the world, that, where nature leaves it, he incorporates it, and gives it the force of a law; so

that in the sequel we can with propriety speak of it as a law, as well as an institution. To the believer in the Bible, this law is the end of argument.

It will have weight with some minds to state that this position is supported by the highest legal authority. In his Commentaries on the Laws of England, Blackstone quotes the primeval grant of God, and then remarks, "This is the only true and solid foundation of man's dominion over external things, whatever airy metaphysical notions may have been started by fanciful writers upon this subject. The earth, therefore, and all things therein, are the general property of all mankind, exclusive of other beings, from the immediate gift of the Creator."¹

It will enhance the force of this argument to remember that this universal right of property is one of what may be called a sacred trinity of paradisaical institutions. These institutions are the Sabbath, appointed in regard for our relations to God as moral beings; marriage, ordained for our welfare as members of a successive race; and the right of property, conferred to meet our necessities as dwellers on this material globe. These three are the world's inheritance from lost Eden. They were received by the first father in behalf of all his posterity. They were designed for all men as men. It is demonstrable that they are indispensable, that the world may become Paradise Regained. "Property, marriage, and religion have been called the pillars

¹ An extended passage containing the extract may be found conveniently in Chambers' Cyclopædia of English Literature, vol. 2, p. 246.

of society;" and the first is of equal importance with the other two; for all progress in domestic felicity and in religious culture depends on property, and also on the equitable distribution or possession of property, as one of its essential conditions. Property lies in the foundation of every happy home, however humble; and property gilds the pinnacle of every consecrated temple. The wise and impartial Disposer, therefore, makes the endowments of his creatures equal with their responsibilities: to all those on whom he lays the obligations of religion and of the family state, he gives the right of holding the property on which the dwelling and the sanctuary must be founded. It is a sacred right, a divine investiture, bearing the date of the creation and the seal of the Creator.

The blessing of this institution, like that of the Sabbath and of the family, has indeed been shattered by the fall of man; but when God said to Noah and his sons, concerning the inferior creatures, "Into your hand are they delivered; even as the green herb have I given you all things," it was reëstablished and consecrated anew. The Psalmist repeated the assurance to the world when he wrote, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hand; thou hast put all things under his feet."

We now advance to the second part of our proposition. Men have no such right to hold property in men. Since the right is from God, it follows immediately that they can hold in ownership, by a divine title, only what he has given. But he has not given to men, as men, a right of ownership in men. No one will contend for a

moment that the universal grant above considered confers upon them mutual dominion, or rightful property in their species. The idea is not in the terms; it is nowhere in the Bible; it is not in nature; it is repugnant to common sense; it would resolve the race into the absurd and terrific relation of antagonists, struggling, each one for the mastery of his own estate in another, – I, for the possession of my right in you; and you, for yours in me. Nay, the very act of entitling all men to hold property proves the exemption of all, by the divine will, from the condition of property. The idea that a man can be an article of property and an owner of property by the same supreme warrant is contradictory and absurd.

We now have sure ground for objecting to the system of American slavery, as such. It is directly opposed to the original, authoritative institution of Jehovah. He gives men the right to hold property. Slavery strips them of the divine investiture. He gives men dominion over inferior creatures. Slavery makes them share the subjection of the brute. That slavery does this, the laws of the States in which it exists abundantly declare. Slaves are "chattels," "estate personal." Slave-holders assembled in convention solemnly affirm in view of northern agitation of the subject, that "masters have the same right to their slaves which they have to any other property."

This asserted and exercised right is the vital principle and substance of the institution. It is the central delusion and transgression; and the evils of the system to white and black

are its legitimate consequences. The legal and the leading idea concerning slaves is that they are property: of course, the idea that they are men, invested with the rights of men, practically sinks; and, from the premise that they are property, the conclusion is logical that they may be treated as property. Why should *property*, contrary to the interests of the proprietor, be exempt from sale, receive instruction, give testimony in court, hold estate, preserve family ties, be loved as the owner loves himself, in fine, enjoy all or any of the "inalienable rights" of *man*? It is because they are held as property, that slaves are sold; because they are property, families are torn asunder; because they are property, instruction is denied them; because they are property, the law, and the public sentiment that makes the law, crush them as men.

We do not here call in question the mitigations with which Christian masters temper into mildness the hard working of an evil system. Those mitigations do not, however, logically or morally defend slavery. Nay, they condemn it; for they are practical tributes to the fact that the laws of humanity, not of property, are binding in respect to the slaves. Hence they really show the inherent inconsistency of the idea, and the unrighteousness of the system which regards men as property.

Notwithstanding those mitigations, the system itself, like every wrong system, produces characteristic evils, which can be prevented only by removing their cause, the false doctrine that men can be rightfully held in ownership. Fallen as man is,

no prophet was needed to foretell at the first the dreadful facts that have been recorded in the bitter history of man's claim of property in man. Such a history must always be a scroll written within and without with lamentations and mourning and woe. Man is not a safe depository of such power. A human institution which subverts a divine institution, and which carries with it the assumption of a divine prerogative in constituting a new species of property, naturally saps the foundations of every other divine institution and law which stands in its way. Hence, for example, the fall of the domestic institution before that of slavery.

The inherent wrongfulness of American slavery as a legal and social institution is therefore clearly demonstrated. It formally abolishes by law and usage a divine institution. Hence, in its practical operation, it sets aside other divine institutions and laws. Consequently it stands in the same relations to the divine government with the abolition of the Sabbath by infidel France, and with the perversion of the family institution by the Mormon territory of Utah.

Here the fundamental argument from the Bible rests. But slavery justifies itself by the Bible. It becomes essential, therefore, to examine the validness of this justification.

There are but two possible ways of avoiding the conclusion that has been reached. To vindicate slavery it must be proved, first, that God has abolished the original institution, conferring on men universally the right to hold property; or, secondly, it must be proved, that, while he has by special enactments taken

away from a portion of mankind the right to hold property, he has given to other men the right to hold the former as property. Further, to justify American slavery, it must be shown that these special enactments include the African race and the American States.

In regard to the first point we simply remark, it is morally impossible that God should permanently and generally abolish the original institution concerning property; because, as in the case of its coevals, the Sabbath and marriage, the reason for it is permanent and unchangeable, and "lex stat dum ratio manet," the law stands while the reason remains. Moreover, there is not a word of such repeal in the Bible. That institution, therefore, is still a charter of rights for the children of men. Till it is assailed, more need not be said.

As to the second point, we believe that careful investigation will prove conclusively, that no special enactments are now in force which arrest or modify the institutions of Eden, in regard to any state or any persons. It will, then, remain demonstrated, that the legal system of slavery exists utterly without warrant of the Holy Scriptures, and in defiance of the authority of the Creator. The word of God is throughout consistent.

It is here freely admitted, that God can arrest the operation of general laws by special statutes. He can take away from men the right to hold property which he has given, and, if he please, constitute them the property of other men. It is, in this respect, as it is with life. God can take what he gives. If, then, he has given

authority to individuals or to nations to hold others as property, they may do so. Nay, more; if their commission is imperative, they must do so. But such an act of God creates an exception to his own fundamental law, and, like all *exceptions*, conveys its own restrictions, and *proves the rule*. It imposes no yoke, save upon those appointed to subjugation. It confers no authority, save upon those specifically invested with it. They are bound to keep absolutely within the prescribed terms, and no others can innocently seize their delegated dominion. Outside of the excepted parties the universal law has sway unimpaired. It is in this instance as it is in regard to marriage. God permitted the patriarchs to multiply their wives; but monogamy is now a sacred institution for the world. So the supreme Disposer can make a slave, or a nation of slaves; and the world shall be even the more solemnly bound by the original institutes concerning property. It follows, without a chasm in the argument, or a doubtful step, that, when persons or States reduce men to the condition of chattels, *without divine authorization*, they are guilty of subverting a divine institution; and, since it is the prerogative of God to determine what shall be property, they are chargeable with a presumptuous usurpation of divine prerogative, in making property, so far as human force and law can do it, of those whom Jehovah has created in his own image, and invested with all the original rights of men.

The soundness of the principle contained in these remarks, both in law and in biblical interpretation, will not be questioned.

In the light of it, let us examine briefly the justifications of slavery as derived from the Bible. Happily the principle itself saves the labor of minute and protracted criticism.

We first consider the curse pronounced upon Canaan by Noah. Admitting all that is necessary to the support of slavery, namely, that that curse constituted the descendants of *Canaan* the property of some other tribe or people, upon whom it conferred the right of holding them as property, yet even so this passage does not justify but condemns American slavery; for that curse does not touch the African race: *they are not descendants of Canaan*;² and it gives no rights to American States. In later times the Canaanites were devoted to destruction for their sins. The Hebrews were the agents appointed by Jehovah to this work of retribution. It was not, however, accomplished in their entire extermination. In the case of the Gibeonites it was formally commuted to servitude, and other nations occupying the promised land were made tributary. Thus the curse upon Canaan was fulfilled by *authorized executioners* of divine justice.

What light does the whole history now throw upon slavery? It is plain the curse was a judicial act of God concerning Canaan. It follows that conquest with extermination or servitude was a judgment of God, which he appointed his chosen people to execute. It follows further, that those, who, without his commission, reduce to bondage men who are not descendants of Canaan, do inflict a curse on those whom he has not cursed; and

² Genesis, 10th Chapter. Vide, Kitto's Cyclopædia, for views in this connection.

thus virtually assume his most awful prerogative as the Judge of guilty nations.

We then inquire whether the States of the South have received warrant for enslaving any portion of mankind. Has God *given* them the African race as property? Where is the commission? The argument fails to justify modern slavery for the same reason identically that it fails to justify offensive war and conquest. God has not given the right – has neither proclaimed the curse, nor commissioned the agent of the curse. Christian States in America seize it, and lay it upon those whom he has not cursed. The passage of his word which has been considered affords them no sanction.

We proceed to another passage. It is supposed by many to be an incontrovertible defence of modern slavery, that the Hebrews were authorized to buy bondmen and bondmaids of the heathen round about them. Let us candidly examine this defence.

Why were the Hebrews authorized by God in express terms to buy servants, and possess them as their "money?" Evidently *because they did not otherwise have this authority*. Human beings, as we have seen, were not "given" in the grant of property. They do not, therefore, fall within the scope of the general laws of property. If they had so fallen, the special statutes, by which the Hebrews purchased them, would have been as gratuitous as special enactments for buying animals, trees, and minerals. *Of all nations they only have possessed this right; for they only received it by special bestowment*. The rest of mankind have ever been

prohibited from assuming it by fundamental laws. If ever there was a case in which the exception proves the rule, that case is before us; and therefore a chasm yawns between the premise and the conclusion defensive of slavery, which no exegesis and no logic can bridge over.

To illustrate the strength of this argument, let the fact be observed, that, if it could be set aside, it would follow, by parity of reasoning, that the clergy of our country, regardless of fundamental laws, have right to take possession of a tenth part of the estates and incomes of their fellow-citizens, because the Levites in this manner received their inheritance among their brethren. It is plain, however, that, as in regard to other interests no less important than liberty or slavery, so also in regard to slavery itself, the special laws of the Old Testament are no longer in force; whence it follows that the vital doctrine of the system, "masters have the same right to their slaves which they have to any other property," is totally erroneous. The institution which claims solid foundation here is built on nothing.

We cannot forbear to adduce an instance of unexceptionable testimony to the validity of this reasoning. In one or two famous articles on slavery and abolitionism, the Princeton Repertory adopts it, with another application, and says, "So far as polygamy and divorce were permitted under the old dispensation they were lawful, and became so by that permission; and they ceased to be lawful when that permission was withdrawn, and a new law given. That Christ did give a new law is abundantly evident." In

the same manner, 'so far as' slavery 'was permitted under the old dispensation it was lawful, and became so by that permission; and it ceased to be lawful when that permission was withdrawn, and a new law given.' It is true, however, only in a qualified sense, that Christ gave "a new law" concerning polygamy and divorce. His law restored the original institution of marriage, as in Eden; and this was "new" to the Jews, because there had been departure from it. In like manner the New Testament, if not the very words of Christ, now gives a new law concerning slavery in the same sense; that is, as will appear, in the sequel, the Christian precepts restore the original institution concerning property as well as concerning marriage. The laws which allowed polygamy and slavery, and therefore the right, passed away together.

Here we leave the Old Testament. No other passages need examination; for all consist with these positions. So far as that sacred volume gives light, the world are bound by the laws and have equal right to the full blessings of three divine institutions, whose foundations were laid in Paradise, and whose complete and glorious proportions will encompass the universal, millennial felicity.

The defence of slavery from the New Testament now demands brief notice. We desire to allow it full force, while we ask the reader's candid judgment of the conclusion.

Of course, the New Testament sanctions now what it sanctioned in the days of its authors. That must have been *Roman, not Hebrew*, slavery; for they lived and wrote to men

under Roman law. Besides, there is reason to believe, as Kitto states, that the Jews at that time held no slaves. In point of historic truth, it appears that the Mosaic law, finding slavery in existence, practically operated as a system of gradual emancipation for its extinction. "There is no evidence that Christ ever came in contact with slavery." This sufficiently explains why he did not give a "new law" concerning it in specific terms. The occasion did not arise, as it did arise in regard to polygamy and divorce, with which he did come in contact. Furthermore, there was no need of new law, other than was actually given.

The argument from the New Testament for the rightfulness of slavery is twofold, being built on the instructions given to masters and servants. It fails on both sides.

For, first, the precepts addressed to servants convey no authority to national rulers or to private individuals to set aside the institution of Jehovah by reducing men to the condition of slaves. These precepts simply enjoin the conduct which Christianity required in their actual situation. They do not vindicate the law and usage by which they were held as property. This is abundantly evident in the texts themselves, and more emphatically, when they are compared with the parallel cases.

Christ promulgated these rules. "I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." Does this empower States to legalize fraud and violence? Does

it transmute all the *evil* which Jesus' disciples have endured into *righteousness* of those who have inflicted the evil? Does it wash the crimsoned hands of persecutors in innocency? Does it justify the wilful smiter? All men know better. No one contends for such exposition. Yet it is indispensable to the interpretation which finds a justification of slavery in precepts which enjoin obedience on slaves. That obedience is required on other grounds.

Another example. The New Testament explicitly commands citizens to submit to the civil power. Does this sanctify the tyranny of a Nero or a Nicholas? In the enjoined submission of subjects, has the despot, or the state, full license for edicts and acts of oppression and iniquity? Yet they are logically compelled to admit this, and thus, in theory at least, banish freedom from the whole earth, who find in commands addressed to servants power conferred on legislators and masters to make them slaves; that is, to hold them as property. Instead of this, the rights and obligations of rulers, and of those who claim to be owners of their fellow men, are defined in a very different class of instructions.

Secondly, the instructions addressed to masters forbid the exercise of the right which is assumed in slavery. To make this clear, we observe, primarily, there is no passage in the New Testament which *institutes* the relation of men held in ownership by men. There is no direct reference to the civil laws which constituted this relation. They are passed by silently, as are the laws that established idolatry, and kindled the fires of

persecution. Their existence is tacitly acknowledged in the use of the terms which designate masters and servants; and that is all. Hence those who find here an apology for slavery are obliged to refer to secular history for the facts and definitions on which their argument rests. Accordingly, no passage in the New Testament would be void of meaning, though slavery should cease. In this respect the Constitution of the United States resembles the sacred books; for not one word of that instrument, interpreted on just principles as the palladium of liberty, needs to be obliterated in the abolition of slavery. Furthermore, and this covers our position, the New Testament, disregarding the Roman law, refers masters exclusively to the law of God as their rule for the treatment of servants. A single citation, with which all passages agree, is sufficient to show this. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." Now, as none can find in such precepts a right to destroy God's primary institution concerning the family, no more can they find in them a right to destroy his primary and universal institution concerning property. Stronger than this, the conclusion is inevitable, that the very precepts which are relied upon to support American slavery do condemn and destroy it; for the law of God, by which they bind masters, ordaining from Eden what is just and equal between men, abolishes the fundamental and central law of the system.³

³ Col. 4:1; "Ye masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." That is, act towards them on the principles of justice and equity. Justice requires that all

It is argued, indeed, that slavery is right, because masters, as well as fathers and rulers, may require obedience. The argument fails utterly; for there is at the foundation no analogy in the cases. The family and the State are divine institutions, having sanction in the Bible; but slavery subverts a divine institution. Fathers and rulers, *as such*, have duties and rights suitable to the relations they sustain by the will of God. Masters, *as such*, have no *rights*; for their relation, as holding property in men, is contrary to his will.

their rights, as men, as husbands, and as parents, should be regarded. And these rights are not to be determined by the civil law, but by the law of God... But God concedes nothing to the master beyond what the law of love allows. Paul requires for servants not only what is strictly just, but τὴν ἰσότητα. What is that? Literally, it is *equality*. This is not only its signification, but its meaning. Servants are to be treated by their masters on the principles of equality. Not that they are to be equal with their masters in authority or station or circumstances; but that they are to be treated as having, as men, as husbands, and as parents, equal rights with their masters. It is just as great a sin to deprive a servant of the just recompense for his labor, or to keep him in ignorance, or to take from him his wife or child, as it is to act thus towards a free man. This is the equality which the law of God demands, and on this principle the final judgment is to be administered. Christ will punish the master for defrauding the servant as severely as he will punish the servant for robbing his master. The same penalty will be inflicted for the violation of the conjugal or parental rights of the one as of the other. For, as the apostle adds, there is no respect of persons with him. At his bar the question will be, "What was done?" not "Who did it?" Paul carries this so far as to apply the principle not only to the acts, but to the temper of masters. They are not only to act towards their servants on the principles of justice and equity, but are to *avoid threatening*. This includes all manifestation of contempt and ill temper, or undue severity. All this is enforced by the consideration that masters have a Master in heaven, to whom they are responsible for their treatment of their servants... Believers will act in conformity with the Gospel in this. And the result of such obedience, if it could become general, would be, that first the evils of slavery, and then slavery itself, would pass away naturally, and as healthfully as children cease to be minors. Prof. Hodge's Commentary.

Their duty, to which they are bound by the solemn consideration that he is their Master, is practically to restore to their servants the rights which he confers upon all; for nothing less than this can be just and equal in his sight.

This view discloses the harmony of the whole Bible concerning slavery; and, in the light of the two Testaments, the institution stands as a legalized violation of the positive will of Jehovah.

We now condense the whole argument into its briefest form, in the following syllogisms.

The entire right of men to hold property is given by the Creator. He gives to American States and citizens no right to hold property in men. Therefore they have no such right.

Again. An institution is sinful, which, without divine warrant, holds property in men, thus assuming a divine prerogative, and subverting a divine institution. American slavery does this. Therefore it is a sinful institution.

The purpose of this tract now introduces a new series of topics. The argument demands its application; and the exigencies of the times present momentous questions, which it must answer.

Hitherto we have spoken of the system of slavery. We come now to persons connected with it. Because the system is sinful, the question immediately occurs, who are chargeable with the sin; for there is no sin without sinners. The answer is obvious. They are chargeable who founded it, and all who wilfully implicate themselves with it. Practically, they are always

chargeable who adopt it as their own in theory and practice, who support it in the State, consecrate it in the Church, and labor for its extension. They are chargeable, for they bring heresy into creeds, unrighteousness into legislation, and crime into popular usage. If they are masters, they stand in the same moral relations with persecutors and tyrannical rulers, guilty for all personal injuries they inflict under color of unjust laws; and, whether masters or not, they are guilty for exerting their influence to sustain laws which set aside the authority of God, and withhold the rights he has given. Such men are accountable to God and to society for deliberate, organised, aggressive iniquity. The "organic sin" of the State is their sin, the sin of each in his own measure; for they are the individuals who determine the acts and the character of the slave-holding State as such.

But are there no exceptions among slave-holders? We trust there are many. There is a plain distinction between wicked laws and the personal acts of men who live under those laws. Some may approve them, and use or abuse them to the injury of their fellow men. Others may disapprove them, and refuse, by means of them, to do or justify a wrong. Christians may become in a legal sense owners of slaves, while they heartily deprecate the system of oppression, while they are ready to unite with good men in feasible and wise measures for its removal, and while they obey the Christian precepts towards their servants, rendering unto them what is just and equal to men and brethren in Christ. Such Christians and such men do not hold slaves in

the sense which God forbids; and they cannot be charged with the wickedness of laws by which they, as well as the slaves, are oppressed. On their estates a higher law than that of slavery has sway. To them their slaves, though legally property, are morally and actually men. The Bible sustains their position. They are the Philemons to whom Paul gives fellowship, and Onesimus returns, not as a slave, but a brother beloved. In the trials of their situation they should receive the cordial sympathy of Christians everywhere. It is, indeed, to their sound convictions and their political influence the world must look, in part at least, for the ultimate, peaceful extinction of American slavery. Without them, what would the South become? With the Scriptures in our hand we earnestly say to them, "Throw the weight of your influence against unrighteous laws, fulfil to servants the law of God, and you shall have the sympathy and confidence of good men everywhere. Nay, more; you, with their help, and they with your help, will confine the spreading curse, till, with God's blessing, it shall cease; and Christian and civilized man shall have no more communion with it."

These discriminations answer certain ecclesiastical questions, which have occasioned much perplexity and discord. When properly applied, they take away whatever support a wicked institution has found by leaning upon the Church; at the same time they award to consistent Christians what is due to them by the religion of Jesus. If it shall be said, there will be practical difficulty in applying these discriminations, it is sufficient to

answer, it will be less than the difficulty of disregarding them.

The question now arises, what can be done for the restriction and ultimate extinction of slavery as it is; for, since it is sinful, Christianity and patriotism declare it should be restrained and abolished.

First. The extension of slavery can and should be prevented by the Federal Government. The Scriptures have shown us, that the people in their sovereignty have not the right to create a slave State or a slave. Of course, the legislators and presidents; who receive in trust the power which emanates from the people, have no such right. If the Constitution assumed to confer this power, it would be the first national duty to amend that instrument in this particular. There is no power on earth competent to set aside either of the Creator's original institutions for man. But, according to the sound and established principle of strict construction, the Constitution as it is does not create slavery, or even acknowledge its existence, except by inference. Hence there is no legal objection to the measure which religion herself ordains. The religious and the political obligations of all citizens and all legislators coincide to protect, under the jurisdiction of Congress, the right of every man to be exempt from the condition of property, and to enjoy the property which he honestly earns. Thus the question concerning slavery and the territories is morally settled by divine authority; and to this no real objection can be made, except by that great interest, whose existence is inherently unrighteous and irreligious.

Secondly. In the slave States, legislation should restore to the enslaved population the primitive rights which God has given to all men, establishing for them, on humane and Christian principles, such relations as are suitable to their condition of poverty, ignorance, and dependence, and are adapted to secure at once their improvement and the general welfare.

This is the logical conclusion to be derived from the premises. As the central wrong of slavery consists in making men articles of property by law, the rectification is to lift from them by law the curse of the false and irreligious doctrine, that they can be rightfully held as property. Thus the axe is laid to the root of the tree.

This is also the conclusion to which we are forced by other moral principles bearing on the case. For men to receive services of men is right. Accordingly, the New Testament allows masters to receive services of those who are slaves in the sense of human law; but at the same time the sacred book requires masters, with all who employ labor, to make the recompenses which are just and equal towards men; for slavery is not right; and legislators, on their responsibility to the Ruler of nations, are bound to adjust the laws in harmony with the first principles of individual and moral obligation.

Furthermore, this is the only practical conclusion. By inevitable necessity, the slaves, as a body, must remain on the soil of their bondage. Only exceptional cases of removal can occur. They are the laborers of the South; and no State will, or can, or

is bound, to remove its laborers. It is simply bound to protect and treat them with Christian equity and kindness. Banishment of them would be injustice and cruelty, violating perhaps no less than restoring divine rights. Moreover, no practicable means of removing them have ever been seriously proposed; and, till they shall be, the point needs no discussion.

But the question may be raised, "Are the slaves to endure their present wrongs until the laws shall be thus renewed, or perhaps forever?" We reply, in showing how slave-holders can cease from guilty connection with slavery; we have also shown how the situation of the slaves becomes one of practical righteousness, before the laws can be readjusted; and for this great obligation of the body politic, sufficient time must be allowed. Moral principles do not exact natural impossibilities. The elevation of oppressed millions can be accomplished only in harmony with great natural and social, as well as ethical laws, which the wisdom of God has ordained.

It remains therefore, that, for a period of which no man can see the end, the slaves must, in most cases, dwell within the present boundaries; but it is incumbent on the citizens and legislators of the South to institute *immediate* measures for restoring to them the inviolable rights of men. So long as they continue, by the *necessities* of the case, in the relation of servants and laborers, masters should deal with them according to the rules of humane and Christian equity, paying to them in suitable ways their just earnings, holding sacred their family ties, and securing

to them the privileges of education and religion. Meanwhile, the legislatures of the several States, by wise enactments, should coöperate with masters in training their servile population for the position which the Creator designed for men.

When these things shall come to pass, a consideration, in which many good men have sought relief in regard to slavery, will have multiplied force. The providential wisdom of God, in bringing millions of the children of Africa from a land of pagan darkness and violence to a land of freedom and Christianity, will shine with new lustre, when they shall receive from American hands, together with true religion, every divine right, and shall thus be qualified and enabled to convey to the dark habitations of their fathers the infinite blessings of enlightened liberty and of the gospel of eternal salvation.

These things are practicable. So long as "righteousness exalteth a nation," a great, free, and Christian people can do what they should do; and thus only can they secure, under the divine blessing, their own highest prosperity and glory. To prove this would be simply to repeat the familiar facts which exhibit the legitimate effects of slavery on general intelligence, enterprise, and virtue.

But what shall produce the true and wide spread public sentiment, which is indispensable to usher in so radical a change in the laws and institutions of proud and powerful States? Truth must accomplish this great work – THE TRUTH that our Creator does not place those who bear his image in bondage to their

fellow men as property, but invests them with a common and inviolable right of dominion over inferior things. The vivid light which this truth sheds on the social relations of men has been extinguished at the South; and it has been dimmed at the North. In every right way and in every place, therefore, it should be made to shine again unobscured. Expounders should bring it forth from the Holy Oracles; for Jehovah has hallowed it there, and made it equal in authority with the Sabbath. The press should publish it; for it is the function of the press to convey unceasingly to the public mind whatever will establish and crown the public integrity and welfare. All men should seal it in their hearts; for it is the divine rule and bond of brotherhood in the universal dominion. It surrounds them with protected families, and builds their safe firesides and their altars of worship.

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