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T. MEREDITH, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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TERMS.

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From the Christian Reflector.

TO THE REV. RICHARD FULLER D. D.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—In my last two letters I have attempted to show what I mean when I assert that slavery is a moral evil. I have wished to make it clear that slavery, or the holding of men in bondage, and "obliging them to labor for our benefit without their contract or consent," is always and every where, or as you well express it, *semper et ubique*, a moral wrong, a violation of the obligation under which we are created to our fellow-men, and a transgression of the law of our Creator, *thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*; that however, while this is true, it is also true that the guilt of any individual doing this wrong may be modified by his means of obtaining a knowledge of his duty, and also by the laws of the community of which he may chance to be a member.

The objection to this view of the subject is founded on the precept and example of the Old and New Testaments. With pleasure I proceed to consider the argument on this part of the question. Believing as we both do that the Bible is a perfect rule of duty, if we can ascertain what it teaches, we may reasonably hope that our opinions may yet coincide. In this letter I propose to examine the argument derived from the Old Testament alone.

Your view, I think, may be briefly expressed as follows: Slavery was sanctioned in the Old Testament; and, since the Old Testament is a revelation from God, and since He would not sanction anything morally evil, therefore slavery is not a moral evil.

Before, however, I proceed to consider this argument, permit me to remark, that I do not perceive in the views which I have expressed, any thing at variance with the teachings of the Old Testament. I will briefly explain my opinions on the subject.

I grant, at once, that the Hebrews held slaves from the time of the conquest of Canaan, and that Abraham and the Patriarchs had held them many centuries before. I grant also that Moses enacted laws with special reference to that relation. Of the nature of these laws it may be convenient to speak, shortly. I wonder that any one should have had the hardihood to deny so plain a matter of record. I should almost as soon deny the delivery of the ten commandments to Moses.

Granting all this, I do not see that it contradicts aught that I have said. I believe slavery then, as now, to have been wrong, a violation of our obligations to man, and at variance with the moral laws of God. But I believe that God did not see fit to reveal his will on this subject, nor indeed on many others, to the ancient Hebrews. He made known to them just as much of his moral law as he chose, and the law on this subject belonged to the part which he did not choose to make known. Hence, although they did what was in itself wrong, yet, God not having made known to them his will, they were not guilty.

But more than this. God saw fit to institute peculiar relations between the Hebrews and the inhabitants of Canaan,—relations such as he has never instituted between any other portions of the human family. When the iniquity of the Canaanites was full, God gave them and their lands and possessions, by special revelation, to the Hebrews. The Hebrews were authorized by a divine commission to invade their territory, to take possession of their houses and fields, and slay without mercy the inhabitants. The limitation and extent of this grant were definitely marked out. They were, however, directed to pause before the work of destruction was fully completed, lest the land, being deserted of its inhabitants, should be overrun by beasts of prey. Still, the people within these limits remained under the primitive curse. The Hebrews were authorized to destroy them, and seize upon their land whenever they needed it. The authority to take them as slaves seems to me to be a part of this original, peculiar, and, I may perhaps say, anomalous grant.

But this grant was made to one people, and to one people only, the Hebrews. It had respect to one people only, the Canaanites. It can be of force at no other time, and to no other people. If the Jews were now to return to Palestine, the Old Testament would furnish no warrant by which they would be authorized, were it in their power, to devote to destruction or to enslave the Druses or Maronites of Mount Lebanon, the Arabs of Damascus, or the Turks of Acre. Much less would it authorize American citizens, residing in Palestine, to do the same thing; and much less does it authorize American citizens here at home to destroy, or to enslave, or to hold in slavery, the people of another continent. To the Jews it would have been unlawful, except by the special direc-

tion of Jehovah. To us and to all men it is unlawful to do the same thing, unless we can show the same special direction. These seem to me to be the general principles which we always apply when reasoning concerning the revelation made by the Most High to the Hebrew commonwealth. They comprehend the case of slavery: and by them is the bearing upon us of the permission in question to be determined.

The view which you take of the case, however, differs materially from this. I will now proceed to examine it. It may be stated briefly thus: Slavery was sanctioned by revelation among the Hebrews; it is therefore sanctioned to us.

Let us reduce this argument to a syllogism, and it will be expressed thus:

1. Whatever God sanctioned among the Hebrews, he sanctions for all men and at all times.
2. God sanctioned slavery among the Hebrews. Therefore,
3. God sanctions slavery for all men and at all times.

I believe that in these words I express the argument correctly. If I do not, it is solely because I do not know how to state it more exactly.

Let us, then, in the first place, examine the major premise. "Whatever God sanctioned among the Hebrews, he sanctions for all men and at all times."

Now this proposition surely is not self-evident. If it be true, it must be provable by reason, or by revelation. Can it be proved by reason? The only argument by which it could be supported is, I think, the following:

1. Whatever God sanctions to any men at any time he sanctions to all men at all times.
2. The Hebrews are men. Therefore,

Whatever he sanctioned to the Hebrews he sanctioned to all men at all times.

Now I think that the major premise of this syllogism is wholly untenable. It appears to me to be diametrically at variance with the whole theory of the divine dispensation. Every one, I think, knows that God has seen fit to enlighten our race progressively; and that he has enlightened different portions in different degrees. He has first given us the light of nature. Millions at the present day have no other light. We know from revelation that by the truth alone which this light reveals, will they be judged. They will therefore be held guilty for the transgression of no more than this light has discovered to them. The rest of their transgression of moral law will not be laid to their account. Thus, in this sense of the word, these transgressions are sanctioned to them. But I ask, are they sanctioned to us? Could we who have the light of the gospel, go back to the morality of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle or Confucius, for the reason that what the light of nature allowed to them is allowable in us? Yet I see not but this proposition would lead us to precisely this conclusion.

The same principle applies to the other gradual revelations of moral light which God has at different periods made to mankind.—He increased the light of the patriarchs by direct communication of a small part of his will. A large part of that will, however, he saw fit to withhold. The violations of this latter part he did not forbid, but on the contrary he allowed them to remain unchecked, that is, in this sense he sanctioned them. But could any of us, in the fear of God, go back to the patriarchal dispensation, and take for our moral rule the revelation, and only the revelation, made to the patriarchs?

So of the Mosaic dispensation. By this revelation the light was more fully discovered, but still much of it was withheld. We cannot plead in this case, more than in the other, that what was permitted without rebuke in a darker age is permitted to us to whom greater light has been given. I suppose, therefore, that directly the reverse of the proposition in question is true; that God reveals his will in different degrees, at different times, and to different people at the same time; that he holds them accountable for precisely as much light as he has given them; that he allows without rebuke those action on the moral character of which that light has not shined, and, in this sense, he sanctions them; but that this allowance can never be pleaded in behalf of those who enjoy a more perfect revelation, that is, on whom a better light has shined.

But suppose we take the strongest meaning of the word *sanction*—that of *approve* or *commend*—the proposition will not be, I think, more tenable, as I have before said. God commanded the Hebrews to destroy the Amalekites, etc. But were these commands to all men and at all times? It is therefore, I think, manifest, that this proposition, on which the argument from reason must rest, is, in every sense of the word *sanction*, without foundation.

I hope, my dear brother, you will excuse this use of formal syllogisms in a familiar letter. It is not done for the sake of formality or with the design of appearing precise and logical. I have adopted this mode of discussion simply because I thought thus I could present the points at issue with greater distinctness than seemed possible in any other mode.

But can the proposition, "whatever was sanctioned to the Hebrews is sanctioned to all men at all times," be proved from revelation? It seems to me that precisely the reverse is the fact. To arrive at the truth in this case, it is only necessary to inquire where there were any acts sanctioned to the Hebrews by Moses, which were not sanctioned to all men.

Take for instance the whole Mosaic code of civil law; its severe enactments, its very frequent capital punishments, its cities of refuge, its tenure of real estate. Could any legislator at the present day enact similar laws, and justly plead as a suf-

ficient reason that God had sanctioned, may enacted, such laws for the Jews? Would this be a sufficient reason for abolishing the trial by jury in a case of accidental homicide, (as for instance when the head of an axe slipped from the helve and wounded a man to death) and enacting that the next of kin might slay an innocent person if he found him out of a city of refuge? I think every one must immediately perceive that this law was a humane limitation to the spirit of oriental vindictiveness, but that it would be very wrong to put it in practice at the present day.

But we are not left to our own reasonings on this subject. We know full well that polygamy and divorce are wrong, that they violate the obligations established by God between the sexes, and are transgressions of his positive law. On this subject I presume we can have no difference of opinion. Yet these sins were not forbidden by Moses. Nay more, laws were enacted by the Hebrew legislator in respect to both of these practices. When a man was already united to one wife, and chose to take another, the manner in which the first wife should be treated was prescribed. The right of the first-born was in such a case defined. When, again, a Hebrew wished to divorce a wife, the manner in which this should be done was a matter of positive enactment. The discussion of our Saviour with the Jews on this subject is given us in *Matth. 19: 4-9*. I will quote the whole passage. "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that at the beginning, when the creator made man, he formed a male and a female, and said, For this cause a man shall leave father and mother and adhere to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God hath conjoined let no man separate. They replied, Why then did Moses command to give her a writing of divorce and dismiss her? He answered, Moses indeed, because of your untractable disposition, permitted you to divorce your wives, but it was not so from the beginning. Therefore I say unto you, whosoever divorceth his wife except for whoredom, and marieth another, committeth adultery," &c. You perceive I have used the translation of Dr. Campbell who seems to have understood the scope of the argument better than the authors of our version.

Now concerning this decision of our Lord, several things are to be remarked.

1. Our Lord authoritatively lays down the law of marriage, defining it to be an exclusive engagement between two parties for life.
2. He not only does this, but he declares that this doctrine was taught from the creation, quoting *Genesis 2: 24*, in confirmation of his assertion.
3. Notwithstanding this Moses had sanctioned divorce, that is, he had not forbidden it, and had enacted laws for the regulation of it.
4. And moreover, the reason of this is given; it was because of the hardness of their hearts; or their untractable disposition.

Here then is an institution sanctioned, that is, permitted and made a subject of legislation, which is wrong in itself, and therefore forbidden by our Saviour to them and to all men. Nay, it had been thus sanctioned, although a prior revelation had discountenanced it. It is therefore clear, that a practice may have been sanctioned to the Hebrews, which is not sanctioned to all men at all times, nay, which before and after a particular period was not sanctioned to the Hebrews themselves. I think, therefore, that the teaching of the Scriptures is diametrically at variance with the proposition on which the whole argument from the Old Testament is founded.

I will, in passing, add a single remark respecting the manner in which the inspired legislator of the Hebrews dealt with this subject. Polygamy and divorce at that time were universally practised among the Jews, and indeed among all other oriental nations. Moses did not at once directly forbid these wrongs. He only permitted them and modified some of their worst features. He however did not leave the subject here. He inculcated such principles as would, by appealing to their reason and conscience, gradually abolish these abuses. And the result took place as he had intended. Hence we observe that the prophets rebuked their countrymen for the practice of these very wrongs—*wrongs permitted*, or (in the manner which we have explained) sanctioned by Moses, and they denounced the wrath of God in consequence of them. A most touching expostulation on this subject is found in *Malachi 2: 13-19*. "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, in so much that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good-will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a goodly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith, that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously." It was in consequence of these very fundamental truths inculcated by Moses, truths diametrically opposed to polygamy and divorce, that these evils had to a great degree ceased, as you have remarked, at the time of the coming of Christ.

But to return. Suppose this proposition, that whatever was sanctioned to the Hebrews is sanctioned to all men at all times, be granted, I do not see in what manner it could justify slavery in the United States. It is, I presume, conceded, that a permission of this kind is to be understood, according to the utmost strictness of application. If slavery be justified by the law of Moses, it is, of course, only justified in the manner and with the restrictions under which it was placed by that law. Let us look at some of the provisions respecting it, which Moses established.

1. A distinction was made between their brethren and the Canaanites. The former could be held in slavery only for six years, but strangers might be held for life.
2. The slaves of the stranger were circumcised and admitted to the ordinary privileges of the Hebrew church and commonwealth.
3. If a master in any manner maimed such a servant, even to the breaking of a tooth, he was obliged to manumit him.
4. The Hebrews were positively forbidden to deliver up a slave who had escaped from his master, but were commanded to allow him to dwell in the place which he choose, in any of the gates where it liked him best. *Deut. 23: 15, 16*. It is not necessary that I attempt to contrast these laws with the laws of the Southern States, respecting slavery. Every one must, I think, perceive the unreasonableness of pleading the Jewish laws as authority for an institution so entirely dissimilar, and so forgetful of the limitations by which that practice was originally guarded. If it be said that the Jewish commonwealth was so peculiar that it is impossible for us to conform ourselves to their laws in this respect, this I think establishes the very point in dispute; namely, that the Jewish law was made exclusively for that people, and can be pleaded in justification by no other people whatever.

And again, this last precept, I think, clearly shows that Moses intended to abolish slavery.—How could slavery long continue in a country where every one was forbidden to deliver up a fugitive slave? How different would be the condition of slaves, and how soon would slavery itself cease, were this the law of compulsory bondage among us!

I have already been so long detained upon the first proposition of the argument derived from the Old Testament, that I have room for but few words to devote to the second. The remarks above will however render extended discussion unnecessary. The second proposition is as follows: "God sanctioned slavery among the Hebrews."

If by the word *sanctioned* it is meant that God in any manner testified his approbation of slavery, I am obliged to say that the evidence of such sanction no where exists, to my knowledge, in the Old Testament. Precisely as in the case of divorce, the institution was permitted and regulated; absolutely nothing more. In the meantime principles were inculcated and laws were enacted which must naturally, in the end, undermine and overthrow it. Slavery, so far as I can perceive, is no more sanctioned in the Old Testament than polygamy and divorce, and these institutions were, in precisely the same manner as slavery, tolerated and regulated, while they were, both before and afterwards, declared to be totally at variance with the whole will of God. From the fact of toleration and regulation of these practices, therefore, we can no more infer approbation of God in the one case than in the other.

The passage from *Leviticus 25: 44-46*, is not, that I can see, at all at variance with the view which I have taken on this subject. "Both thy bond-men and thy bond-maids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bond-men and bond-maids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bond-men forever; but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigor."

If any one will take the trouble to turn to the chapter and read from the beginning, he will perceive that its general intention is to inculcate the duty of kindness to their Jewish brethren as distinguished from the heathen. The verses above quoted are a particular exemplification of a general law. They really say no more than that the Hebrews might hold slaves for life of the Canaanites, but not of the Hebrews. I know that the word "shall" is used when speaking of this subject, but it is clearly used as prophetic and not as mandatory; it tells what would or what might be, and not what should or must be. No one can for a moment confound this use of it with the use in the ten commandments; nor can any one suppose it to render it obligatory on the Hebrews to hold slaves, either of their own brethren or of strangers. As this is the strongest passage in the Old Testament in favor of the views which we are examining, I do not know that it is necessary to extend this part of the discussion any farther.

Let us now review the ground which we have passed over. I have supposed that the argument by which slavery is justified from the Old Testament is properly expressed by the following syllogism.

1. Whatever God sanctioned among the Hebrews he sanctions for all men and at all times.
2. God sanctioned slavery among the Hebrews. Therefore,
3. God sanctioned slavery among all men and at all times.

I suppose myself to have shown that the first of these propositions is at variance with reason and the Scriptures, whether the word *sanction*

mean *tolerate* or *enact*—that the second proposition is untrue, if the word *sanction* mean any thing more than *tolerate*; and as with this meaning it can at the present day afford no justification of slavery; therefore the conclusion that God in the Old Testament sanctions slavery to all men, that is, to us, is without foundation.

I merely use this technical formality, as I have said before, because I wish to expose my views in the clearest light, so that if I err, I may the more easily be corrected. There is no one, my dear brother, who is more capable of detecting my error, if it exist, than yourself; and there is no man living before whom I would more willingly stand corrected.

I am, my dear brother, yours with every sentiment of Christian affection,

THE AUTHOR OF THE MORAL SCIENCE.

From the Christian Reflector.

TO THE REV. FRANCIS WAYLAND, JR. D. D.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—Up to this point I have considered the subject before us as a pure question of moral and political science, and attempted to show that, like other social organizations, slavery is not necessarily a crime; and that even the power of the Roman master, though perfectly despotic, was not itself a sin. To establish this was the more important, because good men are justly shocked, when they understand slavery to be a heinous crime, and find people attempting to shelter themselves under the sanction of the Bible.—"Perish the thought!" they exclaim, and I cordially join with them. To charge this impiety upon Christians at the South, however, is to do them great injustice. Such an accusation takes for granted the very thing we deny. We believe that all just moral institutes are only an expansion of those golden maxims, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also to them;" and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." We believe these precepts apply to masters and servants, just as to masters and apprentices, or parents and children, or kings and subjects. We believe that they reach every abuse of slavery; and condemn all intellectual, moral, and domestic injustice. But we do not believe that they make the relation itself sinful, or require, as they must do if it be a crime, its prompt dissolution. Such disruption might, and in some cases would, subvert society itself, and be real charity neither to the masters nor the slaves. It will not do, then, for you to conduct the cause as if we had been proved guilty, and were put upon our defence. This is the ground always taken at the North, and because Southern Christians reply with the bible in their hands, they are misunderstood. Politically, and ethically, I have proved that despotism itself is not necessarily a sin. In appealing to the word of God, we are not required to prove a negative, and justify ourselves; but you must, to make out your case, and prove us guilty. "Sin is a transgression of the law," and you are bound to show the law we transgress. All will acknowledge this to be the fair position of the accuser and accused. Whereas I submit to you that your Bible argument entirely overlooks our forensic rights, and is an examination of the question whether the Bible justifies slavery. Suppose the Bible does not justify it; still, unless condemned by the Bible, slavery may remain among things indifferent, and be classed with that large number of actions whose moral character depends on the peculiar circumstances of each case. Nor am I surprised that those who undertake your arduous office always pursue this line of reasoning, since the assertion that slavery is itself and always a sin, jars harshly with what appears to plain men as the unequivocal teaching of the Scriptures; and, therefore, it is felt, in the outset, that much explanation and ingenuity are indispensable; or, otherwise, not only must the charge fail, but the prosecutors themselves incur a serious impeachment.

The assertion just mentioned as to the inherent guilt of slavery, is the distinctive article with modern abolitionists. But after studying the subject in all its bearings, they have clearly perceived, that if the Hebrew and Greek terms rendered servant in our Bibles really signify slave, there is an end either of their dogma or of submission to the Scriptures. Hence after trying in vain the whole apparatus of exegetical torture, they have—with, I believe, much unanimity—set all philology and history at defiance, and resolutely deny that such is the import of those words. When Paul says, "We are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free," the terms 'Jew' and 'Gentile' mean something; but 'bond' and 'free' imply no distinction at all! And to get rid of the Old Testament, various interpretations have been contrived, of which the latest is quite curious. While moving earth and heaven about the thralldom of the negro, the abolitionists deny to the white man even liberty of speech, and wish to erect an inquisition over the mind. A very pious Presbyterian pastor has lately been arraigned by them, not for holding slaves, but for daring even to utter his honest convictions on the subject of slavery. And at that trial it was declared (if the newspapers did no injustice to the orators) that slavery was not known in Abraham's day except among the heathen; that the patriarch was a prince, and the persons bought with his money were subjects, whom he purchased to improve their condition. So that, after all, the objection is entirely to the name, and will at once be withdrawn if the Southern masters only call themselves princes, and their slaves subjects—for assuredly, if we ourselves had purchased the African captives from the native masters, we might plead that their condition has been immeasurably improved.

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