

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

THE laws of the great God are as binding upon men of the present day as they were upon the Israelites. And they will be binding upon men to the end of time. Slaveholders are so aware of this, that when slavery is called sinful they fly to the Bible and attempt to prove that this holy book sanctions that dreadful system of iniquity.

In these pages we intend to show that slavery is a violation of all the commandments, and that every slaveholder, who persists in holding his fellow men in bondage, after light is shed upon his conscience, will meet the wrath of God. To this end, we shall place the laws of slaveholders by the side of the laws of JEHOVAH. If they agree, we shall give up our anti-slavery doctrines; but if they disagree, and are found to be directly opposed to each other, then christianity and slavery^a cannot possibly be co-existent. We say then, to the LAW AND THE TESTIMONY.

I. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

This commandment forbids idolatry. An idolater is one who worships for God that which is not God. We do not mean to say that slaveholders require that their slaves shall actually pray to them; but we do mean to say that they

thrust themselves between *Jehovah* and the slave, and compel the latter, on pain of death, to obey them, whether their commands are like God's commandments, or not. Thus the slaveholder puts himself in the place of God, and says to his trembling slaves, *Thou shalt have no other gods before ME.*

The slaveholder claims the right to do what belongs only to God, to bind the conscience. Take a fact—one out of many—to illustrate this. Colonel R—— of Tennessee, learning that one of his slaves attended a prayer-meeting on the estate, told him that if he ever attended another, he *would tie him up and give him one hundred lashes on his bare back.*—*Anti-Slavery Record*, vol. ii. p. 59.

And who is this, we ask, that usurps the authority of **JEHOVAH**, and says, “thou shalt obey **MAN** rather than **GOD**?” Who? **THE SLAVEHOLDER**—for he claims the right of ownership in man. When God has said, “all souls are *mine*”—The slaveholder says, “No! I claim that man as *my* property. He shall not even learn to read God's law; he shall not worship him without my permission; he shall break every commandment in the decalogue, if my business or pleasure require it.” Who, then, is the God to the slave? man or *Jehovah*?

II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, &c.

This commandment forbids the setting up of any image or creature as an object of worship. Now it is as wicked to force another to break a commandment, as to break it directly ourselves. If I put a pistol into another man's hand, and compel him to shoot at another person, and kill him, I am the murderer, and not the man I used as an instrument. So if a slaveholder compels a slave to yield up his conscience to him, and forces him to "bow down" to him, as his property, he puts himself in the place of God, and requires the slave to render worship to him. Thus he breaks the second commandment. Wo to him if he repents not.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.

In the "Negro's soliloquy on the ten commandments," he is supposed to utter his thoughts thus in view of the third commandment. "How can me learn dat?—my massa swear,—my driver swear,—my missis swear;—all round me swear. Suppose I no swear, dey all curse me. Oh, my Lord, tell my massa, not swear so; tell my missis not to be so angry; tell my driver not lick poor negro so much;—den me stop swear. Oh Lord, forgive poor negro,—how he stop swear? dey all swear and curse poor negro so."

Is not the slaveholder answerable for the profane swearing on his plantation? If a man sells ardent spirit, or as the Rev. Dr. Hewitt, the

temperance agent, once said, "sells damnation by the quart," he is deemed answerable to God for all the wickedness those commit under the influence of the liquid poison they purchased of him. In like manner they who uphold slavery, or apologize for it, are guilty of the profaneness connected with this atrocious system.

But slaveholders are guilty of direct blasphemy. Slavery, after denying man the Bible, the Sabbath, the marriage institution, the ownership of his own body; after chaining the poor victim, tasking him unmercifully, exacting his sweat and even his blood, turns round,—and to palliate the horrid guilt,—charges God as the author of all this foul system of abominations!

IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and DO ALL THY WORK, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, THY MAN-SERVANT, NOR THY MAID-SERVANT, NOR THY CATTLE, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates, &c.

We make another extract from the "Negro's Soliloquy," or commentary. "Oh, massa God! when will dey let me keep holy de Sabbath day?—But no rest for poor negro,—all six days long him mus work for his massa; seven day him mus work for himself, or him's wife and him's pickaninny mus starve wid him. Massa no keep Sabbath day holy;—massa go shoot;—massa go sleep;—massa no go worship;—driver

angry,—driver flog;—Oh, Lord, my God, tell my massa give poor negro time, oder day, work for himself; so him can rest on Sabbath day. Tell massa not let driver flog poor negro so,—make him work on de holy day.”

No day is given to the slave, not even the Sabbath. Often, indeed, they work for their masters on this holy day, when tempted by a premium to break the commandment. Of almost the whole slave population it may with truth be said, “*they know no Sabbath.*” When they do hear the gospel it has very little power over their consciences. According to the testimony of the Rev. Professor Jones of the South Carolina Theological Seminary at Columbia, “they are a **NATION OF HEATHEN** *in our very midst.*”

God commands men to “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” and “six days shalt thou labor and do *all thy work,*” but slavery says, **SEVEN** *days shalt thou labor!* Thus God is robbed of the Sabbath, and his laws nullified by wicked men.

V. Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Children are required to *honor* their parents, which implies that it is the duty of parents to perform those parental duties, both in regard to soul and body, that are calculated to secure the obedience and respect of their children, and the favor of God. But slavery rudely and impiously

snaps asunder that cord which binds the hearts of parents and children in one. Under this hellish system family government, that beautiful arrangement by which God has produced so much happiness, is destroyed, parents having no control over their offspring, nor children being bound to obey their parents. Thus man audaciously presumes to release children from filial obligations, and to put it out of the power of parents to exercise parental love or authority.

“Honor thy father and thy mother!”—“Who dey be?” says the poor slave. “Where negro’s fader an moder? how can him honor dem?—suppose him see driver flog his fader, what can he do?—suppose him see driver throw down his moder and flog her;—she cry—she bleed; she call upon her son to help her;—negro say one word, he too be thrown down;—driver curse him—driver lick him; he go tell massa; massa lick him ’gain;—send him to driver;—driver flog him;—put him in stocks,—drive him,—lick him—may be kill him;—What for? ’cause negro tell him, not make his poor moder bleed so:—Oh Lord, tell his massa, let poor negro alone to honor his fader and moder.”

Does any slaveholder, or abettor of slavery, sneer at the simple language of the broken-hearted slave, in view of the indignities and cruelties offered his parent? In view of the yearnings of the parents over the children whom they cannot succor or relieve? *The Lord will laugh at your*

calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

VI. Thou shalt not kill.

“The sixth commandment,” says Thomas Scott, “requires us to ‘love our neighbor as ourselves,’ in respect of his *person and life.*” It “likewise prohibits us to assault, maim, or wound others, or to assist those who do it. . . . All the slaughter committed by oppressions, persecutions, or attempts to deprive of liberty, or confine in slavery, our unoffending fellow-creatures, on any pretence whatever, is artful, cruel murder.

“What then shall we think,” he says, “of the accursed slave-trade” [and he might have added, of the accursed system of slavery—the upholder of the slave-trade] “and how thankful should we be, that it is at length abolished! Even the laws needlessly sanguinary, involve the persons concerned in this enormous guilt; and they who ought to punish the murderer, and yet suffer him to escape, will be numbered among the abettors of his crime, at the tribunal of God.”

God said to Noah, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for **IN THE IMAGE OF GOD** made he man;” and from Sinai He proclaimed, “Thou shalt not kill.” Yet, by the laws of the slave states, if the slave dares to resist any chastisement the master may

choose to inflict, no matter how unjust, he may be **LEGALLY SHOT THROUGH THE HEAD.**

“If any slave,” in Georgia, “*shall presume to strike ANY WHITE PERSON,*” be it in defence of chastity or life, of parent, wife, or child, “he shall, for the first offence, suffer such punishment as the justice or justices shall, in their discretion, think fit, not extending to life or limb; and for the second offence, suffer **DEATH.**”

In Virginia, there are **SEVENTY-ONE** offences for which the penalty is *death* when committed by *slaves*, and imprisonment (merely) “when by whites.” And as no slave can be a party in any species of action against his master, or any white person be capitally convicted on the testimony of slaves, before a judicial tribunal, even in case of known and malicious murder of a slave by a white person, the murderer usually escapes. Such is the slave code! Is it not in direct opposition to the law of God? And yet these are the laws for which is claimed the sanction of **JEHOVAH.** They give the master *absolute power of life and death* over his slave. Slavery first seizes upon the slave by brutal violence, and then to palliate the guilt of **ROBBERY** and **MURDER**, legalizes them!!

In heathen nations, infanticide or the murder of little children by their parents, always prevails, and in slave states (those regions of heathenism) this crime is not unusual. Who are the guilty

cause of the deaths of those innocents? **SLAVE-HOLDERS.** Suicides prevail among slaves. Sir Michael Clarc, M. D., in his evidence before a committee of the British House of Lords, said, that "on one occasion, eleven slaves committed suicide. One hung the other ten." Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; much more the unlearned. And such madness drives the desperate and goaded slave to self-murder. Upon whose skirts will be found his blood?

Rev. John Wesley, in addressing slave-traders and slaveholders, says, "you induce the villain to steal, rob, murder men, women and children, without number, by paying him for his execrable labor. It is all your act and deed. This equally concerns all slaveholders, of whatever rank or degree; seeing men-buyers are exactly on a level with men-stealers! Indeed, you say, 'I pay honestly for my goods; and I am not concerned to know how they are come by.' Nay, but you are; otherwise you are partaker with a thief, and are not a jot honestier than he. But you know that they are not honestly come by; you know they are procured by means nothing near so innocent as picking pockets, house-breaking, or robbery upon the highway. You know they are procured by a deliberate species of more complicated villainy, of fraud, robbery and murder, than was ever practised by Mahommedans or Pagans.

"Perhaps you will say,—'I do not buy any

slaves ; I only use those left me by my father.' But is that enough to satisfy your conscience ? Had your father have you, has any man living a right to use another as a slave ? It cannot be, even setting revelation aside.

“ *The blood of thy brother crieth against thee from the earth.* Oh, whatever it costs, put a stop to its cry, before it be too late ; *instantly*, at any price, were it the half of your goods ; deliver thyself from *blood-guiltiness*. Thy hands, thy bed, thy furniture, thy house and thy lands, at present, are stained with BLOOD.”

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

The marriage of one man with one woman was the original institution of the Creator, and by the decisions of Christ, polygamy, or more wives than one, and divorces, are utterly incompatible with the law of God. What usage has slavery introduced and perpetuated ? **PROMISCUOUS CONCUBINAGE.**

This is the distinguishing characteristic of slavery. Slavery then is poisoning the fountain of good morals in this land, and producing a reckless disregard of all laws, human and divine.

Slave laws do not recognise marriages among slaves, so as to clothe them with the rights and immunities, which are given to this state, among white citizens. The holder of either party may, the next day, or hour, break up the connexion in any way he pleases. In fact, these connexions have no protection, and are so often broken up

by sales, and transfers, and removals, that they are, by the slaves, usually called "taking up together."

The female slaves are entirely dependent on their masters, and subject to insult from any white man. The overseers are not generally married men. They are often refused employment, simply because they are married. Married men meet with general discouragement from the planters. If the slave is taught morality, as he rarely is, he can point to his master and say, "You tell me to do so and so, but what do you do yourself?"

Slaveholders often prohibit their slaves from marrying. "I will not allow you to get married, you may live as I am living myself." And slaves often will not marry, when permitted, because they cannot endure to have their wedded wives flogged.

J. Ballie, Esq. testified, before a committee of the House of Lords, that he could not name one friend, or any overseer or other person, in the West Indies who did not keep a black or colored mistress. Slavery is every where the same as to this matter. According to the testimony of Rev. James A. Thome of Ky., "The slave states are Sodoms, and almost every kitchen is a brothel." And the "Western Luminary," printed at Lexington, Ky., stated the same, in substance, the very day Mr. Thome made the remark in a speech in New York.

In Jamaica, it was stated, that three-fourths of the adults are united in giving honor to seduction and impurity, over "marriage" and the "bed undefiled." The extent of the influence on the tone of morals, can hardly be estimated; but we may fairly attribute to it the almost total absence of any thing like morality among the people. Sabbath-breaking, blasphemy, infidelity, alienation from God, extortion, covetousness, stripes, contentions, cruelties, pervade the length and breadth of the land: for the habitual and wilful breach of one of God's laws, especially of the seventh commandment, overturns the barrier of the whole.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

"This commandment is," says Dr. Scott, "the law of love in respect of *property*." "The spirit of it requires a disposition to do to *all* others, in respect of worldly property, as we would that they should do unto us." It pre-supposes and assumes the right of every man to his own powers, and their product. Slavery denies the right, and robs of both. This commandment forbids the taking of *any*, even the least part of that which belongs to another. Slavery takes away the *whole*.

In the larger catechism of the Presbyterian Church, the question is asked, "What are the sins forbidden in the eighth commandment? And *man-stealing* is mentioned as one. "To steal a man," says Grotius, "is the *highest kind of*

theft." Who are stealers of men? those foreign pirates that kidnap or buy men on the coast of Africa, or those domestic pirates that kidnap or buy men in America? I answer BOTH. "*Stealers of men,*" says the same learned writer, "*are all those who bring off slaves or freemen, and KEEP, SELL, or BUY them.*"

"Men-stealers," observes Dr. Scott, "are inserted among those daring criminals, against whom the law of God directed its curses. These kidnapped men to sell them for slaves; and this practice seems inseparable from the other iniquities and oppressions of slavery; nor can a slave-dealer keep free from this criminality, if '*the receiver be AS BAD AS THE THIEF.*'"

God says, "*thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him.*" Lev. xix, 13. Again,— "*Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. . . Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.*" James v, 1, 4. And again, "*Wo unto him that useth his neighbor's service without wages.*" Jer. xxii, 13. And, "*he that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, HE SHALL SURELY BE PUT TO DEATH.*" Ex. xxi, 16.

IX. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*

The ninth commandment is the law of love,

as it respects our neighbor's *reputation*. And God has here thrown a barrier around *man's character*, to protect it from injury. Yet slavery, not only slanders the characters of its victims, but belies the whole colored race. It also by denying self-evident truths in philosophy, and the plain declarations of the Bible, slanders wise men, and also what is more, the all-wise God.

But slavery gives the lie to the sages who signed the Declaration of Independence, by declaring that the negro has no right to "liberty" and the "pursuit of happiness."

God declares that he has made of "ONE BLOOD all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth," but slavery denies that the colored man is naturally equal to the whites. God asserts that he is "*no respecter of persons*," but slavery pretends that the negro was intended by his maker to be a slave to the rest of the world.

Slavery strips man of his rights, ranks him with brutes, and then pleads his *native inferiority*. It does more, it lays its iron grasp upon the immortal mind, crushes its opening faculties, and then wickedly attempts to apologise for the outrage by pleading the colored man's unfitness for freedom, his native inferiority, and his subjection to slavery by the common Father of all mankind. What is this but *bearing false witness* against both man and God?

X. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his*

man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.

This prohibition is placed as the fence around all the rest of the commandments. The others prohibit the outward gross crime, but this, in the most forcible language, prohibits so much as the *desire or hankering* after what belongs to others. If we may not covet any thing that is our neighbor's how canst thou pretend to be the *owner* of thy neighbor himself? "Thou shalt not covet," says God, and the slaveholder, in the face of the prohibition, holds ten, fifty, a hundred, or a thousand of his *neighbors* as mere "chattels personal," under an overseer whose business it is to get out of them as much work as he can, *without paying for it.* Every hour of the slave's labor is coveted, every blow he strikes is coveted; if it were not so, he would be free. Here then we see that the tenth commandment cuts up the whole system of American slavery, root and branch.

Servants, it is argued, were enumerated in the inventory of property. Hence it is inferred that servants were the property of their masters. They were included among houses, oxen, asses, &c. But if that makes them property, it proves also that *wives* were property.

The slaveholder covets his neighbor's liberty, and withholds it from him; he covets his neighbor's services, and compels him to work without wages; he covets his neighbor's wife, sells her

into the hands of another, or subjects her to insult, to gratify his lust; he covets his neighbor's children, and hence he *enslaves*, and sometimes sells them and tears them from their parents' embrace for ever. Thus man tramples upon the rights of his fellow-men, in contempt of the law of God, and practises the sin of IDOLATRY,* "*for which thing's sake,*" says the apostle, "*the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.*"

The *eighth* and *tenth* commandments, were there no others, brand slavery as a sin, and deal death to the system. The *eighth* forbids the taking away, and the *tenth* adds, *Thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbor's;*" thus guarding every man's right to himself and his property, by making not only the actual *taking away* a sin, but even that state of mind which would *tempt* to such an act.

Reader! Forget not the awful sanctions that God has thrown around His moral law; remember that by them you will be judged at the bar of Jesus Christ; and devoutly pray, "Lord have mercy upon us, and write all these thy laws upon our hearts."

* "And covetousness, which is idolatry." Col. iii, 5

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