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## The Spirit of Slavery (Part 1) Or, The Oppression of Slavery Is Not Worse Than the Selfishness of Sin

"Where the Spirit of the LORD is, there is liberty"  
(2Corinthians 3:17).

by Tom Stewart  
8-18-2000

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### The Oppression of Slavery

#### Preface

It's a disgraceful fact, that slavery as an institution has flourished throughout time, at least until the modern abolitionist movements of the 19th century. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Romans 1:28). Most societies have tolerated some form or degree of slavery. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11). A slave is generally defined as one who is bound in servitude as the property of another. The difficulty of distinction of what or who is a slave, can be seen in the New Testament Greek word *doulos*, which may be used to describe either a servant or a slave. "Simon Peter, a servant [doulos] and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Peter 1:1). Slavery, in its most negative sense, depicts the forced labour that an oppressor selfishly requires of one who is held captive. "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant [doulos] of sin" (John 8:34).

#### American Slavery

In America, slavery was practiced by the native Creek of Georgia and the Comanche of Texas; but, the institution of American slavery is most often remembered, as depicted in Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" (pre-Civil War). "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). The slave trade to the New World involved the trade of 7,000,000 to 10,000,000 Africans by Europeans and Americans from the late 15th century to 1867. Ironically, slavery was already an institution in Africa before the European quest to supply slaves to the opening New World. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (2:1). Those Africans who were not stolen through slave raids, were taken through the slave trade, along Africa's west coast. African slave owners primarily demanded women and children for labor and chattel, tending to kill male captives, because they could be troublesome and were more likely to flee. On the other hand, the transatlantic slave trade required adult males for labor, which provided their African captors a lucrative alternative to their outright slaughter. "9 And the kings of the Earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, 10 standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon,

that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. 11 And the merchants of the Earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: 12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, 13 and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, **and slaves, and souls of men**" (Revelation 18:9-13).

Not only did the southern states of colonial America, use the forced labor of African slaves, but the mercantile interests of the North engaged in the Triangular Trade (18th century):

- (1) New England produced trinkets. They also manufactured rum, using molasses.
- (2) In turn, the rum and trinkets were sold for West African slaves and ivory.
- (3) Then, the slaves and ivory were taken to the British West Indies to be traded for molasses and tobacco. And, the molasses, of course, returned to New England. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered" (Proverbs 11:21).

Compromise entered into the writing of the American Declaration of Independence (1776), where reference to the evils of slavery were purposely omitted, in deference to the southern colonies, to gain their support for American independence. "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). Otherwise, Christians should view with great satisfaction the sentiments of the Declaration, e.g.,

"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."

"So God created man in His own image" (Genesis 1:27). "The LORD is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Psalm 145:9). It is obvious that the Continental Congress comprehended the evils of slavery, because they so skillfully complained of the unwarranted abuse and forced servitude by the English monarchy. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39).

What the drafters of the Declaration omitted, the framers of the United States Constitution (1787) wove into the fabric of the law of the land, e.g.,

"Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons" (U.S. Constitution, Article 1, Section 2, Paragraph 3 [later superseded by the 14th Amendment on July 28th 1868]).

In other words, slaves, who were not "free persons", were counted only as "three-fifths" of a person,

and that only for the purpose of determining how many representatives would be seated from that respective state. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6).

### **Early Christian Abolitionists**

Since the Northern states had little direct use for slaves, the movement to abolish slavery flourished there. The English had already taken the lead of men such as William Wilberforce (1759-1833)-- who was professedly converted to evangelical Christianity in 1784-1785-- to abolish slavery in England and her territories; and, they finally emancipated all slaves with the passage of the Slavery Abolition Act of August 28th 1833-- one month after Wilberforce's death. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold" (Proverbs 22:1). America, having already become an independent nation, continued its dependence on slavery, while the spiritual intelligence of its people became more and more agitated with the issue. "And ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), daughter of Congregationalist minister Lyman Beecher, lived for 18 years in Cincinnati, Ohio, separated only by the Ohio River from a nearby slave-holding community. She developed an intimate knowledge of life in the South from her contact with fugitive slaves. "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body" (Hebrews 13:3). In 1850, her husband, Calvin, received an appointment as a professor at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, to which they relocated, and where she wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly". The book was translated into 23 languages, adapted to the theater, made its author's name anathema in the pre-Civil War South, and has been cited as one of the causes of the American Civil War. "And [Deborah] said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman" (Judges 4:9). Across from Bowdoin College, Harriet Beecher Stowe attended the First Parish Church of Brunswick, Maine-- seated in pew 23 on the Broad Aisle.

Later, Col. Joshua Chamberlain (1828-1914) of the 20th Maine Volunteer Infantry, would retain for his family pew 68 on the South Aisle of the same church. Chamberlain prepared for the ministry, then became a professor of rhetoric and oratory at Bowdoin College. But, he is best known for his elevated sense of purpose in fighting for the abolition of slavery, while executing his duties as a Union commander. "Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight" (Psalm 144:1). Placed on the extreme left of the federal forces on Little Round Top at the pivotal Battle of Gettysburg (July 1-4, 1863), Chamberlain realized the strategic necessity of holding his position. When the ammunition was virtually depleted, God gave Chamberlain the presence and courage to lead a daring bayonet charge, counterattacking down the hill against the Confederates, which allowed Union forces time for reinforcements. "For by Thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall" (18:29). His leadership secured one of the crucial pieces, of this turning point victory in the struggle against slavery. "O sing unto the LORD a new song; for He hath done marvellous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory" (98:1).

Oberlin College of Ohio, founded in 1833 to educate ministers and teachers for America's West, was the first coeducational collegiate institution in America, as well as a pioneer in allowing the admission

of black students on an equal basis with white students. Charles G. Finney, later the president of that school, offered this perspective on Oberlin's policy of racial equality:

On commenting on the terms that must be met for Mr. Finney to come to teach at Oberlin, one such term was "that we should be allowed to receive colored people on the same conditions that we did white people; that there should be no discrimination made on account of color" (from Charles G. Finney's "[Autobiography](#)" -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Finneys.Autobiography.html)

[/Finneys.Autobiography.html](#) --).

"24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is LORD of Heaven and Earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands... 26 And hath made of **one blood** all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the Earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:24-26).

### Charles G. Finney on American Slavery

Many good men in the United States, such as the evangelist Charles G. Finney, took their stand against slavery. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). In 1839, the state of Ohio enacted legislation requiring fugitive slaves to be returned to their respective southern states. Finney introduced a resolution at the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, declaring Ohio's fugitive slave legislation to be "a palpable violation of the Constitution of this state and of the United States, of the common law and of the law of God" and that "no human legislation can annul or set aside the law or authority of God." "19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye... 29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 4:19; 5:29).

As a Christian evangelist, Finney was not primarily a crusader for the abolition of slavery, but he understood that taking a wrong stand on slavery, would be to violate the very Law of Christ. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39). His memoirs recorded the way he was thinking in 1832:

"When I first went to New York, I had made up my mind on the question of slavery, and was exceedingly anxious to arouse public attention to the subject. I did not, however, turn aside to make it a hobby, or divert the attention of the people from the work of converting souls. Nevertheless, in my prayers and preaching, I so often alluded to slavery, and denounced it, that a considerable excitement came to exist among the people" (from

Finney's "Autobiography", [Chapter 23](#) -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/./Voice>

[/Finneys.Autobiography.3.html#CHAPTER 23](#) -- "Labors in New York City in 1832, And Onward"). "Ye are the salt of the Earth [and]... the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13, 14).

During the winter of 1834-35, in his "[Revival Lectures](#)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Revival.Lectures.html> --, Finney discussed "[Hindrances to Revivals](#)" ([Chapter 15](#)) -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice>

[/Revival.Lectures.4.html#LECTURE 15](#) --. "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:3). He enumerated twenty-four "Things Which May Stop a Revival", of which slavery was 19th on the list, and the longest discussed. Finney said:

"Revivals are hindered when ministers and Churches take wrong ground in regard to any question involving human rights. Take the subject of SLAVERY, for instance. The time was when this subject was not before the public mind. John Newton continued in the slave trade after his conversion. And so had his mind been perverted, and so completely was his conscience seared, in regard to this most nefarious traffic, that the sinfulness of it never occurred to his thoughts until some time after he became a child of God.

["Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).] Had light been poured upon his mind previously to his conversion, he never could have been converted without previously abandoning this sin. And after his conversion, when convinced of its iniquity, he could no longer enjoy the presence of God without abandoning the sin for ever.

So, doubtless, many slave dealers and slave holders in our country have been converted, notwithstanding their participation in this abomination, because the sinfulness of it was not apparent to their minds. So ministers and Churches, to a great extent throughout the land, have held their peace, and borne no testimony against this abomination, existing in the Church and in the nation. But recently, the subject has come up for discussion, and the providence of God has brought it distinctly before the eyes of all men. Light is now shed upon this subject, as it has been upon the cause of Temperance. Facts are exhibited, and principles established, and light thrown in upon the minds of men, and this monster is dragged from his horrid den, and exhibited before the Church, and it is demanded of Christians: 'IS THIS SIN?' Their testimony must be given on this subject.

They are God's witnesses. They are sworn to tell 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.' It is impossible that their testimony should not be given, on one side or the other. Their silence can no longer be accounted for upon the principle of ignorance, that they have never had their attention turned to the subject. Consequently, the silence of Christians upon the subject is virtually saying that they do not consider slavery as a sin.

The truth is, this is a subject on which they cannot be silent without guilt.

The time has come, in the providence of God, when every southern breeze is loaded down with the cries of lamentation, mourning, and woe. Two millions of degraded heathen in our own land stretch their hands, all shackled and bleeding, and send forth to the Church of God the agonizing cry for help. And shall the Church, in her efforts to reclaim and save the world, deafen her ears to this voice of agony and despair? God forbid! The Church cannot turn away from this question. It is a question for the Church and for the nation to decide, and God will push it to a decision. [Finney prophesied this in 1834-35, over a quarter of a century before Confederate artillery fired on Fort Sumter on April 12th 1861.] It is in vain for us to resist it for fear of distraction, contention, and strife. It is in vain to account it an act of piety to turn away the ear from hearing this cry of distress.

The Church must testify, and testify 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,' on this subject, or she is perjured, and the Spirit of God departs from her. She is under

oath to testify, and ministers and Churches who do not pronounce it sin, bear false testimony for God. It is doubtless true, that one of the reasons for the low state of religion at the present time is that many Churches have taken the wrong side on the subject of slavery, have suffered prejudice to prevail over principle, and have feared to call this abomination by its true name."

## **Fugitive Slave Laws**

The issue of slavery was a source of division in America among its citizens. On February 12th 1793, Congress passed the first fugitive slave law, which required all states, even those that prohibited slavery, to forcibly return escaped slaves to their original owners in the South. That law stated that "no person held to service of labor in one state, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such labor or service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due." The Northern states' disregard for this law so infuriated the South, that they instigated Congress to pass a second fugitive slave law (1850), which called for the return of escaped slaves "on pain of heavy penalty". This promoted the growth of the Underground Railroad, which was a network of free blacks and abolitionist sympathizers that aided fugitives in escaping to freedom through the North and into Canada. Oberlin College became a station on that Underground Railroad; and, many of Oberlin's graduates maintained schools in Canada for children of fugitive slaves. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18).

A violent confrontation in Christiana, Pennsylvania on September 11th 1851 occurred between free blacks and slave bounty hunters, who were intent upon capturing any fugitive slaves in this abolitionist town. "36 Then said He [authorizing self-defense] unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. 38 And they said, LORD, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough [But, how will two swords be enough to defend eleven apostles? It must still be a cooperative defense of God supernaturally working with man.]" (Luke 22:36, 38). The skirmish resulted in the death of one bounty hunter and the wounding of another. "For the LORD your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you" (Deuteronomy 20:4).

## **Abraham Lincoln on Slavery**

As the fugitive slave issue heated up, the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency in 1860 pushed the Southern states to secession. "And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand" (Matthew 12:25). Though President Lincoln's anti-slavery sentiments were well known, his initial intent was to politically preserve the Union; and, following the Battle of Antietam (September 17th 1862), Lincoln announced that all slaves of revolting states would be freed, if the states did not return to their former allegiance before the next year. Since none of the Southern states returned, on January 1st 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves of the Confederate states in rebellion against the Union. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of

wrath shalt Thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10). And finally, after the Civil War, the 13th Amendment was ratified-- on December 18th 1865-- which abolished slavery in all of the United States of America. "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" (Leviticus 25:10).

Lincoln succinctly stated his convictions about the evils of slavery, in his last inaugural address on March 4th 1865, where he made direct reference to the ninth verse of the 19th Psalm:

"Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's 520 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as we said 3,000 years ago, so still it must be said: The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Though it has been debated about the political nature of Lincoln's 1863 emancipation of Southern slaves--- an unsuccessful Congressional attempt to free all slaves failed on June 15th 1864-- but, following General Ulysses S. Grant's engagement with General Robert E. Lee in the Battle of the Wilderness (May 5-7, 1864) and the ensuing campaign to capture Richmond, Pastor Charles Chiniquy met with his friend Abraham Lincoln in early June 1864. Chiniquy related that meeting:

"The President took his Bible, opened it at the third chapter of Deuteronomy, and read from the 22nd to the 28th verse:-

'Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God He shall fight for you. And I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God, Thou hast begun to shew Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy mighty hand; for what God is there, in heaven or in earth, that can do according to Thy works, and according to Thy might! I pray Thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee: speak no more unto Me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.'

After the President had read these words with great solemnity, he added: 'My dear Father Chiniquy, let me tell you that I have read these strange and beautiful verses several times these last five or six weeks. The more I read them, the more it seems to me that God has written them for me as well as for Moses. Has He not taken me from my poor log cabin by the hand, as He did of Moses in the reeds of the Nile, to put me at the head of the greatest and the most blessed of modern nations, just as He put that prophet at the head of the most blessed nation of ancient times? Has not God granted me a privilege which was not granted to any living man, when I broke the fetters of 4,000,000 of men and made them free? Has not our God given me the most glorious victories over our enemies? Are not the armies of the Confederacy so reduced to a handful of men when compared to what they were two years ago, that the day is fast approaching when they will have to surrender?

Now, I see the end of this terrible conflict, with the same joy of Moses, when, at the end

of his trying forty years in the wilderness; and I pray my God to grant me to see the days of peace, and untold prosperity, which will follow this cruel war, as Moses asked God to see the other side of Jordan and enter the Promised Land. But do you know that I hear in my soul, as the voice of God, giving me the rebuke which was given to Moses?

Yes! every time that my soul goes to God to ask the favour of seeing the other side of Jordan, and eating the fruits of that peace, after which I am longing with such an unspeakable desire, do you know that there is a still, but solemn voice, which tells me that I will see those things, only from a long distance, and that I will be among the dead, when the nation which God granted me to lead through those awful trials, will cross the Jordan, and dwell in that Land of Promise, where peace, industry, happiness, and liberty, will make every one happy; and why so? Because He has already given me favours which He never gave, I dare say, to any man, in these latter days.

Why did God Almighty refuse to Moses the favour of crossing the Jordan, and entering the Promised Land? It was on account of his own nations's sins! That law of divine retribution and justice, by which one must suffer for another, is surely a terrible mystery. But it is a fact which no man who has any intelligence and knowledge can deny. Moses, who knew that law, though he probably did not understand it better than we do, calmly says to his people, *God was wrath with me for your sakes* [Deuteronomy 4:21]" (from Charles Chiniquy's "[Fifty Years in the Church of Rome](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Fifty.Years.Church.Rome.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Fifty.Years.Church.Rome.html> --, [Chapter 60](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Fifty.Years.Church.Rome.5.html#CHAPTER_60) -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Fifty.Years.Church.Rome.5.html#CHAPTER 60](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Fifty.Years.Church.Rome.5.html#CHAPTER_60) --).

## Conclusion

Slavery, as an institution of exacting forced labor by the selfish oppression of holding another captive, entirely disagrees with both the Law and Gospel of God. "27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28 And [Jesus] said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:27-28). In retrospect, the desire of Christianity to promote the Gospel and avoid the odium of legalism, has caused many to forget that the Holy Spirit now works in the Saints through our faith and repentance to keep the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). "For it is God which worketh in you both **to will and to do** of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). More than ever, Christians should love their neighbour as they would themselves. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39). Slavery could have no more attraction to a truly Christian nation than robbery, murder, or any other sin. "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God" (1Peter 2:16). The slavery that was abolished in America in 1865, was an abomination and violation of all the good that is embodied in Christianity; and, the devastations of the American Civil War were both God's judgment upon America, as well as the opportunity for the people to cleanse themselves from the oppression of slavery. "Thus shall they cleanse the land" (Ezekiel 39:16).

## Black Tom

Author Unknown

"I am the LORD thy God, which have brought



The Spirit of Slavery (Part 1) Text

thee out of the ... house of bondage"  
(Exodus 20:2).

Hunted by rebel master,  
Over many a hill and glade,  
Black Tom, with his wife and children,  
Found his way to our brigade.

Tom had sense, and truth, and courage,  
Often tried where danger rose,  
Once our flag his strong arm rescued  
From the grasp of rebel foes.

One day Tom was marching with us  
Through the forest as our guide,  
When a ball from traitor's rifle  
Broke his arm and pierced his side.

On a litter white men bore him  
Through the forest dear and damp,  
Laid him, dying, where our banners  
Brightly fluttered o'er our camp.

Pointing to his wife and children  
While he suffered racking pain,  
Said he to our soldiers round him,  
"Don't let them be slaves again!"

No, by Heaven! outspoke a soldier,  
And that oath was not profane,  
Our brigade will still protect them,  
They shall never be slaves again.

Over old Tom's dusky features  
Came and staid a joyous ray;  
And with saddened friends around him,  
His free spirit passed away.

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints"

## The Spirit of Slavery (Part 1) Text

(Psalm 116:15).

read

[Part 2 of this series](#)

### **The Selfishness of Sin**

[http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Spirit.of.Slavery.Part\\_2.html](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Spirit.of.Slavery.Part_2.html)