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# DISSERTATION ON SERVITUDE :

EMBRACING AN EXAMINATION OF THE

SCRIPTURE DOCTRINES ON THE SUBJECT,

AND AN INQUIRY INTO THE

## CHARACTER AND RELATIONS OF SLAVERY.

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*" Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."—Paul.*

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE following Dissertation is devoted to an extensive subject, and one of great practical importance. Servitude occupies a prominent place in the Scriptures, and is illustrated by a great variety of Scripture precepts and examples. It enters into several of the most important institutions of civilized and christian society, and opens a field for investigation, pertaining to the deepest principles of morality and religion.

This subject in all its branches is now brought into discussion, by the existing excitement in relation to slavery. The advocates and apologists for slavery, are examining it for the purpose of fortifying their positions and maintaining more effectually their tottering cause.

The opposers of slavery are examining it for the opposite purpose; namely, that of assailing more effectually the object of their opposition. This subject, therefore, is one of interest to all classes of persons.

The order pursued in this Dissertation, has appeared to the writer to possess several important advantages. It follows the divine communications on this subject, beginning with the earliest, and proceeding regularly to the latest. On leaving them, it proceeds naturally from the more simple to the more complicated and difficult topics of inquiry. Whatever may have been his success, the writer has sought diligently and honestly for the truth, in respect to the Scripture examples of servitude, and the doctrines they inculcate on this subject. Those doctrines and examples, as they have appeared to him, are herein impartially set forth, and are com-



mended, not to the blind credulity, but to the diligent investigation of every reader.

Truth will bear examination. It is our high privilege to prove all things by free and liberal inquiry; and we must do it in order to attain and hold fast that, and that only, which is truly good.

The present inquiry has led the writer to several conclusions which he did not anticipate at the commencement of it. Many of them have been highly gratifying to his feelings, and in his opinion, favorable to the honor of religion. As far as those conclusions are according to truth, and no farther, he would be glad to conduct others to the same.

The truth is not bound. It is not altogether concealed, nor yet does it all appear to the superficial and hasty inquirer. It must be sought for with diligence and patience, and with continued attention and repeated effort, in order to its being fully explored even in its most simple developments. Moral truth must also be sought with a humble, submissive, teachable, and christian spirit, in order to its being fully understood and appreciated. Labor and argument are often expended in vain upon the unhumbléd and unteachable, already wiser in their own eyes, and in entire ignorance, than seven men who can demonstrate the truth of their opinions. Prov. xxvi. 16.

A christian spirit is peculiarly necessary in the investigation of the nature and relations of slavery. Here it becomes us all to feel that we are but men, and that truth is of God. Here our inquiries ought to be prosecuted with special deliberation and care, remembering that we are responsible to God for our opinions and words, as well as for our actions. Errors of opinion lead to those of affection and action. We must think right on all practical subjects, in order to feel and act right.

The subject of slavery is one of practical interest to every citizen of the United States. We all have something to do with it as citizens, to approve or disapprove,



to encourage or discourage, to build up or pull down. We have done too much in ignorance ; it becomes us now to act with intelligence and discretion. Not to feel a desire to understand this subject, indicates an unusual and criminal apathy in respect to the interests of humanity and religion ; and also in respect to the influence which we are bound as individuals to exert.

Slavery is not only supported by the slave-holding states and districts in which it exists, but by every portion of the United States. Every part of the Union is implicated in its support, by the action of their representatives in congress. The national legislature has assumed the responsibility of continuing it in the District of Columbia, the heart of the nation, and the very Citadel of freedom, and in other districts under its entire control, at the South and West. It has permitted this acknowledged evil to increase and extend itself from year to year, till its present alarming magnitude has been attained. In this procedure of the national government, the North and non slave-holding states have generally co-operated. The voice of remonstrance from this quarter has been occasionally heard ; but it has been only occasional, feeble, and consequently ineffectual. This co-operation of the North in the support and extension of slavery, is the more surprising on account of the general condemnation and abhorrence of this institution by the mass of northern men. It is acknowledged to be wrong. It is deplored as a great political evil, and a source of imminent peril to our liberties as a nation. Over the South it is seen to hang like a dark portentous cloud of the wrath of the Almighty, who declares both by his word and providence, that though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished ; (Prov. xi. 21 ;) and that evil shall pursue them. A sentiment has generally prevailed, that something effectual ought to be done to check this extending and increasing evil ; but till this time it has gone on unchecked, and is now in the full tide of advancement.

In the opinion of the wisest and most discerning

minds, this matter must ultimately come to a crisis. If it is not prosecuted and overtaken with remedial measures by us, it will ultimately become too great and dreadful to be sustained, and will recoil upon its supporters with tremendous and wide-spread ruin. We ought not to close our eyes against approaching danger ; but to foresee the evil which is advancing upon us, and if possible, avoid it.

On the church of Christ the subject of this Dissertation possesses undoubted and peculiar claims. That association was formed for the purpose of promoting the exercise of justice and mercy. We are bound to exercise mercy towards men, as the necessary condition of our receiving it from God. James ii. 13. We are bound as christians to sympathize with the afflicted and oppressed everywhere, but especially within the sphere of our immediate influence.

If slave-holding is wrong, the church ought not in any way to countenance or encourage it. Here the light of truth ought to shine with unclouded radiance ; and from this sacred enclosure, the law of love ought to proceed. “ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report ; if there be any virtue and any praise, think of these things ;” pursue them steadily and earnestly ; “ and the God of peace shall be with you.”

Come thou blessed Jesus in the glory of thy truth and love, and send forth judgment to victory ; (Matt. xii. 20 ;) and let every one that readeth say come.



# DISSERTATION ON SERVITUDE.

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## SECTION I.

### PATRIARCHAL SERVITUDE.

THE state of society in the early periods of our race, is involved in considerable obscurity. The Bible is the only source of authentic information on this subject, and the information which it contains is necessarily limited. It teaches us, however, that marriage existed from the commencement of human society, and that the relations of husband and wife, and of parent and child, were recognized in the family of Adam, and continued and respected in every succeeding age.

At the commencement of human society, all government was naturally and almost necessarily patriarchal. Adam probably long continued to be the patriarchal head of his increasing posterity, and to exercise over them some degree of patriarchal authority. Each succeeding family was, however, a little kingdom of itself, having acknowledged rights and privileges of its own, and looking to its immediate head as the fountain of authority in respect to all ordinary affairs. How far family government was modified by patriarchal authority, or within what limits patriarchal authority was restrained, it is impossible to determine with precision.

Abraham was not subject to any patriarchal authority exercised by his ancestors, after his departure from Haran, when he was seventy-five years old. Gen. xii. 5. Previous to that time, he seems to have been in some degree under the authority of Terah his father, as did also Lot his nephew. Gen. xi. 31.

In Egypt, Abraham submitted to the monarchical government



then existing in that country, and was for a time protected by it. At this time he possessed "sheep, and oxen, and asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and camels." It appears also, that Lot had not yet separated from him. Gen. xii. 14—20.

Men-servants and maid-servants are here enumerated among Abraham's possessions. What authority he exercised over them, or by what right he held them in a state of servitude, we are not informed. It is evident, however, that Abraham's authority over his servants was not derived from the civil government of the countries in which he lived; but that it was entirely independent of those governments. It made no difference as to that, whether he was in Egypt or Canaan; within the domains of an absolute monarchy, or where no civil government of any kind extended its authority over him.

In Gen. xvi. we find an account of Hagar, an Egyptian female servant belonging to Sarah, Abraham's wife. After a residence of ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarah seeing that she had no children, requested Abraham to take Hagar her maid-servant as his concubine, or wife of the second class. Abraham complied with her request, and thus brought upon himself the stain and guilt of polygamy, and planted the seeds of severe domestic afflictions in his family. It is to be presumed that this female servant did not become the wife of Abraham without her consent, or contrary to her own will.

The word *גְּבִירָה* mistress, which expresses the relation of Sarah to Hagar, Gen. xvi. 8, 9, is applied in other parts of the Bible to denote a person of high rank, generally a queen. "And Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him as a wife, the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes *הַגְּבִירָה* the queen." 1 Kings xi. 19: xv. 13; 2 Kings x. 13; 2 Chron. xv. 16.

The severity which Hagar experienced from Sarah, was probably as inexcusable as the sin of polygamy, into which Abraham had been led by the advice of his first and principal wife.

We are told that Abraham made provision for the sons of his concubines, and that he sent them eastward into the East country, while he yet lived. Gen. xxv. 6.

The word concubines is the translation of *פִּילְגֻשִׁים* and denotes wives of an inferior class, such as Hagar. In Gen. xxv. 10, 13, Hagar is called *אֲנָה* incorrectly translated bond-woman. Hannah applies this word to herself, 1 Sam. i. 11, 16; Abigail,



the wife of Nabal, does the same, 1 Sam. xxv. 24, 27, 28, 31, 41; and the wise woman of Tekoa, 2 Sam. xiv. 15. It undoubtedly denotes a state of subjection, in opposition to one of authority; and an inferior, considered in respect to rank. But it does not denote a slave, or a person held as property. Hagar was not so held by Abraham; certainly not after he had taken her to be his wife. An important difference of meaning between this word and the ordinary name of a female servant, is clearly indicated in 1 Sam. xxv. 41, where Abigail requests David to take herself for a servant.

In Gen. xx. 14, Abimeleck, king of Gerar, to compensate Abraham for an injury he had ignorantly done him, "took sheep and oxen and men-servants and women-servants, and gave them to him." These were probably given as subjects are transferred from one civil government to another.

In Gen. xxx. 43, Jacob is said to have had "many sheep, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels, and asses." These passages bear a striking resemblance to Gen. xii. 16, where we have a similar inventory of the possessions of Abraham.

The most common names of patriarchal servants, were עֲבָדִים men-servants, and שִׁפְחָה female-servants. They are several times, however, mentioned in the patriarchal history by different appellations.

In Gen. xiv. 14, Abraham's servants are called יְלִידֵי בֵיתוֹ children of his family; probably the same as family or household servants—servants belonging to his family. Of these he led out in person three hundred and eighteen, who were trained for military service, on a sudden expedition against the conquerors of Sodom and the adjacent country, by whom his nephew Lot had been taken captive. With this force and his confederates he marched from Hebron to Dan. Here he attacked them by night, retook their spoil and captives, and pursued them with great slaughter to Hobah, west of Damascus.

These were probably comprehended among those referred to as belonging to Abraham, Gen. xii. 16, under the appellation of men-servants. They may however have denoted a class of servants, attached in a peculiar manner to their master and civil governor, and liable to be called upon on any sudden emergency in preference to others, and may have been entitled to peculiar privileges.

In Gen. xvii. 12, 13, 23, יְלִיד בֵּיתָא child of the family, occurs



as the appellation of a class of servants who were so far under the authority of Abraham, as to be required by him to receive circumcision; and of course they must have been equally under his control, in respect to other manifest duties.

They are in this chapter distinguished from others in a state of equal subjection so far as religious duties were concerned, termed *מִקְנֵי-כֶסֶף* the purchase of silver, or of money. This latter name, derived from the mode of their acquisition, by purchase, denotes a distinct class of servants, without defining the nature of their servitude. It seems that all the servants of Abraham belonged to one or other of these classes. Properly translated, the passages referred to read thus:

“12. He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations; the household servant or child of the family, and the purchase of money, him that is bought with money. 13. The household servant and he that is bought with thy money, must be circumcised. 23. And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all his household servants, and all his bought servants, every male among the men of the house or family of Abraham, and circumcised them in the same day, as God had commanded him.”

The household or family of Abraham comprehended these two classes of servants. It must of course have been very large, for we have three hundred and eighteen of one only of these classes mentioned on a former occasion, and those such as had been qualified by appropriate instruction and exercise for military service, and such as could be called into the field upon the shortest notice.

In Gen. xv. 2, 3, Abraham not yet having had any children, complains of his having no child to inherit his property and authority, and that Eliezur of Damascus, a household servant, was likely to be his heir. It appears from this remarkable passage, that in respect to the inheritance of property and authority, the household servants took precedence of all other relatives, except lineal descendants; for Abraham had a nephew near, namely, Lot, and had other relatives in Haran; yet Eliezur his servant was at this time his presumptive heir, to the exclusion of all his relatives.

In Gen. xxiv. 2, mention is made of a patriarchal servant, the elder or ruler of Abraham's house or family, who is described as exercising under Abraham the highest authority, and having all



the affairs of this extensive patriarchate or family, under his immediate supervision and control.

The word translated eldest, in our common version of verse 2, is generally translated elder, and ought to be so rendered here. It is the common Hebrew name for a ruler of any kind, whether civil or religious, or both.

This ruler calls himself Abraham's servant, verse 34, and calls Abraham his master, and describes him as having been greatly blessed, and as being a man of great distinction. Verse 35. He describes the possessions of Abraham as consisting chiefly in flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men-servants, and female servants, and camels, and asses. All these possessions are said to have been given or transferred to Isaac, as his successor and heir. Verse 36.

Abraham seems to have exercised the authority of a prince or chief. He was the sole head and ruler of the little dynasty which was composed of his servants and children, and which is repeatedly referred to by Moses, as his *בית* patriarchate or family. The person who ruled under him, over all that he had, was only *זקן ביתו* the elder or ruler of his family.

Abraham's family or household, which he commanded to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, (Gen. xviii. 19,) comprehended all his servants, both the servants of the family, properly so called, and those bought with money. Gen. xvii. 12, 13, 23.

The covenant of grace formed with Abraham, as the visible head of the church, extended its kind provisions to his servants as well as to his children, inasmuch as they, equally with his children, were required to receive the mark of circumcision, the external seal of that covenant. Gen. xvii. 12, 13, 14.

The extent of his authority over his servants, so far as it is indicated in the inspired record of Moses, does not appear to be greater than it was over his children. He was the civil and religious sovereign of both. This sovereignty was probably vested in him partly by inheritance, partly by the usages of the times and countries in which he lived, and still more by the consent of his subjects.

Men who live in society must be the subjects of some government; they must bow to some authority which they become obligated to uphold, and which becomes obligated in its turn, to afford them protection. The government of Abraham was upheld by the combined support of his servants.



So far as appears from the inspired account of this dynasty, that support must have been voluntary, or chiefly so. There was no higher power by which a reluctant submission could have been enforced. There was no middle class to stand between Abraham and his servants, who in consequence of peculiar privileges, might have had an interest to assist him in oppressing them. He stood nearly if not quite alone, with nothing to bind his servants to him, but the benefits they could derive from his government, patronage, and protection. Those benefits, we have reason to believe, were not few nor small; for his was a government in which the doing of judgment and justice was strictly enforced. Gen. xviii. 19.

A kindred species of government and of servitude still continues in the East, though with far less of judgment and justice, and with far more of the exercise of arbitrary power, than can reasonably be attributed to Abraham and his successors in office.

When Jacob left his father's residence, in order to escape the displeasure of Esau, whom he had both injured and offended, he visited Laban, his mother's brother, and abode with him for the space of a month. Gen. xxix. 14. Laban then "said unto him, because thou art my brother, shouldst thou therefore *serve* me for nothing? Tell me what shall be thy wages." Gen. xxix. 15. This passage teaches, that Jacob resided with Laban in the capacity of a servant, and that as such he was entitled to wages.

In verse 20, we are informed that Jacob served seven years for Rachel. At the expiration of that term, he received Leah, an older sister, in place of Rachel, contrary to the terms of the agreement. He then had the offer of Rachel on condition that he should continue to serve Laban seven years more, verse 27, which he accepted. Jacob's wives received the gift of a maid-servant for each, from their father.

Each of these maid-servants became at a later period the inferior wives of Jacob, at the request of their mistresses respectively. Gen. xxx. 4, 9; xxxv. 22.

The servitude of Jacob for his wives, consisted of two periods of seven years. It may be denominated septennial servitude, in distinction from that which is perpetual. It corresponds in respect to duration, to our present system of apprenticeship to trades, which is generally for a term of years, and in many cases that of seven. An apprentice is a servant, and continues such during the period of his apprenticeship. For aught that appears in the inspired narrative, the condition of Jacob during



the period of his servitude for his wives, was substantially the same as that of others who were servants for life, or during the pleasure of their masters. He may have been as much in the power of his master for the time being, as they were for life.

The word hand-maid, which so often occurs in the Old Testament, is the same as maid-servant, being a less eligible translation of the same word.

Isaac says to Esau, respecting the blessing which he had pronounced upon Jacob: "Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given him for servants." Gen. xxvii. 37.

The nature of the patriarchal government administered by Isaac, is here clearly indicated. Esau was Isaac's apparent heir by right of primogeniture. As such, he had evidently expected to be invested with the government of the patriarchate, on the decease or retirement of his father.

In the solemn patriarchal benediction, however, Jacob had been distinctly designated as the immediate ruler of the patriarchate, in preference to Esau, and his family as the ruling branch of the family of Isaac. In pronouncing this blessing upon Jacob, his father had acted under a false impression that he was blessing his first-born. But he was conscious of having acted under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, and he had no authority to recall what he had said.

In giving Jacob his brethren for servants, Isaac obviously intended to invest him with the exclusive government of the patriarchate. He did not divide that government among his sons, but he purposed to give it to the oldest, agreeably to the usages of those times. The brethren of the proposed sovereign in the patriarchal dynasty, were given to him not as slaves, but as subjects. Jacob was designated as the lawful successor of Isaac, and was to succeed to the exercise of his authority over his own brethren, as well as over the other subjects of his father.

This election of Jacob to succeed his father in the patriarchal government, does not appear to have resulted in his immediate elevation to that office.

He was soon obliged to leave the principality to the government of which he had been appointed, in order to escape the murderous displeasure of Esau; and in his absence the reins of the patriarchal government seem to have fallen into Esau's hands.

Jacob, however, in pursuance of the high destination which the prophetic blessing of his father had assigned him, laid the



foundation of a new patriarchate, separate from that which fell into the hands of his less pious brother, and became the real successor of Isaac and Abraham, by succeeding to the exercise and maintenance of the patriarchal religion, and to the effectual establishment of the same among his descendants.

He realized the fulfilment of his father's prophetic blessing, by the standing which he ultimately attained through many trials and difficulties, as a prince having power with God, and swaying by his influence the destinies of men. He and his descendants are first; Esau and his descendants, second. Jacob and his descendants became the light of the world, the salt of the earth, in whom all nations are blessed; whereas the patriarchate of Esau was far inferior, in political consequence, to that of his brother.

The facts referred to in the foregoing pages, few as they are, comprehend every thing of importance in the patriarchal history, relating to the system of servitude which they administered; a system which is erroneously regarded by many as similar to modern slavery.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are described as successive chiefs or patriarchal rulers of a dynasty, founded by the first of these distinguished men.

They were all men of uncommon excellence, and are justly enrolled among the benefactors of their race. They commenced a train of exertion to promote and perpetuate true religion among men, which is yet, after the lapse of so many centuries, but partially developed; and which is destined to fill the world with righteousness, and heaven with redeemed and rejoicing worshipers of God.

These lights of the world were, however, but men, compassed with the usual infirmities of our fallen nature, subject to temptation, to errors of judgment, to perversions of moral feeling, to sin. As such they are described by Moses. A poet or novelist would have described them as angels. But the pen of inspiration, faithful to truth, has drawn their picture, diversified with all the varieties of light and shade which belong to man, both as human and depraved. In their faith and devotion to the service of God and to the promotion of piety, they were examples for our imitation. In the blessings which they received as the consequence of their piety, they were examples for our encouragement. But in their errors and sins, they were examples for our warning, and were designed to illustrate the weakness and imperfection of human virtue, even in the best men.

We have no evidence that the patriarchs held their servants in a state of slavery. There are no traces in the patriarchal history, of laws which resemble the modern systems of legislation designed to support the institution of slavery. Abraham does not appear to have been a slave-holder, but a patriarchal ruler or chief, such as the state of society in that period and country required. His example, therefore, and that of the other patriarchs, cannot be safely relied on as affording any scriptural warrant for slavery, particularly that of the United States.

The fact, that some of Abraham's servants were acquired by purchase, does not prove that they were acquired without their consent, or that they were held as property, or that they were required to surrender to their masters their rights of free-agency, and to submit to an irresponsible sovereignty, established and administered for the exclusive benefit of the master.

Abraham's servants were accounted members of his family, equally with his children, and entitled to high privileges as such. It does not appear that they were deprived of the rights of marriage, of holding and transferring property, or of acquiring knowledge and improving their minds to any extent possible. But the contrary is clearly established.

Even if Abraham and the other patriarchs were convicted of holding their servants in a relation in any respects similar to that of slaves, it would not prove slave-holding to be right.

Abraham and Jacob lived in the practice of polygamy, in violation of the Divine institution of marriage, handed down from the beginning of the world. God's institution of marriage contemplated the union of two persons, one man and one woman, in the matrimonial relation, and no more. Under that institution, no man had a right to more than one wife, and no woman to more than one husband. Polygamy never has been conformable to the Divine law. It was not right in the days of the patriarchs, and it is not now. God's displeasure against the patriarchs for this sin, was unequivocally expressed by the domestic trials which were brought upon them by this means. The most severe afflictions of Abraham arose from his polygamy. The same was true of Jacob. The lives of both those patriarchs were greatly embittered by the evils which came upon them as the consequence of their sins in this respect. Their families were divided against themselves, and greatly distressed on this account. The sale of Joseph into Egypt, and all the trouble



which it occasioned, arose from the fact of his being the son of a favorite wife, and not of the only one.

The sin of polygamy, though doubtless a sin, in the days of the patriarchs and in the state of society then existing in Palestine, is still more criminal now, in this and other christian countries.

The same is true of oppression, by holding persons in unrighteous servitude. There are various modifications of servitude which are right. That of a subject to a lawful sovereign; of a child to a parent; of an apprentice to the master to whom he is apprenticed; and of other servants who are hired for lawful purposes, and who are duly recompensed for their services, are all right and necessary. These servitudes were always right.

If the servitude of the patriarchs was oppressive in any way, it was so far wrong, and as truly so as polygamy was. So far as any modern systems of servitude upheld in christian and civilized countries are oppressive, they are still more criminal than the same would have been in the less enlightened and less improved times of the patriarchs.

It is not the design of God, that we should imitate the examples of ancient saints, without careful discrimination. They were but men, compassed with the infirmities of our fallen and corrupted nature, and but partially delivered from the bondage of moral corruption. As such they are described by the inspired writers. The most important facts of their lives are set before us with a sparing distribution either of commendation or blame. The inspired writers seldom interrupt their narratives to commend the virtues, or censure the vices which they describe, but leave both to awaken their appropriate feelings, and make their due impression on the minds of their readers.

In these records are developed the true and universal principles of human nature, both in its renovated and unregenerate state. In showing us wherein the best and wisest of men have erred, they administer salutary admonition to ourselves, and point out the particulars in respect to which we have need to be especially on our guard.

The virtues of the patriarchs we ought to imitate; their sins we ought to avoid. The record of their sins was not intended to embolden us in sin, but to deter us from it, and to encourage, if penitent, in seeking for pardon.

They lived in a dark age, from the influences of which they



did not entirely escape. The system of servitude which they adopted, corresponded in some degree to the institutions generally prevalent in that age and country. It is not necessary to suppose that they were entirely justifiable in respect to their civil institutions and authority, in order to vindicate the honor of God in bestowing upon them marks of his special favor. And if they were to some extent guilty, their guilt may have been far less than would be contracted by the exercise of similar authority in christian lands, at the present time.

Those who in this country endeavor to justify themselves in oppressing their fellow-men by the example of the patriarchs, will find ere long, and perhaps to their everlasting sorrow, what they ought to have learned long since, that Scriptural examples are no justification of injustice; and that they have either mistaken the facts in respect to patriarchal servitude, or else are making a use of them, the very opposite of that which those examples were designed and are adapted to answer.

Those who claim the patriarchs as slave-holders, and charge them with having sustained this relation to the subjects of their patriarchal authority, are guilty of highly slanderous representations of the characters of those holy men, and of their religion.

Their representations are slanderous, because they involve the charge of a gross violation of the principles of justice and mercy, and are not sustained but contradicted by the evidence relating to the case.

To represent them as lawful sovereigns exercising a mild, religious, and civil authority over their subjects, permitting such as choose to leave their dominions for those of any other prince or chief, is evidently most accordant to the facts relating to this subject, as they appear from the Scripture narrative.

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## SECTION II.

### THE SERVITUDE OF THE MOSAIC INSTITUTES.

THE servitude of the patriarchs previous to the time of Moses, is involved in some obscurity, for want of a particular account of the laws and usages by which it was regulated. All that we

know of it is derived from incidental allusions to this subject, and illustrations of it contained in the book of Genesis, and from reasonings based on contemporary institutions and usages, and those of later times.

The system of servitude as it existed among the Israelites in later times, is more fully explained. The account of the Israelitish polity as established by Moses, embraced several important enactments or ordinances relating to this institution, which enable us to determine its character with considerable precision. No part of the Israelitish polity opens a more curious and interesting field of inquiry, than this. It is deeply interesting as a mere matter of history; still more so as one of sacred history, and especially so at the present time.

But notwithstanding the interest it is adapted to excite, there is reason to believe that it is very imperfectly understood by the great mass of the most enlightened christian communities. It cannot be well understood without considerable attention and effort. Many among us seem to have mistaken its true character entirely, and have expended powerful and learned effort in giving plausibility and currency to their mistakes.

The laws of Moses on the subject of servitude are recorded in the following passages, and principally in the order here observed. Several of them were communicated verbally by God, on the occasion of his uttering the ten commandments, when he descended in fire on Mount Sinai. All were dictated by his wisdom.

1. Ex. xx. 10: "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." The same is repeated in Deut. v. 14.

This passage recognizes the existence of servants of both sexes, and makes it the duty of the master to afford them the opportunity of observing the Sabbath. In respect to the observance of the Sabbath, the servant is put on an equality with the son and daughter. It appears also from the mode of expression here adopted, that the master was not only required to allow his servant to enjoy the rest of the Sabbath, but that he was invested with authority to command it, and required to exercise that authority when necessary for this purpose.

In Deut. v. 14, there is added to the commandment, as stated in Ex. xx. 10, "that thy man-servant and maid-servant may



rest as well as thou ;” showing that particular stress is laid on the part of the commandment which relates to the rest of servants.

Servants were entitled to the same privileges as children and others, in respect to the great annual festivals of the Israelites. Deut. xvi. 9—17 : “ Three times a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose.”

These laws respecting the observance of the Sabbath and the annual religious festivals by servants, prove that this class of persons were considered, in the eye of the law, as having the rights of men, and that they were not reduced to the low level of things. They develop a principle of law which needs only to be carried out into its various legitimate applications, to secure every right and subserve every interest which we possess as moral beings.

Ex. xx. 17 : “ Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s.” Consider in connexion with this, Ex. xx. 15, “ Thou shalt not steal.”

The words man-servant and maid-servant, as they are used in the ten commandments, must be interpreted in their most comprehensive sense. They do not denote a particular class of servants, but those of any class whatever. The command, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s servant, does not prove that servants were held as property, any more than the similar injunction in respect to the neighbor’s wife, proves that wives were held as property. Men may be possessed as servants, without being possessed as property. Children and wives are the objects of possession, as children and wives, but not as chattels personal. They may be claimed by the titles of wife and child, but not by that of a chattel personal.

The passages above quoted, comprehending the tenth and eighth commandments in the moral and municipal law of the Israelites, establish a principle which is inconsistent with holding men as property.

The law respecting covetousness, says, “ Thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbor’s ;” that is, any thing that justly belongs to thy neighbor. It comprehends every thing that a man, considered with respect to his fellow men, may call his own, whether held as property or in any other relation of posses-



sion. It of course comprehends a man's faculties and rights as a rational and moral being, and his labor. These the Israelites were not allowed to covet nor to invade. The limitation of these moral precepts so as to make them signify merely, 'Thou shalt not covet nor steal what is thy neighbor's, by virtue of human laws and the usages of the society in which you happen to live, however unrighteous those laws and usages may be, is a gross perversion of their true sense.

2. Ex. xxi. 1—11 : "Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them ; if thou buy or procure a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve, and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself : if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him.

"If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall say, I love my master, my wife, and my children ; I will not go free ; then his master shall bring him to God, (incorrectly translated judges,) and he shall bring him to the door or to the door post, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his servant forever.

"And if a man sell his daughter for an אַמָּה a maid-servant, (of a higher and peculiar class, not an ordinary female servant,) she shall not go out as the men-servants do. If she is disliked by her master, so that he will not take her for a wife, he shall release her, or allow her to be redeemed. He shall not have power to sell her to another family after his having rejected or defrauded her. If he betroth her to his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. If he take to him another, (that is, another wife or concubine,) her food, her clothing, and her marriage duty, he shall not diminish. If he afford her not these three, then shall she go out free, without money."

From this passage it appears that Israelites might be sold into sexennial, but not perpetual servitude. No Hebrew could be bound to another in the capacity of a servant, for more than six years, with the exception of the female servants sold for concubines or wives.

No person belonging to the Theocracy was allowed to contract with another member of the same for his service in the capacity of a servant, for a longer period than six years ; and as none could acquire authority over a Hebrew as a servant, for more

than six years, so none could transfer such authority for a longer period. This law for the regulation of servitude, is one of the most striking and singular of the Mosaic institutes. It was an abridgment of civil liberty in favor of liberty, and to prevent injustice and oppression, and was worthy of a Divine Lawgiver.

It appears from Deut. xv. 18, that those called hired-servants, contracted only for three years at a time. A sexennial servant was worth a double hired-servant. The same is indicated by Isa. xvi. 14 : " Within three years as the years of a hireling," &c.

If a master gave to his man-servant, a female-servant as a wife, he still retained authority over her as his servant, till her time of service expired. Her children were also his. Ex. xxi. 4, compared with Deut. xv. 12 ; Jer. xxxiv. 9, 10, 11, 16.

Servitude was to some extent hereditary among the Israelites, though not perpetual. Those born of servant-women, in certain circumstances, were the heirs of a servitude similar to that of their parents ; but only for a limited period ; like children who are born to a state of temporary servitude to their parents, as children.

Besides the sexennial servitude above described, there was an institution of perpetual servitude, which was not hereditary. After having served a master six years, and having found his service agreeable, the servant might by a solemn public declaration of a desire to be bound for life to that master, expressed in a prescribed form, become his perpetual servant. Ex. xxi. 5, 6.

The mode of setting persons apart to perpetual servitude, corresponded to the meanness of that relation, and was at the same time adapted effectually to prevent this servitude from being assumed unwillingly, and to discourage the assumption of it at all. It was done before God or before the ecclesiastical and civil authority, which officiated in God's name, and was preceded by an avowal of the servant's desire to have an ignominious rite performed for the purpose in question ; and finally, this rite was performed by the master whose service was thus publicly chosen in preference to liberty, and who by his participation in the ceremony, signified his acceptance of the person thus voluntarily surrendered to him, in the capacity of a perpetual servant.

Daughters might be sold by their parents, as maid-servants of a higher class, or wives of an inferior order, whose condition, like that of lawful wives, was perpetual. If however the maid-servant of this class became an object of dislike to her master, so that he should refuse to take her for a wife, or to betroth her



to his son, she was entitled to her liberty. Her master had no right to dispose of her to strangers, or out of his family. If a master betrothed a maid-servant of this description to his son, he was required to treat her as a daughter. A man might have several wives of this class, but he was required to afford them the maintenance, and allow them the privileges of wives; and in case of his failing in any important respect to discharge the duties he owed them, they were entitled to their liberty. Ex. xxi. 7—11.

Ex. xxi. 1—11, contains a summary of the laws of Moses, on the subject of servitude generally, and of that particular modification of it, which prevailed in respect to females, who were termed in this statute אִמָּהוֹת maid-servants, but who are in other parts of the scriptures denominated concubines. See Gen. xxii. 24; xxxv. 22; Jud. xix. 1, 9, &c.; 2 Sam. xv. 16; xx. 3; 1 Kings xi. 3; 2 Chron. xi. 21.

The identity of the maid-servants here described, and the concubines of David, Solomon, Rehoboam, &c., does not admit of a reasonable doubt. The concubinage of the earlier patriarchs was probably of a similar character. It was a system of matrimonial servitude, and analogous to the matrimonial state as instituted by God.

Ex. xxi. 7—11, affords an explanation of the otherwise inexplicable conduct of David, Solomon, and others, in having concubines. The concubinage which they supported, was a species of servitude permitted by their laws. It had existed and been handed down from the earliest times. To them it was lawful, considered in reference to a universally acknowledged rule of conduct. This law however did not enjoin concubinage. It only permitted it, and that under restrictions which were founded in benevolence and justice.

The laws of Moses gave no other countenance to this system of servitude, than simply not to prohibit it, and to lay such restrictions on it as were calculated to protect the concubine from intolerable oppression. They did not therefore declare or make it right. Concubinage prevailed under these laws as it had done before they were enacted, to the reproach even of good men, who upheld it by their examples. The law which did not forbid this iniquity, was doubtless in many cases incorrectly understood to sanction it, as it has been in later times.

It is not to be presumed that no instruction was given on this subject, but what is recorded in the Scripture narrative. The



requirements of God in relation to marriage, were doubtless understood and more or less explained, long before the institution of concubinage was relinquished. The gradual increase and diffusion of light on this subject, from experience and reason, and from the more perfect understanding of the will of God, as made known in the Scriptures and by prophets, at length subverted entirely the institution of concubinage among the worshippers of God, by its coming to be considered both injurious and irreligious—contrary to reason and revelation.

It does not appear that these laws respecting sexennial servitude, applied to the case of heathen servants who continued in a heathen state. Such, for aught that appears, might be held in a state of servitude for a longer period than Israelites.

3. Ex. xxi. 20, 21 : “And if a man smite his man-servant, or his maid-servant, with a rod, so as to produce immediate death, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if the servant continue for a day or two, the master shall not be punished, for he is his money.”

This law makes no difference between the crime of killing a servant and any other person, provided death is immediate. When the injured person survives a day or two, the law presumes the injury accidental, on the ground that the injurer had a pecuniary interest in the life of the person injured. Persons may be presumed not to have intended injurious conduct, which was manifestly contrary to their pecuniary interests. Yet the infliction of punishment in case of immediate death, shows that this was only a subordinate principle of evidence, and that the intentional killing of a servant, when it was clearly proved, was a crime of the same nature, and rendered the culprit liable to the same penalties, as the killing of any other person in like circumstances.

4. Ex. xxi. 16 : “He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his possession, he shall surely be put to death.” Deut. xxiv. 7 : “If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him or selleth him, then that thief shall die, and thou shalt put away evil from among you.” Man-stealing is here prohibited by the severest penalties. The crime defined under this title, is evidently that of seizing a human being with a view to reduce him to a state of servitude, and subsequently treating him and disposing of him as a servant under the power of a master. It applied of



course to the seizure of children, as well as to that of persons of mature age. The penalty of man-stealing was death.

5. Ex. xxi. 26, 27 : "And if a man smite the eye of his servant or the eye of his maid, he shall let him go free for his eye's sake ; and if he smite out his servant's tooth or his maid's tooth, he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake." This law was designed to protect servants from personal injury. Injuries of the eye and tooth only, are particularly mentioned. Other personal injuries of a serious nature undoubtedly entitled the servant to a similar privilege. "The eyes and teeth," says Rosenmüller, "seem to be here used as examples of the greatest and least mutilation ; in conformity with which, sentence was to be given in all analogous cases of mutilation whatever. The loss of a finger or other member, was a greater injury than that of a tooth, and less than that of an eye."

6. Ex. xxii. 3 : "If he (a thief) have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft."

If a thief was unable to make the restitution for his theft which the law required, he might be sold for the amount wanting. It does not appear from this law, that the thief was sold into permanent servitude, but that he was sold for a time sufficient to raise the amount wanted to fulfill the law of restitution for theft. The institution required was four or five-fold according to the nature of the articles stolen, and the amount of injury done. Ex. xxii. 1.

The preceding laws were enacted 1491 B. C., at the time of the giving of the law from Mount Sinai. Considerable time was occupied in settling the Hebrew polity, in building the tabernacle, &c., as far as these are related to have been carried forward in Exodus. The enactments and occurrences recorded in Leviticus, are supposed to have belonged to the following year, 1490 B. C.

7. Lev. xix. 20 : "And if a man lieth carnally with a woman that is a maid-servant, espoused to a husband and not duly redeemed, nor her freedom given her, she shall be scourged. They shall not be put to death, because she was not free."

The word here translated scourged, means examined, exposed, animadverted upon, and lastly, punished, without indicating the particular kind of punishment intended. As a matter of fact, scourging was probably the kind of punishment inflicted in such cases, and that on the man as well as on the woman, and with a severity proportioned to the supposed criminality of the offend-

ers. Death was the penalty for the same crime, if committed with a free woman in similar circumstances. This is intimated by the reason given for the milder punishment inflicted in this case : "They shall not be put to death, because she was not free." And a law to that effect is recorded in Deut. xxii. 23, 24, B. C. 1451, after an interval of thirty-nine years.

It does not appear that in any other case except that specified in Lev. xix. 20, the laws which guarded the chastity of female servants, differed from those relating to other females. Deut. xxii. 28, 29.

8. Lev. xxv. 8—10 ; verses 10, 54 : "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all the inhabitants thereof. It shall be a jubilee unto you, and ye shall return every man to his possession, and ye shall return every man to his family."

During this year the Israelites recovered their lands, however they might have been lost ; and all who were held in a state of servitude, not a modification of the marriage relation, were released and made free. The object of this law was, to prevent oppression. Verse 14 : "Ye shall not oppress one another, a man his brother." The same is repeated verse 17, with the injunction of the fear of the Lord, as the corresponding and antithetical duty, where the word translated another, is עִמָּךָ neighbor or fellow.

It does not appear that the law limiting the servitude of the Israelites to six years, or that requiring the proclamation of liberty to all the inhabitants of the land every fiftieth year, applied to heathen servants. The phrase inhabitants of the land, seems to denote Israelites, those and those only who adopted the national religion and became incorporated with the nation ; a privilege secured to all. Gen. xvii. 12—14.

Lev. xxv. 44—46, which follows almost immediately after the enactments respecting the year of jubilee, seems to require this limitation, as it contains a manifest exception to the rule by which the nation was to be governed in dealing with Israelites, and states expressly, that they might deal with the heathen according to a different rule. The words translated bondmen and bondmaids, in Lev. xxv. 44, and in several other places, are the same as those which are usually and more correctly translated men-servants and maid-servants, and ought to be uniformly so translated.

Israelites were not allowed to be held in permanent servitude, because they were the Lord's servants. Lev. xxv. 41—43. This reason did not exist or apply in favor of limiting the servitude of



the heathen. When they became the Lord's servants, then they were entitled to the privilege of a limited servitude under the Theocracy, and to the other privileges of Israelites, but not till then.

The more rigorous servitude to which the heathen were allowed to be reduced, was required to be administered with justice and humanity. It does not appear to have differed from the sexennial servitude of the Israelites, except in being for an indefinite period. In a community which was designed to be strictly religious, all the arrangements and regulations of which were designed to promote the exercise and cultivation of piety, it is not strange that a difference should be made in respect to privileges between those who were professedly the servants of God, and those who were not.

God brings various evils upon men as sinners. He does so in regard to the heathen generally, and his justice in doing so is unimpeachable. He had a right to appoint a rigorous system of servitude for the purpose of discouraging the wickedness of those heathen who fell into the hands of the Israelites. He had a right to make his own people the administrators of his displeasure against the heathen, as such, by means of the system of servitude, which he authorized them to exercise over this class of their fellow men.

The Divine warrant was enough to justify the administrator. If such a warrant could be pleaded for slavery in modern times, and by christian nations, it would amply justify the administration of that. But it cannot. The perpetual servitude of the slave is not based in any degree on religious considerations. He is not consigned to this servitude on the ground of his being a heathen, or on the ground of any other moral delinquency. He may be the most devoted of God's servants, and submit most cheerfully to the religious and political institutions of the land, those of slavery alone excepted, and be kept in slavery still.

Besides, the character of servitude is not to be determined merely by a consideration of the length of time during which it may last, but of the principles upon which it is founded, and by which it is administered. A system of servitude may be unrighteous, though it lasts but a day; and it may be righteous, though extended to many years. The Israelites were not allowed to reduce the heathen indiscriminately to a state of servitude. The law did not distinguish between stealing and oppressing a heathen and an Israelite. None, whether Israelites or heathen, could lawfully be reduced to a state of servitude, without just



cause or a divine warrant ; and none could lawfully be retained in that state except on similar grounds.

The institution of the year of release and of jubilee, as recorded in Lev. xxv. took place 1490 B. C. The renewal of the former is recorded in Deut. xv. 1—11, in 1451 B. C., thirty-nine years later than its first appointment by Divine authority.

In Deut. xv. 12—18, is a re-enactment of the statute recorded in Ex. xxi. 1—7, in relation to the sexennial servitude of the Israelites ; also in relation to the only species of perpetual servitude which was allowed, and which was sealed by boring the ear of the servant with an awl, &c.

Here there is an additional statute in respect to the sexennial release of servants, requiring them to be furnished liberally at the time of their release, with whatever is needful for their comfort.

Deut. xv. 13, 14 : “And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty : thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine-press ; of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee, thou shalt give him.”

The law in respect to a sexennial release applied to ordinary maid-servants, in the same manner as it did to men-servants. Deut. xv. 17 : “And also unto thy maid-servant thou shalt do likewise.”

9. Deut. xxiii. 15, 16 : “Thou shalt not deliver to his master the servant who is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in whatever place he shall choose, within one of thy gates where it pleaseth him best. Thou shalt not oppress him.” The Israelites in the land of Canaan were surrounded by nations less enlightened and humane than themselves. Among these nations servants were often oppressed. This law provides, that if any person of a foreign nation, held in unrighteous servitude, fled to them, he should be received and protected as a freeman, and neither returned to his master, nor oppressed by them. It made the Theocracy the sanctuary of the oppressed, from all nations. This law recognizes also the right of all persons to liberty, who are competent to take care of themselves. It applied to servants held among the Israelites, equally with others. If such left their masters, they were allowed to shift for themselves, and if competent to take care of themselves without submitting to a state of servitude, they were allowed to do so.

The servants among the Hebrews, so far as servitude was reg-



ulated by law, comprehended concubines, or females held in a kind of marriage state, as wives of an inferior class, and servants not held in any modification of the marriage state, or common servants. The subjection of concubines to their masters, was analogous to that of wives to their husbands, and was rewarded with corresponding privileges. The condition and rights of the concubine were, in most respects, similar to those of the wife.

This institution, however, was evidently one of the inventions of man, which God did not originally appoint, as he did that of marriage, and which he never sanctioned. There is a natural demand for the institution of marriage, as it was established by God; but there is none for that of concubinage. The demand for concubinage is unnatural and criminal.

This institution existed in the time of Abraham, and was upheld by him and succeeding patriarchs. Moses found it still prevalent, and laid it under such restrictions as he consistently could, but did not abolish it. What instructions he gave, and what doctrines he promulgated on this subject, farther than is recorded in the brief history he has given us of his doings and instructions, we know not. It is to be presumed that the inspired author of the first five books of the Holy Bible, was not ignorant of the disagreement between the institution of concubinage, as it existed in the times of the patriarchs, and as defined in his institutes, and that of marriage, as established by God, and recorded by himself, under Divine direction, in Gen. ii. 21—24. The institution of marriage, as instituted by God, was different from that of concubinage, in several important respects.

The other classes of servants besides concubines, comprehended both males and females, and corresponded more nearly to that of apprentices among us, than to that of slaves. No person was consigned to permanent servitude, except by his own choice, or else as a punishment for crimes, particularly the crime of theft; and that only when legal restitution required his sale as a servant for life. When there would arise a necessity to sell a thief, in order to make legal restitution for the things stolen, his sale for a limited time, was all that the case required. In ordinary cases, no person could acquire authority over another as a master, for more than six years, without the servant's consent, expressed before the civil and ecclesiastical authority, in a manner prescribed, and that after six year's trial of the service of the master chosen.

How far the Mosaic system of servitude was agreeable to the principles of natural justice and pure religion, it may not be easy to decide. Concubinage was undoubtedly wrong. It was a manifest corruption of God's institution of marriage, and was attended with undoubted marks of the Divine displeasure, both before and after the time of Moses.

Unnumbered and severe trials to Abraham, to Jacob, to David, and to Solomon, emanated from this source, and from sins of a similar nature. The institution of concubinage was permitted to continue by Moses probably for the same reason that he permitted divorces for trivial causes at the pleasure of the husband. Deut. xxiv. 1 ; Matt. v. 31, 32 ; xix. 3—9.

In answer to the question, Why, then, if it was wrong, did Moses command to give writing of divorcement, and to put the wife away? Jesus Christ replied, Matt. xix. 8 : "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives ; but from the beginning it was not so. Verse 9 : Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery ; and whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery."

If Moses tolerated any violations of the principles of natural justice in the laws which he enacted on the subject of servitude, they may be explained in a similar manner. If injustice was tolerated, it was only tolerated for want of power to suppress it. It was not approved, still less enforced as a duty which any one was bound to perform.

The servitude of those who were not held as concubines, but as ordinary servants, was not necessarily, perhaps not generally criminal. It originated either in the convenience or necessities of the servant. It was commenced and continued with his consent, or with that of his parents or other lawful guardians. In ordinary cases he could not dispose of his liberties by making himself the servant of his fellow man, for a longer period than six years, at the expiration of which he became free.

The law respecting those born in servitude, is not fully explained, or at least is not as explicit as might be desired. It affords no evidence, however, that the children of Israelites could be forcibly retained in servitude after becoming of age ; and since it is hardly credible that such could have been the fact, without evidence of it having been incorporated in the Mosaic history and institutes, we are authorized to suppose that it was



not the fact; and we are left to infer, that the children of Israelish servants became free at the same age as other children.

It is common at the present time to engage persons as servants for a year or for years, without at all depriving them of their liberties to such an extent as to be oppressive. Apprenticeship is a species of servitude which is usually extended through several years. Persons are frequently sold into this species of servitude by their parents or guardians without being oppressed, because it is with their consent and for their benefit. The same was probably the case with the sexennial servitude of the Jews. Persons sold themselves, or those of whom they had the righteous guardianship into it, for their own benefit, and when the period of servitude agreed upon expired, the servants resumed their freedom. Every seventh year the servant resumed his freedom by law, just as the young man becomes free at 21 years of age.

The Hebrew servants were laid under no legal disabilities in respect to education or religion. They might be educated in the most perfect manner; and were entitled to all the privileges of religious instruction and worship, which were necessary for their spiritual and temporal welfare. Whenever they were competent to support themselves in independence, they were protected by law in deserting their masters, and in the honest support of themselves as freemen.

The system of sexennial servitude must have been attended with several advantages to the servant as well as to the master. It afforded him a somewhat permanent location; and saved him the expense and loss of time incident to frequent removals from place to place, and from one employer or master to another. It also tended more or less to promote stability of character, to strengthen habits of order and regularity, and to prevent both idleness, expense, and dissipation. For aught we know, it may have been as necessary and as useful in the state of society then existing, as the prevailing system of apprenticeship is now. By making the relation of servant as a general rule somewhat permanent, the Mosaic institutes gave him an interest in the family to which he belonged, and that family an interest in him, which could not have been created in any other way. The servant was not a transient and perpetually-shifting appendage to the family of his master, but almost a permanent member of it. The interests of the family were of course identified with

his own, in a degree corresponding to the permanence of his relations as a servant.

The servitude authorized by the Mosaic institutes, was modified both by the general character of those institutes, and by many specific and general laws, not relating particularly to this subject.

The fundamental principles of the Mosaic economy are developed in the following passages:—Deut. vi. 5: “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” So Deut. x. 12.

Lev. xix. 13: “Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him. The wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.” 15. “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment. Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor.” 17. “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.” 33, 34. “And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you, shall be unto you as one born among you; and thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

Deut. x. 19: “Love ye therefore the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Deut. i. 16, 17.

Lev. xxv. 17: “Ye shall not therefore oppress one another, but thou shalt fear thy God, for I am the Lord your God.” 35—37: “And if thy brother be waxen poor and fallen into decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him, yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, he shall be with thee and serve thee unto the year of jubilee. Take thou no usury of him or increase, but fear thy God, that thy brother may live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.”

The principles of benevolence and mercy were inculcated in the Mosaic institutes, as a part of the civil and ecclesiastical law of the land. They were not merely assumed and professed by voluntary associations into which those only entered who choose, but they were enjoined upon the whole nation as a part of their national law, and enforced by the most solemn and weighty sanctions.

The specific enactments and general usages of the Mosaic institutes in respect to servitude, have all been noticed, and to some extent illustrated, in the foregoing passages of this section.



The servitude of these institutes is sometimes represented as being substantially the same as modern slavery, particularly that of the United States; and the fact that the former was authorized by Moses, is supposed to furnish a Scriptural warrant for the latter at the present time.

This point is one of so much consequence, that it may be worth while here to notice some respects in which the servitude of the Mosaic institutes differs from that denominated slavery, and known by the title of slavery in modern times.

1. The Mosaic servitude was sexennial, except when the servant, after having completed one period of servitude, chose to bind himself to his former master as a servant for life, and that for his own benefit; whereas slavery is for life.

2. The Mosaic servitude was not founded on a peculiarity of complexion; slavery is.

3. In the case of those who embraced the true religion, the Mosaic servitude was not hereditary, except during the period of the child's minority. Slavery is hereditary for life.

4. The master under the Mosaic institutes, does not appear to have possessed any greater authority over his servants, than he did over his children. The slave holder does.

5. The Mosaic servitude did not divest those subjected to it of their rights and privileges as men; particularly the right to enjoy God's institutions, that of Divine worship, of marriage, and the benefits of obedience to every part of his law. Slavery divests its subjects of all these rights. Slaves may neither worship God, enjoy the institution of marriage, or obey any part of the Divine law, except by permission of their masters.

6. The Mosaic servitude did not deprive its subjects of the rights of citizens, particularly that of the same legal protection which was extended to others. Slavery does.

7. The Mosaic servitude was the natural result of men's necessities, and was supported no farther than circumstances made its support necessary. Slavery is unnatural and is sustained by a cruel and unjust system of legislation, which has no other object but to support it, and to create and perpetuate a necessity for it.

8. The permanent servitude of the heathen authorized by Moses, was founded on a religious and moral distinction designated by God, and did not necessarily involve injustice of any kind or degree. The contrary is true of slavery.

9. The labor of the servant under the Mosaic servitude was for

value received. The servant submitted to that relation either to cancel an obligation of justice, or to procure for himself specific benefits, which in his opinion he could not so well secure by any other means. The only instances in which this was not the case, are when enemies devoted to destruction by express judgment of God, seem to have had their sentence of death commuted for one of servitude. But even in cases of this kind, the civil and ecclesiastical polity of the Israelites required the exercise of that justice and mercy towards their captives which is incompatible with uncompensated or even partially compensated servitude. Slavery does not recognize the principles of justice. It does not concede the right to a full compensation for servile labor.

There is a fundamental difference between slavery and the servitude of the Mosaic institutes. If the latter therefore was a righteous and benevolent institution, if it was founded and administered in equity, it does not follow as a matter of course, that slavery is righteous. For the two institutions are almost entirely dissimilar. If, however, the servitude of the Israelites was in any respect unrighteous, slavery is far more so.

Besides, the Mosaic servitude was adapted to peculiar circumstances. Moses undoubtedly did right in tolerating and modifying it as he did. But it does not follow that a perfectly similar system of servitude would be adapted to our different circumstances; or that it would be right for our government to adopt such a system, or for our citizens to lend it their countenance or support, even if it were authorized and established by law. The contrary is manifestly true in respect to that part of the Mosaic servitude which related to concubinage, and it may be true of other parts.

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### SECTION III.

#### THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINES RESPECTING SERVITUDE.

THE religion of the New Testament is substantially the same as that of the Old. It is the religion of the true God, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and the religion of fallen



man under similar dispensations of grace, and sustaining similar relations to God, and other intelligent and moral beings. The doctrines of the Bible are parts of one great harmonious system of truth, which can never change or pass away. They embrace distinctions between right and wrong, which are universal and perpetual. As a general rule, things which were right in the days of Adam, and Abraham, and Moses, are right now ; and those which are wrong now, were wrong then. This is the fact in respect to all our conduct, so far as it involves the permanent and universal principles of morality. Where these principles are not involved, it may be otherwise. Things may be right now which were not always so ; and may have been right once which are not so now. This is true of all that conduct which is made requisite and obligatory by temporary circumstances or precepts, but which is not required by any permanent laws. It is an excellence of the Divine government, that in most things we are required to regulate our conduct by universal and permanent laws. To these the Bible principally relates, and in the investigation and right understanding of them, we have the greatest interest. The universal and permanent laws of human action are always obligatory, except when suspended or dispensed with by God.

As is the case with most other subjects of a moral nature, so in respect to servitude, important information may be expected in the New Testament. Especially if the subject was not amply explained in the Old Testament, we may reasonably expect a development of it in the New, which will supply whatever was wanting.

1. 1 Cor. vii. 20—23 : “ Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called, being Δουλος, a servant ? care not for it ; but if thou mayest (or canst) be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman ; likewise also, he that is called being free, is Christ’s servant. Ye are bought with a price ; be not ye the servants of men.”

This passage is addressed to the church at Corinth, one of the cities of Greece. The epistle in which it occurs is supposed to have been written from Ephesus, near the close of the three and a half years that Paul labored in that city, A. D. 60. The servitude here referred to, is that which existed under the laws of Greece and Rome. Whether that servitude was righteous, the apostle does not say. He did not feel called upon in the circum-

stances then existing, to express an opinion in his epistle on that subject, whatever he may have done in private, and on other occasions.

He addresses himself in this passage, not to masters, but to servants ; and declares, not the duty of the former, but of the latter. His instructions on this occasion, embrace the following injunctions upon servants :

(1.) That they should endure their servile condition with patience, and not disquiet themselves with sinful repinings, or unavailing solicitude and regret, on that account. Verse 21.

(2.) But still if it was possible for them to be free, *αλλ' ει και δυνασαι*, they were required to secure their freedom, and not voluntarily to continue in the servitude then existing and prevalent. Verse 21.

(3.) “Ye are bought with a price ; be not ye the servants of men,” (verse 23,) evidently prohibits the exercise of a servile spirit, and an undue voluntary subjection to the authority of man in any relation, particularly that of master or slaveholder, on the ground that we are the servants of Christ, and that a due discharge of the duties we owe him, is incompatible with servile subjection to human authority. The reason here assigned for not voluntarily submitting to a state of servitude, such as then prevailed, is the same as that given in Lev. xxv. 42, for prohibiting the exercise of rigorous authority over the Israelites ; namely, that they were the servants of God.

This passage, which, considered by itself, contains a literal and absolute injunction not to submit to the servitude of those times, is doubtless to be interpreted in conformity with verse 21, in which the same requirement is suspended on the condition, if you are able to obtain your freedom, that is, able to obtain it in a consistent manner.

2. 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2 : “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather do them service because they are faithful and beloved, *οι της ευεργεσιας αντιλαμβανομενοι*, participators in well-doing.” Well-doing denotes not only justice, but kindness. To participate in well-doing, is to do justice and exercise kindness, particularly the latter.

This passage occurs in the epistle of Paul to Timothy. Timothy seems to have been at this time the presiding minister of



the church in Ephesus. 1 Tim. i. 3, 4: "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables," &c.

The duties of servants were such as seemed to require apostolic counsel and advice. Even Timothy, who was by no means a novice in the knowledge of the christian religion, or in the administration of its truths, was judged by the apostle to need the authoritative counsel and advice of the passage before us, for his direction in this difficult part of pastoral duty.

(1.) Persons under the yoke of servitude, were required to honor their masters as such; that is, to obey them in all things which were reasonable, not on the ground that those masters had a righteous claim to their services, but that the name of God and his doctrine might not be blasphemed. This seems to have been intended particularly for those whose masters were unbelievers; and in the next verse there follows a similar admonition to those whose masters were professed believers in Christ, and professed followers of him.

(2.) Persons under the yoke of servitude, to believing masters, were required not to despise them because they were christians, and in that respect only, their equals and brethren; but to do them service as christians and friends, and as persons participating with themselves in the exercise of true benevolence and justice, and who consequently might be expected to treat them with kindness, and equitably to compensate them for whatever service they performed.

Christians may have retained persons as servants, without retaining them as slaves. The yoke of servitude which they imposed, may have been very different from that of the heathen. The fact of its being called by the same name, does not prove it to be the same thing.

These instructions do not necessarily imply that christians held their servants as slaves. They are perfectly appropriate on the contrary supposition. Had the servants referred to, been held as hired-servants, or as apprentices, they would still have been servants, and the apostolic injunction would have been appropriate. The supposition that they were so held, is most accordant with the nature of christianity and with known facts. It is therefore to be preferred in the present case.

3. 1 Pet. ii. 18, 19: "Servants, *οἱ οικετοί*, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to

the forward ; for this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience towards God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully.”

The first epistle of Peter was addressed to christians scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia ; provinces in Asia Minor, where the Grecian and Roman systems of servitude prevailed. This apostle gives substantially the same directions as Paul in 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2. He does not require christian servants to obey their masters and submit to their authority, on the ground that the institution as it existed in those regions, was a righteous institution, and agreeable to the will of God ; but he requires them to submit to injustice in the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed, and from a regard to the will and glory of God. This is often the duty of christians in other relations and conditions besides those of servants. It was, however, peculiarly the duty of servants at that time, and may in many cases be their duty still. Peter enforces the injunction of submission to injustice, in the context, by an effecting reference to the example of Christ : “ who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” Verse 23.

In imitation of that illustrious example, the oppressed servants of those times were encouraged to bear their oppressions with meekness, and to leave all their wrongs to be redressed by God, when he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil.

4. Eph. vi. 5—9 : “ Servants, be obedient to them that are masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ ; not with eye service, as men-pleasers ; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart ; with good-will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men ; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond (*δουλος*, a servant) or free. And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your master is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him.” Paul had labored personally in Ephesus, for the space of three years. Acts xx. 31. Several years after the completion of these labors, while he was a prisoner at Rome, he wrote the epistle in which the foregoing passage of inspired Scripture occurs. Eph. vi. 20.

(1.) This passage contains an injunction upon servants, of obedience to their masters, enforced by the consideration, that for whatever good thing a man doeth, he shall be duly and amply



rewarded by God, even though he may fail of receiving a just recompense from men.

(2.) The same rule of action is prescribed for masters as for servants: "And ye masters, do the same things unto them," &c. It appears from this as well as from one of the passages before quoted, that the relation of masters was not incompatible with a profession of the christian religion. Masters, however, may be the masters of hired-servants, or of apprentices. They may have held their servants not as property, but as fellow men, rendering to them that which is just and equal. Such masters none will condemn. The admonition to them in the passage under consideration, is peculiarly solemn and impressive. They were required to forbear threatening, and of course all other abusive and unkind treatment of their servants, and to do their duty to them in all respects, as unto Christ; knowing too that they had a master in heaven, with whom there is no respect of persons. Under such a law slavery cannot exist. Let such a law be enacted and carried into effect at the South, and slavery will be abolished.

5. Col. iii. 22—25; iv. 1: "Servants, obey in all things your masters, according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong he hath done; and there is no respect of persons. Masters give to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven."

This passage corresponds in every part, to Eph. vi. 5—9. The sentiments are the same, and the phraseology is unusually similar to that of the corresponding passage in Ephesians.

The obligation to render to servants that which is just and equal, is an obligation to treat them as moral and immortal beings, and to respect their temporal and eternal interests. The rule of justice is the law of God, of love. It strikes at the root of servile oppression, both as it existed among the ancients and in modern times.

6. Titus ii. 9, 10: "Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." This re-

quirement, and the argument by which it is enforced, correspond to those already noticed.

7. Phil. 8—21 : “Wherefore though having much confidence in Christ, to enjoin upon thee that which is convenient. Yet I rather beseech by love ; being such as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds ; formerly unprofitable to thee, but now useful both to thee and me, whom I have sent back, (and do thou receive him as the object of my strongest love,) whom I should wish to retain with myself, that in thy stead he might minister to me in the bonds of the gospel. But without thy consent I would not do it, that thy benefit may not be, as it were, of necessity, but willingly. For perhaps he was removed for a time, that you might have him forever ; no longer as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially by me, and how much more by yourself, both in the flesh and in the Lord. If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he has wronged thee, or oweth thee any thing, charge it to me. I Paul have written with my own hand. I will pay it. But I do not mention that thou owest me thyself. Yes, brother, let me derive advantage from you in the Lord. Confiding in thy obedience, I have written to thee, knowing that thou wilt do even more than I say.”

This passage, as it stands in our common Bible, has often been triumphantly quoted, as containing a Scriptural warrant for the servitude of the Greeks and Romans, and consequently for similar systems of oppression in modern times. Onesimus has been repeatedly described as a runaway slave, sent back by Paul to his master, to be held in continual servitude.

But how was this runaway servant to be received by his former master ? “Not now, or not any longer as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved ;” (verse 16,) as Paul himself. Verse 17. He was not to be held responsible for any damage he might formerly have done his master, or any obligations he might have incurred ; but all this was to be charged to Paul, and he solemnly engages to satisfy every demand of this kind. Verse 19.

The declaration, that perhaps Onesimus was removed from his master for a time, that the latter might enjoy him forever, (verse 15,) manifestly relates to a future state of glory ; not to a state of confirmed servitude on earth. The language is plainly applicable to a future state, and the context requires that it should be interpreted in that sense. See verses 13, 14, and 18, 19.



But it may be asked by some, why did Paul recognize the right of Philemon to Onesimus as his servant, by making the requests which he did, if that servitude was wrong? Answer:

(1.) Because Philemon probably had a legal right to him in that relation, which was not yet dissolved.

(2.) Onesimus may have been indebted to Philemon for misconduct, and for benefits received by himself, for which no adequate compensation had been made.

(3.) Since no particular reason is assigned in the epistle relating to this subject, it is altogether possible, that there were peculiar reasons for this procedure, which the apostle did not think proper to mention, and which it is impossible for us to recover from that oblivion in which they are now lost.

Onesimus appears, from the high character given of him in this epistle, and in Col. iv. 9, to have been a man of uncommon excellence and moral worth, probably of high intellectual attainments.

The interpretation of the epistle relating to him, which consigns to perpetual servitude so distinguished a servant of Christ, is manifestly partial and erroneous.

8. In 1 Tim. i. 10, men-stealers, or those who enslave their fellow men, are numbered with the worst of criminals, and we are informed that the law is made particularly for them, that is, for their conviction, and unless they repent, for their punishment. If those who enslave their fellow men are the worst of criminals, those who purchase them, and hold them in perpetual bondage, are not innocent.

9. Matt. xx. 25—28: "But Jesus called them and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you. But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." See also Mark x. 42—45.

This passage contains an exposition of the principles on which the visible kingdom of Christ is established on earth. This kingdom is not like those of men, where some are exalted to great honors and emoluments at the expense of others. The fundamental principle of its constitution, is the principle of benevolence. The subjects of this kingdom are all required to serve one another according to their respective abilities and ne-



cessities. The principle which is so clearly asserted in the passage before us, applies not only to ecclesiastical matters, forbidding unrighteous and despotic domination in them, but it applies to all matters in which the temporal or eternal interests of men are involved. The subjects of Christ are required in all things, to serve each other, and are not allowed to subordinate either the temporal or eternal interests of their fellow men, to their own.

Any relations, therefore, which are inconsistent with this, are prohibited by the law of Christ, and inconsistent with the christian religion. "It shall not be so among you," &c.

Matt. xxii. 37—40 : "Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it : Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

These words contain our Saviour's answer to the question, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" We are here informed, that the first and most fundamental duty of religion, and of man as a moral being, is that of loving God with all the heart and soul.

The obligation next in importance is like unto it, namely, that we should love our fellow men as we do ourselves. These, says the Redeemer, are the two fundamental duties of religion, and are enforced upon mankind by the highest authority and greatest penalties. All the other requirements of the law of Moses, and of the writings of the later prophets, are represented as subordinate to these, and as growing out of them. But love worketh no ill to our neighbor. Rom. xiii. 10. It dictates the same respect for the interests and rights of our fellow men, that we have for those of our children or of ourselves. It is therefore incompatible with slavery. Love to men is the basis of every precept contained in the second table of the ten commandments. It is the mainspring of all true righteousness in the dealings of men with each other.

The golden rule contained in Matt. vii. 12, is in strict accordance with the obligation to love our neighbor as ourselves : "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." Phil. ii. 4 : "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

James i. 27 : "Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their



affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." iii. 17: "The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." 1 John iii. 17: "But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

Luke xii. 33: "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, which faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth."

Matt. xxv. 34—36: "Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

These passages show clearly that the obligations of benevolence and mercy are strictly insisted upon in the New Testament, and strictly enforced under the christian dispensation. Our final acquittal at the judgment seat of Christ, is described as taking place in consequence of our having testified our submission to his authority, and trust in his merits and intercessions, by deeds of substantial kindness and charity. Those who refuse to do this, are represented as being condemned into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.

The principle is distinctly recognized both in the New Testament and Old, that the laborer, generally, is entitled to a recompense for his services. Lev. xix. 13: "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him. The wages of him that is hired, shall not abide with thee all night until the morning." Deut. xxiv. 14, 15: "Thou shalt not oppress a hired-servant that is poor and needy, of thy brethren, or of strangers that are in thy land, within thy gates. At his day thou shalt give him his hire; neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be sin to thee." Ex. xx. 15: "Thou shalt not steal." Luke x. 7: "For the laborer is worthy of his hire."

1 Tim. v. 18: "For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn; and the laborer is worthy of his reward." 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10: "For it is written in the law

of Moses, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care of oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes no doubt this is written, that he that plougheth, should plough in hope, and he that thresheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope.'

The doctrine of these texts is, that men are entitled to a fair compensation for their services, and that every man is bound to respect the right of his fellow men, in regard to the enjoyment and use of property. No title to property can be more clear and disincumbered than that of a human being to his own mental and bodily faculties. They are his by gift of God. For the use and enjoyment of them he is accountable to God. He cannot come under an obligation to use them for the benefit of others, on any other principles than those of benevolence and justice.

The obligation of children to use their faculties for a limited period, for the benefit of their parents, and of apprentices to labor for the benefit of their masters, is one of justice. Such labor is for benefits received. Farther than this, parents have no righteous claim on their children, or masters on their apprentices, or on servants of any other kind. So the obligation of all men, as far as they can, to relieve distress, and supply the wants of the needy, by contributions, of labor, and of other property, is an obligation of benevolence. But it is not binding, except in agreement with the obligations we are under to ourselves, and in subordination to our own higher interests.

Even a voluntary engagement to subordinate our own interests to those of others, any farther than this is consistent with benevolence and justice, cannot make such a subjection obligatory or justifiable. God has charged us with the prosecution of our own interests. He requires us to be just and benevolent both to ourselves and others. We may not voluntarily or unnecessarily surrender our own rights any more than we may invade those of others.

It is a settled principle of law, that in commercial transactions, no obligation can be created, except for value received. Hence promisory notes are required to be written in this form.

From the foregoing examination of the doctrines of the New Testament on this subject, it is obvious that they afford no sanction to any instance or system of servitude, which violates the principles of justice. The doctrines of the New Testament are those of justice, benevolence, and mercy. Christianity is a system of religious worship, and of social duties, in which every



principle of justice and benevolence is distinctly recognized, and solemnly enforced.

The New Testament, however, is not to be considered separate from the Old, but in connection with it, as a continuation of the same series of Divine revelations, and as completing the developments which that left imperfect.

Both together constitute one Divinely inspired rule of faith and practice. They teach one system of religious truth and worship, and but one system of social duties. Some of the institutions of the Old Testament were temporary, and have passed away, but its exposition of the principles of justice, benevolence, and mercy, are of permanent authority. The New Testament does not destroy, but confirm them. They can never be destroyed, or set aside, because they are founded in the Divine character, and the nature of moral creatures, and must therefore continue the same, while God and moral creatures continue. At the first formation of the christian church, those who entered it, came into a state of professed subjection to Christ, and to the laws of his kingdom. They henceforth disclaimed the right to practice injustice of any kind or degree, however authorized by the opinions of men, or sanctioned by human laws. No part of the Bible sanctions injustice. In respect to this subject, both Testaments beautifully agree. We find no permission in the New Testament to hold men as slaves, and no vindication either of the principle or practice of slavery.

*Δουλος*, servant, in the language of the New Testament, is not equivalent to the English word slave. The apostles were servants, not slaves of Christ. Rom. i. 1; Col. iv. 12; Phil. i. 1; 2 Pet. i. 1.

Moses and other prophets are styled the servants of God. Heb. iii. 5.

Servant is in some instances used by Christ in the sense of subject, denoting the relation of a man to his lawful sovereign. Matt. xviii. 23; xxii. 13; Luke xix. 13. This usage is frequent in the Old Testament.

Christ is said to have taken upon him the form of a servant. Phil. ii. 7. He declares that he came into the world not to be ministered to, but to minister, or serve. Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45. He did not, however, become a slave.

All christians are denominated the servants of Christ and of God; Rev. vii. 3; Luke xvii. 10; especially christian ministers. 2 Tim. ii. 24. God, however, does not hold men as slaves, but

as men, and subjects. He does not use them as property, but as free, moral agents, possessing inviolable rights.

The New Testament instructions to children and parents, are similar to those given to servants and masters, and stand in connection with them.

Col. iii. 20, 21 : "Children, obey your parents in all things ; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."

Eph. vi. 1—4 : "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise ; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth ; and ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Both of these passages are followed by similar instructions to masters and servants, which have been taken notice of in the foregoing pages. It is remarkable that in each case where the relations of children and servants are treated of consecutively, children and parents are mentioned first, and after them, servants and masters.

The obligations of servants are not described as being any greater than those of children ; neither are the rights of masters described as being greater than those of parents.

It deserves also to be considered, that in the second table of the decalogue, that comprehensive summary of social duty, there is no recognition of servants, as a distinct class of persons from children.

They are there comprehended under the title of children, and required to exercise obedience to their masters as such.

In the precept, "Honor thy father and thy mother," parents are used by a figure of speech, to represent superiors generally, but particularly masters, as sustaining a relation analogous to that of parents. The parental relation is singled out from all others, as involving the highest obligations, and as therefore most fit to occupy the prominent position assigned it in the decalogue. It comprehends the relation of masters, as the greater comprehends the less ; just as the sixth commandment comprehends all inferior crimes against the persons, and the eighth, all minor offences against the property of our fellow men.

It is obvious that servants must be bound in duty to yield all that masters have a right to require. If, therefore, they are not bound to yield more than children, more cannot justly be requi-



red of them. That they are not, by the moral law, is manifest from the fact, that they are there comprehended under the title of children, and that the same law is given to them and to all others comprehended under this title.

The Bible, therefore, places servants on the footing of children, and protects them as such. Does it consign children to oppression? Does it annihilate their rights as moral agents? Does it give them up to be held and disposed of by their parents like cattle? Does it sanction the horrid systems of parental oppression which have prevailed among the heathen? By no means. Neither does it make a similar surrender of any other class of servants.

The New Testament instructions to masters, apply to such as hold their servants in a different relation from that of slaves. There is nothing said of believing masters which implicates them in the prevailing sin of the times, in respect to slavery.

The New Testament contains no recognition of the right of property in a fellow man; no recognition of a right to subordinate the interests of a fellow man to our own.

But it is sometimes asked, Why was not the New Testament made more explicit on this subject? If slave-holding is wrong, why was it not condemned in express terms?

To these inquiries it may be answered:

1. That the Scriptures are explicit and decisive in condemning slave-holding. They condemn it under the titles of injustice, oppression, unmercifulness, selfishness, covetousness, theft, robbery, evil-doing, inhumanity, &c. They could not condemn it under the title of servitude, for many modifications of servitude are both just and necessary.

2. The laws of God in relation to this subject are sufficiently plain and intelligible for the direction of all candid, diligent, and earnest inquirers. The light which they shed is therefore sufficient. The fact that good men have fallen into errors in respect to the criminality of slavery, and that many are unsettled in their opinions on this subject, at the present time, does not prove the Scriptures to be inexplicit or indecisive in regard to it. Errors exist among good men, even in regard to the most important truths, and the most certain and fundamental principles of religion. A diversity of opinion among men, therefore, on the subject of slavery, does not prove that the Scriptures are defective in point of clearness in their condemnation of slave-holding.

3. The Divine law in respect to slavery is left very much as it is in respect to many other important subjects ; so as to require critical and continual study in order fully to understand it. The reasons for this are the same as for a similar arrangement in other analogous cases.

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## SECTION IV.

### THE SLAVERY OF THE GREEKS AND ROMANS.

AMONG the Romans, persons who were taken as prisoners of war, were sold at public auction into perpetual servitude. Free-born citizens were not allowed, in ordinary cases, to sell themselves or other free-born persons, into this condition. They might, however, in some cases, sell their children. Criminals were often reduced to perpetual servitude, as a civil punishment. Their masters exercised over them an absolute authority, inasmuch, that they might imprison, scourge, torture, or put them to death at pleasure. This authority was exercised with so much rigor and cruelty, in the latter periods of the Roman Empire, that laws were passed at several different times restricting it.

From the resemblance between the Roman system of perpetual servitude, and that of modern slavery, the former has generally received the denomination of slavery. It is well entitled to this denomination.

The Romans deprived their slaves of the rights of marriage ; of appearing as witnesses in civil courts ; of inheriting property or disposing of it by will ; and of serving, except in extraordinary cases, in the army.

Their masters assigned them a stated allowance of food for their support ; commonly four or five pecks of grain, and five denarii or small pieces of money, per month. Besides this, they had a small daily allowance. What they saved of all that was allowed them, belonged to themselves, and was used for their benefit. They often accumulated considerable property from this source. So that those who were sober and industrious, generally became able to purchase their liberty, after a period of six or seven years.



There was a perpetual market for slaves at Rome, to which they were brought for sale, from distant countries. The Romans being a martial people, and prosecuting warfare almost as a regular national business, were constantly obtaining supplies of this commodity for the market. Slaves were commonly exposed for sale naked, and had attached to their necks a scroll specifying their good and bad qualities. They were generally warranted to answer the description thus given of them. Sometimes purchasers took them on trial, and if not pleased with them, returned them within a limited time.

The number of slaves owned in Rome and Italy, is represented as having been very great. Some individuals possessed thousands of them. They were employed as domestic servants, and in the various mechanical, manufacturing, and agricultural pursuits then prosecuted; and to some extent, in the practice of the liberal arts.

Laws existed in the Roman Empire, impeding the emancipation of slaves. For a considerable period, masters were not allowed to liberate only a certain proportion of their slaves at any one time, or within a limited period. Severe civil disabilities were imposed on such as were emancipated.

The perpetual servitude of the Greeks was similar to that of the Romans, their slaves being equally the property of their masters, and under the same absolute control by them. As a general rule, they were treated with great severity. Great pains was taken to keep them in a degraded condition, by withholding from them the means of intellectual improvement, governing them with the rod, and subjecting them to incessant labor.

They were not allowed to imitate freemen in their dress or behavior. In many places they were required to dress in a peculiar manner, indicative of their abject condition.

At Athens slaves were treated with more humanity than in most other parts of Greece. When their yoke became intolerable they were allowed to take refuge in the temple of Theseus, and remain there till sold by public authority to another master. They were also allowed to institute suits at law against their masters, for undue severity in the infliction of punishments, and for attempts upon their chastity; and if their complaints were sustained, were permitted to be sold to other masters. In addition to this, they were allowed to hold property, on which they paid an annual tribute to their masters; and whenever they obtained enough to purchase their liberty at a fair price, they were

entitled to the purchase of it, even contrary to the will of their masters. Those who performed any remarkable service for the state, generally obtained their liberty as a reward.

When made free, slaves did not generally acquire an equal standing with others. They still continued in some degree dependent on their former masters, and looked to them as their civil guardians and protectors.

The number of slaves in Attica, compared with that of free persons, was sometimes in the ratio of twenty to one.

The Spartan slaves were subjected to a more cruel and degrading servitude, than that of most other ancient states. They were not allowed either to be emancipated or removed from the country. They were kept in great ignorance, and at a great distance from their masters; were not allowed to learn or practice any liberal art; were governed with great severity and brutal violence, and often inhumanly murdered.

Both the Greek and Roman systems of slavery were perpetual and hereditary.

They are declared by Blackstone, to be repugnant to reason and the principles of natural law. He shows that the three origins of the right of slavery, as assigned by Justinian, are all of them built on false foundations. Men have not a right in time of war, to enslave their prisoners, or to injure them in any way, farther than the performance of positive duties to themselves or country may require. A man cannot sell himself into a state of slavery, because he cannot in that state receive an equivalent for his liberties and rights. Persons cannot righteously become slaves by birth; first, because that condition in the case of their parents, is not a suitable or righteous one; secondly, because they are not the property of their parents, but independent beings, who can never be indebted to others except for benefits received. The child is indebted to its parents for the care and labor bestowed in bringing it up to years of strength and knowledge, and for other benefits. But for nothing more. The payment of this debt may justly be exacted in such circumstances, and by such means, as are sanctioned by justice and benevolence. But by no others. The obligation, however, is chiefly one of kindness and benevolence. Love is the highest duty of the parent to the child, and the return of this affection is the highest duty of the child to the parent; the latter is the natural and only proper equivalent for the former.

The abolition of slavery in the Roman Empire, was effected



by the gradually extending influence of the christian religion. Trajan, who died A. D. 117, after a reign of nineteen years, was the first Roman Emperor who took from masters the right of putting their slaves to death at discretion. The method of punishing them capitally, was generally by crucifixion. From the time of Trajan, this system of despotism gradually declined, till the extended prevalence of christianity entirely destroyed it.

The primitive christians, says Archbishop Potter, thought it not only sinful, but barbarous and unnatural, that persons possessed of the same social, intellectual, and moral faculties as themselves, should be held as property, and treated like brutes.

Having brought to view the leading features of the Greek and Roman slavery, I come now directly to the question, What is the relation of the Scripture doctrines to these systems of servitude?

The examination of the doctrines of the Bible on this subject, in the preceding sections, may be referred to as furnishing a decisive answer to this question. Their relation to this oppressive and unrighteous system of servitude, is that of direct and manifest opposition. They oppose it as an invasion of the rights of God, and also of man. They oppose it uniformly and decidedly, in the following ways :

1. In requiring us to love our neighbor as ourselves. If we love our neighbor, we shall feel an interest in promoting his happiness. If we love him in a great degree, we shall feel a proportionably great interest in promoting his happiness. If we love him as we do ourselves, we shall take the same delight in his happiness that we do in our own. Our love to our children, leads us cheerfully to accord to them all the rights and privileges of men, when they arrive at a proper age. If we love other children as much, it will prompt the same feeling in respect to them.

But even if in a single case, we might be disposed to hold an individual in a state of slavery, like that of the Greeks and Romans, for his benefit, it must be obvious, that well-informed love for this class of persons as a class, would dictate their release from this degraded condition, as on the whole highly desirable. Far more would be benefitted than injured by it, and the benefits would be far greater than the injuries. And if one individual cannot be held in a state of slavery, for his real benefit in some degree, without exposing another to be held in that state to his greater injury, or without exposing many to an equal amount of injury, then that system cannot have been lawful, by the Scrip-



tures, in any case. The principle of loving our neighbor as ourselves, was not the principle of Roman slavery. It is directly opposed to that institution, as one founded in selfishness.

2. In making it our duty to do to others as we would that they in like circumstances should do to us. No law of the Scriptures is clearer, or of more manifest and binding force than this. This law does not allow one human being to tyrannize over another, on any pretext whatever. It is a legitimate deduction from the law of love, and laid the axe at the root of Roman slavery, to cut it down as an incumbrance and injury to the world.

3. In teaching the doctrine of the relation of all men to God, as his subjects and servants. Nothing is more manifest, than that God claims to be the master of all men, and holds them in the relation of subjects and servants, over whom he exerts unlimited authority. But no man can be the servant of two masters, at the same time. If one man has a servant entirely under his authority, another cannot have the control of him, at the same time. So if all men are under the absolute authority of God, they cannot be under that of men. God must cease to have absolute authority over men, before it can be acquired by any other being.

The principle, that no man can be the servant of two masters, is distinctly alluded to by Christ, as one that is of unquestionable authority. Matt. vi. 24. In 1 Cor. vii. 23, Paul assigns the fact of our being redeemed by the blood of Christ, as a reason why we should not be the servants of men; plainly intimating that the absolute servitude of those times came in collision with the obligations of men to God, as his servants.

4. In directly sanctioning the obligations of justice and humanity. Rom. xii. 15—17; xiii. 7, 8; xiv. 17, 18; Deut. xxiv. 10—22; Luke x. 25—37.

The fact that servitude was not expressly condemned by the apostles, and was tolerated to some extent in the church, is supposed by many to have given a Scriptural sanction to those forms of it which were oppressive. The evidence that it was tolerated, seems to be conclusive; believing masters are distinctly referred to. But to what extent, and under what restrictions this toleration was afforded, we are not informed, other than by the distinct prohibition of all unrighteousness.

It is worthy of particular remark, that the inspired authors of the New Testament are in no case the apologists for the slavery



of those times. They said not a syllable in justification of it. At the same time, they inculcate with the greatest force, those principles of benevolence and justice, of which the whole system of Roman slavery, considered theoretically and practically, was a manifest violation. Those who enslave their fellow men, are numbered by them with the worst of malefactors. From all that is written in the New Testament, we are authorized to infer, that considerable instruction, not recorded, must have been called for and given by the inspired founders of the church, on the subject of slavery. What was the general character of those unrecorded instructions, in relation to this subject, we are left to infer, from what was written down and preserved, and from the fact, that the entire downfall of the ancient systems of slavery, was an achievement of christianity.

There is an important difference between the toleration of slavery and that of servitude. In condemning the Greek and Roman slavery, the Scriptures condemned that institution, and all the instances of oppression which it involved, but they did not condemn the holding of persons in a reasonable subjection, as servants, and on equitable terms. They divested men of authority, as slave-holders, but not as masters.

On submitting to the authority of the Scriptures, every holder of slaves must have come under restrictions and obligations, in respect to his authority, as the master of servants, which would so far modify the character of the servitude he administered, as to be a virtual abolition of it. He must have held his servants, not as property, to be used for his exclusive benefit, but as the moral subjects of God, having interests and rights as dear and as sacred as his own. He must have consulted for the highest happiness and welfare of his servants, as truly and as faithfully as he did for that of himself and children.

The Scriptures legislate for servants, as immortal and accountable beings, possessing all the natural rights, and entitled to all the privileges enjoyed by others, as far as they can righteously obtain those privileges. God is no respecter of persons.

5. The opposition of the christian religion to slavery, as it existed in the days of the apostles, may be still farther illustrated, by considering the dispositions and feelings which it excited in the bosoms of those who embraced it, as indicated by their conduct. The disciples forsook all, gave up all earthly advantages and distinctions, and nearly all their possessions, to follow Christ. Matt. xix. 27. An unwillingness to do this, appears to have

been a fatal obstruction to the salvation of a rich young man, who went away sorrowful from one of the discourses of Christ, and who had supposed that he was already perfect, till tried by this test. Matt. xix. 22.

The primitive christians immediately after the day of Pentecost, when they were greatly imbued with the Holy Spirit, “sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need.” Acts ii. 44, 45.

Those who had practical arts inconsistent with christianity, when they became christians, not only relinquished the practice of those arts, but destroyed the implements for carrying on such practices, to an extent which involved the destruction of a large amount of property. Acts xix. 18—20.

In accordance with the spirit of these examples, we are commanded, “Love not the world, neither the things in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” 1 John ii. 15. “The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever, therefore, will be the friend of the world, is the enemy of God.” James iv. 4.

These examples and illustrations of the religion of Christ, require a degree of benevolence which is inconsistent with the exercise of oppression in any form, and in any degree certainly inconsistent with the unblushing and horrid enormities of ancient slavery, and with the system of personal servitude in which they originated.

The same conclusion is sustained by the levelling spirit of christianity. Christians were baptized into one homogeneous body. 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. Invidious distinctions were annihilated by the gospel. As many as were baptized into Christ became the children and *δουλοι*, servants, not slaves, of God. There was neither Jew nor Greek, nor bond, nor free, amongst them. These and other distinctions of a similar nature, were merged in the comprehensive relations which they sustained as christians. Gal. iii. 26—28.

It is beautifully said by an apostle, “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low.” James i. 9, 10. See also James ii—v. entire, which contain a masterly exposition of the Scripture doctrines on this subject.

6. The opposition of the Scripture doctrines to Greek and Roman slavery, is illustrated still farther, by the absurdity of the contrary supposition.



That slavery was unjust in its origin. It deprived persons of their liberties, on grounds which have been declared by the conscience and judgment of the civilized world, to be insufficient. It was administered in many cases, with barbarous cruelty. The system was, therefore, fundamentally erroneous and oppressive. Very few have undertaken to vindicate it in modern times. Similar injustice and oppression were frequently denounced as deeply criminal, both in the Old Testament and New.

To maintain, therefore, that Greek and Roman slavery were not opposed to the doctrines of the Bible, is to make that blessed book inconsistent with reason and conscience, and with itself. Such a supposition, therefore, cannot be true.

From the foregoing investigation, it appears that those who charge the Scriptures with countenancing the slavery of the ancients, entertain views of them which are erroneous and derogatory to their character. The Scriptures are not liable to any such imputation, but are clear and unblemished in this matter, pleading the cause of the oppressed against the oppressor, and uttering the language of consistency, reason, and a holy religion.

Those who justify modern slavery by the example of the ancient Greeks and Romans, build their confidence upon a worse than sandy foundation—upon a foundation of rottenness and defilement. Roman slavery was smitten down by christianity. The sword of the spirit caused that of the robber and conqueror to be returned to its sheath, and proclaimed liberty to the enslaved captive.

The Bible proposes to revolutionize society, so far as its institutions have been corrupted by ambition, avarice, and other sinful passions, and to reconstruct it on principles of perfect and universal benevolence. This revolution is now in progress, and is destined to advance till unrighteousness shall cease, and there shall be none to hurt or destroy, in all God's holy mountain. In this reformation every good man has occasion to rejoice. It contributes to the relief and happiness of man, and tends to promote the glory of God. The destruction which it accomplishes is that of sin and misery, and the interests which it promotes are those of humanity and religion.

## SECTION V.

## THE NATURE OF RIGHTEOUS SERVITUDE.

MEN of every condition are the creatures of God, and the subjects of his government. Our relations to God are the primary relations of our condition. To his moral and physical government, we are bound to conform. Our interest and duty both require us to do so. God administers the government of the universe according to fixed principles or rules, many of which are revealed in the course of human observation and experience, to our immediate perception and reason; others are revealed to our faith in the Scriptures. The rules by which God administers the government of his moral subjects, indicate at once the path of duty and interest to us. If we do that which pleases him, and with which his blessing is connected, we do well. If we do that which displeases him, and with which his curse is connected, we do evil. Good and evil, therefore, are qualities of human conduct, considered with reference to the constitution and government of the universe by God. That which corresponds to the Divine administration of blessings, is good; that which calls forth the Divine administration of curses, is evil. God administers both good and evil, not in an arbitrary manner, but according to fixed rules, which may be understood and observed by all rational and moral beings.

Every rational being receives his powers of moral agency from his Maker, and is accountable to him for the manner in which they are used. He finds himself placed in circumstances, impelling him to voluntary action, and finds consequences of good or evil, resulting inevitably from every act he performs.

All the consequences of voluntary action are not immediate. None of them are limited to the brief space, during which the action producing them is performed. They extend into future time, into eternity. A creature of such responsibilities ought to be a creature of corresponding endowments. It would be unjust to lay such responsibilities on a being incompetent to sustain them with advantage to himself, or at least, without injury. God accordingly has endowed man with conscience, and reason, and collateral faculties, which, if rightly exercised and improved, conduct, infallibly, to happiness. He has placed him under a



dispensation of mercy, giving him a chance for life, even after steps otherwise the most fatal and irretrievable, have been taken.

Those modes of action with which God connects his blessing, are comprehended in his requirements. Those with which he connects his curse, are comprehended in his prohibitions. The former are right, the latter, wrong. God leads us by blessings, and urges us by curses, in every department of moral action.

Servitude, in some of the existing modifications of that relation, is undoubtedly agreeable to the Divine will. Like the marriage and filial relations, it is based on the universal principles and wants of human nature, and cannot be altogether dispensed with.

Servants are often necessary to individuals. Individuals, as such, may need the assistance of a fellow man, in the capacity of a servant. They may be able to make ample compensation for the service they require, so that a man may promote his own highest interests, while he subserves those of him to whose service he is invited. This necessity is in some cases of a most imperious nature, constituting a demand for servitude, which cannot be altogether neglected and left unsupplied, without indicating an entire defect of that benevolence which God requires.

Servants are often necessary as aids for the prosecution of business. The welfare of individuals, families, and of the world, requires the prosecution of various branches of industry. Individual labor may accomplish something towards the successful prosecution of these pursuits; but it is not of itself sufficient for this purpose.

Most branches of business can be carried on with greater economy and expedition, and consequently with greater advantage, both to the adventurer and the community, by the employment of several hands, than by the unassisted industry of individuals laboring for themselves.

In several branches of business, and those of the highest consequence to the welfare of society, individual and unassisted industry can do nothing. The accomplishment of all great works requires combined effort, and combined effort requires the subordination of some to others. Combination and co-operation in business cannot be effected to such an extent as to meet the urgent demands of human want, without the adoption of a system of servitude, which puts authority into the hands of some, and makes obedience the duty of others. The yoke of this servitude



may be light. It may not be called by the name of servitude, but it necessarily involves the thing.

Servants are necessary to the family. The family is an institution of God. It embraces, in its most perfect state, two persons united in the marriage relation, together with their children and servants. Children are not necessary to the existence of the family, though it is provided by God as an asylum for them, and is adapted, in a high degree, to that purpose. Families often have need of the assistance of persons in the capacity of servants, which they can afford to compensate in such a manner as to be a full equivalent for the service rendered. This necessity is in many cases constant and perpetual. In other cases, it is only occasional. The demand for servants in the family is of the most urgent character. The wants and capacities of remuneration possessed by some families, are perpetual; the wants of others, and other wants of the same at times, require only occasional supplies of service, and yet require these in the most urgent manner.

This demand for service lays a natural basis for servitude; and as it arises naturally out of the circumstances of mankind, as organized into families, it may be considered as being involved in the Divine constitution of the family.

In every species of servitude, the person served is invested with a certain degree of authority over the servant. The ends of servitude cannot be attained without it. This is true in the case where one individual serves another as an individual; where a person serves another in the prosecution of some pursuit of industry, merely for the purposes of business, and where a person serves a family as a domestic servant. It is also true of the service of the child, the apprentice, and of the subject of civil government.

A state of servitude is necessarily one of subjection in some respects; that is, so far as the service to be performed is concerned. In acting for another, we are under obligations to act in conformity with his will, as far as that does not bring us in collision with any other principles of duty. The obligation to act in conformity with the will of another, is one of subjection, and that will which we are bound to respect, is invested with authority, co-extensive with the obligation resting upon the servant to act in conformity with it.

Considered in respect to his authority, the person served is termed the master, of which the correlative term is servant.



These terms, however, are not applied to designate the parties, in all cases, where an actual servitude exists, and where, in strictness of speech, they are applicable. A child, for example, is not usually denominated a servant, or a parent a master. Both are called by more specific, and consequently more appropriate appellations.

No system and no instance of servitude can be righteous, which is not founded in benevolence. No individual under the government of God, has a right to require the service of his fellow men, for any other than benevolent objects. Benevolence is the law of God's moral government. Whatever falls short of this, or comes in collision with it, is wrong. No person has a right voluntarily to become a servant, except where the ends of benevolence will be best attained by this means.

There is no equitable demand for servitude, except where more good can be done by means of it, than without. The good to be attained by servitude, respects, first, the interests of the person served; secondly, those of the servant. The primary object of servitude, is the promotion of the interests of the person served; a secondary object of it is the promotion of those of the servant.

Servitude may be right, when required by the interests of the person served, though not required by those of the servant; also when required by those of the servant, though not by those of the master; but it can never be right, when it sacrifices the greater interests of the servant, to the less important ones of the person served, or the greater interests of the master to those of the servant.

All persons are bound to take care of themselves and others as far as they can consistently. They are often required to sacrifice less important interests of their own, in order to secure or subserve the greater interests of others. But they are never required to sacrifice greater interests of their own, to the less valuable interests of others; neither are others ever authorized by God to exact such sacrifices. Every interest of moral beings ought to be prosecuted and protected according to its absolute and relative importance. Any different rule is a deviation from the law of God—a law both of Scripture and reason.

Every rational being commences his existence under obligations to serve God, as his only absolute Master. Matt. xxiii. 10; Eph. vi. 9. This obligation is supreme, and incapable of being annulled or superseded. The service of God comprehends the



observance of all those laws pertaining to the direction of our conduct as intelligent and moral beings, which are capable of being ascertained, either by revelation, or experience and reason. The rewards of obedience in every particular instance, are great and permanent; greater than it is possible for men to bestow. No system and no instance of servitude can be right, which divests the servant of the power to serve God to the utmost extent of his abilities. Every such instance of servitude robs God of his due, and robs the servant of the invaluable rewards of obedience to God. For this robbery, no adequate restitution or compensation can possibly be made, either to God or the servant. The highest wages, the bestowment of the greatest earthly advantages, are no proper equivalent for the loss of the eternal rewards of a single instance of obedience to God. Persons, therefore, cannot in any instance turn aside from serving God, in compliance with the wishes, or in submission to the authority of their fellow men, without incurring unspeakable and irreparable loss. As far as we can serve our fellow men in consistency with every part of the service we owe to God, we may and ought to serve them, but no farther.

Neither individuals nor civil society can righteously require one human being to be placed under the absolute authority of another, or obliged to serve another to the neglect of any part of service which may be due from him to God.

The right to serve God to the utmost extent of our voluntary powers, cannot be righteously taken from us, or surrendered by ourselves to others. It is not at our disposal, and cannot equitably become the property of our fellow men. We possess it by virtue of our endowments as rational beings, placed under the moral government of God. It is our highest privilege. We may bargain it away, but God will not approve or ratify the bargain. While we exist, he will hold us accountable to himself as moral beings, subject to his righteous dominion, and bound to serve him at all hazards, and every possible expense.

No engagement to serve our fellow men, can be valid any farther than such service is consistent with our obligations to God. In subordination to those obligations, we may become the servants of men. We may engage in their service for a longer or shorter period, and be held under obligations to serve them. Obligations to serve our fellow men may originate without any engagement of ours. In cases where such obligations manifestly exist, they may be enforced by the civil authority.



This is true in respect to children, a class of servants where the obligation is unquestionable ; also in respect to other classes of servants. The right to enforce obedience by reasonable methods, does not depend upon an acknowledgment of obligations on the part of the servant, but upon the fact of the certain existence of such obligations. The righteous authority of human masters must always be limited by that of God. They have no right to command what God forbids, or to forbid what he requires ; or by any means to prevent their fellow men, whatever may be their condition or circumstances in life, from performing any service which is manifestly due to their supreme and absolute Master in heaven.

Even the limited right which one human being may have to the service of another, or to another in the capacity of a servant, may be of considerable pecuniary value. This is sometimes the case with apprentices and children. A master may have a considerable pecuniary interest in his apprentice, the parent in his child ; both being considered merely in the light of servants. This interest may, in some cases, be capable of an equitable transfer from one proprietor to another ; but never to the prejudice of the servants ; or at least not on any other principles than those of benevolence to all the parties concerned.

Generally, the pecuniary interest which is possessed in a servant is untransferrable, except in peculiar circumstances, where the interests of both the parties require such a transfer, or at least are compatible with it.

In every instance and modification of servitude, there is some degree of subjection of the will of the servant to that of the person served, or master. This may vary from the least possible, to the greatest allowable. The rights and obligations of master and servant correspond respectively to each other. A master cannot righteously exact any service which the servant is not bound to yield ; as far as he exercises his authority within the limit to which it is justly restricted, the servant is under obligations to obey.

The just extent of this authority is different, in different modifications of servitude. In the case of children, especially in their earliest years, it is more extensive than in most other varieties of servitude. Servants are in all cases bound to practice a voluntary subjection to their masters, corresponding to the extent of rightful authority which they possess.

The existing systems and modifications of servitude are de-



terminated, partly by municipal laws, partly by contract or agreement, and partly by public sentiment, general usage, and the characters and dispositions of the parties concerned.

The proper end of municipal laws relating to servitude, is to promote the administration of justice to both parties, not to subserve the interests of one party at the expense of the other. As far as this end is impartially and faithfully prosecuted by legislators and jurists, their enactments and decisions are really useful to men and agreeable to the will of God; no farther. Human laws are not adapted to be really useful, any farther than they are dictated by impartial justice and benevolence.

Unjust laws are not a proper rule of conduct for moral beings, under the government of a righteous God. They come in collision with the laws of God, and are, therefore, null and void, like municipal statutes which contravene constitutional provisions in the excellent civil polity of the United States. The enactment of unjust laws is itself a wrong. The enforcement of them is another wrong.

The same remark may be made in respect to general usage. As far as it is founded in justice and benevolence, and is conformable to the known will of God, it is right, and ought to have the force of law in determining the different modes of servitude, as well as in other things. General usage, however, is not a sufficient reason for doing wrong. It does not justify covetousness, or ambition, or selfishness, or any of their bitter fruits.

From the foregoing remarks, it appears that servitude, in all its varieties, ought to be founded in a benevolent regard for all the interests of both the parties concerned, and for those of the world; not for those of either of the parties exclusively; and that no service can justly be exacted by a master, which the servant is not bound to render, by principles of benevolence and charity; or else by those of justice.

It also appears that no system or mode of servitude can be right, which sacrifices the greater interests of one party, to the inferior interests of the other. The consent of the injured party does not sanctify injury, or make it right. Human law and custom do not make it right.

Human authority, when extended to the utmost limits which righteousness allows, cannot in the case of any human being, invade the right of worshiping God, according to the dictates of revelation and reason, and that of performing every religious and moral duty which God requires.



The right to serve God cannot be sold by the subject of it; because, we have no reason to believe that God will ratify such a sale, or acknowledge it as valid; but the contrary; and because it is not possible to receive an equivalent for it from our fellow men, or from any created beings. Masters, therefore, cannot acquire a righteous authority over their servants, within the extended limits of religious and moral duty, which shall empower them to countermand or suspend any of the requirements of God.

Even the limited authority which is capable of being acquired over men as servants, may not be usurped. No person has a right to claim and exercise it, unless it is justly acquired; unless it is demanded by circumstances which constitute an unequivocal indication of the will of God, and consequently, of our duty as his subjects.

An equivalent for services exacted, however ample, does not justify such exaction contrary to the will of God. Every human being, considered with respect to his fellow creatures, both human and superhuman, is, under God, the original proprietor of his own voluntary powers. At the time of his creation, the capacities he receives are all his own. His title to them is entirely disencumbered, and perfectly unquestionable. He is bound from the first moment of intelligent and rational agency, to exercise his faculties according to the dictates of justice and benevolence. Whatever righteous authority to control his voluntary action may be acquired by others, must emanate from himself, or be conferred by his Creator.

Men are required to serve their fellow men only in the capacity of free moral agents, not in that of involuntary beings or of brutes. Any authority which is not suited to men in this character, and which does not recognize their inalienable, as well as alienable rights of voluntary and moral agency, is, of course, not right. It is a violation of the order of the universe, as established by God, and tends to certain and extensive injury.

There cannot be any such thing as an equitable absolute servitude to man; certainly not to sinful man. All human authority is, in justice, limited by that of God. Limitations from this high source, surround and hem it in on every side.

No human being, in any relation, has righteous authority to require what is sinful, or to exact a criminal service of his fellow being. All such exactions are an invasion of the rights of God, who forbids sin, and of the rights of man, as a servant of God,

to whom sin is a source of great and permanent disadvantage, for which no adequate recompense can possibly be received.

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## SECTION VI.

### THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SERVITUDE.

SERVITUDE has been described in the previous section, as admitting of numberless varieties. Its actual varieties are almost as numerous as its possible ones. Yet there are some general modifications of it, a review of which will answer most purposes of instruction and illustration, and which I now propose briefly to describe. The following are obviously of this kind :

1. The servitude of children.
2. That of apprentices.
3. That of family or domestic servants.
4. That of occasional and transient servants.
5. That of agents, factors, &c.
6. That of professional persons.
7. That of the subjects of civil government.
8. That of slaves.

1. *The servitude of children to their parents or guardians.* Children commence their existence in a state of entire dependence on parental care. That care is provided by the strong impulse of parental affection wherever the institution of marriage is duly maintained and respected. Parents feed, clothe, and protect their children, not for purpose of gain, not for pay, but from motives of affection. In the first instance, their labor in behalf of the child commences unsolicited, though not unrequir- ed. An immortal being is committed to their care by a dispensation of Divine providence. It is committed to the care of particular parents, not cast upon the charity or justice even, of a large community. The natural relation of the parents to the child, devolves upon them, in preference to all others, the duty of taking care of it. The prospect of compensation for their present labors and solitudes, by the future services of the child, is no part of the basis of parental obligation.

That obligation is as perfect when the child has no prospect



of surviving the period of infancy, and of course none of performing any services by way of compensation for those previously received, as in any other case. It is founded solely on the relation of the parents to the child, as its parents, as under God the authors of its existence. By introducing a rational being to this world they incur an obligation to take care of it as long and as far as their care may be necessary, on the same principle that they take care of themselves. The parental obligation, therefore, is purely one of benevolence, and corresponds perfectly with the divine law, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The parent is bound to love and do by his child as by himself. He does not charge the property he consumes, to himself, and withhold it in cases when he has no reason to believe it will be returned or reproduced ; but uses it for the satisfaction of his wants as the end for which it was acquired. So he is required to do in respect to his child.

The authority of parents over their children is not founded in the convenience or necessities of the former, but solely in the necessities of the latter. The duty of exercising parental authority, is like that of exercising parental care in other respects, one of manifest necessity on the part of the child. The child's need of parental government is as obvious as his need of parental care in respect to food and clothing. The object of parental government is chiefly the good of the child.

The parent's right to the services of the child grows out of his obligations of service to him. While he is bound to perform for the child the highest services in his power, and those which are designed to be of incalculable value, he is entitled in justice to obtain by the services of the child, what compensation he can, consistently with its best interests.

The parent may not exact from his child a compensation in service or other property, for all the benefits he may bestow. He may not deal out his benefits in the ratio of the compensation he expects to receive, withholding those which he fears will be unrecompensed. He is bound to do by his child as well as he may be able, during the whole period that parental care is needed ; and at the close of that period, to allow him to prosecute his own interests in whatever reasonable and honest methods he may chose. When a child ceases to need parental care and oversight, he is entitled to his liberty. It is a matter of no small difficulty to determine the precise limits of the period during which parental oversight is necessary to each indi-

vidual. To leave this matter entirely to the discretion of parents, would evidently be improper. And yet they very properly, and almost necessarily, have considerable discretionary power in relation to this subject.

The legal authority of a father over his children, ceases at the age of twenty-one, when they are supposed to be capable of taking care of themselves. Till that age, a father is the master of his children, and holds them under his authority as servants; not for his benefit, but for theirs. The age fixed by law for the termination of this servitude, has received the sanction of the most enlightened and liberal minds. It might be better for some to attain their liberty earlier than the period assigned by law, and many virtually attain it earlier, with advantage to themselves. But the period of the enfranchisement of children, now legally settled, and generally acquiesced in, could not probably be altered for the better, by laws either hastening or deferring it.

The obligation of filial obedience during the period of childhood, is based on the relation of the child to its parents, considered as constituting them its natural guardians and masters, and on the fact that its own weakness, inexperience, and ignorance, render subjection to the authority of more experienced and intelligent directors, highly necessary. This natural obligation is confirmed by express revelation, in the strongest terms. Ex. xx. 12.

Children, therefore, are the natural servants of their parents during their minority, agreeably to an obvious arrangement of God. This servitude is founded in the necessities of children. It is necessary, in order to their being properly taken care of, and on that ground as well as others, may be safely and confidently inferred to be according to the Divine will. Parents, therefore, have a Divine warrant to hold their children in a state of servitude for a limited period, in order to take proper care of them, and fit them, as far as possible, for the greater liberty and more arduous duties of mature years.

Parental authority and oversight are recognized and sustained both by law and general usage. Every possible facility for improvement is afforded to the child, by way of the establishment of schools and colleges, the appropriation of money for tuition, &c. A scheme on the part of any number of parents to retain their children in perpetual servitude, and arrangements to keep those children in ignorance, to deprive them of the advantages of a common education, in order that they might be made less un-



willing and obstinate victims of such a system of oppression, would excite universal indignation. It would be regarded as a scheme of almost unparalleled wickedness and inhumanity. Such a conspiracy against the liberties of a single child, even though that child were an orphan, and thrown by accident into the hands of his father's creditor as his guardian, would excite universal indignation, as an unprovoked, and selfish, and sordid infraction of the rights of an immortal being, whom God has required us to love and serve.

The laws and usages of different countries have invested parents with different degrees of authority over their children. In our own country, children are protected by law in the enjoyment of a reasonable amount of liberty, and their interests are carefully looked after and secured. No legal impediments prevent parents from giving full scope to their feelings of benevolence, and doing the best for their children they possibly can.

The child feels that in serving his parents during the period assigned for that purpose, he is only repaying in part, and generally but in part, the debt he owes them for services received. The authority of parents is limited by the laws of God, both natural and revealed. Beyond those limits it cannot be rightfully extended either by legislative authority or general usage.

## 2. *The servitude of apprentices.*

Apprentices are persons who are bound to service for a limited time, with a view to learn some particular art or occupation. The master becomes obligated by the terms of the apprenticeship, to afford the apprentice an opportunity of making himself acquainted with the business in question, and of acquiring sufficient ability and skill for the successful prosecution of it. He also assumes the responsibility of providing for the maintenance of the apprentice during the time of service. For these benefits, to wit, instruction in the theory and practice of some trade or calling, and support during the time within which the instruction is to be given, the apprentice becomes obligated to serve his master in the exercise of his industry and skill. He is bound to be dutiful and obedient to all reasonable commands and requirements. Such requirements as are manifestly unreasonable and wrong, he is at liberty to disobey. No commands or solicitations of his master, can make it his duty to involve himself in crime, either against the laws of God or man.

The servitude of apprentices is limited by contract, and varies from six months to seven years. It may be terminated pre-



vious to the time stipulated, at the request of either of the parties, by a civil process, if it appears that there is sufficient ground for that request. Parents and guardians cannot bind out their children and wards as apprentices beyond the period of their becoming of age. Persons who are of age may obligate themselves to serve in the capacity of apprentices for any reasonable length of time. Apprentices, like children, are protected by law, in the enjoyment of a reasonable amount of liberty, during the period of their apprenticeship, also from personal injury and abuse.

The authority of the master, and the subjection of the apprentice, are founded in benevolence and justice. They are necessary to the attainment of the important benefits which result to the parties concerned, and to society, from this source.

### 3. *The servitude of domestic servants.*

Domestic servants are those who are employed in the families of their masters, for the purpose of assisting in the care or business of the family. They become servants by being hired for that purpose. This servitude may be modified within any reasonable limits, by the terms of the agreement. The law which regulates it is principally that of general usage and natural justice.

The domestic servant does not resign to his master his entire powers of moral agency; he does not obligate himself to practice unqualified submission to his master's will. He only concedes the authority to direct and control his actions within certain limits, either specified in the contract, or determined by law and general usage. Within these limits he virtually promises due submission and obedience, and is bound to fulfil his engagement with promptness and fidelity. Beyond the limits assigned to the master's jurisdiction, obedience on the part of the servant is not required.

The institution of domestic servitude is of indispensable necessity. The demand for domestic servants is imperious, and cannot be set aside without overturning the whole fabric of society. The supply of this demand is also amply provided, and the appropriation of this supply may take place on principles which are equally just and benevolent. The servant employs his industry and skill under the direction, and for the benefit of his employer, and receives an equitable compensation for the same. In being at liberty to pursue this or any other mode of life for which he is qualified, as he can best subserve his interests, the price of service naturally regulates itself according to the principles of justice and benevolence.



As a general rule, every person ought to pursue that mode of life in which he can do best for himself and others. Other things being equal, the profitable departments of industry ought to be prosecuted in preference to those which are unprofitable; and the more profitable, in preference to those which are less so. By acting universally on this principle, the greatest amount of wealth is produced, and the greatest amount of happiness secured.

4. *The servitude of occasional or transient servants.*

Domestic servants are employed by the month or year; occasional servants, by the day or week.

The necessities of mankind create a demand for some servants of this class. Their subjection to their employers and masters, for the time of service, may be as great as that of domestic servants or apprentices. In many cases, however, it is far less, though conformable to the same principles. As far as they engage in the service of their fellow men, they are bound to act according to the reasonable wishes of their employers.

5. *The servitude of agents, factors, &c.*

An agent or factor is one entrusted with the business of another. The business committed to a man as an agent, to be performed in behalf of another, is termed his agency.

An agent is a servant to the person or persons in behalf of whom he assumes an agency, so far as the agency which he assumes is concerned, but no farther. The terms of an agency are such as the principals see fit to establish. If they involve a criminal subjection to the will of the principal, they ought not to be accepted by any one. If the business proposed to persons as agents, is lawful and right, and the terms reasonable, it may be undertaken; and in such cases the agent is bound to comply with the terms of his agency, and to transact the business committed to him, according to the instructions received. The terms may be more or less definite, and the instructions more or less explicit, according to the nature of the business and other circumstances. Agents may be of two classes, temporary and occasional, or permanent.

In some cases their subjection to the will of their employers is very slight, having reference only to the thing to be done, while in respect to the mode and time of doing it, they are left entirely, or almost entirely, to their own discretion. In other cases the subjection of the agent to his employer is as great as that of any class of servants can justly be. Persons are responsible for

the conduct of their agents, within the limits prescribed by the terms of their agency.

6. *The servitude of professional men ; of artists, mechanics, tradesmen, &c.*

These different classes of persons engage more or less in the service of their fellow men, and become obligated to them in the capacity of servants. Physicians and surgeons serve their fellow men as physicians and surgeons; ministers of the gospel, as ministers of the gospel; artists of various kinds, as artists, &c. The terms of professional servitude are determined partly by law and general usage, and partly by contract. This species of servitude is analogous to that of agents.

The professional servant is as truly a servant as the subject, the domestic, or the child. When he consents to use his professional skill for the benefit of an employer, he is bound to do it in subjection to the reasonable will of that employer, and in subservience to his true interests. The employer stands in the relation of the person served, the professional man, &c., in that of the servant, to be governed in the service he performs, by substantially the same principles as other servants.

By actual service, all the classes of servants above described, with the exception of children and apprentices, become legally entitled to wages. Children and apprentices are not entitled to wages, on the ground of having performed service for their parents and masters, because the support, instruction, and experience, which they acquire in these states of servitude, are supposed to be an equivalent for their services. The principle that the laborer is worthy of his hire, and that of benevolence to both the parties, lies at the foundation of all these modes of servitude. It applies equally to the servitude of children, apprentices, domestic servants, occasional servants, agents, professional men, artists, &c. The services of all are required for benevolent purposes, and they are considered as having a just claim for the true value of their services.

The value of service is determined by circumstances. It is sometimes greater and sometimes less. Whatever it is worth, the servant is entitled to receive for it. In this respect, industry and skill stand on an equal footing with any other merchantable commodity. It is the property of the laborer. He may expend it for himself, or exchange it for other commodities, as he judges best. He ought, in the disposal of it, to be governed by the same principles as in disposing of other property.



The just value of service, like that of other commodities, is what it will bring in an open market. It is not a matter of arbitrary appointment, either by servants or their employers. The former would be likely to estimate it too high, if its value was to be determined entirely by them, and the latter too low. Where liberty is left unrestrained, and every person may pursue that branch of industry and skill, in which he supposes he has fairest hope of success, and from which he has a prospect of reaping the greatest advantages, the wages of servants will naturally regulate itself. It will be precisely what it ought to be; no more and no less. Any legislative interference for the purpose of regulating the wages of servants, would be as unjust as it would for that of regulating the price of grain, cattle, or any other article of property.

The different kinds of servitude above described, are recognized and sanctioned by the laws of most civilized nations, and are thus incorporated into the civil institutions of mankind. They are not, however, merely the creature of human laws, but rather of human necessities. Laws sanction and sustain, but do not originate them. Their existence in the modifications specified, is coeval with that of society in any improved form. They cannot be abolished. The abolition of them would involve the destruction of society itself. They would exist, from the necessities and wants both of servants and masters, though all human enactments sustaining them should be repealed.

The object of legislation in respect to them, is to define them and the duties they impose on both the parties concerned, and to make provision for the enforcement of those duties, and the protection of each of the parties in the enjoyment of their respective rights. This is the general purpose and design of human laws. It is to protect persons in the enjoyment of natural rights, and to enforce the discharge of duties which would be obligatory, by virtue of the constitution of the human mind, and the arrangements of Divine providence, had human laws never been enacted.

#### 7. *The servitude of the subjects of civil government.*

Civil government is an institution of the greatest importance to the welfare of men. It is, therefore, of God; and civil obedience is a duty which has the sanction both of reason and revelation. Rom. xiii. 1—7; 1 Pet. ii. 13—18. Civil government implies civil subjection, and requires that authority should be vested somewhere and in some persons, for the control of its subjects. That, like all other authority delegated to men, is limited

by the known laws of God, the principles of benevolence and justice. Within those limits it ought to be implicitly obeyed. The obedience of the subject to the civil authority, is as much a duty, as that of children to their parents, or as any other of the obligations of benevolence.

The use of civil government by those in power, for purposes of selfishness and injustice, is a perversion of it, which is deeply criminal. Where such perversions occur, those oppressed by them have a right to use all reasonable and proper means to obtain redress, as injured persons, and to turn back the stream of civil authority into its appropriate and healthful channels. Voluntary submission to injustice, from the exercise of civil authority, is not a duty. Neither is it a duty to look with indifference upon the civil oppressions of others. Relief from injustice of every kind, is an appropriate object of pursuit, both in our own cases, and in those of others.

Obedience to a reasonable and equitable civil authority, is compensated by ample rewards. This servitude, therefore, under proper regulations, is an amply compensated one, and like that of children, is founded in reason and justice. The sanction which it borrows from revelation, is the sanction of justice, and nothing more; certainly nothing contrary to this.

#### 8. *Slavery, or the servitude of slaves.*

Slavery is a species of servitude in which the servant is under the absolute control of his master, and subject to his disposal as a personal chattel, or personal property.

“A slave,” says the slave-law of South Carolina, “is a chattel personal in the hands of a master or possessor, to all intents and purposes whatsoever.”

The municipal law of another slave-holding state, describes a slave as one “who is in the power of a master, to whom he belongs. The master may sell him, dispose of his person and his industry. The slave can do nothing, possess nothing, and acquire nothing but what belongs to his master.”

These definitions apply to slaves generally. They distinguish this class of human beings from all others, by a line of demarkation that need not be mistaken. They may be employed in labors and pursuits appropriate only to human beings, but they are held by the same tenure as brutes, or inanimate objects; namely, as property. The slave is a servant. His state is one of subjection to a master. But his servitude differs from that of every



other class of servants known to the world, by its degrading assimilation to the servitude of brutes.

Attempts have frequently been made to identify slavery with some other and equitable modifications of servitude. It has been asserted to be the same in principle as subjection to civil government, to parental authority, and to employers in the capacity of hired servants.

Civil government, parental authority, and that exercised over men as hired servants, may be perverted and degraded into systems of injustice and tyrannical oppression. In that case, they may be assimilated to slavery so far as to leave no important or perceptible distinction in principle between them. But in their unperverted state, the difference between them and slavery is too obvious to be unobserved, or unappreciated by the most careless eye.

All men who are at all acquainted with the subject, whatever theoretical notions they may hold and promulgate respecting it, make a great practical distinction between slavery and the other modifications of servitude. None regard it as an eligible condition either for themselves or children. They may contend for it as very suitable and useful for the children of the slaves, but they would in most cases prefer to follow their own children to an early grave, rather than see them consigned to the dominion of slave-holders, as chattels personal.

Slavery differs essentially from the other kinds of servitude described in this section, in the following particulars :

1. It is founded in a regard chiefly if not solely, to the interests of the master, and not in a common and due regard for those of both the parties concerned. The servitude of children, apprentices, &c., is instituted for the benefit of the servant as truly as for that of the master. The object of other servitudes is to secure certain benefits to one of the parties, for which compensation is made to the other, either in service or wages, or instruction and support. But the chief end of slavery is the benefit of the master. As far as the interests of the slave can be secured in subordination to those of the master, they are, to some extent, provided for. But no farther. No sacrifice of the interests of the slave, whether for time or eternity, is too great to be made, when the interests of the master require it. Such is the theory of slavery, and the practice is generally in dreadful agreement with it.

2. Slavery invests the master with a greater degree of author-

ity, than any other modification of the institution of servitude. The first peculiarity noticed relates solely to the principle on which this investment of authority is made. That which is now suggested, relates to the amount of it invested. The restriction of the authority of slave-holders, within the same limits as obtains in respect to parents, the masters of apprentices, of domestic hired servants, &c., would prove fatal to the institution of slavery. It would be a virtual abolition of it.

3. It is artificial and unnatural. Other kinds of servitude are natural and necessary. They do not borrow their existence from legislative enactments, but result from the necessities and wants of mankind. Slavery is entirely a creature of human laws. Laws are necessary to its institution and establishment, and the moment they are repealed, it ceases to exist. So far from being necessary to the great interests of society, slavery is an invasion and sacrifice of them. It sacrifices many of the highest and dearest interests of the slave, to the supposed temporal but less important interests of the master.

Slavery has been substantially the same in all ages in which it has existed, and in all countries. It has always been characterized by selfishness, tyrannical authority, and a sacrifice of the highest and dearest interests of the enslaved, to the less important interests, and often to the caprice of their masters. Such was the character of this institution among the Greeks and Romans ; and it is such still, amid all the improvements of christianity and of modern times. The greatest restraint upon the authority of slave-holders in this country, is not that of municipal law, jealous for the rights of the servant, but that of public opinion, an opinion which lends its sanction to the invasion of the dearest rights of rational and social beings. Such restraint must of course be very inadequate to the wants of the slave, and the ends of justice.

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## SECTION VII.

### IS SLAVERY WRONG ?

This question has been supposed by many to be too plain to require discussion. Public opinion and the public conscience,



have given their decision in the affirmative, under circumstances which seem almost to preclude the possibility of error. The best of men, in their best frames of mind, with no interest to bias their judgment, and in great numbers, have participated in the condemnation of slavery, and that in the most earnest and unqualified manner. In multitudes of cases, this opinion has been formed as the result of extensive and accurate information, both in respect to slavery and the subject of morals generally.

Some, however, have not acquiesced in this condemnatory judgment; and many who profess to acquiesce in it, do not subscribe to it in full. Many suppose the existing modifications of slavery to be wrong in some, or even in many respects, and to be liable to some abuses, who do not unite in the condemnation of the institution as wrong in itself. Some too, who profess to regard slavery as wrong in itself, however modified and administered, understand imperfectly the statement of their professed sentiments, and reject and oppose the inevitable consequences to which those sentiments lead, and which they involve.

There are not a few in this country who advocate the institution of slavery, as nearly or perfectly right; as agreeable to the laws of God and to the dictates of reason and experience. Persons of this class are found in the Southern churches and ministry. They do not regard men as criminal for holding their brethren as property, for buying, selling, and using them in other respects as slaves, but only for exercising their authority with rigor and cruelty.

If compelled to admit the unrighteousness of slavery as it is generally administered, they contend for it as administered in some cases, and if unable to vindicate it as it is really is, they still advocate it, as in their opinion it might be.

This diversity of sentiment respecting the moral character of slavery, creates a demand for diligent inquiry and thorough investigation. The interests involved are of the most vital and permanent character. An investigation, therefore, the design of which is to determine the true relation of slavery to those interests, ought to be entered upon, by all whose minds are yet in any degree unsettled, or whose opinions have been formed on superficial and slight grounds, and ought to be prosecuted with diligence and candor, and with earnest prayer to God, for the enlightening influences of that Spirit, whose office it is to lead every humble inquirer into all important moral truth.

The question whether slavery is wrong or not, may be resolved into the two following :

1. Is the institution of slavery wrong ?

2. Is it wrong to sustain and exercise the office of slave-holder under that institution as established in slave-holding states ?

1. *Is the institution of slavery wrong ?*

The institution of slavery consists in those laws and general usages or customs, which determine the character of this modification of servitude, where it is supported by law. As an institution, it may be compared to that of filial subjection, or the servitude of children ; to that of apprentices ; and to that of civil government ; but it is specifically different from any existing varieties of either. Though different from every other institution of society, it is capable of being greatly modified, and exists under different modifications, in different slave-holding states.

In determining the character of the institution of slavery, it will conduce to clearness of apprehension, to consider it first, as it is, and secondly, as it might be ; or as it may reasonably be supposed possible to constitute and restrict it.

(1.) The institution of slavery is wrong, considered as it is, or as it actually exists in different states and territories.

It authorizes manifest injustice and cruelty, and deprives the rational creatures and subjects of God, of rights and privileges which belong to them as rational and moral beings. It interferes, therefore, with the duties which men owe to themselves, and to each other as men, and with those which they owe to God as his subjects. This interference is generally acknowledged, by reasonable and pious men of all parties. Consequently, they have founded their apologies for it in most cases, rather on their opinions as to what it ought to be, than on the facts demonstrating what it is.

Charges of injustice are sustained against the existing modifications of slavery, in respect to the following particulars :

They divest the servant of his rights as a moral being, and degrade him to a thing, a personal chattel, or an article of personal property in the hands of a possessor and master ; and this, for no crime of his, but merely for the real or supposed benefit and convenience of the master. They deny the slave the benefit and protection of those laws which are enjoyed by all other classes of persons, and which are justly regarded as of inestimable value ; and cast him upon the mercy of an irresponsible



master, with no adequate power to maintain his dearest and most sacred rights as a rational and moral being. They deprive him of the right to seek his happiness by all such honest and reasonable means as he may choose; compel him to labor at such employments as his master may see fit to appoint; and that, without putting it in his power to obtain a fair compensation for the same. They deprive him of the advantages of a common and liberal education, thus dooming him to perpetual ignorance and imbecility; and take from him the institution of marriage, and the power to educate his children for happiness in this life and that to come. All these injuries are inflicted by the institution of slavery, in all its existing varieties. This institution, as it exists, therefore, is manifestly wrong. It is a violation of the most unquestionable principles of justice and benevolence.

(2.) No modification of slavery can make it right, which does not amount to a formal or virtual abolition of it.

Let us suppose a thorough reform of this institution to be prosecuted, till nothing wrong should be left. What would be removed? And what would remain? The marriage relation would be restored to its integrity, the laborer entitled to a compensation equal to the value of his labor, the rights of personal liberty, of property, and of conscience, all acknowledged; laws prohibiting instruction repealed, arrangements for extending the advantages of common and liberal education as widely as possible, adopted and prosecuted with vigor, and parents, the natural guardians and masters of their children, designated to this office by the providence of God, allowed by the civil authority to exercise all the appropriate duties of the parental relation, in the government and instruction of their children, and to make what provision they can for their temporal and eternal welfare. In such a reform, slavery will indeed be corrected; its abuses will be removed, but it will be by the entire subversion of the institution itself. Those who are now in slavery might still, in some cases, be servants; but they would not be slaves. An equitable apprenticeship to business is not slavery; an equitable domestic servitude is not; no person who enjoys the rights of property and of personal liberty, can justly be considered a slave.

Perhaps, however, a much less thorough reform of this institution, than now indicated, would satisfy the wishes of some, and accord with their apprehensions of what justice requires. But which of these improvements is not necessary, in order to render this species of servitude right? In respect to which of the par-



particulars referred to, is not slavery wrong? If every other enactment of our present systems of slavery was repealed, but the right to exact service, and that without paying for it at the market price, the remnant would be wrong. The power to exact service of our fellow men, except on the ground of some obvious necessity, or in satisfaction of some equitable claim, is an invasion of their undoubted rights, and is criminal. But what is the claim of the slave-holder? Whence is his title derived? Is that claim for value received by the slave? Not at all. The slave has received no benefit from him, for which the surrender of his liberties is an equitable exchange. From his earliest years he is, in most cases, the subject of injurious treatment by his master, in various respects, particularly in respect to the means of intellectual and moral improvement. The master's claim to a fellow being as his slave, cannot be sustained on the ground that the slave is justly indebted to him to that amount, for the care and expense bestowed on him in his infancy. That admission would lay a foundation for the enslaving of children, as such. It would entitle all parents to hold their children as slaves, which is contrary, not only to the dictates of benevolence, but to the best established principles of justice. Parents have not a right to enslave their children, and laws that should invest them with this right, would be unjust and unreasonable.

The title of a master to an African who is torn from his country and sold as a slave by the man who seized him, is that derived from the thief and robber. The thief and robber, however, cannot give a just title to the property they have seized and taken from the true proprietor. The owner has a just title to his property, notwithstanding its seizure. The man who buys of a robber, purchases the robber's title, nothing more. That title is no better when transferred to the hands of a purchaser, than it was before. Every transfer that may succeed, is a transfer of the same insufficient title. The owner of the stolen property may be destitute of power to enforce his claim to it, but that claim remains uncanceled, till it is equitably destroyed. Has the claim of a stolen African to himself, been equitably canceled? The property which a human being has in himself, is of the most sacred character. It ought manifestly to be secured to the true proprietor, by all possible and reasonable means. Are there no possible and reasonable means, then, of securing it to the stolen African? The answer to this question is obvious. Means of securing the property in question to the original



proprietor, are abundant. That property, therefore, ought to be secured to him. The proprietor is at hand with his title, and ready to assert it. He that purchases a stolen man, purchases a false title, in the very presence of the true proprietor, and with the amplest means of discovering the validity of the proprietor's title to the property. Laws which recognize that false title as valid, are therefore manifestly wrong.

Whence does the slave-holder derive a title to the child of his slave, as a slave? The child commences its existence a creature of God, and in the first instance, under obligations only to God, as his servant. His relations to an earthly parent, indicate that parent not as his possessor, but merely his protector and guardian, during the period of his incompetency to take care of himself. It is the duty of the parent to bring the child forward to such a degree of improvement, that he may be able to take care of himself as soon as practicable. He is bound, in duty, to consult for the happiness and welfare of the child, as truly as he does for his own. For whatever care and labor he judiciously expends on the improvement and support of the child, he is entitled, in justice, to a compensation. That compensation must be made chiefly in service, as the child has no other means of making it. But the service which the parent has a right to exact of his child, is not the subjection of a slave; far from it. Neither is it perpetual servitude of any kind. The judgment and experience of the world have acquiesced in assigning the child to a state of servitude, not slavery, to his parent, till he attains the age of twenty-one years; making it the duty of the parent to afford him support and instruction till that period, and giving the parent a right to what service he can obtain in the mean time, as a compensation for parental care and expenditure. This arrangement is generally considered just to both the parties concerned. It is attended with great advantages to both, and affords the parent as great a pecuniary compensation as justice and benevolence authorize him to require.

The duties of parental oversight and support may be transferred to others, in which case filial obligation will undergo a corresponding transfer. But in this transfer there is no fundamental change of obligations and relations. The relations of the child are substantially those of a child, and those of the guardian are, in most respects, the same as those of the father, which were transferred to him; never greater.

The parent has no equitable title to his child as a slave, and

cannot convey such a title to others ; for he can only convey to another what he possesses himself. The title of the slave-holder, therefore, to the children of his slaves, is false on two grounds :

(1.) On the ground that the parents are not equitably his, but their own, by a title which has not been equitably cancelled, and which is therefore of unquestionable validity.

(2.) On the ground that even if the parents were equitably his, a title to the parents does not comprehend an equitable title to the children as slaves, but only as children.

On the whole, it appears that the institution of slavery, or the laws and usages investing men with a title to their fellow men as slaves, are plainly repugnant to justice ; that slavery is therefore wrong, and that those who have the power, and upon whom the responsibility is devolved by Divine providence, ought to unite in pulling down this enormous system of oppression.

2. Is it wrong to sustain and exercise the office of slaveholder under existing slave laws ?

Human laws do not make wrong right. The greatest crimes may be legalized, as has often been done ; but they are crimes still. Laws, for example, authorizing persecution, have existed in many countries. Thousands of innocent persons have been subjected to imprisonment, torture, confiscation of property, exile, and death itself, by due process of human laws. But do any suppose that those executions were right ? Did the neighbor who impeached the innocent, or the judge who condemned him, or the executioner who confined, or tortured, or beheaded, or burned him, do right ? Human laws, indeed, justified them, but are they acquitted in the sight of God, and at the bar of enlightened conscience ?

If human laws can make it right for a judge to condemn the innocent, or for an executioner to put him to death, they can reverse the law of Jehovah, and subvert his moral government over men. If the legalizing of crime makes it right in any single case, it may have this effect in another, and another case, till all crime is legalized and destroyed. Where then will be the government of God ? Where the immutable distinction between right and wrong, which is so much the boast and glory of the christian morality ? What a mere figment is the Divine law, if it is not to be enforced in opposition to the laws of men ? God says, respect the life of the innocent ; the human legislator says, no, kill him. Which of these is the higher authority, it is easy to decide. An apostle decided this question long since, when



he declared—"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken to you more than to God, judge ye." Acts iv. 19. God has not established one rule of conduct for apostles, and another for others. He has established one rule for all men, and that is the rule of obedience to him, the opinions, enactments, and inflictions of men to the contrary, notwithstanding. Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 5.

On the same principle that the three servants of God, though standing alone, refused to worship the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar, at the peril of their lives, (Dan. iii. 8—26,) they would, if in power, have refused to support or enforce such worship. The principle on which they acted, was that of the supremacy of God and of his law. The wonderful interposition of God in their favor, is a sufficient testimony to the correctness of that principle.

The supremacy of God and of his law is the fundamental principle of correct morals. It is the pole star of piety and virtue.

Right and wrong are founded in the nature and relations of moral actions, considered with reference to the laws of God as the supreme rule of moral action. A consideration of human laws may be left out of the account, in determining the moral quality of actions. They are of no use in these determinations, except as far as they correspond with the law of God; and where they differ from this, are liable to be of the greatest injury in perverting our moral judgments. If we judge of conduct by an incorrect rule, our judgment will necessarily be erroneous.

By the law of God, it is wrong to hold men as things, because they are more than things, and have rights of personal liberty and of property, that are invaded by their being held in subjection of this kind. By this law, slaves are as truly entitled to the right use of their faculties, to a full equivalent for their industry, to the liberty of acquiring property, and the power of holding, enjoying, and using it, as any other class of persons. The invasion of these and other rights, in the case of the slaves, is as truly prohibited by the law of God, as in that of others. The idea that a man derives a just right from human laws to hold his fellow men in a state of servitude, which is contrary to the law of God, is absurd. Human authority cannot make it our duty to violate one of God's requirements. Scripture examples and precepts have placed this truth on the most unquestionable ground; on the firmest basis. However others act, he who sub-

mits to the Scriptures as the law of his life, may not do evil that good may come.

If the law of God may not be violated, when the violation of it is positively required by human laws, and those requirements enforced by the heaviest penalties, still less may this be done with impunity, when those laws merely grant permission and afford authority to the subject to do it if he chooses, without imposing any obligations on him to that effect.

Permission to exercise the office of slave-holder, and support in doing it, are all that is done for slavery, by the laws of slave-holding states. No man is compelled by law to become a slave-holder, or to continue in this practice contrary to his will.

It is a melancholy fact, that legal permission to practice injustice in any department of human agency, is enough to open wide the flood-gates of iniquity anywhere. Take away from human life, or from any kind of property, the safe-guards thrown around them by the law, and none of us would be secure for a week.

Such has been the experience of the world in respect to slavery. Permission is given to enslave all who are born in certain circumstances. And lo ! it is done ! The christian and infidel are alike eager to seize the unprotected as their lawful prey. These victims of oppression are given up to their fellow men to be enslaved for life. The whole grant is improved, and as a general rule, death alone is the herald that proclaims liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

It appears then, that if slave-holding is wrong in itself, the authority which it derives from human laws, cannot make it right, or diminish in any degree, its criminality. The question, therefore, whether it is wrong to hold men as slaves, under existing slave-laws, must be answered according to the previous question, whether the institution is wrong ? That answer is an affirmative one ; this must consequently be affirmative.

The criminality of holding men as slaves under existing slave-laws, may be farther illustrated by the following considerations :

1. It involves all the guilt inherent in slave-holding. God's law, both natural and revealed, is a rule of action, the authority of which is far above that of municipal statutes. It is the only proper and supreme rule of moral action, other laws having no force where they come in collision with this. All the guilt of slave-holding arising from the undue restraint of liberty, the



education of human beings for working machines, withholding from the laborer a just compensation for his labor, &c., is chargeable upon the slave-holder under existing slave-laws, as truly as if there were no laws to sanction this procedure.

The idea that the slave-holder can shift his responsibility to the laws is entirely erroneous. God's law binds him irrevocably to the practice of justice and mercy, human laws to the contrary notwithstanding. By God's law, not by that of men, the morality or immorality of his conduct must be determined. By this he will stand or fall at the last day.

2. The man who assumes and administers the office of slave-holder, virtually gives his assent to the laws establishing slavery, and becomes a supporter of this institution. A slave-holder may denounce slavery as wrong in words; he may profess to abhor the system of legislation by which it is created and upheld; but his act of holding slaves is a practical support of that system, which does far more to perpetuate it, than he can possibly do by other means to pull it down. Every instance of slave-holding contributes to the extension of slavery, by multiplying its victims; and to the stability of it, by its effect, considered as an example for the imitation of others. This is particularly the case in respect to pious slave-holders, and others who are considered as being persons of correct moral principles. The examples and countenance of such persons are the principal supports of slavery. It is sustained in credit, chiefly by their names; and if not thus sustained, could not long stand at all. The examples of good men are often followed without reflection or inquiry. They are supposed of course, to be safe. Good men, therefore, are under greater responsibilities than others, and ought to act with corresponding circumspection. Their sins are both more criminal and more injurious, than those of others, in proportion to the light and knowledge which they possess, and the standing which they have in the community.

3. Every slave-holder is responsible, to a great extent, for all the injustice and cruelty which attend unnecessarily, the administration of slavery. Slavery is the occasion of a vast amount of wickedness, which is not inherent in the system, and inseparable from it, but which attends it as a natural accompaniment, and which flows from it as a natural consequence of undue authority and subjection. Some may administer it with humanity, making the necessarily galling yoke of this bondage as light as possible; others will do it with rigor, making it unnecessarily severe

and oppressive. The instances in which slavery is made as light, and clothed with as little injustice as possible, in which it is attended with no evils but such as are inseparable from it, are comparatively few. Those in which its attendant and incidental evils are numerous and oppressive, are not few. They are numbered by thousands and tens of thousands.

For all these incidental injuries, relating as they do both to temporal and eternal interests, partly occasional and partly habitual, the institution of slavery, and all who unite in upholding it, are justly responsible.

A single insulated act of injustice does not draw after it a train of responsibilities to be compared with that which is connected with extensive systems of evil doing. Holding men as slaves has this disadvantage, that it belongs to a system of oppression, and tends to the support of that system, in all its parts, and with all its abuses.

Where the emancipation of slaves is prohibited by law, or the benevolent ends of it frustrated by legislative enactments, designed to prevent this result, the path of exact duty may not be always apparent. The slave-holder, in circumstances of this kind, finds himself invested with legal rights, which it is manifestly wrong for him to exercise. He has the legal right to subordinate the temporal and spiritual interests of his fellow men to his own. He may do this in the case of tens and hundreds. But he cannot do it innocently. He may verily think he is doing God service, in the exercise of oppression; but his thinking so does not make it so. The existing laws impeding the emancipation of slaves, render this class of persons peculiarly dependent upon their masters, and peculiarly liable to injustice. Oppression is encouraged, justice and mercy discouraged.

In such cases, what ought the slave-holder to do? He ought to consult for the welfare of his slaves, on the same principles that he does for that of himself and children. If, on mature deliberation, and after a careful estimate of slavery, he would be willing to have been trained up for it, and consigned to it himself; if he would be willing to train up his children for it, and consign them to it, did the laws permit; if he finds it conducive to the temporal and eternal interests of all the parties concerned, and agreeable to the law of a holy God, who forbids all unrighteousness, on pain of his eternal displeasure; then let him prosecute the intention of the law, and subject his horse and his brother to the same arbitrary sway, and hold them alike by the title of



“chattels personal, to all intents and purposes whatsoever.” But if conscience shrink from such a procedure, however authorized and encouraged by men, then let him that is armed by law with the power of exercising this oppression, forbear. Let him put that armor off as quickly and as entirely as possible.

But the question still returns, What shall the slave-holder do? Let him make all reasonable efforts and sacrifices to place his servants, in his estimation and in that of justice not his slaves, beyond the reach of injustice and oppression. Let him exercise a noble generosity, a pure benevolence, in respect to this matter. Let him take no advantage of his power, for the injury of his servants either in their persons, characters, property, or civil and religious rights as men. But let him act in relation to them, on the principles which led the Redeemer of the world, though rich, to become poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.

It is not necessary that a slave-holder should dismiss his slaves from his care, in order to acquit himself of the guilt of slave-holding. He may release them from the bondage of slavery, and still hold them as apprentices, hired servants, and objects of guardianship, in the relation of children or wards. He ought to give them an interest in his property, equal to their just dues, after all reasonable deductions are made for the expense and responsibilities incurred in taking care of them; or else to pay them at the market price for their services, in some other way, and to allow them to expend or invest the same for their own benefit, and according to their discretion. In other words, the man who is now a slave-holder, ought not to exercise in any case, the despotism contemplated by the slave-laws; but, in the place of it, a righteous sovereignty, limited by the strictest justice and the most impartial benevolence, in which the interests of his servants should be respected according to their true value, as really as his own.

But even in the exercise of such an authority, the master would not be justified in claiming his fellow men as his perpetual servants.

The subjects of civil government have the liberty of going from one country to another. This is the case even under those which are most despotic. The right of exchanging one country, and the jurisdiction of one government, for another, is founded in justice and benevolence, and the invasion of it without just cause, is an act of manifest and flagrant injustice. On the same principle, servants of mature age ought to be allowed to ex-

change the sovereignty of one master for that of another. A smaller amount of liberty than this, is altogether less than their necessities require, and is insufficient for the purposes of justice.

By adopting the principles above recommended, the slaveholder would be converted into a master with limited authority, and the head of a limited and righteous sovereignty; that which is now a stock or herd of slaves, into a principality of free-men, under an equitable government, having liberty to exchange the same for any other, whenever they could honestly do it, and whenever, in their opinion, such a change was expedient; and slavery would be entirely abolished by the voluntary relinquishment of it on the part of masters.

On the whole, it appears both that the institution of slavery is wrong, it being a system of laws and usages authorizing gross injustice, and conflicting with the highest interests of men as immortal beings; and that exercising the office of slaveholder under this institution, is also a wrong for which the institution is no proper justification, which existing circumstances do not require, and which God does not allow.

Those who may be still unconvinced of the truth of these positions, are requested to consider the following additional topics of argument. It is believed that they afford strong confirmation of the reasonings and conclusions above stated:

1. The effect of slavery on the temporal prosperity of all the persons concerned, the masters and slaves.

2. Its effect on the intellectual and social improvement of all the persons concerned.

3. Its effect on their religious and moral improvement, considered particularly in respect to the number of actual conversions, and the degree and amount of piety and holiness attained.

4. Its effect on the interests of the colored race generally in this country, in depressing and otherwise injuring them.

5. Its effect on the interests of this nation, considered with reference to all classes of persons.

6. The dangers to be apprehended from this source, if they are not averted by timely repentance and reformation.



## SECTION VIII.

## OUGHT SLAVERY TO BE IMMEDIATELY ABOLISHED ?

SOME persons think it a matter of little consequence, to inquire what ought to be done, in respect to the abolition of slavery, under the apprehension that the determination of this question in the most satisfactory manner, will be entirely ineffectual as to the attainment of the desired result. "If men were willing to do what they ought to do," say they, "the case would be very different from what it is at present. But as it is, we had better consider what slave-holders and the slave-holding community are willing to do, and leave the inquiry, what they ought to do, for future and subsequent consideration." God, however, has not acted on this plan, and those who are engaged in his service, and who acknowledge his authority, have no liberty to adopt it.

God does not adapt his requirements and exhortations to the wishes of men, but to the demands of justice and benevolence. "He utters his judgments against them touching all their wickedness." Jer. i. 16. He commands the friend of righteousness, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins." Isa. lviii. 1. He says of the false prophets, "If they had adhered to my counsel, and caused my people to hear my words, then they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." Jer. xxiii. 22. Again, "He that hath my word, let him speak it faithfully. Is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" xxiii. 28, 29.

Those who distrust the adaptation of truth to promote righteousness, or its efficiency by the Divine blessing to smite down the idols and to slay the very leviathans of wickedness, must have an imperfect knowledge of its past successes, as well as of the declared purposes of God respecting it. Moral truth has a power over the conscience, which never yet has been fully appreciated. The empire of sin is maintained chiefly by shrinking away from the clear light and renovating influences of truth. "He that believeth not is condemned," is under the dominion of sin; "and this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John iii. 18, 19.

The principles of the Bible are sufficiently clear and decisive on this subject, for the direction of all who respect its authority as the word of God. They have been amply tested by experience. Truth, when spoken in faithfulness, and accompanied with the prayer of the righteous, has achieved the most surprising victories over selfishness and other forms of sins.

Slavery has already felt its power. Some of the strongest fortresses of this giant evil have been stormed with success, and others are giving way. If this son of Anak cannot be smitten down and destroyed by the sword of the Holy Spirit, that weapon and the invisible hand of the Almighty, by which it is wielded, are unworthy of our confidence; and we must seek for light from some other quarter of the universe, or sit down in hopeless despair.

Truth however, strong as it is in the power of the Almighty, does not go forth alone to the achievement of its victories over the conscience and heart of man. God's providential government leads, pursues, and sustains it, in every stage of its progress.

The battle that is now being fought against slavery, against all the inherent and accompanying wickedness of this deeply rooted and strongly fortified system of oppression, may severely try our faith, our benevolence, our generosity, our compassion, our courage. But it is the Lord's, and if we come to the attack in subjection to his will, and in his spirit, the words that we utter shall not return unto us void, but shall accomplish that which he desires, and shall prosper in the thing whereto he sent them. Isa. lv. 11.

The question, Ought slavery to be immediately abolished? resolves itself into the two following:

1. Ought slavery to be ever abolished?

2. Ought those who possess the legitimate power, to abolish it immediately?

1. Ought slavery to be *ever* abolished?

That it ought to be abolished at some time, and in some way, is conceded by nearly all candid men, who have not a pecuniary or secular interest of some kind, in its being upheld. It is conceded, moreover, by the great majority of intelligent slave-holders themselves. The philanthropist, the politician, the moralist, and christian, all cry out against slavery, as involving a violation of the laws of God, and of the unquestionable rights of man. In denouncing slavery as a curse to the world, as a great political and moral evil, chilling the buds of happiness, and blasting



the fruits of virtue through all the ranks of society, but especially in the bosom of the slave, there is great unanimity among intelligent and good men; a unanimity not exceeded in any other instances of a similar and legalized enormity.

If any additional argument were needed for the establishment of the opinion now prevalent, that slavery ought to be abolished at some time, the preceding exposition of its nature and relations might be referred to, as sufficient. But there is no need of argument on this point; or if such argument is needed in some cases, those are not the cases to which this dissertation is particularly addressed.

I conclude, therefore, in accordance with the judgment of the civilized world, that slavery ought to be abolished at some time, because it is wrong; and as such, tends to diminish the happiness, and impair the virtue and piety of men; and also to obscure the glory of God, and thwart the benevolent ends of his righteous government over the moral universe.

2. Ought those who possess the legitimate power, to abolish slavery *immediately*?

Slavery is an institution of man, not of God. It has been shown to be fundamentally unjust and oppressive, and consequently, directly opposed to the law of God, and hostile to the best interests of mankind. The obligation to abolish it at any time, arises from the fact of its inherent criminality, and of its inevitable consequences of mischief and misery; consequences that are a manifest infraction of the law of love, to which the moral universe is subjected.

To abolish slavery, is to cease to uphold it by law; or it may be considered, as comprehending the abrogation of the existing systems of slave-laws, and the enactment of laws forbidding the reduction of human beings to a state of slavery, and the holding of them in it.

It is of course the work of the law-making power. If it ought to be done at all, it ought to be done by those who possess that power, either originally as the source of it, or by delegation, as the depositories and agents of the exercise of it, within prescribed and constitutional limits. The power to abolish slavery is lodged somewhere; either with the people collectively, or with their representatives; in some cases, with the former, and in others, with the latter. Wherever lodged, it is laid under eternal responsibilities, for the doing of the greatest possible amount



of good, and the prevention of the greatest possible amount of evil.

In the first instance, and during every successive period of its existence, slavery has been the creature of men. Men created it. They sustain it at this moment. The first originators of it were responsible to God and to the universe, for their agency in bringing it forth. Those who now sustain it are equally responsible for the agency they exert in upholding it. The character of slavery cannot be understood without considering it in connection with the agents of its support and continuance. Separate from them, it has no moral character. Considered in its true relations to them, it has been shown both to have a moral character, and to have one which is deeply depraved; a character of aggravated wickedness. Those who possess the power to abolish slavery, are, under God, the trustees of the slaves.

The execution of their high trust, involves the immediate abolition of slavery. It cannot involve less than this; for less would not be right; and less not being right, could not tend to the greatest good; but in proportion to its defection from strict righteousness, would necessarily tend to evil. Righteousness alone is good, and tends to happiness; sin is evil in all its varieties and degrees, and tends to misery.

The reasons for immediately abolishing slavery, may be comprehended under the following heads:

1. The institution is fundamentally wrong and oppressive. It is not founded in impartial benevolence, but in gross selfishness and injustice. That which is wrong cannot be useful even for a time, and we are not allowed by God to do evil, in the vain and delusive hope that good may come. Rom. iii. 8.

2. It ought to be done immediately, because the injuries which slavery inflicts are immediate and immense. The institution of slavery is doing constant injury. It maintains an incessant and fatal conflict with the interests of immortal minds. Every hour multiplies its injuries at an enormous rate; adds to the long catalogue of its cruelties and other crimes, and inflicts new wounds on its bleeding victims. Many of those injuries are remediless. Many of those wounds are incurable. Many of those victims are sacrificed to eternal sorrow. The tide of slavery is one of moral desolation and death. It is rolling on with tremendous force, and bearing every moment new victims on its bosom, and inflicting new injuries in its progress. Those clothed by Divine providence with legitimate authority to say to



this torrent, "Thus far shalt thou come and no farther; here shall thy proud waves be stayed, thy moral desolations end;" stand in the true Thermopylæ of freedom and the world. The fight of Leonidas and his compatriots was but children's play, in comparison with the achievement reserved for them, and placed within their power. There is here a victory to be gained in the cabinet, which is worthy to cast an eternal shade on the most splendid achievements of the battle-field. This achievement is the redemption of millions in the very garden of the world, from the most degrading bondage. It calls for a pure heart, a clear head, unshrinking courage, and a determined purpose. Did Divine providence provide a Leonidas and his compeers for the dreadful exigency of an ancient state, when the tide of exorbitant and unlawful power was sweeping over it; did the Almighty lay under contribution the vast accumulations of stores for elemental warfare, treasured up in the natural world, in order to the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt? Will not the same Divine providence, the same unaltered and unchangeable Jehovah, nerve with an adequate portion of his strength, enliven with his Spirit, and enlighten with his wisdom, the subjects of this immense responsibility in respect to the abolition of slavery, do they but come up to his help against the mighty, with the generous fervor of the true patriot, and the self-denying and self-sacrificing devotion of a far greater than he, the true christian?

God has never been wanting to the cause of humanity, and in respect to that, he has ever been a God at hand, and mighty to save. He will not be wanting in this case.

The obligation to abolish slavery immediately, is not diminished by the fact that it is shared by many, and that many must concur in order to effect the entire and universal abolition of it. It is just as much the duty of the many, as it would be that of a single individual, or of any number however limited, were the power to achieve this end, vested in that individual or that number. The unwillingness of any on whom this work devolves, to co-operate in it, does not diminish either their obligation to unite in doing it, or the obligation of others who share this power, to use it vigorously for the end in question. Unwillingness to discharge duty, does not cancel obligation.

The argument is this: slavery pours forth a mighty torrent of mischiefs upon mankind. Its victims are numbered by millions even in these United States. Many of its injuries are in-



calculable and eternal. These are multiplying and increasing every moment.

But there are men having ample powers to bind up this dragon, red with the blood of millions, and still thirsting for more. They can brand him with the mark of Cain, and banish him from the realms of civilization and christianity. They cannot indeed, repair the mischiefs he has done, or dry up the tears he has wrung from suffering humanity. But they can pluck the infant from his den, and deliver those in the midst of life from being any longer the objects of his cruelty. Shall they bind him and banish him at once and forever? or shall they let him continue his ravages?

The voice of God, like the noise of many waters, and of mighty thunderings, commands that he be bound, and banished, and allowed no more to afflict the world. He speaks to our humanity as men, to our pity as christians, to our personal interests, as yet to be judged and sentenced to endless life or eternal death, according as we have exercised kindness and charity, or not, in this suffering world. Matt. xxv. 31—46. God places us here for the trial and exercise of our benevolence, as well as for that of our faith. On the manner in which we sustain this trial, our own interests for eternity chiefly depend. The interests of others are indeed involved, but not to the extent of our own. Every blow that we strike at the interests of a fellow being, returns with redoubled force upon ourselves; so that, in all the injuries we inflict, whether by the activity of our malice and selfishness, or by the deficiency and sluggishness of our love, we ourselves are chiefly injured, and are ultimately the principal sufferers.

3. Those who have the power, ought to abolish slavery immediately, because it may not be in their power to do it at a future time. God invests men with legislative power for the purpose of their doing good with it. The period of its investment in the hands of individuals is short and uncertain. The man that enjoys this investment to-day, may be called to resign it to-morrow. It becomes him, therefore, to do with his might whatever good work his hands find to do.

That of abolishing slavery requires his attention more than any other work, depending on the exertion of uncertain powers, on account of the greatness of the interests which it involves, and of its liability to be neglected by others, if it is by him. His neglect to attend to it may induce others to similar neglect



at the same time, and may serve as a precedent for his successors. In this way it may be the cause of irreparable present mischief, and may place an incalculable benefit now attainable, beyond the possibility of future attainment.

4. Slavery ought to be abolished immediately, because the work of abolishing it is easier now than it is likely to be at any future time.

We are authorized to judge of the future by the past. Since the first introduction of slaves to this country, they have been constantly and rapidly increasing. They now amount to more than two millions, and will doubtless continue to increase for years to come. The difficulty of emancipating them, other things being equal, is in proportion to their numbers; consequently it is daily increasing in the ratio of their numerical increase.

In other respects we possess every advantage at the present time for accomplishing their emancipation and turning it to profitable account, that we can ever hope to possess.

The slaves are as well prepared for emancipation as they can ever be. Slavery is incompatible with any considerable degree of mental improvement. The key of knowledge and means of improvement are taken away from them, in order to keep them in peaceful subjection as slaves. This severity is not practiced merely for purposes of cruelty, but for those of security on the part of the masters. If it is necessary now, it will continue to be necessary; and will be a perpetual bar in the way of their improvement while they remain in the condition of slaves. Various other impediments exist in the way of the elevation and improvement of the great mass of them, the removal of which it is preposterous to expect, except by the abolition of slavery.

Here then, is a great work of justice and benevolence to be done at some time. The generation which shall do it, will be the benefactors of millions existing at the time, and will send down the stream of their beneficence, widening and deepening as it flows, to future ages, and to millions on millions yet unborn.

This work is not only one of justice and benevolence, but one of necessity and mercy. It can be done now. There is ample power to do it. All that is wanting is a willing mind on the part of a majority of those who have the power. The difficulties to be encountered in doing it are indeed great, far greater than they would have been at an earlier period; but they are

less than they will probably ever be again. Will this generation do the work ? Having suffered its difficulties to accumulate with its increasing magnitude thus far, will those who have the power, do the work which it belongs to them to do ; or will they pass it on to a future age, to be done with more difficulty, and with diminished usefulness by other hands ?

5. Another reason for abolishing slavery immediately, is, that the sooner this work is done, the greater will be the probable utility of it. Do it now, and the benefits of it will commence from this time to continue, and probably continue increasing, in all future time while the world shall stand, and while eternity shall endure. Even the difference of a single year is of great consequence in this matter ; that of a generation is inconceivably great. The delay of this work for a year will doubtless change the destiny of many immortal souls forever. The delay of it for an age must be fraught with the most amazing consequences of temporal and eternal injury to men. The work of the abolition of slavery, therefore, above all things demands dispatch. It is a work of the utmost urgency.

6. The increasing danger of servile insurrections, and other Providential judgments on account of slavery and its accompanying sins, is another and strong reason for immediately abolishing this institution.

The history of other nations and of past ages, is full of admonition and warning on these points. The slavery of the ancients was, in many cases, visited upon them by Divine providence, with terrible retribution. Greece, Rome and other ancient states, suffered severely from this cause.

The Scriptures also inform us, that this was the case with Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Assyria, Babylon, and the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. It may be the case with the United States, unless prevented by speedy repentance and reformation.

The extreme sensitiveness of the South on the subject of slavery, arises from their apprehensions on this point, and it indicates a state of mind and of things, which must be exceedingly uncomfortable.

If profound silence would avert the danger, or remove it to any considerable distance, there would be some propriety in the exorbitant demands of many Southern men on this subject. It would be cruel in the extreme to blow upon coals liable to ignite of themselves, and capable, under the providence of God, of producing the most dreadful explosion, and the most wide-spread



ruin among all classes of persons. But the profoundest silence on the part of his friends or of himself, would not purchase security to the adventurer, advancing in darkness and unconcern to the verge of a dreadful precipice. It would not distance for a moment the danger before him, or mitigate in any degree, the final catastrophe.

So it is in regard to slavery. This great moral phenomenon continues its progressive development, whether observed or not. Much of its work of mischief, like the guilt of its perpetration, is in secret, and if not seasonably abolished its final catastrophe will, in all probability, burst with surprising suddenness and fury upon the land, and deluge it with dreadful ruin.

It is not necessary that a prospective evil should be certain, in order to furnish a reasonable ground for precautionary measures. If the evil apprehended is great and probable, or merely possible at no distant period, it ought to be provided against by the most vigorous and efficient means. Such is at least the fact with the evils of servile insurrections, and other national judgments to be apprehended from slavery. These evils are more than possible at no distant period, they are altogether probable; and at the same time, are of a nature the most terrific and intolerable. There is no certain means of correcting them but by the immediate abolition of slavery; to this measure, therefore, as one of protection and self-defence, the supporters of the institution are loudly called.

7. The immediate abolition of slavery is demanded by a due regard to the national honor.

In the memorable declaration of our independence, we used as a nation the following language:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.”

This declaration has never been revoked; it is the language of the nation still. In pursuance of these principles, the strug-

gle of the revolution was prosecuted with glorious success. The yoke of the British crown was declared to be oppressive, and was broken, that we might enjoy the liberty which we claimed as our undoubted and unalienable right. We ascertained our own rights, and secured them at great expense and hazard. But how have we dealt with our neighbor? Have we loved him as ourselves? Have we thought the yoke of oppression as ill adapted to his interests as ours; as galling to him as to us? The answer to these questions is found in the humiliating fact, that at the very time of the declaration of our rights, and of the struggle for our independence, we were exercising over men "created free and equal" with ourselves, a degree of oppression, in comparison with which, the oppression that we complained of and resisted as intolerable, was not to be named; and still more, in the additional fact, that for more than sixty years we have enjoyed the benefits of our blood-bought freedom, during which time the praise of liberty has never ceased, and the course of our prosperity has been one of unrivalled progress, and we have not yet found it in our hearts to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound in the most oppressive servitude, by our authority. Well may we say with the perpetrators of a memorable instance of injustice in ancient times, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear." Gen. xlii. 21.

For a pittance of the price at which we purchased our own political independence, we might have procured the redemption of our slaves. But we have not done it, and as a nation are as little inclined to do it now as we ever have been.

Slavery is a reproach to any people, but more so to us than to any other, on account of the high ground we have taken in respect to liberty and justice, wherever our own political rights are concerned.

Our system of slavery would disgrace the most despotic governments of Europe and Asia. How much more then is it disgraceful to ourselves? And inasmuch as we regard the national honor as above all price, and desire to hold it up to the world in the native purity of freedom, untarnished by national crime, we ought to labor for the immediate abolition of slavery. The flag of freedom is deeply dishonored by being made the symbol of bondage to millions of our oppressed fellow countrymen.



There is at this moment a large and dark stain upon it, which nothing less than the abolition of slavery can wipe away.

The grounds which have now been stated, are deemed a firm support for the doctrine that slavery ought to be immediately abolished. If this doctrine is true, it ought to be understood and promulgated. If it is not true, either let the fallacy of the reasonings by which it is supported be pointed out, or let the contrary opinion be established. There is no unkindness in urging important practical truth even upon unwilling ears, or in administering deserved rebuke to a slumbering conscience. Such offices are often required, and if the present should prove to have been a case of this kind, it will not be a solitary one.

To the argument for the immediate abolition of slavery as now submitted, the following objections will occur :

1. That the slaves are incompetent to enjoy liberty with advantage to themselves.
2. That they are incapable of civil government in an emancipated state.
3. That their immediate emancipation would produce intolerable pecuniary embarrassment among the mass of slave-holders, and throughout the country.

These objections I will now consider.

1. The immediate abolition of slavery is declared to be impracticable, on the ground that the slaves are incompetent to enjoy liberty.

The liberty referred to in this argument, is deliverance from a state of slavery. It is compatible with a state of apprenticeship ; of domestic servitude for wages, to which the servant may bind himself for any reasonable length of time, and on any reasonable and equitable conditions ; and of guardianship, to which persons incompetent by immature age or imbecility arising from any other cause, to take care of themselves, may be assigned by the civil authority, in order to their being properly taken care of.

With this view of the liberty contemplated, is it true that the slaves are not competent to enjoy liberty ? Are not many of them competent to engage as hired servants to the very masters whom they now serve as slaves ? Are they not competent to hire out as servants in the same departments of industry in which they now labor ? Will there not be a demand for them as hired servants, proportionable to that which now exists for them as slaves ? These questions admit only of an affirmative

answer. The man who is competent to labor as a slave, is competent to do so as a hired servant, in the department of labor to which he is accustomed. It requires no more skill to labor as a hired servant, than it does as a slave. But it is said, that having always been accustomed to work for an absolute master and under the lash, they will not be willing to work when delivered from a state of slavery. To this it may be answered :

(1.) That the slaves if liberated, would be under the necessity of laboring for their own support and for that of their families. They would have no other means of obtaining a living, even the most meagre. Their wants, therefore, would furnish the most powerful motives to the performance of some degree and some kind of labor. The kind which they would adopt would of course be that to which they are accustomed. To the adoption and prosecution of it, they would be impelled not only by their most pressing wants, those which are adapted to influence the mind in the lowest stages of improvement ; but by the desire of wealth, of an improved standing in the community, and a spirit of rivalry, together with the increased and increasing development of the parental and other social affections. It is impossible that these motives should be entirely ineffective.

It is deeply to be regretted that the slaves of the United States, and slaves generally, are shut up in ignorance of letters, and excluded from the various means of improvement afforded to others. But it is greatly in their favor considered as candidates for liberty, that they are bred to habits of industry and self-denial. An acquaintance with some branch of industry is of the highest consequence to those who are thrown upon their own resources. That attainment is generally possessed by the slaves, and in consequence of it they are far less impotent than many suppose.

(2.) Laws may be enacted enforcing habits of industry, by authorizing the civil authority to bind out as a hired servant any person who is found to be without regular employment, and at the same time without a visible support. Such laws exist in England and in some of the non slave-holding states of this country. The immediate abolition of slavery might render them necessary to some extent, for the enforcement of industry, subsequent to that event. If a resort to them was necessary, they no doubt might be made an efficient means of attaining the end in question.

(3.) If the natural motives to industry, and legal enactments for the encouragement of the same, should prove insufficient in



some cases to secure the desired result, and to place the subject beyond the reach of pinching want, the fault would be visited chiefly on the head of the delinquent. As far as that should be the case, no injustice would be done; and it is better that many should suffer as the consequence of their own faults, than that one should experience injustice and suffer by the faults of others.

But wherein are the slaves incompetent to enjoy liberty; liberation from a state of slavery? Wherein are they unfit to enjoy either perfect liberty, or that of children and apprentices? Children are not slaves by virtue of their relation to their parents as children; apprentices are not slaves by virtue of their relation to their masters as apprentices. What then is the necessity for keeping in slavery those who are now in that condition, so far as their interests and wants are concerned? The idea of such a necessity is absurd. It may be honestly entertained, but it is in palpable contrariety with the plainest decisions of common sense, and with the general experience of mankind.

Slaves are human beings. Injustice and oppression are no more needful to them than to their masters. Their children are in no more need of the discipline of slavery than those of their masters. The state of children, not that of slaves, is best adapted to the development of the intellectual and corporeal faculties of the children of slaves, and to that of their social and religious affections. An equitable condition is the only proper one for older persons.

In regard to other portions of the human family, slavery is never supposed to be necessary. The poor, the feeble, the young, the ignorant, and the inexperienced, find other relations and institutions which suit them far better. On the same principle, the slave may be far better situated than in a state of slavery. Other relations and conditions are far better adapted to his necessities and wants as a rational and moral being.

2. The immediate abolition of slavery is declared to be impracticable, on the ground that the slaves are incapable of civil government in an emancipated state.

The government of slaves is an unlimited despotism. They do not enjoy the protection and benefit of those equitable and benevolent laws, which the experience of mankind has shown to be necessary in order to secure the administration of justice. The entire government of the slave is in the hands of his master, and may be administered with mildness or rigor, according as the master is inclined.

The abolition of slavery will still leave children and others who are supposed, on legal grounds, to be incompetent to take care of themselves, in the care of responsible parents as children, or else in a state of apprenticeship, or of subjection to masters as their guardians. Others will generally be employed as free, hired servants, in the different departments of industry to which they are accustomed. Thus situated, the civil authority will enjoy every facility for enforcing the observance of order, and for procuring obedience to all reasonable laws. The liberated slaves will not have the means of making effectual resistance, if they were in some cases disposed. The civil and military power of the slave-holding districts will be in the same hands after the abolition of slavery, in which it is now. It will be in every respect as great as it is now, and will admit of being greatly strengthened and increased by the influence and co-operation of such liberated slaves, and other colored persons, as will find it for their interest to support the government.

Every motive of interest and duty which can actuate the human mind, will be capable of being put in requisition for the government of liberated slaves. Such modes of punishment may be resorted to as the circumstances shall require.

If the question related to their capacity for self-government, it would be very different from what it now is. It might, with some plausibility, be contended, that they are not capable of self-government. If left unassisted to the work of erecting and sustaining civil institutions, they would be in great danger of proving unequal to such a task. They will not be called to this by the abolition of slavery. Civil institutions, the product of the experience of ages, are already in existence around them. The modification and additions which their liberation from a state of slavery will require, will be but slight, in comparison with the extent of the social edifice as it now stands. The work of making those modifications and additions will naturally devolve on experienced and able statesmen; some of whom are as much so as any the world contains. There is not wanting, therefore, either the ability or the power requisite for the crisis contemplated. The question, therefore, is not whether the liberated slaves will be able immediately to construct and support a civil government, but whether it will be possible to extend over them, and to support among them, a government already established on the firmest earthly basis; a government of great strength, in consequence of the wisdom, justice, and benevolence of its in-



ternal conformation ; and every part of which is upheld by the power of all the different states and districts which compose the Union. If liberated from slavery, those who are now slaves will have the greatest interest in supporting the government which liberates them. To that government they will be compelled to look for protection. They will find themselves at once dependant upon it for every privilege that is dear and valuable. It will be the charter of their rights. By its authority they will hold both their persons and their property. Their ignorance is not so great but that many at least would learn the importance of this government to their security, both in respect to their persons and property, of which they will become possessors for the first time by the act of emancipation.

Some of the slaves would be easily governed. This would be the case with all who are truly pious, and with many who are but partially imbued with the principles of the christian religion. Their religious sentiments and principles would facilitate their control by civil laws. The fear and love of God would incite them to obey the equitable laws and ordinances of man, under which they are providentially placed. Most would be very much under the influence of their masters and employers. All would be influenced more or less by the fear of punishment. Those who, under the influence of these and other motives, would naturally submit to the civil government, would contribute by their example and influence, to promote general submission even among the more refractory.

The considerations above suggested certainly go far to prove that the slaves are capable of civil government. They derive, however, additional weight from the following facts :

(1.) Multitudes of the human race, equally uninstructed and uninformed, are living in actual and peaceful subjection to civil government. Before the invention of printing, the condition of almost all nations was one of as great ignorance as that of slaves. The peasantry of many countries in Europe are still in almost as great ignorance of letters and other branches of general knowledge, as the slaves ; yet they are the peaceful subjects of civil government.

If ignorance does not incapacitate other portions of the human family for a state of subjection to civil government, it does not incapacitate slaves for the same.

(2.) The African race are inclined to submission, both by a natural mildness of disposition, by which they are distinguished



from many other portions of the human family, and by long subjection to slave-holders.

(3.) The abolition of slavery would remove the great obstacles to their improvement, and open wide to them the door of instruction in common and sabbath schools; and at the same time it would bring into lively exercise many of those affections favorable to the prosperity and happiness of society, which are yet undeveloped, or developed only in a few cases, and in a slight degree.

On the whole, therefore, we have ample ground to conclude that the slaves are capable of civil government; and that the immediate abolition of slavery is not rendered impracticable by any deficiency in this respect.

3. The immediate abolition of slavery is declared to be impracticable on the ground that it would produce intolerable pecuniary embarrassment among slave-holders, and throughout the country.

This objection is a very serious one. It is that on which multitudes chiefly rest in believing that the immediate abolition of slavery is entirely impracticable. The other objections noticed, are perhaps most frequently on the tongue, but this is in the heart. The great obstacle to the emancipation of slaves at any time, and in any mode, is the difficulty of reconciling it with the pecuniary interests of their masters. The system of slavery was founded at first, not only in motives of interest, but of selfishness; and in them it is strongly intrenched.

If slavery is never abolished till every demand of supreme selfishness can be satisfied in its abolition, that event will probably be deferred to a remote period, and be attained by a process sufficiently gradual to satisfy the most moderate reformers. Selfishness demanded the organization of this institution, and now demands its continuance. The same principle makes a great many other demands, contrary to justice and humanity; but none more so than these.

A little consideration, however, will show that the pecuniary embarrassment to be expected from the immediate abolition of slavery, would be far less than is sometimes imagined. Slaves are not articles of consumption, either as food, clothing, or dwellings. Neither are they an exclusive source whence either of these classes of useful products are derived. They constitute only a part of the productive capital, from the improvement of which, the food, clothing, and other articles of human consumption in the slave-



holding districts, are derived ; a portion of wealth, which is useful only as a means of producing other kinds of property adapted to supply human wants.

The slaves are a principal class of agents in the production of property. They are also, to some extent, consumers, though they are supposed to consume far less than they produce.

Their emancipation will not remove them from the districts in which they reside. It will not destroy their powers of production, considered in relation to the creation of wealth. They will have all the capacity for producing articles of utility after their emancipation, which they have in a state of slavery. There is good reason to believe that their capacities for the production of wealth will be greatly increased by emancipation, rather than diminished. The only difference between their present condition and a state of freedom, so far as the pecuniary interests of their masters can be unfavorably affected, is this ; their labor can now be obtained by their proprietors for less than the market price, its true value ; whereas, if they are liberated, they will become entitled to receive for it the price which it will command in the market. Slave labor costs the proprietors something now. But if emancipation should take place, it would cost them what it is worth. The question under discussion then is this : Can the slave-holding classes afford to pay a fair price to the laborer for his service ? Is it impossible for them to take care of themselves and families without robbing the laborer of his just due ? For all that will be required of them, after the emancipation of their slaves, will be to pay them equitably for their services.

The abolition of slavery will not destroy any kind of property but that which consists in slaves. It will not destroy, but increase the capacities of producing wealth, which are possessed by slaves. If slavery is abolished, the slave-holders will still have their farms, plantations, shops, dwelling-houses, implements of labor, machinery, &c. They will also have a market well supplied with servants, to be obtained on reasonable terms, for what their labor is worth. Multitudes could emancipate their slaves, and have enough property left on which to live in comfort, and even in affluence. One consequence of emancipation would be, an increase of the value of most kinds of property. Lands would rise ; various articles of merchandize would meet an enlarged and increased demand. And the greater value of this property would go far to compensate the slave-holding class of the community for their loss by emancipation. In many

cases it would compensate them fully. So that the pecuniary loss from emancipation would be partly, and perhaps to a very great extent made up, by the rise in the value of real estate which would follow that event. A similar result has been recently developed in the West Indies.

The idea that society would not be able to survive the catastrophe of emancipation, on account of the loss of property which would be involved in that event, is absurd and ridiculous. Slaves are not among the necessaries of life. Neither are slave-holders so poor and impotent, and so disqualified for all lucrative pursuits of every kind, that the loss of what they unrighteously hold as property, would involve them in irretrievable ruin, and reduce them to inevitable and hopeless distress.

Much alarm is undoubtedly felt on this ground. The loss of property which is anticipated from the abolition of slavery, is regarded as a tremendous evil. Dismal forebodings and appalling fears are indulged, which a sober estimate of the case will not justify. The man that is panic-struck, or that is laboring under any other enthusiastic excitement, is not the man either to estimate danger properly, or to make wise and judicious arrangements with reference to it.

But suppose property should be lost ; multitudes in some degree impoverished ; and some, a few in comparison with the great mass of slave-holders, reduced to extreme poverty. What then ? Is nothing to be done which involves a loss of property ? Might not the country survive such a shock and recover from it ? Might not many of those persons most injured, retrieve their fortunes, and live in comfort notwithstanding ?

What is the loss of property in a good cause ? Christ who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his impoverishment, might be rich.

Thousands have taken cheerfully the spoiling of their goods in the service of God. Thousands have been willing to impoverish themselves in order that they might confer signal benefits on their fellow men. Are there not among slave-holders thousands, and tens of thousands, who would be willing to subordinate their own pecuniary interests entirely to those of justice and humanity ? I cannot think so meanly of that class of men, as not to suppose there are. If our liberties were invaded, no sacrifice of property which might be requisite for asserting and defending them, would be considered too great to be made for that purpose. What is still more valuable than property, life



itself, the life of thousands and tens of thousands of patriots, would be freely and promptly sacrificed in such a worthy cause. If we would expend so much for our own liberties and those of our fellow-citizens, shall we begrudge the loss of that property which consists in slaves, as far as it is requisite for their immediate emancipation? Shall their emancipation be indefinitely postponed for want of that generous surrender? Such may be the fact. Persons may be unwilling to suffer the loss of property by the emancipation of slaves, and on that ground may oppose and prevent their emancipation. But such conduct need not, ought not to be. Generosity, benevolence, and justice, forbid it.

When we think of the sacrifice or consumption of property, by doing right and by promoting human happiness, we ought to remember, that these are the very purposes for which property is useful. When property has satisfied rational wants, it has answered its legitimate purpose. Such are the wants to be satisfied by the abolition of slavery, and by the restoration of men to the possession of themselves. We ought also to remember, that the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor riches to men of worldly wisdom.

Riches are the gift of God. He is able in various ways to resume them. If we refuse to impoverish ourselves when called to do it in the discharge of our duty, God may impoverish us in our sins. Every demand for the surrender of property, which is made by the law and providence of God, he is able to enforce, by blessing and prospering the obedient, and by cursing and rendering unprosperous the disobedient.

As far as we practice obedience in respect to duties of this kind, we may expect a greater degree of prosperity than otherwise, in the use of our remaining property; and as far as we refuse to surrender property at the call of God, we may expect to have it in some way taken from us. Men are seldom the poorer for doing justice; but often so for committing injustice, with a view to enrich themselves to a greater extent than they can do by honest means.

Living under the providence of God, with our fortunes as a nation and as individuals in his hand, and entirely at his disposal; no man can know that the slave-holding districts of this country, or even the slave-holders, would be the poorer for the immediate emancipation of their slaves. It would be easy for God to diminish their prosperity while slavery continues, to such a degree



that they will be losers by holding on to their slaves ; and to increase it, if slavery should be abolished, to such a degree, that they would loose nothing by that event. In our calculations on this subject, we ought to remember, that God is the God of the oppressed, and that it will not be a new thing, should he espouse their cause, and tread down their oppressors with indignation ; or should he bestow unusual benefits on those oppressors made penitent, in consequence of their repentance and reformation. Besides, in estimating the effect of the immediate abolition of slavery on the pecuniary interests of the great mass of slaveholders, we ought to consider chiefly their permanent interests ; not those of a year, but of a series of years, and even of generations to come. Not our temporary, but our permanent interests, are the great interests about which we ought to be chiefly concerned. Those which are merely temporary, ought, in all cases, to be subordinated to those which are permanent.

The object of the accumulation of wealth is future use, not immediate consumption. A large proportion of the acquisitions of the present generation, are designed for that to come, and for still more remote posterity. What then would be the effect of the immediate abolition of slavery, on the pecuniary interests of slaveholders, and of the present slave-holding communities, considered in relation to the next fifty or a hundred years ? If it should produce a temporary reduction of their property, and temporary embarrassment, would it not also be attended with an ultimate and permanent reaction in their favor, which would more than compensate them for this temporary injury ? No man can know that it would not ; and there are important reasons for believing that it would. As a general rule, honesty is the best policy. Though a man may be a gainer by single acts of dishonesty, yet the habit of being dishonest, considered in relation to a series of years, and to the period of human life, is almost universally unprofitable and disastrous. So it may be in regard to slavery.

In partiular cases, and to a certain extent, a man may be a gainer by holding his fellow men in slavery. But like other species of dishonesty, this is decidedly unprofitable, considered in relation to the whole period of life, and to the whole pecuniary interests of society. As a general rule, the slave-holding districts are less wealthy and prosperous, in proportion to the natural advantages which they possess for the acquisition of wealth, than those which adopt the other and equitable modes of servitude. The difference in this respect, in favor of those which are without



slavery, is manifest and striking ; and ought to be taken into the present account.

If, however, the immediate abolition of slavery should be found by experiment too expensive an enterprise to be carried through by the slave-holding districts unassisted, a sympathizing world would be ready to afford them whatever assistance they should need.

I have now argued in favor of this enterprize on the ground, that it would not prove so expensive as is generally feared, and that the expense of it would be easily borne by the slave-holding communities themselves. Again, on the supposition that the expense were ever so great, and the temporary embarrassment occasioned by this procedure ever so considerable, I have still argued, and I hope maintained, that the work ought to be done, on the same principle that we would barter both our lives and property for our own liberties, and those of our children.

Lastly, I have placed the cause on a different and broader ground, as one that ought to be attempted at every hazard, and that will command the benevolent assistance of the civilized world to carry it forward to a happy result, rather than that it should fail for want of the pecuniary means of effecting it.

On the whole, it appears that the objections now considered, do not at all invalidate the conclusion to which they are opposed, and that the position, that slavery ought to be immediately abolished, receives additional strength from the consideration of these objections.

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DIVINE REDEEMER, Thou who desirest truth and honesty in the soul, and who art the only source of wisdom, shine forth ; and let the writer and every reader of these pages, enjoy the blessedness of doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.