

## Arguments in Opposition to Slavery

**Document #1:** Selections from William Lloyd Garrison, Declaration of Sentiments of the American Anti-Slavery Society, December 6, 1833

More than fifty-seven years have elapsed, since a band of patriots convened in this place (the meeting was taking place in Philadelphia), to devise measure for the deliverance of this country from a foreign yoke. The corner-stone upon which they founded the Temple of Freedom was broadly this, "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, LIBERTY, and the pursuit of happiness." . . .

Their principles led them to wage war against their oppressors, and to spill human blood like water, in order to be free. Ours forbid the doing of evil that good may come, and lead us to reject, and to entreat the oppressed to reject, the use of all carnal weapons for deliverance from bondage; relying solely upon those which are spiritual, and mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds . . . Their grievances, great as they were, were trifling in comparison with the wrongs and sufferings of those for whom we plead. Our fathers were never slaves - never bought and sold like cattle. never shut out from the light of knowledge and religion. never subjected to the lash of brutal taskmasters.

But those, for whose emancipation we are striving. constituting at the present time at least one-sixth part of our countrymen - are recognized by law, and treated by their fellow-beings, as marketable commodities, as goods and chattels, as brute beasts . . . For the crime of having a dark complexion, they suffer the pangs of hunger, the infliction of stripes, the ignominy of brutal servitude. They are kept in heathenish darkness by laws expressly enacted to make their instruction a criminal offence.

Hence we maintain. that, in view of the civil and religious privileges of this nation, the guilt of its oppression is unequalled by any other on the face of the earth; and, therefore, that it is bound to repent instantly, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free.

We further maintain. that no man has a right to enslave or imbrute his brother. to hold or acknowledge him, for one moment, as a piece of merchandize. to keep back his hire by fraud. or to brutalize his mind, by denying him the means of intellectual, social and moral improvement.

The right to enjoy liberty is inalienable. To invade it is to usurp the prerogative of Jehovah. Every man has a right to his own body. to the products of his own labor. to the protection of law. and to the common advantages of society. It is piracy to buy or steal a native African, and subject him to servitude. Surely, the sin is as great to enslave an American as an African.

Therefore we believe and affirm.

. . . That every American citizen, who detains a human being in involuntary bondage as his property, is, according to Scripture, (Exodus, xxi. 16) a man-stealer: That the slaves ought instantly to be set free, and brought under the protection of law:

. . . That all those laws which are now in force, admitting the right of slavery, are therefore, before God, utterly null and void; being an audacious usurpation of the Divine prerogative, a daring infringement on the law of nature, a base overthrow of the very foundations of the social compact, a complete extinction of all the relations, endearments and obligations of mankind, and a presumptuous transgression of all

the holy commandments; and that therefore they ought instantly to be abrogated.

. . . We also maintain that there are, at the present time, the highest obligations resting upon the people of the free States to remove slavery by moral and political action, as prescribed in the Constitution of the United States. They are now living under a pledge of their tremendous physical force, to fasten the galling fetters of tyranny upon the limbs of millions in the Southern States; they are liable to be called at any moment to suppress a general insurrection of the slaves; they authorize the slave owner to vote for three-fifths of his slaves as property, and thus enable him to perpetuate his oppression; they support a standing army at the South for its protection; and they seize the slave, who has escaped into their territories, and send him back to be tortured by an enraged master or a brutal driver. This relation to slavery is criminal, and full of danger: it must be broken up.

**Document #2:** Selections From A Condensed Anti-Slavery Bible Argument, by a Citizen of Virginia, 1845

The belief was long nearly universal, and is yet very general throughout the Christian world, that the Scriptures do, to some extent, justify human slavery, as practised in this country. The object of the following chapters is to controvert this belief, and to prove that it is false and heretical, as well as dangerous and destructive to human happiness; that this belief is founded entirely on perversions of the true meaning of certain passages in the Scriptures, and is entirely contrary to the spirit of the divine volume, the letter of which condemns the practice with as much severity as it did that of any other crime. The following argument is presented for the calm and prayerful consideration of all Christians, both in the North and in the South. The time as come when . . . "neither the evidences of the Gospel, nor the solemnities of religion; neither the constitution of the church, nor the rights of its members; neither the divine right of bishops, nor the value of holy orders; neither the spirituality of the soul, nor the materiality of the body, can escape the ordeal of free and full discussion. Shall we, then, think it strange that American slavery, with all its influences on the moral and political destinies of this great and mighty nation, shall, by the spontaneous concession of the whole civilized world, be allowed to escape inquiry, or be exempt from appearing in the presence of this august and powerful tribunal of FREE DISCUSSION? It cannot be imagined. Come it must, and come it will; and we may as well be prepared for it soon as late." . . .

The practice of human slavery is not condemned in the Scriptures by that name, nor mentioned in any of our common law definitions by the same name. But it is condemned in the Scriptures under other names, and by descriptions, plainly and severely. There are many modern practices, such as piracy, duelling, gambling, &c., which are not condemned in the Scriptures by those names, but by descriptions. In this way, though all the crimes against God and his religion have been legalized by men in this world, they are all plainly described and condemned in the Scriptures, so that mankind are without any moral or just excuse for committing them. But that the practice of human slavery is thus condemned, is plainly proven, as follows: .

I. By our slaveholding definitions, human slavery is described as property in man, and slaves are declared to be the property of their masters or owners, and cannot own, possess, or enjoy anything but what belongs to their owners. But by our common law definitions, human slavery is compounded of the crimes of kidnapping, assault and battery, and false imprisonment.

II. In Exodus xxi. 16: "And he that stealeth a man and selleth him, and if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death."

