

**THE BIBLE AGAINST  
SLAVERY, WITH  
REPLIES TO THE  
"BIBLE VIEW OF SLAVERY"**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649746347

The Bible against slavery, with replies to the "Bible view of slavery" by Stephen M. Vail

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**STEPHEN M. VAIL**

**THE BIBLE AGAINST  
SLAVERY, WITH  
REPLIES TO THE  
"BIBLE VIEW OF SLAVERY"**



PROF. STEPHEN M. VAIL, D. D.

*Dear Sir:*—We the Students of the Methodist General Biblical Institute, having learned that the New Hampshire Patriot has closed its columns against you not allowing you to reply to the late pro-slavery articles of Mr. X., and believing that the Institution of Slavery is at War with the Bible and the best interests of our Country and Humanity, and believing that the publication of your reply to X and others at this time would be useful to the religious community and the Country generally, showing as we understand you do, that the Bible is against Slavery; we respectfully solicit from you your reply for publication.

With Respect,

Your Obedient Pupils,

J. HENRY OWENS, }  
J. T. HAND,        } Committee.  
THEO. L. FLOOD, }

CONCORD, Feb. 15, 1864.

TO REVS. J. HENRY OWENS, } Committee of Students  
J. T. HAND,                } of  
THEO. L. FLOOD.         } Biblical Institute.

*Dear Brethren:*—Wrong or dishonorable action always fails, in the long run, to compass its ends. If the New Hampshire Patriot had given me as much space as my opponent X. occupied in its columns, this proposed pamphlet would not have seen the light. The Patriot's refusal to allow me to reply in the way desired, renders it necessary for me to reply in some other form. The form of the pamphlet will be more permanent and will in the end reach a larger circle of readers. Thanking you for your kindness, I cheerfully submit my manuscript to you for publication, as you request.

Your affectionate Friend and Teacher,

STEPHEN M. VAIL.

Q. S. 10 FEB. 12

# THE BIBLE AGAINST SLAVERY.

---

## PREFATORY.

---

The question whether the Bible is against Slavery is at this time one of the highest interest. In the providence of God the people of the United States are now called upon to decide on the question of the permanent emancipation of four millions of slaves. Until the present rebellion got up and sustained altogether by the slaveholders and their abettors in the southern States, the people were united in the view that the General Government had no power of a political kind over slavery in the States. But now as the seceded States have taken themselves from under the protection of the Constitution and Government of the United States, and have rebelled against the government of the country for the sake of the better preserving slavery, their institution is no longer entitled to the protection of the government. And as a war measure therefore, and as a measure of justice, the slaves in the seceded and rebel States, with some exceptions, were declared to be free men on the 1st of January, 1863, by the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States.

But many of our fellow citizens still claim that the Proclamation is only a war measure, and that its power must cease on the re-construction of the Union, and that the slaves must fall again into their former status.

The question of course must be settled by the people themselves of the whole country. If the President and Congress to be chosen in 1864, the present year, should be pro-slavery then all the acts of Mr. Lincoln's administration so far as the slaves are concerned might be abrogated, and

slavery for the slaveholding States so called would still be the policy of the Nation. The great question before the nation in the coming presidential election must therefore be *slavery or no slavery?*

As a christian nation receiving the Holy Scriptures as our guide, it becomes a grave inquiry *what saith the Scriptures* on this question? If the Bible is against slavery it is important to know it. If the Bible be found, after all the efforts of slavery, to be on the side of Freedom it will be a confirmation of its Divinity to the minds of millions, and the Bible will be dearer than ever to the hearts of all mankind. If as many have claimed, it be against human liberty and in favor of oppression, the inference will continue to be drawn by thousands that it is not from heaven. My own belief is that it has been greatly misunderstood,—and such has been the traditional power of slavery over us, that as yet we have only faintly apprehended the truth,—that the Bible is always and every where against slavery.

#### § 1. *Introduction.*

My object in the present publication is to show that the Scriptures are against slavery, both those of the old Testament and of the New, both alike condemn it. By consequence I must show that the recent publications of such writers as Bishop Hopkins, of Vermont, Dr. Lord late President of Dartmouth College, "X" of the New Hampshire Patriot and others, who have written on the pro-slavery side of the question, are on a sandy foundation without the slightest support from the Holy Scriptures.

It is not surprising that a system of iniquity of such pecuniary and political power as slavery in our country, should find apologists among respectable men, and even among men of reputed learning. But it is a matter of surprise at this late day when this accursed system has put its cruel hand to the throat of the nation and seeks the destruction of the Republic, and when all loyal slaveholders themselves are seek-

ing the destruction of slavery, that such men as Bishop Hopkins and Dr. Lord yet apologise for it and seek to save it.

But it must go down. The nation must and will slough off the horrid excrescence. There is no decree in the book of fate more certain than that *slavery must now be destroyed*.

Having long been of the opinion that there was no support for it in the sacred writings, the Holy Scriptures, I here present a candid review to the country of those passages which have been supposed by the gentlemen named above, and by others, as favoring involuntary servitude among men.

In the fall of 1862, soon after the issue of the President's Proclamation, that on the first of January, 1863, he should declare the slaves of rebels free on the ground of military necessity, the young men of the Biblical Institute invited me to preach on the occasion of said proclamation. The sermon was published. It was attacked in the New Hampshire Patriot. I replied to the attack, and challenged my reviewer to find a single case of justified sale of a human being in the Scriptures. It was replied that if there were no cases of such sale, that there were laws regulating such sales, and an attempt was made to produce them, to which I replied, and my reviewer then goes on to discuss the subject generally in opposition to my reply.

He having occupied some fourteen columns in the Patriot in opposition, while I had occupied but seven, I sought the privilege of further reply and was denied, at least till after the March elections. I am thus compelled to resort to this mode of self-vindication, as well as the vindication of the truth.

I would remark further by way of introduction, that I have kept the original Scriptures constantly before me, in all my discussions. Knowing that this must be the ultimate standard of appeal, I have sought to draw light from the Scriptures alone. And thus purposely while writing this reply I have not consulted other writers on the anti-slavery side of the question; but have constantly appealed to the Scriptures themselves. Comparing dark passages with their parallels,



thus comparing Scripture with Scripture, and leaving all to be decided by the common sense of my readers. It has been gratifying to me to find, after my reply was written, that there is a substantial agreement between myself and such writers as Albert Barnes, Charles Elliott, D. D., and G. B. Cheever, D. D. The works of these writers are the most elaborate and most able of any that have fallen into my hands, and in my judgment they present, in general, the true scriptural views on this subject.

§ 2. *What is the meaning of the Hebrew gnebedh?*

[Pronounced differently by Hebrew scholars, some calling it *ebed*, others *gnebedh*, which I prefer.]

Other writers whose attention has not been specifically called to this subject have generally failed to discriminate between slavery and other kinds of servitude. So also the Lexicographers both of the Greek and Hebrew, e. g. Gesenius says *gnebedh* generally a *servant*, who among the Hebrews was also a *slave*. So Robinson, *Lexicon of New Testament*, *doulos*, a *bondman*, *slave*, *servant*. So others, all so far as I have observed, failing to properly discriminate between the signification *Servant* and *Slave*. From this looseness of defining as Dr. Cheever forcibly says, "The eggs of the Cockatrice are hatched." A *Slave* is an *involuntary, coerced servant*, held as property, a *chattel personal* in distinction from a *chattel material*.

A *servant* as distinguished from a *slave* is a voluntary servant, one who works for wages or a support. This confusion of the two words servant and slave, leads to much erroneous reasoning from Scripture. The condition of a servant is a normal condition, right, and often needful in human society. While the condition of a *slave* is always abnormal and wrong, and *never* necessary in human society, except as a punishment for crime. It is a condition born of pride, covetousness, and in a word, of man's evil nature. So St. Chrysostom says: "But if you ask whence slavery has its origin, and why it has entered into human life. \* \* \* I will tell you; avarice,

vulgar display, and insatiable cupidity beget slavery; since Noah had no slave, Abel had no slave, nor Seth, nor yet those after this." (Hom. in Epist. and Ephes. 22.)

The distinction between the two, *service* and *slavery*, *servant* and *slave* is clearly marked. The first is generic, the second is specific, the first is of labor in general, the second is of coerced labor. The first may include the second, and when so intended the sacred writers so qualify their language as to leave the reader in no doubt, as for example, when the children of Israel were called the servants of Pharaoh (*gncbedh Pargnoh*), we know slaves are meant, from the context. So Joseph was sold into Egypt for a *gncbedh, slave*, I should render, (Ps. 105: 17); for the account of Joseph's captivity shows, that he was a coerced servant, at least till he was raised to be Pharaoh's Prime Minister. So when Moses is called the *Servant of Jehovah* (*gncbedh Jehovah*), we must render *Servant of Jehovah* and not slave of Jehovah. So David is called the *servant of Saul* (*gncbedh Shuool*), not slave of Saul, for the context does not show that his service was coerced or involuntary. The distinction is perfectly plain, and the disregard of it by the pro-slavery writers mentioned above is very strange.

§ 3. *What is the meaning of the Greek "doulos," and Latin "servus"?*

We might as well say here, that the Latin *servus*, the Greek *doulos*, and the Hebrew *gncbedh*, correspond to the English word *servant*, and not to *slave*. Dr. Lord says, "An *ebed* at Jerusalem; a *doulos* at Athens; a *servus* at Rome; and a *slave* at Washington, have been as well understood, in those respective representative cities, to mean a chattel personal, as *son* has been understood to mean the child of his father.\*

Dr. Lord, I respectfully submit, is not correct, although all the pro-slavery writers, as Bishop Hopkins, Fletcher, and others, agree with him. Let these gentlemen consider whether it would be proper to render Rom. 1: 1, Paul a *slave* of Jesus

\* See second letter to ministers of the gospel, p. 48.

Christ, *doulos* in Greek, and *seruus* in Vulgate, or whether it would be proper to render Is. 52: 13, (a beautiful prophecy of the Messiah), "Behold my *slave*," &c., Hebrew *gnebedh*, Vulgate *seruus*, Sept. *païs*.

Observe further. The Lord Jesus Christ himself is called a *doulos* in Phil. 2: 7, "He took on him the form of a *doulos*." Does any one dare to say that He, who was found in the form of God took on himself the form of a *slave*;—an unwilling involuntary *slave*? Christ was indeed a willing servant to poor lost man. But he was not his unwilling slave, such an idea is not only absurd, it is impious. Yet to such a result the pro-slavery principle leads, and therefore is and must be *false*.

I say, then, that Dr. Lord and others are mistaken when they say that *gnebedh* is the specific term for *slave*. If so, then Moses was a slave, for he is repeatedly called *gnebedh*. See Dent. 34: 5, Josh. 1: 1, 13, 15, &c. Then Joshua was a *slave*, for he is also repeatedly called *gnebedh*, as Josh. 24: 29, Judges 2: 8, &c. Then also David was a slave, for he is called an *gnebedh* of Saul, 1 Sam. 30: 13.

Dr. Lord, and Bishop Hopkins, and "X," are simply mistaken in their declarations that *gnebedh* is properly a "*slave*." It is the general term for the English "*servant*." It is generic, and includes all kinds of servants, and the specific sense must be determined by the context or connection;—e. g., when the children of Israel are called *gnebedh Parguoh*, Ex. 9: 20, then it means *slaves* of Pharaoh; because the context shows that they were compelled to serve Pharaoh against their will, and without wages. When they are called *gnebedh Jehovah*, we are to render it *servants* of Jehovah, not *slaves* of Jehovah. So *gnebedhem David* is *servants* of David, not *slaves*, because these servants were clearly voluntary. I suppose the above illustrations will save me from being misunderstood.

I would further add that the proper word for *slave* in Greek is *andrapodon*, in Latin *Mancipium*. There is no word in Hebrew which specifically means *slave*.

Now for the interest we naturally feel in the opinions of others I would refer to Barnes on Slavery, p. 70, for his