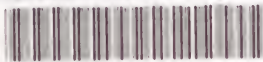


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Slavery....The Bible....Infidelity.

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PRO-SLAVERY

INTERPETATIONS OF THE BIBLE,

PRODUCTIVE OF

INFIDELITY:

BY WILLIAM W. PATTON,  
PASTOR OF THE FOURTH CONG. CHURCH, HARTFORD, CONN.

[SECOND EDITION.]

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The following resolution, passed at the close of a meeting held at Guilford, Conn., August 4th, in commemoration of West India Emancipation, will inform the reader why the following pages are submitted, through the press, to the perusal and careful consideration of the religious public.

*Resolved*,—That the thanks of this meeting be rendered to the Rev. Mr. Patton, for his able and appropriate discourse this day delivered to us, and believing the same calculated to exert a good influence, if put into circulation, we hereby request a copy for publication.”

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## SLAVERY---THE BIBLE---INFIDELITY.

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THE Bible is the Word of God. This is the truth which runs a dividing line between infidels and christians. The infidel asserts that it is "a cunningly devised fable," of human origin alone, intended to impose upon the credulity of the ignorant mass, and only received by the intelligent for selfish reasons. The christian on the other hand contends that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God," and was written by "holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and that consequently all are bound to believe its doctrines and to live in accordance with its precepts.

The evidence in proof of the inspiration of the Bible is of two kinds, external and internal. The external evidence embraces the arguments derived from miracles, prophecy, and the success which has attended the propagation of Christianity. The internal evidence, to use the language of Bishop Horne, is derived from "the sublime doctrines and the purity of the moral precepts revealed in the Scriptures—the harmony subsisting between every part,—their miraculous preservation—and the tendency of the whole to promote the present and eternal happiness of mankind, as evinced by the blessed effects which are invariably produced by a cordial reception and belief of the Bible—together with the peculiar advantages possessed by the Christian revelation over all other religions." It may be well to remark here that one of the above specifications (to wit, the miraculous preservation of the Scriptures,) would more properly be included in the external evidences. A more concise definition of the internal evidence of Christianity is given by the celebrated Methodist divine, Richard Watson, as "that which arises from the apparent excellence and beneficial tendency of the doctrine."

In what way have infidels attacked Christianity? They have assailed it in both the points which have been mentioned, but until of late, principally by denying the existence of the miracles and prophecies which constitute the main strength of the external evidence. From the days of the Sanhedrim who pretended that Christ did not rise from the dead, but his body was stolen by his disciples, to the days of Thomas Paine, pretty much one course has been pursued. There has been indeed an occasional and feeble attack upon the doctrines and precepts of the Bible, as for instance when Hume attempted to show that "Humility ought to be struck off from the catalogue of virtues and placed on the catalogue of vices;" but the strength of argument and the power of wit and sarcasm on the infidel side, has been principally expended in attempts to meet the evidence in favor of Christianity drawn from miracles and prophecies. I think a reference to the works of Celsus, Porphyry, Bolinbroke, Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon and Paine, will justify this assertion.

But a new system of tactics has in these modern days been devised, and of late, Christianity has been attacked on the side of its internal evidence, as though that point, long thought to be impregnable, and almost allowed by its enemies to be so, was now discovered to be the least capable of defence. Those who have listened to the addresses before infidel conventions, or who have read the current infidel publications, are aware that their efforts have been directed in a new channel. They have suddenly given their theories a practical turn, and have undertaken to reduce infidelity from a mere negation to something positive. Mr. Owen, in the infidel convention recently held in New York City, urged this point as one of vital moment, that infidelity should make some positive affirmations and not content itself with a mere denial of Christianity. In connection with this new plan of effort, the words love, universal benevolence, human brotherhood, equality, &c., are continually upon their lips, and they have actually begun to assail the church with the weapon of moral reformation. It may sound strangely in the ears of some to hear the battle cry of "Reform," and especially of a Moral Reform, shouted by the infidel ranks,—it may contrast curiously with the lives of their most eminent writers; nevertheless, such a battle cry has been adopted. Yes, infidels profess to go for a reformation in morals, and they boldly contend that Christianity is the chief obstacle in the way of success. They declare that the Church and the Bible are corrupt on the score of morals, and that so far from an argument being derived from that quarter in favor of Christianity, the very reverse is true.

Among the subjects which have afforded infidels the means of making such an attack on the religion of Christ, is Slavery. Within the last few years, anti-slavery principles have furnished an armory from which they have drawn some of their deadliest weapons, and by whose aid they have done fearful execution. Said one of the most prominent infidels in a recent convention of free thinkers in New York, "I have done with the old arguments against Christianity, and have, adopted a more efficient plan. Now I work altogether through the moral reformations of the day, and through them attack religion, and find that I can accomplish more than by any other means." Those who have had an opportunity to watch his movements, know that his hardest blows are dealt when upon the subject of slavery.

At first sight, it might appear preposterous, to denounce the Bible on the ground that it sanctions slaveholding, when the Old Testament contains this explicit condemnation of it, "He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death," and "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbors service without wages, and giveth him not for his work"; when also the New Testament exhibits such words of rebuke as these "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 who have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth." "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers for them that defile themselves with mankind, for *menstealers*, for liars, for perjured persons." A more scathing denunciation of the sin in question, is surely to be found on record in no other book. How,



then, it may be asked, can the infidel have the hardihood to affirm that the Bible sanctions slaveholding? The answer may be returned without difficulty. The infidel erects his superstructure on the foundation which professedly Christian hands have laid. He surveys the church, and lo! thousands and tens of thousands of her accredited members actually hold slaves. Members "in good and regular standing," fellowshipped throughout Christendom except by a few anti-slavery churches generally despised as ultra and radical, reduce their fellow men to the condition of chattels and by force keep them in that state of degradation. Bishops, Ministers, Elders and Deacons, are engaged in this awful business and do not consider their conduct as at all inconsistent with the precepts, of either the Old or New Testaments. Moreover, those Ministers and Churches who do not themselves hold slaves, very generally defend the conduct of those who do, and accord to them a fair Christian character, and in the way of business frequently take mortgages and levy executions on the bodies of their fellow men, and in some cases of their fellow Christians.

Now is it a wonder, that infidels beholding the practice and listening to the theory of professing Christians, should conclude that the Bible inculcates a morality not inconsistent with chattelizing human beings? And must not this conclusion be strengthened, when they hear Ministers of talent and learning declare that the Bible does sanction slaveholding, and that it ought not to be made a disciplinable offence in churches? And must not all doubt be dissipated, when one of the most learned professors in our theological seminaries, asserts that the Bible "recognizes that the relation may still exist, *salva fide et salva ecclesia*" (without injury to the Christian faith or church) and that only "the abuse of it is the essential and fundamental wrong"? Are not infidels bound to believe that these Professors, Ministers, and Churches understand their own Bible, and that consequently, notwithstanding solitary passages which appear to condemn slaveholding, the Bible sanctions it?

This is the opportunity furnished for the infidel to argue against the Bible. He adopts the very arguments which proslavery ministers and churches adduce in order to array the Bible on the side of the oppressor, and then appealing to the common sense, the reason, the conscience of men, he pronounces a sentence of condemnation on a book which inculcates such morality, or rather immorality, and relies on the verdict of humanity and justice to sustain him. It is by such a course that the faith of thousands in Christianity, is being undermined. It would seem to require but a bare statement of these facts to prove the truth of the position which I have undertaken to maintain, to wit, that

**INFIDELITY IS THE CERTAIN RESULT OF PROSLAVERY VIEWS IN THE CHURCH.**

For my own part, I believe that if we admit the premises of the infidel, we shall be forced to his conclusion—if the Bible sanctions slaveholding, then it cannot be from God—for the argument from internal evidence is not only refuted, but actually turned against the Bible. Nor am I alone in this belief: Thousands tremble for Zion as they behold the position into which many would drive or lead the church. A writer in one of our ablest periodicals, the *New Englander*, (Oct. 1845) in concluding a review of Gov. Hammond's Letter in defence

of slavery, does not hesitate to use this language; "We will only say to those who think that the Bible sanctions slavery, such as we have proved it to be,—Meet the infidel on the question of the *internal evidence* of the divinity and truth of the Bible, *if you can.*"

In stating what I conceive to be the truth on the point submitted, I propose to show—

I. WHAT MUST IN THE NATURE OF THE CASE BE THE RESULT OF PROSLAVERY VIEWS IN THE CHURCH.

II. WHAT HAVE BEEN ALREADY THE ACTUAL RESULTS.

I. *I am to show what must in the nature of the case be the result of proslavery views in the Church.* As certainly as there is any connection between premises and conclusion, that result must be the extension of infidelity. Am I asked, why? Because a sanction of slavery by the Bible would be fatal to its internal evidence. Is the question still urged, In what respects is that internal evidence destroyed? I reply, In respect to four important points, which I will specify.

1. If the Bible sanctions slaveholding then it misrepresents the character of God. We learn much both as to the natural and moral attributes of God from the works of nature and the spontaneous affirmations of conscience. These teachers inform us that God is benevolent, is just, is merciful, is truthful. The Bible itself declares that as to these fundamental points, the light of nature affords the means of arriving at the truth. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it to them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." (Rom. 1: 19, 20.) If then reason infallibly teaches the wisdom, benevolence, holiness, justice and mercy of God, the Bible in order to be received as from God, must teach the same truths and must in every way be consistent with those moral attributes. If the Bible is found to teach directly or indirectly that God is malevolent, or unholy, or unjust, or unmerciful, then no better ground for rejecting it is needed. Now it has been contended by Christians that the Bible meets this claim in the fullest manner—that it not only does not contradict the teachings of reason as to the character of God, but more fully affirms and explains them, setting forth the divine character in a manner so clear, so pure, so glorious, as has never been approached by any other system. This I firmly believe to be the fact; but my faith would be staggered as to the strength of this evidence, if I also believed that the Bible sanctioned the claim of property in man. For what is slaveholding but the most flagrant contradiction of benevolence, holiness, justice and mercy? If it be just for one man to appropriate wholly to himself the body, mind, time and earnings of his fellowman from infancy to old age, I defy any man to define injustice. All that we commonly characterize as injustice is the doing some *one* of the things just specified, and shall he who does them all be called just? The common sense of every man rejects the thought, and in view of the wide-sweeping usurpation of slaveholding rather affirms the expression of John Wesley, that it is "the sum of all villainies." But if slaveholding be essentially unjust, unholy, malevolent and unmerciful, what must be the character of him who as Moral Governor approves and sanctions it? Does not the law reveal the

moral state of the lawgiver, and is it not always a transcript of his character? If then the divine law as laid down in the Bible is perfectly consistent with the conduct of him who asserts and exercises the claim of ownership in his fellowman, then must the character of God, the lawgiver, suffer in the eyes of all who listen to the voice of conscience.

Men know that God is just, and that slaveholding is unjust. The infidel dare not deny either fact, and in proof I instance Thomas Jefferson, who appealed to the very justice of God against this abomination. Speaking of slavery and of the liability to an insurrection of the slaves, he writes; "I tremble for my country *when I reflect that God is just*; that his justice cannot sleep forever; that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune,—an exchange of situations [between slave and master] is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest." Again he observes; "When the measure of their [the slaves] tears shall be full—when their tears shall have involved heaven itself in darkness—*doubtless a God of justice will awaken to their distress*, and by diffusing a light and liberality among their oppressors, or, at length by his exterminating thunder, manifest his attention to things of this world and that they are not left to the guidance of blind fatality." (Notes on Virginia).

These are the words of an infidel whose conscience told him, as does the conscience of all men, that slaveholding never can be reconciled with justice, and consequently that God can never sanction it. Suppose now that a proslavery minister had approached Thomas Jefferson, and endeavored to prove from the Bible that slaveholding is not inconsistent with God's requirements, what would have been his answer, and that of every man whose conscience on this subject has not been perverted and seared? It would have been this, "Sir, if your interpretation of the Bible be correct, it cannot be the Word of God—for it gives him a character the very reverse of that which reason and conscience affirm." I hesitate not then to say, that so far as the internal evidence in favor of the Bible rests on its exhibition of God's character, it is all swept away by a proslavery interpretation, and a triumph is given to infidelity: for in the contest, the infidel will have the common sense and conscience of the world with him.

2. If the Bible sanctions slaveholding, then the argument for its inspiration derived from its system of morals, is forever destroyed. When we argue with infidels, we urge the generally admitted fact, that the correct, the pure, the benevolent, the beautiful system of morals inculcated in the Bible, evinces its divine origin. We point to the vain attempts of ancient philosophers to devise a code of moral law which should suffice to regulate human conduct, and should commend itself to every thoughtful and candid mind. We quote the maxims of justice and love, so universal in their application, which are contained in the New Testament, and with them contrast the selfishness, injustice and malevolence which inhere in all systems but the Christian. We ask, How comes it that only the Bible should set forth a perfect system—a system which promotes universal love and happiness, unless we admit that God was its author? This ar

gument so briefly described, bears with irresistible power against the positions of infidelity, so long as the main fact with regard to the Christian system of morals, is allowed to be true. Hence the infidel Rousseau was compelled to use this language; "Where could Jesus learn among his competitors, that pure and sublime morality, of which he only hath given us both precept and example?" Even the scurrilous Tom Paine amid all his abuse of the Bible, remarks of Christ; "He was a virtuous and amiable man. The morality that he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind." But the force of this argument is lost on the man who denies the fact which we urge, who declares that the Christian religion so far from inculcating morals which commend themselves to every man's conscience, lends its sanction to that which outrages every decision of our uncorrupted moral sense. This latter is the position of modern infidelity. Once skeptics endeavored to account for the pure morality of scripture, now they deny its existence. They say, we care not for general assertions, for abstract maxims of benevolence, for the famous golden rule, let us descend to particulars, and learn what specific practices are tolerated or forbidden by Christianity. Your leading divines assure us that the morality of the Bible allows of slaveholding, allows one man to hold another as a chattel, a piece of animated property, an intelligent machine, to take that man's earnings, and divest him of all rights and prerogatives. In other words, the morality of the Bible, allows of robbery in its highest form, by which a man is robbed of his own soul and body, and condemned by mere force, without a shadow of right, to renounce liberty and to exist for another's convenience and gain. Such an unjust and immoral practice, is defended by reference to the Bible; those guilty of it are admitted to the church and welcomed to fraternal communion by professing Christians; Commentators and Doctors of Divinity and Missionary Boards declare that slaveholding is not inconsistent with a fair character and true regeneration of heart. What is the inevitable result? Men of discernment conclude that such a religion never came from God, teaching as it does a doctrine subversive of human rights, inimical to liberty, hostile to republican principles, at war with all true morality, corrupt and corrupting in its tendency and actual effect. The truth is, that men have a moral sense,—they are created with some perception of right and wrong, with a conscience whose decisions they are bound to follow. That moral sense condemns slaveholding. Even the slaveholder knows it is wrong. Hence John Randolph worded his will in this manner; "In the name of God, amen. I John Randolph, of Roanoke, in the county of Charlotte, do ordain this writing, written with my own hand, this fourth day of May, one thousand eight hundred and nineteen, to be my last will and testament, hereby revoking all others whatsoever. I give to my slaves, their freedom, to *which my conscience tells me they are justly entitled.*" Hence he said in his scathing rebuke of Edward Everett in 1820; "Sir, I neither envy the head nor the heart of that man from the North, who rises here to defend slavery upon principle." Said the skeptic and slaveholder Thos. Jefferson, writing to Dr. Price of London, in 1785, with regard to an antislavery pamphlet which the latter had published; "From the mouth to the head of the Chesapeake, the bulk of the people will approve it in theory, and it will find a respectable minority ready to adopt it in practice—a minority which for weight of character, pre-



ponderates against the greater number who have not the courage to divest their families of a property, which, however, *keeps their consciences uneasy.*' The truth is, conscience utters but one voice on this subject and that is of unmingled reprobation. John Randolph felt this, when the fact of his slaveholding made him writhe in agony on his dying bed, and to an inquiry of his physician as to his difficulty, he took a card and wrote thereon, the one word, *Remorse.* Rely upon it, the religion which sanctions slaveholding must first gain a victory over the conscience before it can be received as coming from God.

3. To teach that the Bible sanctions slaveholding, is to destroy the evidence in its favor that comes from experimental religion. Christians have always professed a willingness to abide the test that Christ himself laid down, "By their fruits shall ye know them." They have pointed the infidel to the influence of Christianity as seen in a comparison of the lives of those who receive and those who reject the Bible. They have claimed that wherever the Bible has influence, there you find individual and social happiness, and purity, and that all that is necessary to change earth to a paradise is, to have the doctrines of the Bible lived out by all men. Taking this test, the infidel turns to the Southern States and find that "the gospel" has been preached there for two hundred years, that numerous churches attest the belief of the inhabitants in the Bible, and that everywhere the Scriptures are acknowledged to be the Word of God and the rule of life. He also beholds in operation a system of oppression, the most vile and cruel that exists on earth; three millions of the inhabitants are slaves; as such, are scantily clothed, poorly fed, are kept in abject ignorance and heathenism and grudge out a weary life in unremitting and unpaid toil. As the result of this system, a curse seems to rest upon every department of human action, upon agriculture, upon commerce, upon education, upon morals. The fountain of this accumulated wretchedness, he ascertains to be the chattel principle, or the recognition of the doctrine that one man may be the property of another. This doctrine, more to be dreaded in its influence on human welfare, than the fabled box of Pandora, he learns is proved to be true, out of the Bible, and as a matter of fact, ministers and people are engaged in its practical illustration, living on unremunerated labor and dooming their fellowmen to lifelong misery. The propriety of this is advocated on scriptural grounds by the minister in the pulpit, by the legislator in the hall of legislation, by the editor in his paper, and by the judge upon the bench. He turns to the North, and the same interpretation of the Bible in favor of oppression is given by professors in theological seminaries, presidents of Colleges, Doctors of Divinity, learned commentators, and the rank and file of churches, to say nothing of the endorsement of the doctrine by ecclesiastical bodies and missionary societies. What now will be the conclusion to which a skeptical mind will come? None other than this—that the propagation of such a religion is the subversion of liberty—that the fruits of it are corrupt, and such as to establish the falsehood of its claims to inspiration.

4. If the Bible sanctions slaveholding, then it teaches either a false or a contradictory doctrine, with regard to the accountability of a large portion of the human race. There is no doctrine more forcibly proclaimed by conscience than that of human accountability. We believe that God holds us and all our fellowmen answerable for every



act. A large part of the infidel world, including their most powerful writers, acknowledge this truth. So fundamental a position is it, that we could not reasonably receive a book as inspired, which directly or impliedly denies it. Now I affirm, that the fundamental principle of slavery is fatal to accountability as far as the slaves are concerned. On what is accountability based? On the possession of power. Obligation rests upon ability. That which we have no power to do, we are not bound to do. Now the slave as a chattel, is possessed of no rights such as inhere in a rational and accountable being—hence he is deprived of power, and by consequence, of accountability. Rights are the capital which we possess—destroy that capital and how can the income be demanded? A slave is a being despoiled of rights. According to slave law, according to the only true idea of a slave, as a piece of property, he has no right to make his wife and family happy and comfortable by the proceeds of his labor, no right to train up his children with the authority of a parent, no right to read the Bible, no right to rest on the Sabbath, no right to attend regularly at the Sanctuary, and to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience, no right to inform his own mind, or that of his children, no right to devote a part or the whole of his time to doing good as he has opportunity. Grant these rights and slavery falls at once. Take away these rights and having reduced the man to a mere chattel, you can no more predicate responsibility of him, than of the horse or the ox who labors on the same plantation. Rights are necessary to make a man, and I know of no being in this world who is accountable, but man. If then you approach the infidel with the Bible as sanctioning the claim of property in man, he will meet you on this wise: “I believe that God has made man accountable, that every human being as possessed of certain inalienable rights is thereby constituted a subject of God’s moral government, as no brute can be. You tell me that this book is from God, and yet assert that it maintains a doctrine, which, by subverting human rights, degrades man to a brute, and throws him out of the pale of moral responsibility. My conscience will not allow me to credit the claims of such a book to inspiration. A God of benevolence and wisdom, never could fill this earth with intelligent beings, a part of whom should be authorized to strip the others of the prerogatives of manhood, and thus to convert them into brutes in human shape.—God would better have made the slaves brutes, than to have mocked them with the shape and tortured them with the feelings of manhood. I have not time to unfold this argument so as to give it its full weight—an entire discourse would be requisite for that; I must therefore leave it in its present incomplete state.

Such is a hasty glance at the effect which the prevalence of proslavery views in the church must have, from their antagonism to the alleged internal evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures.—By this a priori reasoning we know what the facts must be, unless all the principles of calculation on which we usually rely, are wholly worthless. Let us now take up the posteriori course of argument, and learn what the facts of the case are. I proceed then to show—

II. *That the prevalence of proslavery views in the church actually has made infidels.* I shall illustrate the subject by a reference to facts, which will show its bearing on four different classes, viz., the slaves, the free colored people, the slaveholders, and those who are

not connected with the system, but hate its injustice and labor for its overthrow.

1. The connection of slaveholding with religion causes skepticism among the slaves. We could hardly expect it to be otherwise. The slave conscious that he has been stripped of his rights, must either believe that his master is a hypocrite, or else that his master's religion puts forth a false claim to divine authority. One of these positions the mass of the slaves almost invariably take. The whole influence of the system as practised and defended by the professedly Christian church, is to cause a rejection of Christianity by the oppressed. Let the following evidence suffice. Mr. D. De Vinne communicates this fact to the "True Wesleyan." G. Dougherty, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Representative in the Mississippi Legislature, related to him the following :

"In the year 1806, on the arrival of a slaver from the coast of Africa, J. Dougherty went to the city of Savannah to buy slaves. After several hundred had been sold in lots and single, as suited the purchasers, a middle aged man was put upon the stand, who wished to make a communication before he was sold, the purport of which was that he was a Mohammedan, and that whenever the hour of prayer and other devotional duties came, he must have time to attend to them. Mr. D. who had lately embraced religion, and seemed to be zealous to promote the cause, gave the highest price for him, feeling confident within himself that he would soon convert him to the true faith. Taking him to his plantation, he built him a hut, and assured him that he should be allowed the time he required, and in addition, should have every opportunity to attend all the meetings of the Christians.— The Mohammedan slave for a while attended these meetings, and learned something of Christianity, without, however, discontinuing his former devotions. At the expiration of about a year, his master, who was intent on his conversion, asked him formally, if he did not prefer Christianity to Mohammedanism, and if he would not openly renounce the prophet and acknowledge Jesus Christ? The slave asked if the Christian religion allowed one Christian to hold another in slavery, and their children after them? The answer, of course, was in the affirmative. The Mohammedan replied, that the religion of the prophet *did not allow that*. The result of all was, the slave, in a land of Bibles and gospel ministers, daily and his prayers, performed ablutions, made his prostrations, and at an advanced age died, declaring that God was one God, and Mohammed was his prophet."

Thus was the religion of Jesus put to shame before the claims of the false prophet, and the poor slave preferred to trust his soul to Mohammed rather than to Christ, the tender mercies of whose religion he had been led to feel were cruelty. Corroborative evidence of the same kind is furnished by Rev. J. D. Paxton, himself once a slaveholder. His language is: "It is often said, and not without reason, that there is a growing indisposition among slaves to worship with their masters and attend on the preaching of whites. Now that this prejudice in slaves, against worshipping with the whites, may be traced mainly to the system of slavery is to me most certain. The relation between the master and slave is not one of mutual agreement, in which there is a quid pro quo, a stipulated service for a stipulated reward; but one of force on the part of the master and hard necessity on the part of the slave. Suppose the master a professor of religion and prays in his family. After laboring during the day, the slave comes home and throws himself down to rest. He was

called out, it may be, pretty early—he has labored under the eye of a watchful master or overseer, has been found fault with as to his manner of doing his work, or his not doing it faster, has been scolded and threatened, and perhaps whipped, has made his meal, it may be, in the field, and on provisions much inferior to what he knows his master and family enjoy. His labors for the day are however closed. Presently he hears the horn blow or the bell ring for prayers. What now are the thoughts which would most likely pass through the mind of a slave of no decided religious feelings? ‘Ah! the white folks are going to be religious now; master is going to pray. He takes his ease all day, and makes us poor negroes do his work. He is always finding fault and scolding and whipping us. I don’t think his prayers will do much good—I won’t go to prayers.’ Their aversion to attend family prayers is so common as to be the subject of frequent remark. I think nine times out of ten, few attend even in professors houses, except the house servants, and not unfrequently they slip out of the house when the family assembles for prayer.” Such is the testimony of one who had the best opportunity for learning the truth. A very striking proof of the skeptical feelings which pro-slavery preachers produce among slaves, is related by Rev. C. C. Jones, in his Tenth Annual Report of the Association for the religious instruction of the negroes in Liberty County, Georgia. His words are:—“I was preaching to a large congregation (of negroes,) on the Epistle to Philemon; and when I insisted upon fidelity and obedience as christian virtues in servants, and upon the authority of Paul, condemned the practice of running away, one half of my audience deliberately rose up and walked off with themselves, and those that remained looked anything but satisfied, either with the preacher or his doctrine. After dismissal, there was no small stir among them: some solemnly declared there was no such epistle in the Bible; others that it was not the gospel; others that I preached to please masters; others that they did not care if they never heard me preach again.” How plain it is that there are some heresies which nature itself will refute and disprove even in the breasts of the most degraded, and that the slaves knew that God never could have sanctioned a system of oppression like American Slavery, that an epistle which did sanction such sin never was written by Paul, and could not be a part of the Gospel. Fugitive slaves tell us that their brethren in bonds look with suspicion upon the Bible. Lewis Clark, a fugitive from Kentucky, well known in many free States where he has labored, said in answer to the question, What do the slaves know about the Bible? “They generally believe there is somewhere a real Bible, that came from God; but they frequently say, the Bible now used is master’s Bible, most that they hear from it being, ‘Servants obey your masters.’” Henry Bibb, a fugitive slave from the same State, declared in my hearing, that he knew hundreds of slaves who reject the Bible because it sanctions slaveholding.—Let me now direct your attention,

2. To the effect of pro-slavery views in the church upon the free colored people. I have not been able to make the inquiries necessary to reach the facts in respect to this portion of the community, and my remarks will therefore be brief. I have, however, one witness, whose competence none who know him will deny, and whose testimony is directly to the point. I refer to the Rev. Theodore S.

Wright, the colored Presbyterian minister in New York City.—Speaking of the wicked and cruel prejudice which operates against the colored people, and which is a remnant of slavery, and destined to perish with it, he remarked: “The colored man is excluded from the house of God. Even at the communion table he can only partake of the crumbs offered to him after the others have been served. This prejudice drives the colored man from religion. I have often heard my brethren say, they would have nothing to do with such a religion. They are driven away and go to infidelity; for even infidels at Tammany Hall make no distinction on account of color.”—Rev. Mr. Pennington, the colored Congregational minister of Hartford, has also made general remarks to me of the same nature, stating that it is his firm belief that many colored people are driven into infidelity by the pro-slavery views of the professedly Christian church. I ask you now,

3. To consider similar facts connected with residents at the South, particularly slaveholders. It is true that even men reared in the midst of slavery, are disgusted with the defence of slaveholding drawn from the Bible. A few years since, Lewis Tappan, Esq., was returning from England and introduced the subject of slavery as a topic of conversation among the passengers. There was present a professor of religion who eagerly defended slavery from the Scriptures, and fluently quoted texts to support his position. After the conversation ended, a Cuban slaveholder who was present came to Lewis Tappan and said, with regard to the defender of oppression: “I have no confidence in that man’s religion. I would not trust him—he is not honest, and I will not speak another word with him the rest of the voyage.” Hear now the language of Cassius M. Clay, until recently a slaveholder.

“But when and how shall we class that man who knocks from under our towering and weary feet the last woodholding of hope, and makes God himself the worst of tyrants—the basest of tyrants—the most unjust of tyrants (excessives)? The man who attempts to justify slavery from the Bible is that man! If he wages us to his opinions, he makes us an infidel—we lose our belief in the existence of a God—our idea of the immortality of the soul—his distinction between right and wrong—we sink from the man into the brute—we would not scruple to murder our mother for a meal of victuals—or scatter the desecrated remains of a dead sister, or father, or wife, to manure our cucumber vines! We thank God that instinct is stronger than reasoning, and conscience more powerful than argument. We do not sincerely believe, and we deliberately weigh what we say, that all the books and papers which have been written to prove slavery a divine institution, has never convinced a single man or woman that it was *right*—no, *not one!*”

No! Slaveholders know that they are doing wrong; it would be an insult to their intellect and moral sense to believe the contrary. They inwardly despise those who would defend oppression from the Bible, or else they learn to despise the Bible itself. Evidence of this is found in a letter to the Emancipator, by a correspondent traveling at the South, dated May, 1846, from which the following is an extract:



“ Soon after we were under weigh, I fell into conversation with an infidel, a native of North Carolina, and a resident of Alabama. The *first* argument he brought against the Scriptures was the assertion that they sanctioned slavery ; and to prove it, quoted Gov. Hammond, and prominent Doctors of Divinity, both North and South. I replied that I should be compelled to join him in rejecting the Bible, if I believed that American slavery was sanctioned by it,—but I did not. This loosened his foundation for argument with me against the Scriptures, very essentially. I frequently meet with men of this character—whose humanity has led them to look with contempt upon a religion, which, according to its professed ministers sanctions ‘the sum of all villainies.’ The truth is, the South is full of those who openly declare their contempt of the Bible, and the number will continue to increase so long as it is made to countenance every *popular sin*.”

It is but recently that my attention has been occupied specifically with this part of the anti-slavery subject, but I doubt not that, had I time to examine it thoroughly, the proof would be overwhelming, that even among slaveholders, multitudes have learned to look with contempt on ministers, churches and the scriptures, from the simple fact that Christianity has been thrown as a shield before slavery, while its professed expounders, in the language of the poet,

‘Torture the pages of the hallowed Bible,  
To sanction crime and robbery and blood,  
And in oppressions hateful service, libel  
Both man and God.’

4. Our investigation will not be even generally complete, unless we notice the effect produced upon many of the opponents of slavery, by the past action of the church. The truth is precisely this, unpalatable as it may be to the mass of the churches. There are many ardent advocates of anti-slavery principles, who from the bottom of their hearts loathe slaveholding, who are moral in their lives, men of truth, of chastity, of honesty, of moral daring, from whose lips no oath, no impure word proceeds, but who nevertheless are thoroughly infidel in their principles. I could name some of the more prominent, if necessary. I have heard them denounce the Bible and have more often read their words of condemnation. Their number is increasing, and their principles are successfully instilled into minds whose ardor outweighs their judgment. Every year that passes, witnesses the conversion of many from Christianity to infidelity.

I am well aware that pro-slavery ministers have derived an argument from these very facts, against the anti-slavery cause. They have denounced it as tending to infidelity, and made the opinions of some attached to the Garrisonian party a text from which to warn their people against laboring for the slave. I am as keenly alive to the evil influence of the anti-church abolitionists, as firmly opposed to their extravagance of opinion and action, as willing publicly and privately to deprecate their course, as are those to whom I have referred. But nevertheless I have a word of truth in the name of crushed humanity and the living God, to speak to these ministerial friends of oppression.



Rail on, scoff on, at the infidelity of Garrisonism, if you please, but know two things—that you scoff at the works of your own hands, and that the longer you maintain your position, the larger will be the number of such infidels who will attack the church. Nay! start not, at this announcement as though it were something strange. I reaffirm it, that the infidelity of certain abolitionists, whose names have become a byword with you, is occasioned by your conduct. You often call them ‘the troublers of Israel.’ I will answer in their behalf, out of that blessed book which your inhumanity has brought into contempt: ‘And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *art thou he that troubleth Israel?*’ And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.’ There was a time when these men believed in the religion of Jesus Christ, when they revered the Sabbath, attended upon the worship of God in the sanctuary, and respected the ambassadors of the Saviour. What has occasioned the sad change, over which I, as well as yourselves, mourn? Hear me, ye ministers and church members who have been false to humanity and to God in the cause of the slave. These men were sensible of the wrongs inflicted upon their brother man—they saw the scourge which descended upon his naked body, and buried itself in his quivering flesh; they beheld as the tear ran down his cheeks; they listened to his groans; his cries for help thrilled through their hearts; they were moved with indignation as they were witnesses of the degradation of body and soul to which he was reduced, and were roused to action as he crouched before them, spoiled of his rights,—a miserable, dehumanized chattel. Burning with anxiety to abolish a system which outraged millions of their fellowmen, they came to you, expecting that the ministers and followers of the compassionate Saviour would “remember those in bonds as bound with them.” What was the reception with which they met? You denounced them as fanatics, you refused to open your houses of worship that the voice of the slave might be heard, you defended the slaveholder and declared that the Bible sanctioned the claim of property in man, you admitted slaveholding preachers and professors to your pulpits and to your communion tables, and were in fact so busy in “tithing mint, anise and cummin,” in regulating church government and correcting heretics, that you “omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith.” With you joined the theological seminaries, the religious press, the ecclesiastical bodies of the land, all asserting that the rights of the master were guaranteed by the Word of God. One extreme begets its opposite. They took you at your word—they believed that the Bible did sanction slavery, and as their consciences condemned it, they followed out the path you prescribed, and cast away the Bible. I do not defend their course—but I charge its guilt in a great measure upon you. What is the result? Your indifference to humanity, your perversion of scripture, drove them to ‘come-outism’ and infidelity, and now, forsooth, you strengthen yourselves in opposition to anti-slavery principles, by reference to their irregularities! This reacts upon them, and they again upon you, and thus the breach widens, the evil increases, the cause of emancipation suffers, and the Bible is dishonored.

A few words in conclusion and I have done. The present crisis is one of intense interest to the true follower of Christ. A new race of infidels has arisen, not profane, unchaste, immoral as were their predecessors, and as many of their cotemporaries are, but evincing a regard for God, for truth, for humanity, for morals, and whose complaint is that the church are arrayed against God, against truth, against humanity, against sound morals. It is an evil hour when infidelity can marshal its forces with Humanity for its watchword, with the conscience of the world on its side, while Christianity in the hands of those who betray its interests, leads forth its host to do battle for oppression. In *such* a conflict, infidelity must triumph—the Bible must fall. Then will be true of the church what was anciently said of Jerusalem; “All that pass by, clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty. The joy of the whole earth?”

This may be strong language, but it describes the issue and the result to which the church is being driven by many of its religious teachers, especially at the South, who are fast bringing both themselves and Christianity into contempt, and with a scathing rebuke of whom by the gifted Whittier, I conclude.

“Paid hypocrites, who turn  
Judgment aside, and rob the Holy Book  
Of those high words of truth which search and burn  
In warning and rebuke.

Feed fat, ye locusts, feed !  
And in your tasselled pulpits thank the Lord  
That, from the toiling bondman’s utter need,  
Ye pile your own full board.

How long, O Lord ! how long  
Shall such a priesthood barter truth away,  
And in Thy name, for robbery and wrong  
At thine own altars pray.

Woe to the Priesthood ! woe  
To those whose hire is with the price of blood—  
Perverting, darkening, changing as they go,  
The searching truths of God !

Their glory and their might  
Shall perish ; and their very names shall be  
Vile before all the people, in the light  
*Of a World’s Liberty.”*









