

**LETTERS TO PROFESSOR STOWE AND DR.
BACON: ON GOD'S REAL METHOD WITH
GREAT SOCIAL WRONGS IN WHICH THE
BIBLE IS VINDICATED FROM GROSSLY
ERRONEOUS INTERPRETATIONS**

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Letters to Professor Stowe and Dr. Bacon: On God's Real Method with Great Social Wrongs in Which the Bible Is Vindicated from Grossly Erroneous Interpretations by Amos A. Phelps

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AMOS A. PHELPS

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LETTERS
TO
PROFESSOR STOWE AND DR. BACON,
ON
GOD'S REAL METHOD
WITH
GREAT SOCIAL WRONGS
IN WHICH
THE BIBLE IS VINDICATED
FROM
GROSSLY ERRONEOUS INTERPRETATIONS.

By AMOS A. PHELPS.

New York :
PUBLISHED BY WM. HARNED,
FOR THE AMERICAN AND FOREIGN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.
1848.

NOTE.

AFTER the return of Mr. Phelps from the West Indies he was requested by a friend to revise his Letters to Professor Stowe, with a view to their republication in a permanent form. At Castine, Maine, a week or two before his death, he performed this labor. As the writer of this note made his last visit to him, at Roxbury, Mass., four days previous to his decease, when he was scarcely able to converse, he whispered, "My letters to Stowe are ready for the press," and added, "The letters to Bacon may be added: I see no objection to it." But he had not revised the latter. He then bade his son bring the copy from another room to be disposed of as the Committee might see fit. The revising of these letters was the last literary work of our deceased brother, and the copy bore evidence that it was done with his accustomed particularity and thoroughness. This little book, then, may be considered his last legacy to the Christian public, to his anti-slavery brethren, and to the world; and the friends of Freedom, of an unadulterated Christianity, and of Gospel Missions, will prize it as an evidence of the skill, manliness, and good temper, with which he was accustomed to argue with opponents, assert the truth, and defend the Bible. The work is stereotyped, is put at a reasonable price, and it is hoped that it will have an extensive

circulation. The agency of the friends of the deceased, of those who prize impartial investigation, and manly discussion, and of those who are anxious to preserve the Holy Scriptures from adulteration and perversion, is earnestly requested, that successive editions of these Letters may be printed, sold, loaned, and circulated in this and other lands, among ministers, missionaries, and the friends of missions. By the premature death of Mr. Phelps, the Christian community have been deprived of the work he had for several years contemplated—a complete review of the Bible with reference to demonstrating its anti-slavery character. He longed to prepare such a work, and was fully persuaded that he could show, conclusively, that neither the Scriptures of the Old or New Testament afford any countenance to American slavery. Near the close of his life, he said, “I have been very desirous of completing several things that I have undertaken or planned in my mind, especially my Bible views on the subject of slavery. But perhaps God means that the Bible shall vindicate itself. The churches have fallen into disesteem, and it may be that God will permit the Bible to do so for a time.” These letters show something what the work would have been, had Mr. Phelps lived to execute the plan he had in view. His premature decease is apparently a great loss to the world, to the cause of freedom and Christianity. But he could say, in view of the probable speedy termination of his earthly career, “I think I have done being anxious about the result, and am quite resigned to the Divine will, be it what it may.” So may it be said in reference to what he performed or left incomplete, by every friend and admirer of this ripe scholar, judicious

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counsellor, and indefatigable laborer in the Lord's vineyard,
this friend of man, whether white or colored, this faithful
servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Servant of God, well done,
Rest from thy loved employ:
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy Master's joy!



PREFACE.

THE following letter, addressed to the Editors of the Boston Recorder, will show the nature, somewhat, of the following discussion, and how it came to be carried on in its columns. The failure of my health prevented a reply to Dr. Beecher. Consequently, and because they interrupted the continuity of the argument, some references to Dr. Beecher's letters which occurred in the first part of the discussion are also omitted.

To the Editors of the Boston Recorder :

I see from a late Recorder, that Dr. Stowe has written out his Brooklyn speech on the subject of Organic Sin; that Dr. Beecher is about to enter upon a full and elaborate discussion of the same subject; and that the communications of both are to appear in your columns.

Allow me to say, that I sincerely rejoice at this. I do so on many accounts, but most of all, because of the vast importance of the question at issue. One portion of abolitionists maintain that slaveholding, as a *present individual practice*, is sinful; that it is always so, in the same sense in which gaming, drunkenness, falsehood, adultery, idolatry, and the like, are so; and that being so, it is always to be treated, in the instruction of Christian teachers and the administration and discipline of Christian Churches, just as these other sins are.

In opposition to this, there are obviously but two issues that can be made up. One is, that of the Calhoun and Hammond school, in the rightfulness of slavery as a system,

and the innocence of slaveholding (not of its abuses) as an individual relation or practice—an innocent part of an innocent whole. The other issue is that of the wrongfulness of slavery as a system, but the innocence of individual slaveholding, though a part of a bad system; or at all events, its innocence *so far*, that it is not, in the same sense with gaming, drunkenness, falsehood, adultery, idolatry, and the like, a sin, and it is not therefore to be treated by religious teachers and Christian Churches, as they treat such other sins. This is the position of the good brethren named above—this, the ground taken at its late meeting by the American Board.

And this I hold to be one of the most momentous issues that has yet been submitted to the decision of the Christian public respecting slavery. It has been up before, but never so distinctly, definitely, and tangibly as now. Is slaveholding (saying nothing of personal treatment either way) a sin, and always a sin, and to be always regarded and treated as a sin, in *the same and only the same*, as is drunkenness, falsehood, gaming, theft, adultery, idolatry, and the like. One portion of the abolitionists say, yes. Drs. Stowe, Beecher, the American Board, &c. say, yes, as a system, but no as an individual practice. This is the issue. It is the last entrenchment of slavery in the free States. This carried, and slavery has then no hiding place, but the extreme resort of the essential rightfulness of system and practice both; and on that issue, the verdict of an enlightened public will not long be doubtful.

I shall regard it as a favor if you will allow me to say something in your columns in reply to the positions of Prof. Stowe, Dr Beecher and the Board.

Yours truly,

A. A. PHELPS.

New York, Oct. 13. 1845.