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DOMESTIC SLAVERY CONSIDERED  
AS A SCRIPTURAL INSTITUTION

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Act 17:26

21 I suppose that "God, of one blood, made all men that dwell upon the earth,"—that we are all partakers of the same nature, as we are all the children of one common parent. I suppose that this *common nature* is not affected, in any respect, by the color of the skin, the difference of the hair, or by any other variety of physical formation. I believe also that this common nature remains the same under every degree of intellectual development. A man may be wiser or less wise, he may be more or less richly endowed with mental capacity, he may be more or less ignorant than myself, but these differences affect not our *common nature*.

56 This form of expediency—the inculcating of a fundamental truth, rather than of the duty which springs immediately out of it, seems to me *innocent*. I go further: in some cases it may be really *demand*ed. Thus, suppose a particular wrong to have become a social evil, to have become interwoven with the whole framework of society, and to be established by positive enactment and immemorial usage; suppose that all departments of society have become adjusted to it, and that much instruction is necessary before any party can avail itself of the advantages of a righteous change; suppose also the whole community to be ignorant of the moral principles by which both the wrong is condemned and the right established. In such a case, the wrong could only be abolished by changing the sentiments and enlightening the consciences of the whole community. Here it seems to me that it would be not only allowable, but a matter of imperative duty, to inculcate the principles on which the duty rested, rather than the duty itself. The one being fixed in the mind, would necessarily produce the other; and thus the end would be in the most certain manner accomplished.

18 It is in this manner that the New Testament has generally dealt with the various forms of social evil. Take for instance civil government. At the time of Christ and his apostles, the only form of government known in the civilized world, was a most abominable and oppressive tyranny. Yet the New Testament utters no precepts in regard to forms of government, or the special duties of rulers. It goes further. It commands men everywhere to obey the powers that be, so far as this could be done with a good conscience towards God. But it at the same time inculcates those truths concerning the character, rights, responsibilities, and obligations of man, which have been ever since working out the freedom of the human race; and which have received, as I believe, their fullest development in the principles of the American Declaration of

Independence. Indeed, in no other manner could the New Testament have become a system of religion for the whole human race, adapted to meet the varying aspects of human depravity. If it had merely taught precepts, whatever was not forbidden must have been taken as permitted. Hence, unchecked wickedness would soon have abounded, and the revelation of God must have become a nullity. But by teaching principles of universal application, it is prepared to meet every rising form of moral deviation, and its authority is now as all-pervading as at the moment when it was first delivered. Our Saviour, as it appears to me, carries out this principle to the utmost, when, setting aside as it were all other precepts, he declares that our whole duty is summed up in these two commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself; for this is the law and the prophets [Matthew 22:39]." That is, I suppose him to mean that cherishing these principles in our hearts and carrying them out into all our actions, we shall do the whole will of God without any other precept.

The result of the abolition of slavery by the inculcation of the principles of the Gospel would be the reverse of all this. By teaching the master his own accountability, by instilling into his mind the mild and humanizing truths of Christianity; by showing him the folly of sensuality and luxury, and the happiness derived from industry, frugality, and benevolence, it would prepare him of his own accord to liberate his slave, and to use all his influence towards the abolition of those laws by which slavery was sustained. By teaching the slave his value and his responsibility as a man, and subjecting his passions and appetites to the laws of Christianity, and thus raising him to his true rank as an intellectual and moral being, it would prepare him for the freedom to which he was entitled, and render the liberty which it conferred a blessing to him as well as to the State of which he now, for the first time, formed a part. 76

Such was, in fact, the result of the promulgation of Christianity upon the Roman Empire. As the gospel spread from city to city, and began to exert an influence upon the public mind, the laws respecting slavery were gradually relaxed, and every change in legislation was, in this respect, a change for the better.

77 And thus we see that *the very reason* why this mode of teaching was adopted, was to *accomplish the universal abolition of slavery*. A precept could not have done this, for, in the changing condition of human society, the means would have easily been devised for eluding it. But by teaching truths, the very truths in which Christianity consisted, utterly and absolutely opposed to slavery, truths founded in the essential moral relations of creatures to their Creator, it was rendered certain that wherever Christianity was understood and obeyed, this institution must cease to exist.

87 . Jesus Christ is the comforter of those that are cast down; and can we, who are his disciples, trample the cast down yet deeper in the dust? He has said, "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest [Matthew 11:28];" and can we lay yet heavier burdens on the weary and heavy laden, whom he thus receives into his bosom? Jesus Christ has said, "It is impossible but that offences should come, but wo to the man by whom they come. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones [Matthew 18:6]." How, then, can we stand before him, after having inflicted on these little ones these aggravated wrongs? Jesus Christ has taught us that the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, the prisoner, the stranger, are his representatives on earth, and that our love to him is to be measured by the Universal sympathy which we extend to every form of human distress; and he adds, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the *least of these* my brethren, ye do it not unto me [Matthew 25:40]." The special representative of Christ in this country seems to me to be the oppressed, and I fear I must add the frequently lacerated, Christian slave. How shall we stand before the Saviour, if we make no effort to comfort and deliver this slave—much less if we count ourselves among the number of his oppressors?

many respects differing from our own. God grant that we may both meet in that world where neither of us shall any more see through a glass darkly, but where we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known.

I am, my dear brother, yours with every sentiment of affection,  
The Author of the Moral Science

## APPENDIX I

ORIGINAL WAYLAND ARTICLE  
ON "DOMESTIC SLAVERY"<sup>69</sup>

Domestic slavery proceeds upon the principle that the master has a right to control the actions, physical and intellectual, of the slave, for his own, that is, the master's individual benefit; and, ~~of~~ course, that the happiness of the master, when it comes in competition with the happiness of the slave, extinguishes in the latter the right to pursue it. It supposes, at best, that the relation between master and slave is not that which exists between man and man, but is a modification at least, of that which exists between man and the brutes.

Now this manifestly supposes that the two classes of beings are created with dissimilar rights: that the master possesses rights which have never been conceded by the slave; and that the slave has no rights at all over the means of happiness which God has given him, whenever these means of happiness can be rendered available to the service of the master. It supposes that the Creator intended one human being to govern the physical, intellectual and moral actions of as many other human beings as by purchase he can bring within his physical power; and that one human being may thus acquire a right to sacrifice the happiness of any number of other human beings, for the purpose of promoting his own.

Slavery thus violates the personal liberty of man as a physical, intellectual and moral being.

1. It purports to give to the master a right to control the physical labor of the slave, nor for the sake of the happiness of the slave, nor upon terms mutually satisfactory to the parties, but for the sake of the

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[<sup>69</sup>Francis Wayland, "Domestic Slavery," *Christian Reflector* 12/18-19 (2 and 3 May 1844): 69-70 and 73 respectively.]

happiness of the master. It subjects the amount of labor, and the kind of labor, and the remuneration for labor, entirely to the will of the one party, to the entire exclusion of the will of the other party.

2. But if this right in the master over the slave be conceded, there are of course conceded with it all other rights necessary to [unreadable] inasmuch as the slave can be held in this condition only while he remains in a state of comparative mental imbecility, it supposes the master to have the right to control his intellectual development, just as far as may be necessary to secure entire subjection. Thus, it supposes the slave to have no right to use his intellect for the production of his own happiness; but only to use it in such manner as may be consistent with his master's profit.

3. And, moreover, inasmuch as the acquisition of the knowledge of his duty to God could not be freely made without the acquisition of the other knowledge, which might, if universally diffused, endanger the control of the master, slavery supposes the master to have the right to determine how much knowledge of his duty a slave shall obtain, the manner in which he shall obtain it, and the manner in which he shall discharge that duty after he shall have obtained a knowledge of it. It thus subjects the duty of man to God, entirely to the will of man; and this for the sake of pecuniary profit. It renders the eternal happiness of the one party subservient to the temporal happiness of the other. And this principle is commonly recognized by the laws of all slave holding countries.

If argument were necessary to show that such a system as this must be a variance with the ordinance of God, it might be easily drawn from the effects which it produces both upon morals and upon national wealth.

1. Its effects must be disastrous upon the morals of both parties. By presenting objects on whom passion may be satiated without resistance and without redress, it tends to cultivate in the master pride, anger, cruelty, selfishness, and licentiousness. By accustoming the slave to subject his moral principles to the will of another it tends to abolish in him all moral distinctions: and thus fosters in him lying, deceit,

hypocrisy, dishonesty and a willingness to yield himself up to minister to the appetites of his master. That in all slave-holding countries there are exceptions to the remark, and that there are principles in human nature which, in many cases, limit the effects of these tendencies, may be gladly admitted. Yet, that such is the tendency of slavery, as slavery, we think no reflecting person can for a moment hesitate to allow.

2. The effects of slavery on national wealth, may be easily seen from the following considerations:

1. Instead of imposing upon all the necessity of labor, it restricts the number of laborers, that is, of producers, within the smallest possible limit, by rendering labor disgraceful.

2. It takes from the laborers the natural stimulus to labor, namely, the desire in the individual of improving his condition; and substitutes, in the place of it, that motive which is the least operative and the least constant, namely, the fear of punishment without the consciousness of moral delinquency.

3. It removes, as far as possible, from both parties, the disposition and the motives to frugality. Neither the master learns frugality from the necessity of labor, nor the slave from the benefits which it confers. And hence, while the only party wastes from ignorance of the laws of acquisition, and the other because he can have no motive to economy, capital must accumulate but slowly, if indeed it accumulates at all.

And that such are the tendencies of slavery, is manifest from observation. No country, not of great fertility, can long sustain a large slave population. Soils of more than ordinary fertility cannot sustain it long, after the first richness of the soil has been exhausted. Hence, slavery in this country is acknowledged to have impoverished many of our most valuable districts; and, hence, it is continually migrating from the older settlements to those new and untilled regions where the accumulated manure of centuries of vegetation has formed a soil, whose productiveness may, for a while, sustain a system at variance with the laws of nature. Many of our free and of our slave-holding States were peopled at about the same time. The slave-holding States had every advantage, both in soil and climate, over their neighbors. And yet the

accumulation of capital has been greatly in favor of the latter. If any one doubt whether this difference be owing to the use of slave labor, let him ask himself what would have been the condition of the slave-holding States at this moment, if they had been inhabited, from the beginning, by an industrious yeomanry; each one holding his own land, and each one tilling it with the labor of his own hands.

But let us inquire what is the doctrine of revelation on this subject.

The moral precepts of the Bible are diametrically opposed to slavery. They are, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, and all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.'

1. The application of these precepts is universal. Our neighbor is everyone whom we may benefit. The obligation respects all things whatsoever, certainly to a thing so important as the right to personal liberty.

2. Again. By this precept, it is made our duty to cherish as tender and delicate a respect for the right which the meanest individual possesses over the means of happiness bestowed upon him by God, as we cherish for our own right over our own means of happiness, or as we desire any other individual to cherish for it. Now were this precept obeyed, it is manifest that slavery could not in fact exist for a single instant. The principle of the precept is absolutely subversive of the principle of slavery. That of the one is the entire equality of right; that of the other, the entire absorption of the rights of one in the rights of the other.

If any one doubt respecting the bearing of the Scripture precept upon this case, a few plain questions may throw additional light upon the subject. For instance,—

1. Do the precepts and the spirit of the gospel allow [unreadable] my support from a system which extorts labor from my fellow-men, without allowing them any voice in the equivalent which they shall receive; and which can only be sustained by keeping them in a state of mental degradation, and by shutting them out, in a degree, from the means of salvation?

2. Would the master be willing that another person should subject him to slavery, for the same reasons, and on the same grounds, that he holds his slave in bondage?

3. Would the gospel allow us, if it were in our power, to reduce our fellow citizens of our own color to slavery? But the gospel makes no distinction between men on the ground of color or of race. God has made of one blood all the nations that dwell on the earth. I think that these questions will easily ascertain the gospel principles on this subject.

But to this it is objected, that the gospel never forbids slavery; and still more, that by prescribing the duties of a master and servants, it tacitly allows it. This objection is of sufficient importance to deserve attentive consideration.

The following will, I think, be considered by both parties a fair statement of the teaching of the New Testament on this subject. The moral principles of the gospel are directly subversive of the principles of slavery; but, on the other hand, the gospel neither commands masters to manumit their slaves, nor authorizes slaves to free themselves from their masters; and also, it goes further, and prescribes the duties suited to both parties in their present condition.

*First.* Now, if this be admitted, it will, so far as I see, be sufficient for the argument. For if the gospel be diametrically opposed to the principle of slavery, it must be opposed to the practice of slavery; and, therefore, were the principles of the gospel fully adopted, slavery could not exist.

*Secondly,*

1. I suppose that it will not be denied, that God has a right to inform us of his will in any manner that he pleases; and that the intimation of his will, in what manner soever signified, is binding upon the conscience.

2. Hence, God may make known to us his will either directly or indirectly; and if that will be only distinctly signified, it is as binding in the one case as in the other. Thus he may, in express terms, forbid a certain course of conduct, this is forbidding it directly; or else he may command certain duties, or impose certain obligations with which that

course of conduct is manifestly inconsistent; that is forbidding it indirectly. It is insufficient, in either case, in order to constitute the obligation, that the will of God be known.

3. The question, then, resolves itself into this: 'Has God imposed obligations upon men which are inconsistent with the existence of domestic slavery? That he has, may, I think, be easily shown.

*a.* He has made it our duty to proclaim the gospel to all men, without respect to circumstance or condition. If it be our duty to proclaim the gospel to every creature, it must be our duty to give every creature every means for attaining a knowledge of it; and yet, more imperatively, not to place any obstacles in the way of their attaining that knowledge.

*b.* He has taught us that the conjugal relation is established by himself; that husband and wife are joined together by God; and that man may not put them asunder. The marriage contract is a contract for life, and is dissoluble only for one cause, that of conjugal infidelity. Any system that interferes with this contract, and claims to make it any thing else than what God has made it, is in violation of his law.

*c.* God has established the parental and filial relations, and has imposed upon parents and children appropriate and peculiar duties. The child is bound to honor and obey the parent; the parent to support and educate the child, and to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. With these relations and obligations, no created being has the right to interfere. A system which claims authority to sever these relations, and to annihilate these obligations, must be at variance with the will of God.

4. That the Christian religion does establish these obligations, will not, I think be disputed. Now they either are, or are not, inconsistent with the existence of domestic slavery. If they are inconsistent with the existence of slavery, then slavery is indirectly forbidden by the Christian religion. If they are not inconsistent with it, then that interference with them which slavery exercises, is as uncalled for as it would be in any other case; and is the infliction of just so much gratuitous, inexcusable and demoralizing misery. And, as we have before said, what is indirectly

forbidden in the Scripture, is as truly forbidden as though it were directly forbidden.

But it may be asked, Why was this manner of forbidding it chosen in preference to any other? I reply, that this question we are not obliged to answer. It is enough for us to show that it is forbidden. It is this which establishes the obligation, and this obligation cannot be in the least affected by the reason which may be given, for the manner in which God has seen fit to reveal it. The reason may be, that slavery is a social evil; and that, in order to eradicate it, a change must be effected in the society in which it exists, and that this change would be better effected by the inculcation of the principles themselves which are opposed to slavery, than by the inculcation of a direct precept. Probably all social evils are thus most successfully remedied.

We answer again, this very course which the gospel takes on this subject, seems to have been the only one that could have been taken, in order to effect the universal abolition of slavery. The gospel was designed, not for one race, or for one time, but for all races, and for all times. It looked not at the abolition of this form of evil for that age alone, but for its universal abolition. Hence the important object of its Author was, to gain it a [unreadable] every part of the known world: [unreadable] by its universal diffusion among the classes of society, it might quietly and peacefully modify and subdue the evil passions of men and [unreadable] without violence work a revolution in the whole mass of mankind. In this manner alone could its object, a universal moral revolution, have been accomplished. For if it had forbidden the evil instead of subverting the principle; if it had proclaimed the unlawfulness of slavery, and taught slaves to resist the oppression of their masters; it would instantly have arrayed the two parties in deadly hostility throughout the civilized world: its announcement would have been the signal of servile war; and the very name of the Christian religion would have been forgotten amidst the agitations of universal bloodshed. The fact, under these circumstances, that the gospel does not forbid slavery affords no reason to suppose that it does not mean to prohibit it; much

less does it afford ground for belief, that Jesus Christ intended to authorize it.

3. It is important to remember that two grounds of moral obligation are distinctly recognized in the gospel. The first is our duty to man as men; that is, on the ground of the relation which men sustain to each other: the second is our duty to man as a creature of God; that is, on the ground of the relation which we all sustain to God. On this latter ground, many things become our duty which would not be so on the former. It is on this ground that we are commanded to return good for evil, to pray for them that despitefully use us, and when we are smitten on one cheek, to turn also the other. To act thus is our duty, not because our fellow-man has a right to claim this course of conduct of us, nor because he has a right to inflict injury upon us, but because such conduct in us will be well pleasing to God. And when God prescribes the course of conduct which will be well pleasing to him, he by no means acknowledges the right of abuse in the injurious person, but expressly declares, 'Vengeance is mine and I will repay it, saith the Lord.' Now, it is to be observed, that it is precisely upon this latter ground, that the slave is commanded to obey his master. It is never urged, like the duty of obedience to parents, because it is right; but because the cultivation of meekness and forbearance under injury, will be well pleasing unto God. Thus, servants are commanded to be obedient to their own masters, 'in singleness of heart, as unto Christ;' 'doing the will of God from the heart, with good will, doing service as to the Lord, and not to men.' Eph. 6:5-7. 'Servants are commanded to count their masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.' 1 Tim. 6:1. 'Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters,' etc., 'that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.' Titus 3:9. The manner in which the duty of servants of slaves is inculcated, therefore, affords no ground for the assertion, that the gospel authorizes one man to hold another in bondage, any more than the command to honor the king, when the king was Nero, authorized the tyranny of the emperor; or than the command to turn the other cheek

when one is smitten, justifies the infliction of violence by an injurious man.

In a word, if the gospel rule of conduct be directly at variance with the existence of slavery; if the relations which it establishes, and the obligations which it enforces, are inconsistent with its existence; if the manner in which it treats it is the only manner in which it could attempt its utter and universal extermination; and if it inculcates the duty of slaves on principles which have no connection with the question of the right of masters over them; I think it must be conceded that the precepts of the gospel in no manner countenance, but are entirely opposed to the institution of domestic slavery.

Before closing this part of the subject, it may be proper to consider the question, What is the duty of masters and slaves, under a condition of society in which slavery now exists?

#### I. As to Masters.

If the system be wrong, as we have endeavored to show, if it be at variance with our duty both to God and to man, it must be abandoned. If it be asked, When? I ask again, When shall a man begin to cease doing wrong? Is not the answer always immediately? If a man is injuring us, do we ever doubt as to the time when he ought to cease inflicting injury upon others?

But it may be said, immediate abolition would be the greatest possible injury to the slaves themselves. They are not competent to self-government.

This is a question of fact, which it is not within the province of moral philosophy to decide. It very likely may be so. So far as I know, the facts are not sufficiently known to warrant a full opinion on the subject. We will, therefore, suppose it to be a case, and ask, What is the duty of masters under these circumstances?

1. The situation of the slaves, in which this obstacle to their emancipation consists, is not by their own act, but by the act of their masters; and, therefore, the masters are bound to remove it. The slave: were brought here without their own consent, they have been continued in their present state of degradation without their own consent, and the



are not responsible for the consequences. If a man have done injustice to his neighbor, and have also placed impediments in the way of remedying that injustice, he is as much under obligation to remove the impediments in the way of justice, as he is to do justice. Were it otherwise, a man might, by the accumulation of injury, at last render the most atrocious injury innocent and right.

2. But it may be said, this cannot be done, unless the slave is held in bondage until the object be accomplished. This is also a question of fact, on which I will not pretend to decide. But suppose it to be so, the question returns, What then is the duty of the master? I answer, supposing such to be the fact, it may be the duty of the master to hold the slave; not, however, on the ground of right over him, but of obligation to him, and of obligation to him for the purpose of accomplishing a particular and specified good. And, of course, he who holds him for any other purpose, holds him wrongfully, and is guilty of the sin of slavery. In the mean while, he is innocent in just so far as he, in the fear of God, holds the slave, not for the good of the master, but for the good of the slave, and with the entire and honest intention of accomplishing the object as soon as he can, and of liberating the slave as soon as the object is accomplished. He thus admits the slave to equality of right. He does unto another as he would that another should do unto him; and thus acting, though he may in form hold a fellow creature in bondage, he is in fact innocent of the crime of violation of liberty. This opinion, however, proceeds upon the supposition that the facts are as above stated. As to the question of fact, I do not feel competent to a decision.

II. The duty of slaves is also explicitly made known in the Bible. They are bound to obedience, fidelity, submission and respect to their masters, not only to the good and kind, but also to the unkind and forward; not, however, on the ground of duty to man, but on the ground of duty to God. This obligation extends to every thing but matters of conscience. When a master commands a slave to do wrong, the slave ought not to obey. The Bible does not, as I suppose, authorize resistance to injury; but it commands us to refuse obedience in such a case, and

suffer the consequences, looking to God alone, to whom vengeance belongeth. Acting upon these principles, the slave may attain to the highest grade of virtue, and may exhibit a sublimity and purity of moral character, which, in the condition of the master, is absolutely unattainable.

Thus we see that the Christian religion not only forbids slavery, but that it also provides the only method in which, after it has been established, it may be abolished, and that with entire safety and benefit to both parties. By instilling the right to moral dispositions into the bosom of the master and of the slave, it teaches the one the duty of reciprocity, and the other the duty of submission; and thus, without tumult, without disorder, without revenge, but by the real moral improvement of both parties, restore both to the relation towards each other intended by their Creator.

Hence, if any one will reflect on these facts, and remember the moral law of the Creator, and the terrible sanctions by which his laws are sustained, and also the provision which, in the gospel of reconciliation, he has made for removing this evil after it has once been established; he must, I think, be convinced of the imperative obligation which rests upon him to remove it without the delay of a moment. The judge of the whole earth will do justice. He hears the cry of the oppressed, and he will, in the end, terribly vindicate right. And, on the other hand, let those who suffer wrongfully, bear their sufferings with patience, committing their souls unto him as unto a faithful Creator.