

*W. P. Singley* No. 4. 9.  
*@ Nathan Centre*  
*846-55, Medina Co.*  
**S L A V E R Y**

AND THE

**B I B L E .**

---

BY REV. ENOCH POND, D. D.

---

PUBLISHED BY THE  
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY, BOSTON.  
28 CORNHILL.

## THE BIBLE AGAINST OPPRESSION.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.—Gen. i. 27.

Now, therefore, behold the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me, and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.—Ex. iii. 9, 10.

Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.—Ex. xxiii. 9.

Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which has escaped from his master unto thee; he shall dwell with thee; even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him.—Deut. xxiii. 15, 16.

Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates; at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.—Deut. xxiv. 14, 15.

The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. When he maketh inquisition for blood he remembereth them; he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.—Psalm ix. 9, 12.

For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.—Psalm xii. 5.

W. H. C. Sewall  
 Boston  
 1890-1  
 J. C.

## SLAVERY AND THE BIBLE.

---

THE more recent discussions respecting slavery have turned largely, if not chiefly, on the question: how does the Bible treat it? By one class, the Bible is appealed to in justification of slavery; by another, in condemnation of it; and the question seems yet unsettled, what ground the inspired writers designed to take on the subject. It becomes us, therefore, as believers and lovers of the Bible, to look carefully into this matter, and endeavor to satisfy ourselves respecting it.

*First.*—Most of the writers of our sacred books were familiar with various forms of servitude and oppression; which, in popular language, we now denominate slavery. Such slavery was in existence, and constituted a part of the social fabric long before any part of the Bible was written. We have proof of its existence in the families of the Patriarchs, hundreds of years before Moses was born. We have proof, from ancient monuments, of its existence in Egypt, long before the sojourn of the Israelites in that land. Indeed, the Israelites themselves, during the latter part of their sojourn in Egypt, were, in some sense, slaves. They were at least bond-men; and their bondage was exceedingly rigorous and oppressive.

And what has been said of Moses and the writers of the Old Testament, may with equal propriety be extended to those of the New. In the days of Paul, the Roman empire was little better than one great mart of slaves. The character of slavery, at that period, seems to have been various. In some instances, it was mild and favorable; in others, it

was barbarous and cruel, to the last degree. But whether mild or cruel, the Apostles understood it. They had traversed the greater part of the vast Roman empire; had mingled chiefly with the middling and lower classes of society; and had therefore become familiar with the operations and results of the system.

*Secondly.*—The writers of our sacred books, and more especially of the New Testament, do not often refer to slavery; but when they do, they always speak calmly and considerately. Their vocation led them to dwell, not so much upon the social and civil relations of men, as upon their spiritual relations; not so much upon their circumstances here, as upon their state and prospects for eternity. Their great object was to publish abroad the gospel of the grace of God, and rescue their perishing fellow men from the bondage and the curse of sin. They became “all things to all men,” so far as this could be done in fidelity to truth, if by any means they might save some. Still, they were not unmindful of what was passing around them in the world. As kind-hearted, benevolent men, they could not be. They felt for the woes and the miseries of earth, in which it was their lot so deeply to share. They refer to the existing forms and facts of slavery, with which they were so familiar. They speak of it in different ways and connections, but always, as before remarked, with calmness, with sobriety, with benevolence, with dignity; not in a way to give needless offence, but rather to insure confidence and respect.

*Thirdly.*—The Bible nowhere represents slavery as a Divine institution. By some of the more recent advocates of the system, this pretence is seriously made. They put slavery on the same footing with the Sabbath and civil government, and speak of it confidently as an institution of God. But we know not on what grounds such pretensions are set up. We know when the Sabbath was instituted. We know with what strictness and solemnity its observance is enjoined. Civil government, too, is expressly spoken of as an ordinance

of God. Rom. xiii. 1. But where do we find such language used in regard to slavery? *Where?* Shall we be referred to some of the laws of Moses, which were designed to regulate and restrict servitude among the Hebrews? We might prove in this way, just as well, that polygamy and divorce are Divine institutions; since there are laws in the Hebrew code designed to regulate and restrict these great and acknowledged evils, until their removal could be peacefully effected. Until the advocates of slavery can point us to the chapter and verse in which their favorite institution is divinely established, we are safe in saying that there is no such chapter or verse in the Bible.

*Fourthly.*—The sacred writers nowhere *approve* of slavery, or give it their sanction. It has been affirmed by some writers, that if the Bible does not positively institute slavery, it does at least, approve of it, and sanction it. But where is the evidence of this? Where in the Scriptures shall we look for an approval or sanction of slavery? They never speak of it as a thing good and desirable in itself. They never represent it as a practice to be ratified, established, guarded, and perpetuated.

*Fifthly.*—So far from this, the Bible lays down truths and principles,—and they are the fundamental principles of our religion—which are *directly opposed to all slavery*; and which, when they shall come to have their full scope and development, will *banish slavery from the earth*. Among these truths and principles we may mention these: All men have a common origin, and constitute but one family; they are endowed by their Creator with like powers and faculties, and with equal natural rights; each is to love his neighbor as himself, and do to others as he would that they should do to him. No one can doubt that these and similar principles are enjoined in the Bible. They are not arbitrary, but result directly from the relations which human beings sustain to each other. They are fundamental principles in the religion of the gospel; and all must acknowledge that they are

irreconcilably hostile to every form and species of slavery. If no one of my fellow men can justly seize upon me, and violently take away my liberty and rights, then I have no right to treat him in this manner. If no one has a right to hold me in bondage against my will, and for his own benefit, I have no more right thus to hold him, or to hold any one else. If no one, in his senses, would wish to be made a slave himself, he has no right to enslave others: For we are to do to others, under all circumstances, as we would that they should do to us.

That principles such as these are directly and utterly opposed to slavery, and to every thing else which contravenes the legitimate exercise of human rights, there can be no doubt. And that these are among the fundamental principles of the Bible and the gospel, is equally clear.

*Sixthly.*—For the time being, until these principles might operate, and bring forth their legitimate results, we find the inspired writers *suffering* the existence of slavery; yet while suffering, *regulating* and *restraining* it. In this light are to be regarded all those enactments respecting slavery, found in the books of Moses; and all those passages in which reference is made to existing slavery, in the writings of the Apostles. Not one of these passages can properly be considered as giving or implying a Divine sanction to slavery. They merely *suffer* it, for the time being. And while they suffer it, impliedly rebuke it. They regulate and restrain it; checking it in its onward course of usurpation, and softening its harsher features, till the great principles of religion should have time to produce the requisite changes in the minds, the hearts, the customs, laws, and governments, of men; and thus prepare the way for the final extinction of slavery and oppression in the earth.

In this respect, the Bible regards and treats slavery just as it does some other great and acknowledged evils. Take, for example, that of *polygamy*. This, like slavery, is a very ancient vice. Of Lamech, only the seventh from Adam, it

is said that he “took unto him two wives.” Polygamy was practised more than a thousand years previous to the time of Moses. It was practised by the patriarchs of the Jewish nation, by their judges and kings. And now the question is one of great interest: *How does Moses regard and treat it?* It is an acknowledged evil and wrong,—a *very great wrong*; and yet the law-giver of Israel does not, at once, prohibit and abolish it; but, as in the case of slavery, he first lays down principles which are directly opposed to it, and which, in the end, must work its overthrow; and then, until these shall have time to do their work, he, by express statute, regulates and restrains it. “If a man takes him another wife,” beside the first, “her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.” In other words, he shall do as much for the comfort and support of the first wife, as though he had not taken a second.—Ex. xxi. 10. “If a man have two wives, one beloved, and the other hated, and they have borne him children, and if the first born son be hers that is hated, he may not make the son of the beloved first born, before the son of the hated, which is indeed the first born, but he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath.”—Deut. xxi. 15–17.

And so also in respect to indiscriminate *divorce*. Here was another evil which had grown up in the world, and had become common among the Israelites,—*the putting away of their wives* for insufficient cause. And we find the great lawgiver of Israel, or rather God speaking by him, treating it in the same manner as polygamy and slavery. For the time being he regulates and restrains it, while he records facts, lays down principles, and utters sentiments, which are in direct opposition to it, and must work its overthrow. See Matt. ii. 14–16.

We have the more confidence in thus speaking of divorce, because our Saviour has himself explained it. “Moses,

because of the hardness of your hearts, *suffered* you to put away your wives ; but from the beginning it was not so.”—Matt. xix. 8. With equal propriety, it might have been said of polygamy and slavery: “For the hardness of your hearts, Moses, for the time, *suffered* you to have more wives than one ; but from the beginning it was not so.” And “for the hardness of your hearts, Moses *suffered* you, for the time, and under certain restrictions and regulations, to hold slaves ; but from the beginning, it was not so.”

The manner in which the inspired writers aimed at the ultimate extinction of slavery, was very like that in which they sought to accomplish other great and needed changes. Not suddenly, and by positive enactment ; but gradually, by apostolic example and influence ; and by the evolving genius of the Christian faith ; so that little violence was done to existing prejudices ; and established customs were not rudely broken up.

“No man,” says our Saviour, “putteth a new piece of cloth upon an old garment ; for that which is put in to fill it up, taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles ; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish. But they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.”—Matt. ix. 16, 17. These teachings of our Saviour, however little they may comport with the views of many in our day, are *full of heavenly wisdom and goodness* ; and in accordance with them, *his* plans of reform and change were uniformly taken. He sought to cleanse the fountain, in order to purify the stream ; to remove carefully the roots of existing evils, than rudely to smite down the tree ; to cleanse the minds and hearts of men, and thus to reform their lives.

The two methods of reform here spoken of, are precisely those in regard to which Luther and Carolstadt differed at Wittemberg, in the time of the Reformation. Carolstadt was for violently tearing the pictures and images out of the



churches. They had no right to be there, and why should they be tolerated at all? But Luther, with all his impetuosity; reasoned differently. "If you tear the pictures from the churches before the minds of the people are prepared for their removal, they will replace them. Let us first get them out of men's minds and hearts, and then they will remove them from the churches of their own accord."

It is easy to see that Luther's plan of procedure in this matter was altogether the more wise and scriptural. It was more kind, gentle, persuasive, and abiding. It was less likely to excite prejudice, and inflict injury, and was altogether more consonant to the bland and benevolent spirit of the gospel.

*Seventhly.*—But while slavery was suffered by the sacred writers to remain for a season, until the principles of the gospel should have time to work its overthrow, and was by various Divine precepts, restrained and regulated, it is evident, from these regulating precepts, and from various other representations of Scripture, that it is an object, not of the favor of God, but of his *reprobation*. "He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, shall surely be put to death."—Ex. xxi. 16. Here is a virtual condemnation of nearly every form of slavery. The most of the slavery now existing in the world had its origin in stealing and selling men. And yet this was a capital offence, by the Jewish law. "Thou shall not deliver unto his master the servant that is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, in the place that he shall choose."—Deut. xxiii. 15. Here is another virtual condemnation of slavery. If slavery was a kind and benevolent institution, and entitled, as such, to the Divine favor and sanction, why should the fugitive be harbored and protected? Why should he not be restored, like the stray ox or ass, to his proper owner?

St. Paul's views of slavery are apparent in several passages of his writings. "Art thou called being a servant, care not for it. But if thou mayest be free, *use it rather*."

*Be not ye the servants of men.*”—1 Cor. vii. 21, 23. If slavery is a benevolent institution of heaven, why should the slave be taught to prefer freedom? And why should we not be the servants of men? “Masters, give unto your servants that which is *just and equal*; knowing that ye also have a master in heaven.”—Col. iv. 1. We have here, not only a direction to masters to treat their slaves justly, so long as the existing relation between them continues, but a clear intimation of something further than this. The precept looks to the *freedom* of the slave, so soon as freedom can be bestowed upon him in a way to be a blessing. How can the master give to his servant that which is just and equal, while he is using him and his unrequited labors for his own benefit.

There are other Scriptures bearing on this question, which are more decisive than any yet mentioned. “The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy. Yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. Therefore, have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath.”—Ezek. xxii. 29. “For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord. I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.”—Ps. xii. 5. “Is not this the fast that I have chosen; to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”—Is. lviii. 6. Strange, that any one can read Scriptures such as these,—so full of denunciation against every form of oppression and robbery, and especially the oppression of the poor and needy,—holding them in bondage, and laying upon them heavy burdens,—and still doubt that the teachings and influence of the Bible are in opposition to slavery.

It then appears that the inspired writers found slavery in existence, established by law, and deeply rooted in the customs and institutions of society; that while they occasionally

refer to it, they neither instituted, approved, nor sanctioned it; that so far from this, they inculcated truths and principles which are directly opposed to it, and which when consistently received must work its overthrow; that they intentionally left these principles to operate, and produce their legitimate results; that, in the meantime they treated slavery just as they treated some other acknowledged evils in society. We find them suffering, regulating, restraining it; yet with clear intimations lying on the very face of the regulating precepts, and of other Scriptures, that slavery was a disallowed institution,—one having no claim to the Divine sanction and favor. Such, so far as can be learned from the Bible, and the whole Bible, was *the view* which the sacred writers took of slavery; and such their course of teaching and action in regard to it.

Nor could the Apostles, situated as they were, consistently have taken any other course. They had no hand in making the laws by which the Roman slavery was established; nor could they, by any direct influence, repeal or modify them. The Christian master could release only such portion of his slaves as the laws permitted. Nor could he go to any other country and there release them; for the whole civilized world was under the same dominion. And if he set them free, contrary to law, they were liable to be subjected again to a bondage more severe than that from which they had been delivered. Under these circumstances, what should the Apostles do, but *aim at a change in the public mind*; inculcate *principles* which should satisfy the whole people that slavery was wrong; and induce them, under a sense of the wrong, to abandon it? Had the first preachers of the gospel pursued a different course; had they insisted on the immediate duty of masters to liberate their slaves, while both masters and slaves were ignorant of the principles on which such exhortations were founded; the probable result would have been insurrections, and a servile war, which must have terminated in the destruction of those engaged in it, or in

rendering their condition vastly worse than it was before. Whereas the result of the method adopted by the Apostles was just the opposite of this. By inculcating upon masters the mild and humanizing truths of Christianity; by enforcing the great law of love in its bearings upon the relations of social life; the minds of all concerned were prepared for a change. By the prevalence of Christianity through the Roman empire, the condition of the slaves was first meliorated; and after a few centuries the cruel system was overthrown. In the language of the late Prof. B. B. Edwards, "Christianity did very much towards abolishing slavery in the Roman empire. It effected a glorious triumph, in this respect, in almost every part of the Imperial dominions. There was no royal edict which crushed slavery at once; but its contrariety to the New Testament was gradually seen and acknowledged. Clergymen pleaded for the oppressed, and often succeeded in vindicating their rights. The code of slave law was by degrees ameliorated; until, in the sixth century, Justinian well nigh completed the reform."

Under the government of the barbarians, who subverted the Western Roman empire, slavery was again established; and in such a form, that servitude became the natural condition of nearly all, except the monarchs and their barons. Here then Christianity had another work of mercy brought to her hand; and she performed it nobly. Wherever her voice could be heard, the poor serf and peasant were not forgotten. The bishop was the constituted protector of slaves in his diocese. All cotemporary and subsequent history conspires to attribute the gradual abolition of this oppressive system to the effectual aid of Christianity."

Negro-slavery, as carried on by Christian nations, is of comparatively modern date. It was commenced by the Portuguese, in the latter part of the fifteenth century. But since that period, it has had a cruel and disastrous reign. It has been participated in, more or less, by nearly all the

civilized nations of the earth; by ours, alas! among the rest. In some of its aspects, particularly in the manner of acquiring and transporting slaves, it is more terrible than perhaps any of the older forms of slavery. Is it not fully time, then, that the power of Christianity, which has done so much for the abolition of slavery at other periods, should be brought to bear effectually upon this last and most revolting system? It is certain that slavery cannot be perpetually tolerated. In face of a fully exhibited and faithfully applied Christianity, it must ere long disappear. And is it not time that the work were earnestly undertaken?

We speak of the present as an era of light. In comparison with other ages, it undoubtedly is so. Under the dispensation of the Spirit, Christianity is now making, and is about to make, its last and most glorious development. The quickened hearts of God's people are beginning to feel,—for they cannot help it,—that a system so palpably hostile to the genius and spirit of the gospel *must be wrong*; that God abhors it, and that men ought to repent of it, and put it away.

## H Y M N .

O Lord! our eyes have waited long,  
But now a little cloud appears,  
Spreading and swelling as it glides  
Onward into the coming years.

Bright cloud of Liberty! full soon  
Far stretching from the ocean strand,  
Thy glorious folds shall spread abroad,  
Encircling our beloved land.

Like that sweet rain on Judah's hills,  
The glorious boon of love shall fall,  
And our bound millions shall arise  
As at the angel's trumpet call.

Then shall a shout of joy go up,  
The wild glad cry of freedom, come  
From hearts long crushed by cruel hands,  
And songs from lips long sealed and dumb.

And every bondsman's chain be broke,  
And every soul that moves abroad  
In this wide realm, shall know and feel  
The blessed liberty of God.

J. H. BRYANT.

He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.—Psalm lxxii. 4.

The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.—Psalm ciii. 6.

Deliver me from the oppression of man ; so will I keep thy precepts.—Psalm cxix. 134.

Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.—Prov. iii. 31.

He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker ; but he that honoreth him hath mercy on the poor.—Prov. xiv. 31.

Rob not the poor, because he is poor, neither oppress the afflicted in the gate ; for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.—Prov. xxii. 22, 23.

So I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun ; and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter ; and on the side of their oppressors there was power ; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive.—Eccles. iv. 1, 2.

If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter ; for he that is higher than the highest regardeth ; and there be higher than they.—Eccles. v. 8.

Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad ; and a gift destroyeth the heart.—Eccles. vii. 7.

Wash ye, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.—Isa. i. 16, 17.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.—Isa. v. 7.

Is he not *Man*, though knowledge never shed  
Her quickening beams on his neglected head?  
Is he not *Man*, though sweet religion's voice  
Ne'er made the mourner in his God rejoice?  
Is he not *Man*, by sin and suffering tried?  
Is he not *Man* for whom the Saviour died?  
Belie the Negro's powers! in headlong will,  
Christian, *thy* brother thou shall prove him still.  
Belie his virtues! since his wrongs began  
His follies and his crimes have stamp't him Man.

*Montgomery's West Indies.*

My ear is pained,  
My soul is sick, with every day's report  
Of wrong and outrage, with which earth is filled.  
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart;  
It does not feel for man; the natural bond  
Of brotherhood is severed as the flax  
That falls asunder at the touch of fire.  
He finds his fellow guilty of a skin  
Not colored like his own; and having power  
To enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause,  
Dooms and devotes him as a lawful prey.  
I would not have a slave to till my ground,  
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,  
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth  
That sinews bought and sold, have ever earned.  
No; dear as freedom is, and in my heart's  
Just estimation prized above all price,  
I had much rather be myself the slave,  
And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him.

*Cowper's Task.*