

that is peculiar to African slavery to-day, as existing among us. It took deeper root in the Hebrew nation after their settlement in Canaan, and we find humane laws enacted for its regulation. Indeed, so carefully was the person of the slave protected, that personal injury, such as the loss of an eye or a tooth, entitled him to freedom. (Exodus 21: 26, 27.)

The New Testament treats slavery as an existing institution deeply rooted in the law of the Roman government, of which Palestine was a province, as well as in the prejudices of the people. Neither Jesus nor His apostles taught rebellion against civil authority nor resistance to properly enacted laws. They could not be convicted of treason, neither did they needlessly array prejudice against them.

Nor was it necessary so to do, in order to work out the abolition of slavery in the church, and they did not aim at being national reformers.

Had slaveholding been sinful in itself, it would have been their duty to insist upon its repudiation as a condition of membership in the church. But it was not necessarily so: it became so only through the abuses which too naturally sprung from it, the cruel or unjust treatment of their servants. Hence, then, as now, a man might be a slaveholder and yet an eminent Christian. Still the relation of master and bondman, between man and man, and in many cases between Christian brothers was anomalous and contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. We find the enactment of laws for the government of the church which would lead to its gradual abolishment. Thus so far from receiving liberty to break the bonds and repudiate the authority of their masters—whatever may be said of this as a natural and unalienable right—slaves were required to obey with alacrity, and with a sincere desire to do their duty to their masters as a part of their duty to Christ—being submissive to the Divine will in this as in every other trying situation into which they might be brought by the providence of God. Though a servant yet was he the Lord's freeman. (1 Cor. 7: 22.)

But what was enjoined as to the masters? Though they were not commanded as an immediate and imperative duty to emancipate their slaves, yet they were enjoined to treat them according to the principles of justice and equity. "Ye masters do the same thing unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your master also is in Heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." "Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal." (Col. 4: 1; Eph. 6: 9.)

Now, justice requires that all their rights as men, as husbands and as parents should be regarded. And these rights are not determined by the civil laws, but by the laws of God.

If these laws in regard to slavery were generally acknowledged and obeyed—and we profess to be a Christian nation, governed by the laws of God—first the evils of slavery, and then slavery itself, would pass away as naturally and healthfully as children cease to be minors.

In regard to the frequently cited and much perverted case of Onesimus, who is alleged as a runaway slave returned to his master by the authority of an apostle—I say in the first place there is nothing to prove that Onesimus was a slave. That he was a person held to service by Philemon is true, but that would be equally true on the supposition that he was bound to Philemon either by his parents or guardian or by himself voluntarily as an apprentice.

Now, can anything else be proved from the word used to designate his condition, or inferred from the fact that he ran away? as it is as common for apprentices to run away as for slaves.

That Paul returned him to his master as a fugitive from justice is as contrary to the facts of the case, as it is gratuitously assumed.

Paul could scarcely be considered as doing so in violation of the explicit command of God, recorded in Deut. 23, v. 15, 16, which forbids the return of the fugitive—"Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee; he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him."

The facts of the case would seem to be these: For some reason, Onesimus, when converted, was desirous of returning to his former master. Whether this arose from the suggestion of his own mind, or of the Apostle, does not appear; for the expression used by the Apostle on this subject, *ἀνεστρέψα, whom I have sent again*, does not necessarily imply that he even proposed it to him, much less commanded it. At all events the return was voluntary on the part of Onesimus. I reason that Paul sent him with a letter to Philemon to secure his kindly reception. Many reasons may have inclined Onesimus to return, for it is no uncommon occurrence for runaway apprentices and servants when they have seen and felt the misery of being among strangers and in want, to wish themselves back at their former homes; or he may have felt, now that he was converted, that he had wronged his master in some way as the Apostle acknowledges "that in time past he was unprofitable," and now he was desirous of repairing the wrong. Or he may have had friends or kindred whom he was desirous of seeing again. Any of these is sufficient to suppose him desirous of returning to his former master, and hence he sought the kindly interposition of Paul to secure his