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THE LAW AND THE TESTIMONY CONCERN-
ING SLAVERY.

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“Ye have caused many to stumble at the Law.”

MALACHI ii: 8.

I. INTRODUCTION.—DEFINITION AND APPLICATION OF TERMS.

In these pages we seek a solution of the inquiry: *Does the Bible give any warrant or allowance to chattel Slavery?* We design the plainest possible exposition of Scriptural truths to the common mind, with a faithful appeal to the reader's mind and conscience—that other universal law which God has written in the human heart, a law to which he ever appeals throughout the sacred volume.

We will assume, with the concurrence of the reader:

1. That the Bible is of Divine, and hence, of supreme authority concerning the law and government of God; and also concerning all the rights, and duties, and sins of men, and of all laws made by them, in all the relations of the present life.

2. That between these two laws of God—revelation and common or natural law, as originally written on the heart of man—there is, in fact, entire harmony.

3. That if on any subject there is, owing to our fallen, sinful state, an apparent conflict between them, we should re-examine our interpretation of Scripture, on the one hand, and scrutinize our hearts on the other; ever bearing in mind that God's word must be the paramount standard.

4. That an appeal to either law, on a practical question in morals, will secure a reliable decision; and a concurrent decision, faithfully made from both, makes a matter doubly sure.

5. That if God has said anything in the Bible in approbation of Slavery—a matter confessedly injurious in many ways—he

must have "used great plainness of speech," so that "he that runs may read" the fact.

It is lamentably true, that the popular mind is extremely unsettled concerning the moral aspects of slavery. Conflicting opinions and dogmas prevail, embracing every conceivable principle, from utter condemnation to complete justification by the oracles of God. The inquiry before us, therefore, is difficult of solution; but it would be wrong to say we can not find the truth, if we are willing to come to the light.

But we can not judge correctly of the *moral character* of Slavery, till we first know *what chattel Slavery really is*. And here, again, multitudes have false, confused, or defective views of the system or practice. They have not studied the subject; are misguided by pro-slavery perversions of language; and, though possibly "teachers of the law," actually "understand not what they say, nor whereof they affirm" on the momentous subject.

At the outset, therefore, we attempt a definition of a few principal terms which often occur in our discussions.

A *Slave* is a human being, who is seized, held, subjugated, controlled, and used by another human being as a chattel, a thing, a beast, the property of his "owner, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever."

A *Slaveholder* is one who thus seizes, holds, subjugates, controls, and uses a human being as his property.

Slavery is the state or condition of persons so held as property. Or, to speak more definitely,

Chattel Slavery is the condition of human beings converted into chattels and used as such; including their labors, sufferings, disabilities, and liabilities appropriate to that condition, according to the customs of slaveholders, and the laws of slaveholding communities.

Slaveholding is the *practice*, in which every slaveholder indulges, of taking and using human beings as property. In every case there are two parties concerned and connected, the enslaver and the enslaved; a man and a chattel. The former is alone the free, acting, responsible party in forming and continuing the connection. It is absurd to hold the slave responsible for being

in that condition, seeing he is there by compulsion. In correct language, therefore, *slaveholding* is the subject of our inquiry, and not the state or condition of slaves. Does God sanction the *practice* of slaveholders?

Again, the terms *servant*, *servitude*, and *service*, are often injuriously misapplied on this subject. True, slaves are desired for their unrequited labor, and are "made to serve with rigor." But the word *servant* belongs to children, apprentices, hired laborers, citizens of the republic, members of the Christian brotherhood, ministers of the Gospel, the elect angels, and Christ, the Son of the Father. The name is too good to be applied to our bondmen. It does not distinguish or designate the class, which is anomalous and peculiar. They are driven to service like bullocks subdued to the yoke, and *slave* is their descriptive name. So in legal documents, slaveholders and their abettors affect to claim and secure slaves as "persons held to service or labor under the laws of a state," when it is conceded that slaves are not so held, and when it is obvious that a *chattel* can not be a "*person*," or a person an article of property. But thus it is that by legal fictions they hold fast their vassals.

Servitude is not always Slavery. It is the state or condition of persons, often tribes or nations, who are required to be subject to some superior power. The authority of the rulers may be either legitimate or usurped; their demands just or unjust. But if the subject party is not made *the property* of the higher power, the servitude is not Slavery. The subjects may be fearfully oppressed, but they are not slaves. Their lords may be tyrants, but they are not slaveholders. Let it be remembered, that the compulsory servitude of our African slaves is chattel Slavery. We shall find, in the Bible, an account of a very different servitude.

We also, unwarily, give strength to oppression and injustice, by conceding that Slavery is *an institution*, as the South arrogantly claims; an institution, legal, patriarchal, Scriptural, peculiar, and at length Divine. Being established "for better or for worse," it must be held as inviolable and unassailable as the Federal Government, or the Union of the states. But slaveholding is simply a *practice*, and not an *institution*. It is not established

or organized as such in the Union, or any State, or any Church; by any authority, real or pretended, legitimate or usurped.

We also err exceedingly by regarding Slavery as a *system*, which slaveholders seem to submit to, as a power above them; a mighty automaton, which compels them to do all the mischief, while they are but its "unwilling" servants. But "the system" is a nondescript, a fiction of the imagination. Slaveholders are, indeed, harmonious in spirit and principle, systematic and mutually helpful in their practices, from Maryland to Texas. Church and State, we admit, protect them in their doings. But this "combination of parts into a whole" is effected solely by the voluntary action of individual slaveholders. Let them relinquish their "*practices*," and both "the system" and "the institution" would vanish "like a dream when man awaketh." But no power can destroy or remove either, while the practices are suffered to continue. First and last, therefore, we have to deal with *slaveholding, the practice of individuals*.

II. THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SLAVEHOLDING.—THE ASSUMED PREROGATIVES OF THE SLAVEHOLDER.

EVERY slaveholder claims the right,

1. To own and use human beings as his property, and dispose of them at his pleasure, independently of their will; including all transfers and sales, and the slave-trade, both domestic and foreign.

2. To own and use the children of his female slaves, by his ownership of their mother.

3. To extort service or labor from his slaves without a contract and without recompense.

4. To subject them to his absolute command and control, as to all their relations, and actions, and interests; and

5. To secure his possession and power by holding his vassals accountable to himself alone, as lawgiver, and judge, and executor of his own sovereign decrees; which leads him to the adoption of measures which are fearfully oppressive. For,

a. He compels the annihilation of the marriage relation and the family state.

b. He denies them the knowledge of God their Savior, or imparts it in kind and quantity according to his own sovereign will.

c. He denies them the power of acquiring property, of making contracts, of enjoying any of the "inalienable rights" of man, excepting only the right *to live—for their "masters."*

d. The exercise of such absolute power induces the infliction of cruelties, at the thought of which humanity shudders; inso-much that candid slaveholders have said, "cruelty is the rule, kindness the exception."

6. The slaveholder also claims, that his prerogatives and powers are secured to him, if not granted, by the laws of the state and the nation.

Differences of administration there are, beyond question, as among the absolute monarchs of larger empires. Yet, within his own domain, every actual slave-owner is a self-constituted autocrat, both in principle and practice; not exerting all his assumed powers, every day, to the fullest extent; but holding them in reserve with a desperate grasp, for use when occasions require. Call in question any of these assumed rights or prerogatives, and the mildest master will reply, "It is lawful for me to do what I will with my own."

From this statement of the position and powers of the slaveholder, the condition of the slaves can be readily apprehended; their subjugation, sufferings, disabilities, and hopeless bondage. But the full bitterness of their cup none can know but they that drink it.

III. THE RELATION BETWEEN MASTER AND SLAVE.

THERE is much disputation on the question, whether this relation is in itself wrong or sinful. To decide upon its moral character we need first to consider well what the relation is; how, by whom, and for what purpose it is formed and sustained; and how it compares with other human relations. We do not inquire concerning the relations of man to the brutes and inanimate things, nor of his peculiar relations to Jehovah, but of his relations to one or more of his own race.

Those which we term natural relations are formed by God, our Maker, at our birth. Each child is born into two human relations or connections; one with his parents, one with the whole family of man. In the former, creation, nature, providence, and the Divine law, all unite in giving parental affection and authority to the parents, filial love and obedience to the child. In the latter, nature and revelation connect the new comer in love and duty to the universal brotherhood, and every cotemporary brother to him. These relations are formed without the consent or knowledge of the coming man. But if he consent to live, and act, and enjoy his rights on earth, he must ever stand in his relations, and discharge the appropriate duties. In a qualified sense, also, the connection of the child and the future man with civil government is a natural relation, formed originally without his choice. His birth places him under some "power ordained of God," to which he owes allegiance, from which he is entitled to protection under a righteous administration.

Very many human relations are formed by the free consent and mutual agreement of parties. These, if formed for a right purpose, and according to God's law, are of a moral character, involving mutual rights and reciprocal duties.

Of the voluntary relations which are right, being sanctioned by the word of God, the conjugal is the chief. This relation is conformable to nature, but is formed only by mutual contract, at a mature age. It is regulated by express law, given at the creation, by which our Maker "setteth the solitary in families" throughout all the earth. Many other voluntary relations are formed among men, which God approves and regulates; but we need not specify them here.

But voluntary connections for wicked purposes, or employing unlawful means, are doubly wicked. The Jews who "banded together to kill Paul" were related to each other as guilty conspirators; and to him, as his intended murderers. Voluntary partners in iniquity will be utterly confounded when they stand *together* before the judgment-seat.

Individuals, also, form connections with others by their own purpose and act alone, without previous concurrence; and thus sustain relations to them in consequence. The party so doing

is answerable for the moral character of the relation, whether it be good or bad. The benefactor of the poor and needy, of the fatherless and the widow, stands in a just and blessed relation to them, even though they know him not. On the contrary, the swindler, the thief, the seducer, forms a relation to his victim which he will carry into eternity, unless he repent and make all possible restitution. So the murderer, restitution being impossible, will meet his murdered brother as a swift witness against him before their final Judge.

Now the relation in question is not formed by the free, mutual consent of the parties; and has nothing of reciprocity, either in its origin or continuance. Every slave in the Union is taken by might alone; and is held by force, without contract and without recompense.

This is not a natural relation. Natural birth did not make those who were born in Africa slaves in this country. They were stolen, transported, and sold to Americans. Their descendants, nearly all now in bondage, are natives here; and it is common to say, "they are born slaves." So the "owner" of the enslaved mother takes her children as his vendible property, precisely as he does his calves and colts. He does this by his own sovereign will, according to custom and law in slaveholding states. But is the child "born a slave?" To assert it is false and absurd. It comes into the world a human being, not a beast. Its natural relation as an infant is to its actual parents, not to the mother's owner. But he, with ruthless hand, snatches it from their embrace, forbids their being its owners and guardians, and converts it into a chattel—a slave. Nay more, he may be himself the father—a frequent occurrence—and the child is at once put out of all its natural relations to human beings. Should he place it among the children by his married wife, he would lose caste among his fellows, in everlasting disgrace.

Thus the relation in question is formed and continued. It is commenced by the power and sovereign will of the individual slaveholder, "for the sake of gain," or property, with the express and sole purpose of holding and using that possession, that human chattel, without restraint or limit. And while he continues his practice, he prolongs the relation. The relation and

the practice, therefore, have the same moral character; both are right, or both are wicked. One who voluntarily stands in the relation of a slaveholder must be regarded as sanctioning the principles, and doing the deeds of a slaveholder.

It is also a solemn consideration, that the most lenient slaveholder sustains very intimate relations to all engaged in *the traffic* in all its forms; closely allied to slave-traders, "soul-drivers," slave-breeders, and kidnappers, at home and abroad; confederates all, one in principle, doing essentially the same work.

Have these relations any warrant or allowance in the sacred volume?

IV. SERVITUDE AMONG THE HEBREWS NOT SLAVERY.

SLAVEHOLDERS claim that Moses either established or regulated Slavery among the Hebrews, in the land of promise; and that God, therefore, allows it in the United States. One sufficient reply to this claim is, that that servitude was essentially different from chattel Slavery. This has been clearly shown of late years by able writers;* and we need give the point only a brief notice here.

God did permit the Hebrews to employ servants of two classes: (1.) Of their Hebrew brethren; and (2.) Of their heathen neighbors. The former were called "hired servants," the latter, "bondmen and bondmaids."

1. *Of Hebrew servants* we remark, (see Exodus xxi:) 1. Servants were obtained by contract, or mutual agreement. 2. The buyer procured service, not property in man; and the purchase-money was compensation for labor, not the price of "the bodies and souls of men." 3. The rights of the servants were carefully secured and guarded by law. 4. Their families were received and supported by their employers. 5. Every Hebrew servant went "free for nothing in the seventh year" of his servitude, if he chose; not "empty," but "furnished liberally," out of his employer's flock, and floor, and wine-press. (Deut. xv: 12-15.) 6. If a servant, loving his master, refused to leave in the seventh year, "the judges" declared his time of service prolonged; but

* T. D. Weld, W. Goodell, G. B. Cheever, and writers in antislavery periodicals.

even he must go out in "the year of jubilee." (Ex. xxi: 5, 6, compared with Deut. xxv: 39-42.) 7. If a master, at any time, maimed his servant in smiting him, he was required to free him at once.

No chattel Slavery there. The relation was formed by consent of the parties, and not by force; it was one of mutual interests and reciprocal obligations. The master was not a sovereign dictator; the servant was not—a *slave*.

2. *Of Heathen servants.* Read with attention Lev. xxv: 44-46: "Both thy bondmen and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they beget in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen forever."

Also Ex. xxi: 16: "He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death."

A comparison of these and other scriptures may help us to decide whether God allowed the Hebrews to *enslave* their heathen neighbors.

Professor Stuart, in a work intended as a *defense* of *Christian* slaveholders and slave-catchers, remarked: "Moses is not understood as giving *command*, but *permission*." And again: "We have here an unlimited liberty to *purchase* (not to steal) bondmen."

"Not to steal" men. No, surely. God would not allow Moses to enact one law against another in the same code. Neither would Moses so stultify himself. The above "permission" in Leviticus could not repeal, or annul, or subvert the express prohibitory law in Exodus. On the two enactments we remark:

1. The law in Exodus punishes with death each one of the three essential practices pertaining to our "system" of Slavery, viz: (a.) *the stealing* of a man; (b.) *the selling* (and of course *the buying*) of a stolen man, the traffic in all its forms; and (c.) *the holding* of a stolen man, or, restraining him of his liberty

for life, or for a day. Therefore, Moses did not grant "permission" to steal, or sell, or buy, or hold human beings as chattels.

2. To "buy" heathen, therefore, was to *procure their services, not their bodies and souls*. And this was to be done by voluntary *contract* with the persons themselves, or with their parents and guardians. Perhaps the heathen tribes might sell the services of vagabonds, criminals, and prisoners taken in war.

3. The "possession" of bondmen, thus granted to the Hebrews, could have been only a right to *possess or retain their services*; and the "inheritance" allowed to their children was nothing more.

4. The word "forever" must have applied only to *the perpetuity of this grant, and not to the hereditary and perpetual enslavement* of human beings, for which there is here no shadow of a warrant.

5. God expressly required that their servitude should *terminate in the year of jubilee*. Lev. xxv: 10: "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."

6. *The condition* of heathen "bondmen" among the Hebrews was *essentially different* from that of a slave. They were protected against oppression; were allowed to become religious proselytes; were entitled to a large portion of time for religious observances; were not stripped of their rights as men. If their yoke was made grievous they might flee, and every Hebrew dwelling was made for them a legal asylum. Deut. xxiii: 15, 16: "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is 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."

Such was the *servitude* of heathens among Hebrews which Moses allowed, having none of the essential attributes of chattel Slavery. Evidently it was a merciful Divine appointment, providing for their introduction to the knowledge of the true God, and their adoption into his family. Well might Albert Barnes say, "Sad is it that the mild and benignant enactments of the Hebrew legislator should ever be appealed to, to sanction the

wrongs and outrages of the poor African in this land of freedom; sad, that the ministers of religion should ever prostitute their high office to give countenance to such a system, by maintaining, or *even conceding for a moment*, that the Mosaic laws sanction the wrongs and oppressions existing in the United States." Yet, since Barnes thus wrote, our chattel Slavery is justified by the authority of Moses, and of Israel's God, with tenfold more frequency and urgency than before.

7. Even if God did allow the Hebrews to enslave the heathen, still we must maintain that *the grant was exceptional and temporary*. Exceptional, because it was contrary to natural and moral law; and contrary, as we have seen, to the specific statute which forbade man-stealing, slaveholding, and the traffic. It was temporary, because the bondage soon ceased.

8. If God did, by his special messenger, authorize his peculiar people, in the land of promise, to enslave a people whose measure of iniquity he declared to be full, he *does not thereby authorize Americans to enslave Africans*. He has sent no Moses to give us a commission and designate the people whom he would give us for a spoil.

9. If we justify our slaveholding by the law of Moses, then *we are solemnly bound to obey his entire code*. Let us, therefore, "take counsel, execute judgment, hide the outcasts, and bewray not him that wandereth." Let the fugitive slave, "hunted as a partridge upon the mountains" by human blood-hounds, no more cry, "In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul." Let the people set the trumpet to their mouth, and "proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof." Four times fifty years have already passed. A few hundreds of bondmen are multiplied to millions. Still their hopes of redemption perish, and their groaning goes up to Israel's God, while we refuse to obey his voice, and let the people go.

V. DIRECT BIBLE TESTIMONY.—PLEAS FOR SLAVEHOLDING EXAMINED.

DOES God in his word expressly sanction the practice? Does he tolerate it by evident implication? Does he treat it as a flagrant sin, but one not to be meddled with?

1. Did God appoint chattel Slavery, or render the practice of it unavoidable, *at the creation*; either (a.) by forming black bipeds, animals without souls, like apes or baboons; or (b.) by creating one class of human beings of an inferior race, fit only for servile drudges? Both these impious notions have been urged, to justify or excuse our arbitrary domination. The first plea is of late seldom avowed openly; the second is heard every hour of the day.

Many would, doubtless, be glad to believe that their slaves were beasts by nature, and not made such by their oppression. And truly they deny them the attributes and rights of men, and their law-books expressly style them "beasts," and "quadrupeds." Yet they hold their vassals responsible as moral agents, having understanding and conscience—subjects of rewards and punishments—and amenable to their "masters," if not to God. Thus slaveholders, who think or say that Africans are mere animals, refute their own plea, and are condemned out of their own mouths. Besides, if slaves of pure African blood are mere brutish animals, where shall we rank the mulattoes, and what is the moral character of the fathers who begat them?

But the advocates of Slavery now generally plead that Africans, though they are human beings, are *an inferior race, abject and servile, created* to be ever in subjection to whites, who are "the lords of creation." Now what facts and moral teachings do we learn from the Bible, either in support or refutation of both these pleas?*

We find that "God hath made *of one blood all nations* of men to dwell on all the face of the earth; that at creation he made *an immense distinction* between man and all animals; man only becoming "a living soul," whose "spirit returns to God who gave it;" while that "of the beast goeth downward to the earth;"

* Especially in Genesis and the eighth Psalm.

that he expressly *put animals in subjection* to mankind, to all men equally; that while tribes and nations differ from each other, physically and intellectually, yet *all are human beings*, and there is only *one human race*; that God *enjoined labor* on the whole race, "commanding that if any would not work, neither should he eat;" that he *gave no authority* to a superior class to rule over another with rigor in any way, but everywhere commends those of low degree to greater sympathy, protection, and generous care; that he expressly *appointed marriage, and the family state* in the beginning, and has sustained them by his word and his providence in all ages, guarding and defending them by prohibitions and penalties, and the judgments of his hand on transgressors.

Manifestly, therefore, the slaveholder arrogates power which God never gave him, degrading his equal brethren to the condition of servile brutes; "working not at all," but extorting labor and service without recompense; taking away all rights which God gave to them as to himself; and abrogating the law of marriage, compelling all manner of sexual licentiousness. How unlike is the slaveholder among men to "the Maker of them all." Jehovah, "though he be high, yet hath respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off. . . . He ruleth by his power forever; his eyes behold the nations; let not the rebellious exalt themselves."

2. *Has slaveholding the sanction of precedent?*

Such is the pretense in legislative halls, and often in the assemblies of the saints. "Slavery has existed in all ages, and has become the established order of things, therefore we do no wrong, if we only mitigate its rigors." They plead the authority of Moses, and the example of those "good old patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," perverting the law of Moses, as we have seen; stigmatizing Abraham as a slaveholder, which he was not, and then justifying themselves by his example. They are not ashamed, moreover, to follow the pernicious ways of pagan Rome and other ungodly nations.

But does the Bible teach that men may innocently repeat the deeds of wicked men, and walk after the course and fashion of this sinful world? Are the iniquities of men recorded as

precedents for our imitation? Are they not written solely for our admonition and solemn warning? *Other* precedents are recorded also unto which we should give heed. God has been "known by the judgments that he executeth" in all ages; our righteous Judge, who declared in the holy mount, "I, Jehovah, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

3. *Is the practice sanctioned by the laws of Entailment or Inheritance?*

So they say, and hide their personal responsibility under cover of an inheritance—a curse though it be—which they can not throw off. Recreant Northerners, also, marrying fortunes in slaves, or otherwise becoming slaveholders, wipe their mouths and say, "We have done no wrong; the evil is entailed upon us; we can not help it."

Do they mean, by this, that the views, and spirit, and purpose of the slaveholder are usually transmitted to his children, and live and reign in him? We concede the fact, which is testified by Jefferson and numerous competent authorities. But the Bible does not teach that a child is blameless, who imbibes the spirit, and follows the guidance, and does the deeds of a sinning parent. What mean ye, that ye use this proverb in a Christian land, saying, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." As the statement of a fact, it is often true; as an excuse for sin, it is always false and mischievous.

Property, however, can be rightfully bequeathed and inherited. But human beings are not property. They can not be made such by stealing them, or vending, or holding, or giving, or bequeathing, or transferring, in any conceivable way. Now, man-stealing—a capital crime by the law of Moses—originated all the claim to his human chattels which any American slaveholder has ever had. This was clearly shown in the fourth chapter. And we need here only to remind the reader, that no man can convey to another what he does not possess. The father that bequeaths a stolen being as property, commits a great offense; the son who accepts and retains the bequest, hath even greater sin. O, that the sons and daughters of the South would say,

with the young man of Kentucky, "I am a slaveholder's son, and an heir prospectively of slave property; when I become a man, I'll see if this curse can be entailed on me." He did so; and the father released both his son and his human chattels from inglorious bonds.

4. *Can we claim for slaveholding a Providential Sanction?*

Many console themselves in the belief that Slavery, grievous as it is, occurs in the providence of God, and is overruled for good by him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. Providence brought the Africans here, and has thrown them upon us of the present generation, helpless and dependent. Emancipation is impossible. We can only wait in patience till the same wise Providence shall open some way yet unknown to men. Meantime, their condition is vastly improved in regard to civilization, knowledge, and the hope of heaven. Both they and we must be reconciled to the allotment of Providence.

Alas for the blindness that has happened to our offending Israel. Let God have all the praise of educing good from the evils that men do; but let not men do evil that good may come, and charge God foolishly. When will they cease to ascribe their own wicked deeds to the sovereign providence of God, and say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations?"

5. *Has slaveholding the prophetic sanction?*

Yes, say the commentators, North and South. "Cursed be Canaan," said Noah, by the spirit of prophecy, "a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren." And so it is unto this day. Africans, the children of the accursed, have ever been debased and oppressed; crushed by "their brethren," the party exalted to power and dominion. It is of the Lord that "the Scriptures can not be broken;" we are but fulfilling the declared will of God; "why doth he yet find fault?"

But to this plea there are three conclusive replies. (*a.*) The curse is misapplied to the Africans; for they, though often debased and servile, are not the descendants of Canaan, but of Ham by other sons whom Noah did not curse. These settled in the land of Canaan, or Palestine, and have ruled rather than served. (*b.*) The moral law, and not prophecy, determines the moral character of men's actions. They often fulfill predictions of

deeds, both evil and good, without a thought of "the word that went before concerning them." But whether they act with or without regard to Divine predictions, men have their reward according to their own works. The righteous and beneficent, fulfilling his word and will, become "workers together with him" who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." So kings and people may do against the Lord and his anointed the very things which "his hand and his counsel determined before to be done." Are the offenses of the wicked foretold? So also are the woes threatened. The "betrayers and murderers" of Christ exactly fulfilled the words of the prophets and his own. Were they, therefore, without blame? Nay, verily. Peter charges home upon them the guilt of crucifying the Lord of Glory; "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain." (c.) Besides, if God had expressly predicted the enslavement of Africans, where has he called or commissioned Anglo-Americans to do that work of death and destruction? And who can desire to receive such a charge? Who would not rather love to fulfill the promises of grace and salvation to every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation?

6. *Is the plea of necessity valid?*

Slaveholders plead the necessity of slave labor, because whites can not work in a hot climate; of severe discipline, because no work or subjection can be secured without it; of withholding wages, for they can not afford to pay; of keeping slaves ignorant, lest they learn the way to freedom; of refusing emancipation, lest they turn and kill their masters; of forbidding marriage and the family relation, lest the claims of husbands, wives, and parents should utterly subvert and destroy their own authority and possession. Now, all these and many more necessities do exist, if slaveholding must be and continue. But what must a practice be, which requires this plea for its defense?

"Thus spake the fiend,
And with necessity, the tyrant's plea,
Excused the devilish deed."

In the management of his moral government, God never necessitates the commission of sin. But if men sell themselves as

servants of unrighteousness, "drawing iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-ropes," God will (*it is a necessity of his moral nature*) give them to "eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

7. *Does any Divine law sanction slaveholding?* How do we read the *Laws of Love, of Righteousness, of the Social Relations, of Dominion and Subjection, of Recompense, of Restitution, and of Retribution?* Do any of these look with favor on the assumed prerogatives and practices of the slaveholder?

(1.) *The Law of Love*—the second great commandment, like unto the first, on which hang all the law and the prophets—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The "owner" loves his servant *as a slave*; but surely not as an equal human being, a neighbor, a brother; for "love worketh no ill to one's neighbor." Love would not take from a brother all the rights of man.

(2.) *The Law of Righteousness*, which is identical with that of Love; the one requiring right affections, the other right conduct, so that right treatment of a brother is the fruit and evidence of cordial love to him. But if the conduct be unjust and injurious, how can love reign in the heart? "Whatsoever ye would that men should *do* to you, *do* ye even so to them." Would the slaveholder agree that his slaves should *do to him* as he has long *done to them*? The man does not live who would so say, in the fear of God.

(3.) *The Law concerning the Social Relations*; the revealed will of God concerning the rights and duties in the relations which God either sanctions or forbids. We have seen that the slaveholder thrusts himself into an unnatural and sinful relation to his brethren; and thus corrupts or destroys *their* relations also, that he may preserve his own interests and power. How can he answer for this when he stands with them at the judgment-seat?

(4.) *The Law of Dominion and Subjection*. God has appointed among men a right to command, and an obligation to obey. But he has nowhere conferred on any erring mortal arbitrary, absolute, irresponsible power; such as every slaveholder claims, and also exercises at his own sovereign will. We can easily see and condemn the usurpation of the pope, and other absolute mon-

archs. The former, according to a Catholic writer, exercises a government "fundamentally absolute, in which the legislative, judicial, and executive powers are united, compounded, and jumbled together in one and the same hand." Can it be that the "blessed and only Potentate" has authorized such despotism in this Christian land?

(5.) *The Law of Recompense.* Universal conscience agrees with the Bible, that "the laborer is worthy of his hire—of his reward." The slaveholder gives no wages, and denies his vassals' right to receive. What he bestows more than bare sustenance, he regards as a generous gratuity. Thus he becomes an extortioner. The hire of his laborers crieth against him, and entereth into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. But now, though man ignores the doctrine of recompense, God will hold it in everlasting remembrance. He will "lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." He will "recompense tribulation to them that trouble" the innocent and helpless; "rest to them who are troubled" by the extortioner and the oppressor.

(6.) *The Law of Restitution* runs through the Bible, and is acknowledged in all the earth. Whatever one has taken away from another by treachery or violence, he is bound to restore, in full measure, if not fourfold; and as long as he refuses, he is a persistent robber and spoiler. If restitution is beyond his power, his iniquity may be confessed and forgiven; but he will account himself a debtor to his injured brother forever. But here are millions of people, robbed of all lawful possessions and all rights, and scarcely one in a thousand ever receives or knows restitution. "They are a people robbed and spoiled; all of them are snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses; they are for a prey, and *none delivereth*; for a spoil, and *none saith, RESTORE.*" And now, "Who among you will give ear to this?" It is the word of the Lord by Isaiah, (chap. xlii,) "who will hearken and hear for the time to come," and cease to "rob the poor and oppress the afflicted?" "For the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoil them." Let us then solemnly consider,

(7.) *The Law of Retribution.* "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;"

and falls upon the transgressors in this world or another, *without respect of persons*. The momentous inquiry in the case before us is, *which party is the guilty one* in the sight of God; *the enslaver, or the enslaved?* Those who had never injured us, or we who have stolen and enslaved them? Not they, but we, are perpetuating injustice, oppression, extortion, inhumanity, and the turning away of the needy from his right; crimes standing high on the catalogue of men's deeds of wickedness; crimes most fearfully denounced in God's word; crimes signally punished in all past ages, "when God arose to judgment to save all the meek of the earth." On us, therefore, will fearful judgment come (if repentance and restitution do not avert it) when God shall again say, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, *now* will I arise; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him; the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." O, that the long-suffering of God may be our salvation from the day of wrath.

(8.) *Does our Lord and Redeemer grant indulgence to the slaveholder?* How, when, where? By his Spirit, his example, his word, his sufferings endured for all, or by his power and dominion? He came to "preach deliverance to the captives, to heal the broken-hearted, to set at liberty them that are bruised." He died and rose, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." His own dominion over his willing people is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." They are all one in him; and he accounts good or evil done to the least of them as done to himself. This he will make manifest to the assembled universe, "when he shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him," to "sever the wicked from among the just" forever.

Such is the character of our Lord and Redeemer, "God manifest in the flesh;" and "as he is, so are we (his devoted followers) in this world." But *Christian* slaveholders can "smite with the fist of wickedness" even their brethren in the Lord, "exact all their labors, bind heavy burdens, and refuse to let the people go" to serve him. "Is Christ, therefore, the minister of sin," as represented by his friends? Is he an oppressor, a tyrant, a cor-

rupter and destroyer of the souls for whom he died? God forbid.

O, that Christians would "cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord," and to cause the enemies of the cross of Christ "to blaspheme that worthy name by which they are called."

VI. THE LEGAL SANCTION CONSIDERED.

JUDGED by the principles and teachings of the Bible, we have learned that slaveholding is "a heinous crime; yea, an iniquity to be punished by the judges." But still its advocates contend, that "the laws of the land" may authorize and sanction it, by which it becomes a righteous and honorable practice. This is the avowed sentiment of nearly all individuals and parties who are in any way concerned in the administration of our civil government. Indeed, it is the almost universal opinion of our people, that "Slavery is the creature of law;" that in nearly half our states it is "a legal institution;" that the government and people of the Union are bound, by the public faith, and "the compromises of the Constitution," to respect and defend "the vested rights of slaveholders." And it must be conceded that our Government, in all its departments, *does practically sustain* the right of existing slaveholders to hold property in men; does place their conceded rights and interests on the same level with those of all other classes of citizens in the republic.

Thus the practice is in great measure taken out of the sphere of moral and religious questions, and made a matter of state policy or public necessity. So Christians and ministers of the Word leave the whole subject with Cæsar; and obey the laws of the state, however unjust.

But have the people of this land come to believe "the lowest lie of the infidel Hobbs," namely, that "the law of the land is the supreme rule of right?" Let us see. No man is higher authority in the case than Henry Clay; no other has had half his influence in shaping national legislation on the subject. Hear him, therefore: "I know there is a visionary dogma, which holds that negro slaves can not be the subject of property. I shall not dwell long on the speculative abstraction. That *is* property which the law

declares *to be* property. Two hundred years of legislation have sanctified and sanctioned negro slaves as property." Other men of vast influence in Church and State have been equally bold and explicit. When Seward referred legislators to a "higher law," which human laws can not annul, Daniel Webster could scout it as a specter, "hung up somewhere between the heavens and the earth." And Professor Stuart could write: "There is a higher law, they say. But I ask, who has discovered and determined such a law." Many eminent theologians have asserted to the same effect, warning men not to interfere with the decisions of the constituted authorities, even by protest or argument.

Thus it is claimed, that, when positive law sustains slaveholding, it is right politically; that such law gives the slaveholder authority, and clothes him with all the powers and prerogatives of an autocrat; and that the simple right of holding men as property, includes, of necessity, the traffic in all its branches, and with all its horrors. Clay asserted this also; and it is well known, that the inter-state slave-trade is held to be as lawful as any other commerce. And although we have a law denouncing the foreign trade as piracy, no wonder it becomes a dead letter, while our legislation sustains the same abomination in every other form.

That civil government does, in fact, sustain slaveholders' rights, so called, is beyond question. It is so in all the slaveholding states. It is so, to a great extent, in the Federal Union. The statutes sanction the property claim, although statute law has never *originated* or *established* that claim in any one state. The power of the nation is summoned to deliver the fugitive to his "owner." The judicial tribunal delivers him up to his tormentors, saying, "the law allows it, and the court awards it." Thus the State or Government throws its shield of protection over the slaveholder, as the owner of men, securing to him his property, authority, and sovereign power. Thus it sustains several hundred thousands of extortioners and oppressors, under institutions based on the acknowledged equal rights of all men. A republican government, defying all despotic power, abjuring even the shadow of monarchy or aristocracy, submits itself to the most odious monopoly and usurpation on the face of the earth.

The great moral interests of the whole nation are brought under the control of a very small minority of the people—an oligarchy ruling nominal freemen with a rod of iron.

The Federal Constitution has been pressed into the service of the slaveholders from the beginning. Had we space it were easy to show, that it is for that end falsely interpreted, tortured, and perverted from its true and obvious intent; that its letter and spirit throughout support the freedom and equal rights of "all the people" of these United States. If this be so, our pro-slavery laws and decisions not only contravene the universal moral law, but subvert the foundation of our own rights and liberties. But if the Constitution, on the contrary, be itself pro-slavery, then, indeed, is our error original and fundamental; freedom and righteousness are enthroned in profession, but enchained or exiled in fact; our boasted republic is a sham, and our independence a mockery of the hopes of an enslaved world.

But we must bring this arrogant assumption of power by a human government to the ordeal of conscience and the Bible. Can civil rulers enact laws irrespective of the Divine law, or in direct conflict with God's revealed will? Can they innocently violate, or justly authorize others to violate, any enactment of Jehovah? Can they make a law of theirs higher than his? Can they repeal, annul, or pour contempt upon his law, written by his own hand on tables of stone, and on fleshly tables of the heart? Can they "sanction," authorize, "sanctify," or make just and right, man-stealing, extortion, "merchandise in the bodies and souls of men," and whatever act of oppression is involved in slaveholding? Is any such enactment a law, which either God or man is bound to respect? We appeal to the Ruler of the nations, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. But the Lord is my defense, and my God is the rock of my refuge."

The advocates of legal supremacy can not object to this criterion; for none are more clamorous than they for implicit subjection to "the powers that be," because those powers "are ordained of God," to whom all "must needs be subject, not only

for wrath, but also for conscience' sake." Does the Bible, therefore, give to civil rulers any warrant for legalizing the practices of the slaveholder?

Numerous proofs of the following propositions will readily occur to every reflecting reader of the sacred volume, and furnish a conclusive reply.

"The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will;" often, in his wise and righteous providence, "setting up over it the basest of men;" using tyrants as a sword in his own hand, to punish or correct an offending people.

His universal requirement of rulers is, "that they be just men, ruling in the fear of God," holding them to a strict account for the perversion of their power and authority.

He forbids injustice, partiality, oppression, and all iniquity in rulers, still more vehemently than in their subjects.

He has signally punished the rulers of many nations, who, like Jeroboam, sinned and made their people sin, dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

By his word and providence he has shown his approbation of those who refused to obey the unjust and impious mandates of ungodly rulers.

When rulers give a legal sanction to any iniquity of the people, the latter are not thereby justified or excused in the sight of God. Both are guilty confederates in rebellion against him.

Jehovah, therefore, has never given to civil government a right to "decree unrighteous decrees, to turn away the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of his people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless."

But ours are all popular or democratic governments; and may not *the people* have made laws to sanction slaveholding? They have done so in the letter; but such laws are unjust, and should be regarded as a nullity. Suppose all the white men in the colony of Virginia had been slaveholders. They formed an independent state government; and unanimously decreed, that the slaves they before held individually should be treated as property in all courts of law. This company of slaveholders could not

confer on the body politic a right or power which they had not as individuals. What slaves they had before their union were held "by might without right;" and all their possible legal sanctions are no better.

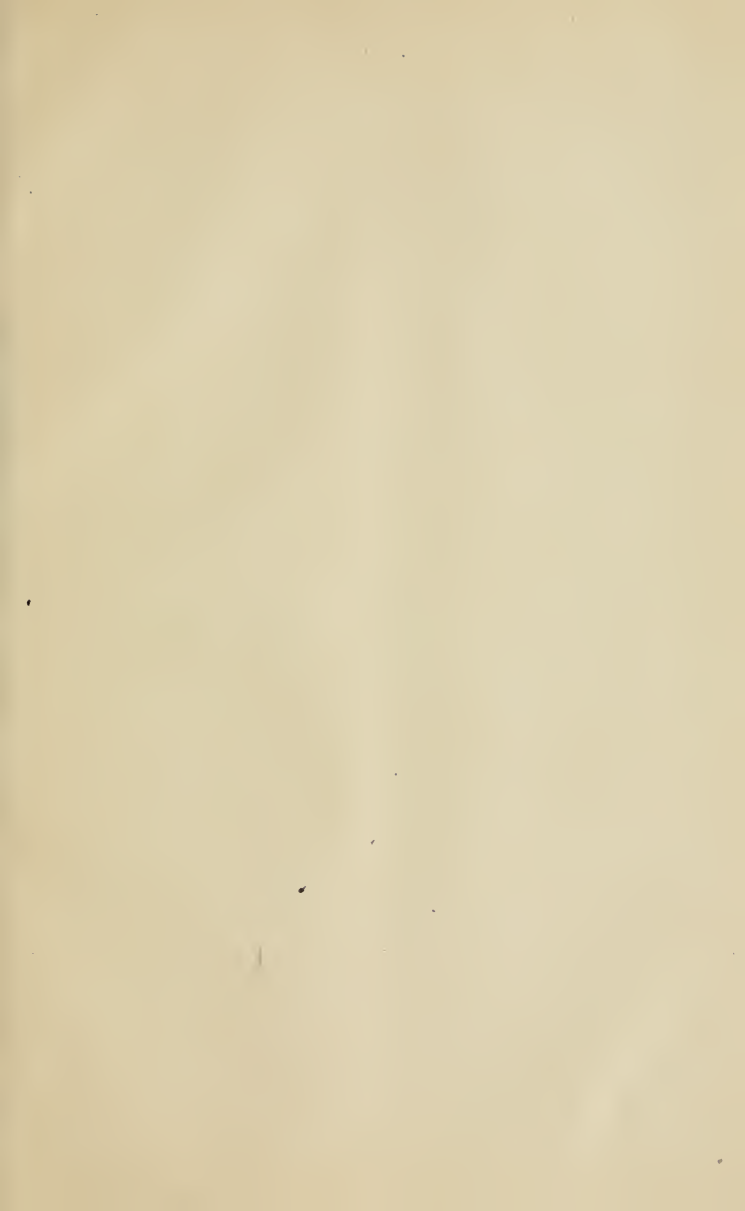
The conclusion is inevitable, that every political or legal sanction professedly given to slaveholding, is a sinful act of the government and people, in no degree diminishing the crime of individual oppressors.

Says Blackstone: "The law of nature, being coeval with mankind, and dictated by God himself, is, of course, superior in obligation to any other. It is binding all over the globe, in all countries, at all times. No human laws have any validity, if contrary to this; and such of them as are valid derive all their force and all their authority, mediately or immediately, from this original."

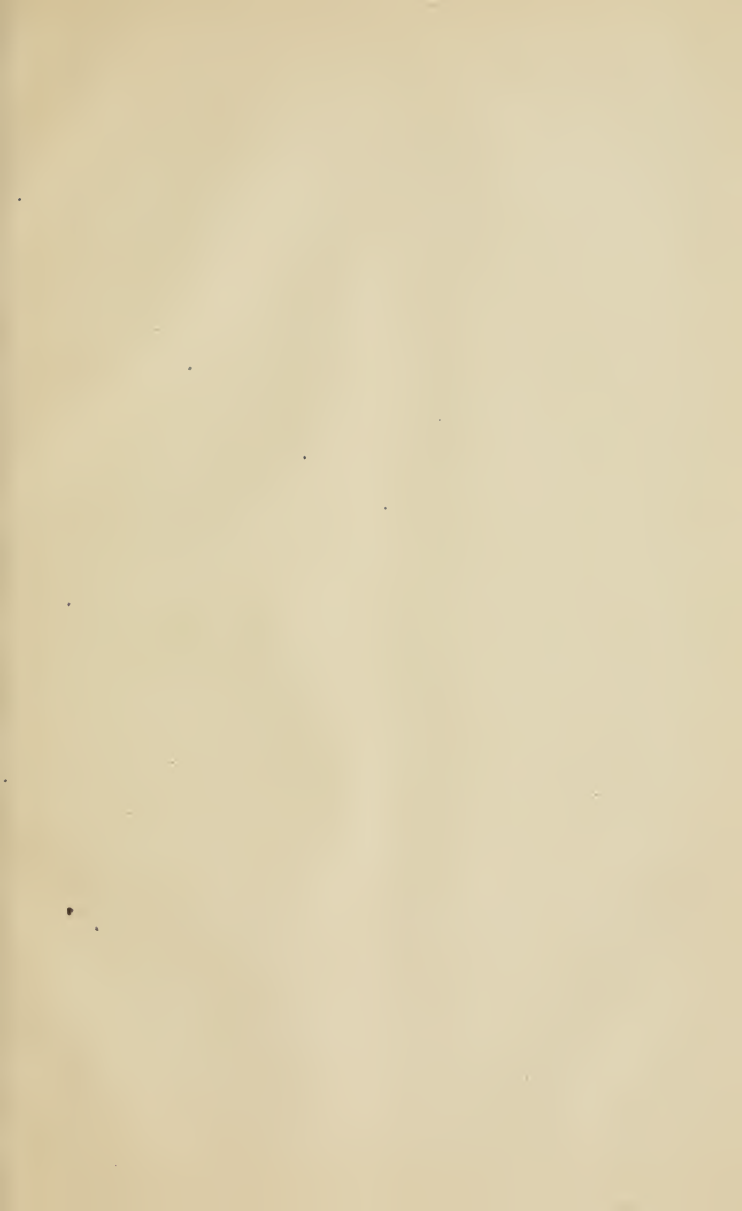
Says Lord Brougham: "Tell me not of rights—of the property of the planter in his slaves. In vain you tell me of the laws which sanction such a claim. There is a law above all the enactments of human codes. It is the law written by the finger of God upon the heart of man. And by that law, eternal and unchangeable, while men despise fraud, and loathe rapine, and abhor blood, they shall reject with indignation the wild and guilty fantasy, that man can hold property in man."

Ah, sinful nation, Church, people;—laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters. We have forsaken the Lord; we have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger; we have gone away backward. If we despise the cause of our enslaved brother when he contendeth with us, what then shall we do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall we answer him?











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