

**SLAVERY DISCUSSED IN  
OCCASIONAL ESSAYS,  
FROM 1833 TO 1846**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649015474

Slavery discussed in occasional essays, from 1833 to 1846 by Leonard Bacon

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)

**LEONARD BACON**

**SLAVERY DISCUSSED IN  
OCCASIONAL ESSAYS,  
FROM 1833 TO 1846**



# SLAVERY

DISCUSSED IN

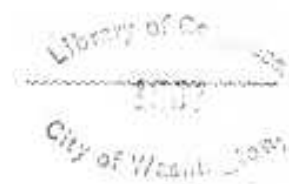
## OCCASIONAL ESSAYS,

FROM 1833 TO 1846.

BY

LEONARD BACON,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN NEW HAVEN.



NEW YORK:

BAKER AND SCRIBNER,

145 Nassau Street and 36 Park Row.

1846.

---

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1846, by

LEONARD BACON,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the District of  
Connecticut.

---

---

EDWARD O. JENKINS, PRINTER,  
114 Nassau street.

## PREFACE.

---

SEVERAL years before the commencement of the Anti-Slavery agitation on this side of the Atlantic, it so happened that I was led to consider, with some care, the condition and prospects of the enslaved class in the United States. From that time to the present, no subject not immediately connected with my official duties or my professional studies, has occupied so much of my attention. When the British Anti-Slavery Societies began their labors, in 1823, I entered into their views as then exhibited; and I learned much from the reports of those Societies, and from the pamphlets published by Stephens, Clarkson, Wilberforce and others. When the Rev. Joshua Leavitt, now so eminent among American abolitionists, made his first appearance as a writer on slavery, in 1825, I agreed generally with his views, and was instructed by his arguments; for his views, at that time, were substantially the same with those which the British abolitionists were then urging upon Parliament. From him I learned

to make certain distinctions which still seem to me essential to any just view of the subject, widely as he and others have since departed from them.\*

---

\* After the lapse of one and twenty years, it cannot seem indelicate to refer to Mr. Leavitt as the author of the articles above alluded to. They were published in the Christian Spectator for 1825, pp. 130-138, 239-246. I well remember the violent sensation which they produced in Charleston, where the Christian Spectator was immediately put upon the *Index librorum prohibitorum* of his holiness Judge Lynch. Yet those articles were far from containing the modern Anti-Slavery doctrine. Witness such passages as these :

“The right of personal liberty is not, in all circumstances, an *absolute* right. If it were so, slavery would have never been recognized in the Word of God. Yet it was permitted and regulated in the laws given by God himself Lev. xxv. 44, 45.” “Neither has Christianity interfered in this respect to abolish slavery. Paul has given directions for the mutual deportment of masters and servants, or slaves, as they were in those days.”—p. 131.

“Our own laws recognize involuntary servitude whenever the public good and the interest of the individual require it. Such is substantially the case of minors, of idiots, of spendthrifts, of drunkards. The right of personal liberty, therefore, is not one which may be lawfully vindicated *at all hazards*. *Solus populi, suprema lex*. The public good, the interest of all classes, both whites and blacks, is *the supreme law*. Slaves have no more an abstract absolute right to rise and kill their masters, and involve the *whole* community in destruction, than the son or apprentice has to revolt from the control under which the laws have placed him. The very idea is most preposterous, that a part of the community have a right, which they may assert to the destruction of the peace and happiness of the whole. The right of the master, therefore, to the services of his slave, *may be* as perfect as to the services of his apprentice. But this right depends, in either case, wholly on the assumed fact, that in existing circumstances the public good requires the existence of servitude. It is a mere creature of society, and depends entirely upon the laws.”—pp. 131-132.



In the year 1830, or soon after, a new doctrine, or what seemed such, began to be current. The English Anti-Slavery Societies, in the heat of their con-

---

"I have had three objects in view, in thus going into the nature of slavery as a legal institution. In the first place, I wish it to appear that the relation between the master and slaves, is a proper subject of legislation. It is a conventional right and depends entirely upon the laws."—*ibid.*

"The second object was to relieve slaveholders from a charge, or an apprehension of criminality, where in fact there is no offence. There can be no palliation for the conduct of those who first brought the curse of slavery upon poor Africa, and America too. But the body of the present generation are not liable to this charge. Posterity are not answerable for the sins of their fathers, unless they approve their deeds. They found the negroes among them, in a degraded state, incapable either of appreciating or enjoying liberty. They have, therefore, nothing to answer for on this score, because they have no other alternative, *at present*, but to keep them in subjection. There is nothing so destructive to the moral sense, as to be forced, by our principles, to the acknowledgment of guilt, in that which we at the same time believe to be absolutely unavoidable, and in which, therefore, it is impossible really to feel self-reproach." "A Christian *may* hold slaves, and exact their services, without any occasion to feel a pang of self-reproach *merely on account* of his holding slaves."—p. 133.

"The third object aimed at, was to fasten the charge of criminality on the very spot where such a charge will lie, and where it ought to be felt; and where alone reformation is practicable. There are no duties without corresponding rights, and no rights without corresponding duties. While it is the duty of the slave to submit himself to his own master so long as the laws of this country make him a slave, it is his right to be protected *by the laws*, in the enjoyment of life, health, chastity, good name, and every blessing which he can enjoy consistently with the public welfare."

"Christianity enforces this dictate of sound reason. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' is as much the law between master and

lict with the "West India interest," being most reasonably disgusted with the resistance of the colonial authorities to every measure that had any tendency towards freedom, had begun to renounce all further dependence upon such measures, and to demand of Parliament the immediate abolition of slavery. "*Immediate abolition*" had become the popular doctrine among philanthropists; and "gradualism" or the notion of a process of abolition, was scouted as an obsolete idea. Accordingly the doctrine of immediate abolition began to be current here; but here it was necessarily, to some extent at least, another thing from what it was in Great Britain. There it was a demand that a new constitution of society, a new body of laws, a new system of relations between capital and labor, and between the landholder and the peasant, should be imposed upon dependent and vassal colonies by the omnipotence of the Imperial Parliament. Here it became the doctrine of "imme-

---

slave, as between any other members of the human family. This is so obvious as to appear almost like a truism. And yet this is the very thing that has always been lost sight of among slaveholders. It has been wholly disregarded in our own nation." "We do not answer to this indictment unless we either plead guilty, or show that our *laws*, our customs, our modes of thinking and acting, recognize the humanity of the negroes."—pp. 133, 134.

Some of these statements are no doubt unguarded. But the leading principles and distinctions carried conviction to my mind at the time; and it still seems to me that there can be no just reasoning on the subject without them.

diate *emancipation*” by individual masters, “at all hazards,” and without regard to consequences; the doctrine that slavery is a sin on the part of the master, always and in all circumstances, and that he must immediately renounce his authority without asking what is expedient for the commonwealth, or what for the welfare of the slave. All who refused to receive that doctrine and its corollaries, were denounced as “pro-slavery,” and as sacrificing duty to expediency.

Such was the occasion on which I felt myself called to publish the first of the following essays. A critical examination of the subject in the light of the Scriptures, seemed to be necessary at that time; and I did what I could. The two or three years that followed, were years of great excitement in respect to slavery. The most extravagant views were presented on both sides. On the one hand, the Anti-Slavery party, including the no-government element from which it has now in some measure disengaged itself, seemed to aim at irritating public opinion into phrenzy. On the other hand, the southern people were demanding that the discussion of slavery in the free States should be put down by mobs; and there were found northern men base enough to lend themselves to such a demand. The dates of several of these essays, will show that they were written during that period of excitement.