'No Longer Slaves, But Beloved Brothers And Sisters'

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF CALIFORNIA

RACIAL RECONCILIATION TASK FORCE

FINAL REPORT

September 30, 2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to a resolution adopted by the 160th Diocesan Convention, the Executive Council of the Diocese of California created and charged the Racial Reconciliation Task Force (Task Force) to study the complicity of the Diocese in the institution of transatlantic slavery and to disclose any direct or indirect economic benefits to the Diocese resulting from slavery, slave owners, and slave related activities. After two and one - half years of study, the Task Force has uncovered no documentation that the Diocese of California, its clergy, or its lay leadership directly or indirectly participated in, actively supported, invested in, or benefited economically from the institution of trans-Atlantic (African) slavery.

However, it is clear that the Diocese of California consciously chose to remain officially silent on the issue of slavery, which reflected the position of the national Church at the time. Such silence rendered the Diocese complicit in allowing African slavery to persist as a practical reality in California, even after admission to the Union in 1850 as a "free state." The Diocese of California also must be held accountable to the extent that it supported and benefited from the governance, policies, and practices of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, which, as the national governing authority, refused to oppose the institution of slavery or condemn those dioceses and ordained and lay leaders who used scripture to justify the enslavement of other human beings. Well into the twenty-first century, American society still suffers from the pernicious economic and social disparities rooted deeply in the institutional legacy of African slavery in the United States, including the State and Diocese of California.

Thus, the Racial Reconciliation Task Force makes the following recommendations to the 163rd Diocesan Convention of the Diocese of California.

- Raise awareness about the causes and consequences of racial discrimination and injustices affecting African Americans in contemporary America.
- Document the Episcopal Church's past and continuing involvement in, acceptance of, support of, and benefit from enslavement and discrimination against Native Americans, Asians, Hispanics and others.
- Take action at the Diocesan level to lead the Episcopal Church in forging a national Church strategy to assist the United Nations in implementing its *Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.*

AFRICAN SLAVERY AND RACIAL RECONCILIATION IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

General Convention of the Episcopal Church

The General Convention of the Episcopal Church, meeting in Columbus, Ohio, in 2006, approved *Resolution A123*, which urged all dioceses to research those instances where "they were complicit in or profited from the institution of transatlantic slavery," meaning slaves imported from Africa and their descendants in slavery. The Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies officially and powerfully apologized on behalf of The Episcopal Church for its part in the maintenance of African slavery in the United States. (See full *Resolution*, Appendix B.)

Diocese of California

In 2006, the Diocese of California's annual convention authorized the expenditure of $15,000 to study the economic benefits to the Diocese from slavery and to promote racial reconciliation, but no further action was taken. The matter languished until 2009, when the members of the Deputation to the General Convention heard other Diocesan reports on the matter, and sponsored another resolution subsequently adopted by the 160th Convention of the Diocese. After several more months with no further action taken, San Francisco Deanery president Warren Wong brought this grievous oversight to Roulhac Austin of Diocesan Executive Council, who created and charged a task force with documenting the Diocese's relationship with African slavery. (See full *Resolution*, Appendix C.) In March 2010, the Executive Council formed the Racial Reconciliation Task Force in response to these actions. This *Report* chronicles the Task Force's findings and recommendations.

Since the Diocese of California encompassed the entire state during the period under study, the Task Force contacted all other dioceses within California: San Joaquin, Northern California, El Camino Real, San Diego, and Los Angeles. As of the date of this *Report*, Los Angeles is the only California diocese to have studied the issue or held a service of reconciliation.

Also, as a part of the Task Force's initial research, the Rev. John Rawlinson surveyed and received responses from twenty-three professors of Afro-American and/or ethnic studies at colleges and universities throughout California. Not one of them had any direct encounters with materials related to the Episcopal Church in California and slavery.

RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

Defining Slavery

According to the United Nations, *slavery* is simply defined as "the enforced servitude of one person to another or one group to another." The 1926 international Slavery Convention (in which the United States did not participate), defined slavery as "The status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right

of ownership are exercised." Within these clear and concise definitions, slavery may take several forms.

In its most pernicious form, *chattel slavery* consists of the outright ownership of a human being, independent of location or other conditions, whereby a person—the slave—is defined as personal property. This was the condition of African slavery in the United States prior to conditional emancipation in 1863 and total emancipation with adoption of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865. Court records in Santa Clara County and other California counties clearly attest to the fact that slaves were treated as property, not people, simply because the manumission documents, whereby slaves were granted freedom by their owners, were filed with the county recorder as quit claim deeds on property.

In feudal Europe, and in Russia during the first half of the 19th century, slavery took the form of the continuing institution of serfdom, whereby ownership of human beings was attached to ownership of land. Ownership of the serfs who worked the land was transferred with ownership of the land itself. Russia eliminated the last official vestiges of the serf system in 1861, although the landed classes continued to adjust to the new labor system for the rest of the century. Count Leo Tolstoy generated a lot of profound literature out of this continuing struggle.

Indentured servants was another hold-over of the feudal system by which people were attached in service to others for a specific time, often tied to working off a punishment or a debt, also used to teach or learn a trade, and usually tied to a specific sum of money. Indentures, for instance, were used effectively by Henry V to staff his army for the Agincourt campaign. In the United States, President Andrew Johnson, was indentured as a tailor when still a boy.

The Episcopal Church—at both the national and diocesan levels—has charged itself with reconciliation for its role in the *Transatlantic* Slave Trade. Since, in the broadest sense, this could include indentured servitude and obviously excludes enslavement of Native American populations, we have chosen to refer to African Slavery throughout this study. It was chattel slavery practiced in its most vicious form, and it permeated every aspect of American society—in every region—for over two hundred years.

Slavery: A Historical Context

Even though the Spanish brought the slavery with them from the old world to the new, the Roman Catholic Church quickly positioned itself as a moral force for reform. The 1537 Papal bull, "Sublimus Dei," banned slavery in all Catholic lands, including Spain and Spain's colonies. In 1573 the Spanish "Ordinances Concerning Discoveries" forbade slavery and strictly regulated treatment of native populations, created a 'protector de indios," and recognized "Indians" as Spanish citizens. Although ignored with impunity in practice, those legal protections technically remained in place in California until annexation to the United States in 1850.

Such protections were never even nominally recognized in English colonies in the Americas. In 1710, for instance, the Virginia House of Burgess specifically defined slaves as "all servants imported and brought into the Country . . . who were not Christians in their native Country. . . . All Negro, mulatto and Indian slaves within this dominion , . . shall be held to be real estate." In 1789, the U.S. Constitution was adopted without any specific mention of the word "slavery." However, separate clauses allotted seats in the House of Representatives based on a formula that counted 3/5 of "all other Persons" (slaves), forbade Congress from prohibiting the "importation of such Persons" prior to 1808, and declared that no-one held in service in one state could escape that service by fleeing to another state.

The American colonies and eventual nation were even more protective of the institution of slavery than their English counterparts. The British House of Lords outlawed the slave trade in England in 1807, and slavery was outlawed all together in the British Empire in 1833. At the same time, the American Congress was passing bills to implement the fugitive slave protections suggested by the Constitution and extending slavery first in lands acquired by the Louisiana Purchase and later into territory acquired in the war with Mexico. Contrary to the historical trends in the Spanish and British empires and their former colonies, in the 1857 case of *Scott v. Sandford*, the U.S. Supreme Court vacated all rights of African slaves or their descendents (whether slaves or not) to be citizens, sue in court, or be removed from their owners without due process. This was the world and the country that the new state of California entered in 1850.

Slavery in California

Despite centuries of prohibition under Catholic doctrine and Spanish and Mexican law, slavery existed in many forms in California before and after the state's admission to the Union in 1850. After independence, the new Mexican republic continued to recognize Natives with the full rights of citizenship that they had held under Spain. Mexico officially abolished slavery in any form in 1823. Once again, however, forced servitude, if not outright ownership of human chattel, continued as common practice.

The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war between the United States and Mexico, transferred California to the United States, and recognized that Afro-Mexicans living in California were free. In 1849, California delegates presented an antislavery constitution to Congress, and California was admitted as a "free state" as part of the Compromise of 1850. Prohibition of slavery was acceptable at least partly because white miners feared that slave owners would overwhelm them with slave labor in the gold fields.

While slavery was officially prohibited, almost every other type of racial restrictions and prohibitions quickly were enacted into law. In 1850, California's first state legislature immediately passed an anti-miscegenation law forbidding Whites and Blacks to intermarry. Another 1850 state law that denied Blacks, mulattoes, and Indians the right to testify in criminal trials involving Whites was extended to civil cases in 1851. Also in 1850, "An Act for the Government and Protection of Indians" allowed the application of

forced indentured servitude on California Indians, especially children. In 1852, the California legislature passed a state fugitive slave law. In 1863, the same year that President Lincoln issued a proclamation provisionally freeing slaves in areas of rebellion, California excluded children of color from White schools.

Thus, it is not surprising that enforcement of the prohibition against slavery was so lax as to be non-existent. The open existence of slavery was both decried and documented in local newspaper accounts. The *Newark Daily Advertiser* referenced the 1849 purchase of a woman and her child in San Francisco. An April 1, 1850, advertisement in the *Sacramento Transcript* offered " For Sale: A Valuable Negro girl aged 18 bound by indentures for two years. Said girl is of amiable disposition, a good washer, ironer, and cook. For particulars, apply to the Vanderbilt Hotel of J.P. Harper."

In 1852, three years after the passage of the antislavery state constitution, the *San Francisco Herald* offered a reward for the return of an escaped slave girl. In another instance, a San Francisco slave owner offered a discount to abolitionists if they wanted to buy his slave's freedom: "On Saturday, the 26th, I will sell at public auction a Negro man, he having agreed to said sale in preference of being sent home. I value him at $300, but if any or all of his abolitionist brothers wish to show that they have the first honorable principles about they can have the opportunity of releasing said Negro by call on the subscriber at the Southern House previous to the time and paying $100."

Sensational fugitive slave litigation offered another glimpse of slavery's place in California. In 1851, the San Francisco free Black population of 400 galvanized around the plight of runaway slave, named Frank. Though his owners claimed he was subject to return under the National Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, a sympathetic judge ruled the federal law didn't apply to Frank, because he had obtained his freedom in California and hadn't crossed state lines. After several more court skirmishes, Frank was ultimately declared free, because the slave owner could not prove that Frank was his slave. In a bizarre twist, Frank's acknowledgement of his slave status in another state was declared inadmissible, because Blacks could not testify in California courts. In an additional irony, because of his free status, Frank was deemed liable for a debt to the white plaintiff.

Perhaps the most famous case, Scovall vs. Archy Lee, occurred in 1858. Lee was Scovall's slave in Mississippi and was brought to California in 1857. Scovall hired Lee out and kept his wages, which was illegal in California at the time. Scovall decided to send Lee back to Mississippi, and Lee fled. After several cases where he was alternately imprisoned and declared free, only to be rearrested, Lee was ultimately granted his freedom in California by United States Commissioner William Penn Johnston.

The commerce of slavery was also present here. The California Department of Insurance has established the Slavery Era Insurance Registry to identify slaves, masters and companies and to record 700 personal property claims of slave losses. Examination of the registry, however, reflects slaves and masters mostly in Southern

states—where slave owners' property rights were legally protected—with none of the slave owners or insured slaves obviously living in California.

In one glimmering moment of hope that belies the extreme racial prejudice of the period, in 1863 and 1864, two separate courts awarded damages to Charlotte Brown for being removed from a San Francisco streetcar because of her race. However, this was far from the trend. In response to continuing restrictions, three Colored Conventions were held in California prior to the Civil War—in November 1855, December 1856, and October 1857. When their petitions seeking redress their grievances were ignored or buried by the state legislature, about 400 Blacks, mostly from San Francisco, fled to Victoria, British Columbia, where they enjoyed integrated schools and churches and most prominently were welcomed by Rev. Cridge of the Church of England.

The Civil War changed little for Blacks living in California. California approved the Thirteenth Amendment eliminating slavery in the United States only after it already had been ratified and had become part of the federal Constitution. California did not approve the Fourteenth Amendment extending the protections of citizenship to African Americans until 1959, and it rejected outright the Fifteenth Amendment, extending the right to vote to Blacks. California got around to officially approving the Fifteenth Amendment in 1962, admittedly still ahead of the three former slave states of Maryland (1973), Kentucky (1976), and Tennessee (1997).

Slavery's Children: Continuing Racism in California

Although it is beyond the official charge to the Racial Reconciliation Task Force, it is important and clear that the racial attitudes that accepted and supported slavery before the Civil War gave birth to continuing and endemic discrimination after the war. Not only did the Civil War change little for California's Black people, but California proved itself just as violently racist as the rest of the country towards anyone who was not White throughout the last three decades of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.

Two decades of virulent anti-Chinese violence began with a riot in Los Angeles in 1871, continued through pogroms that forced Chinese out of communities where they had lived for years throughout California and the West, and ended with passage of one of the more heinous pieces of legislation ever approved by Congress, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. In 1879, the new California state constitution denied Chinese the right to vote, prohibited their employment on public works, and authorized their segregation outside of city limits. And, while schools eventually were desegregated for Black children, in 1890 the California Supreme Court upheld segregation of "Mongolian" children in public schools.

The Episcopal Church played a supporting role in a peculiar case challenging the state's 1850 anti-miscegenation law. Helen Gladys Emery, daughter of the archdeacon of the Diocese of California, fell in love with a Japanese man, Gunjiro Aoki, son of Rev Peter Aoki. Unable to find anyone in California to marry them in violation of California law, the couple married in Seattle in 1906. There is no indication that the Diocese of

California supported the couple's desire to marry within Christ's love, and the anti-miscegenation law remained in force for another three decades. When a state appellate court ruled in 1933 that marriage between Whites and Filipinos was legal, because a Filipino was not "Mongolian," but "Malay," the California legislature acted quickly to change the definition. It was not until 1948 that the California Supreme Court struck down the anti-miscegenation laws on a 4 to 3 vote. This was one year after a federal court struck down "separate but equal" schools for Mexican Americans in California.

The ultimate expression of the permeating nature of fear and hate based in race may have been represented in the implementation of Executive Order 9066 in 1942, which authorized the removal of anyone who might be a security threat from designated "military areas." Although technically non-discriminatory, the Order was used almost exclusively to move hundreds of thousands of American citizens of Japanese descent to internment camps is isolated areas thousands of miles from their homes. Manzanar, in the California dessert, held 10,000 American citizens at a time. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed an act apologizing for this sinful act, and $20,000 was paid to each person still alive who had been incarcerated by the Order.

African Slavery and the Episcopal Diocese of California

Silence is the testimony of the Episcopal Church's theological stance toward slavery, reflecting the national church's complicity in the institution by simply choosing not to address it. Though personally being a fairly vocal abolitionist, Bishop William Ingraham Kip adhered to the national church's policy of refusing to make pronouncements either supporting or condemning slavery as a practical necessity in preserving the institution of the church. Bishop Kip urged his congregations to remember that no matter the political or social divisions that separate them as citizens, "*as a church* our object has been to promote peace and good will among men." The Bishop was pleased to announce that because of the Church's silence on the issue of slavery, the national Episcopal Church was rather quickly and painlessly reunited once the war ended.

Though all races were officially welcomed in every parish church, separate congregations were established for different populations, based on color or language. The first church for Black Episcopalians in San Francisco, Christ Church for Colored People, opened in 1875. It eventually split into St. Cyprian's, a black congregation and Sei Ko Kai, a Japanese congregation.

The racial attitudes of both the Diocese of California and of the national Episcopal Church after the Civil War are revealed in service of Peter Williams Cassey. Born in 1831 of a prominent free Black family in Philadelphia, Cassey arrived in San Francisco in 1853 and married a free Black woman, named Annie Besent. In 1861 they moved to San Jose, where Peter helped found the Phoenixonian Institute (later, St. Philip's mission and school), the first residential secondary school for African Americans west of the Mississippi River. On September 13, 1866, Bishop Kip ordained Peter Cassey as a deacon in the Diocese of California. To the best of our knowledge, he was the first

ordained African American Episcopal clergyman in the State of California, but his story has been re-discovered only recently.

Despite Rev. Cassey's distinguished family heritage and considerable personal accomplishment, Bishop Kip followed the "customary understanding" when dealing with him. He was identified on the clergy rolls of the Diocese, and the Bishop interacted with him in a direct and personal way, but he was barred from attending any Diocesan Conventions. In 1881 Rev. Cassey was called to St. Cyprian's Church, a missionary parish in New Bern, North Carolina, where he used his Philadelphia connections to raise money for his work. In 1894 he was called to the first of three churches in Florida, where he died in 1917. To the best of our knowledge, he was never ordained a priest.

In the end, the Racial Reconciliation Task Force has not identified any evidence that the Diocese of California, its clergy, or lay leadership economically contributed to, or benefited from, the institution of African slavery during the fifteen years from statehood to the end of the Civil War. As far as existing records reveal, no clergy or lay leadership owned slaves or benefited from slave-driven business enterprises. However, several factors make thorough and accurate research problematic and any conclusions tentative. First and foremost, the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 burned Diocesan House to the ground and destroyed the bound volumes of *Pacific Churchmen*, the diocesan archives, and other church records. Therefore detailed diocesan donor records simply are not available. Similarly, the records of many local congregations in northern California also were lost during the same cataclysm.

In addition the current Diocese of California is only part of the original diocese, which originally covered the entire state. As a result, many congregations and church institutions that were extant during the period are now part of other California dioceses. Of course, it is possible that one or more of these congregations or institutions invested in, or financially benefited, from slave-related economic activities. The Task Force simply has not possessed the resources or physical access to pursue these multiple possibilities.

Given these limitations, however, the Racial Reconciliation Task Force has found no apparent nexus between Episcopalian slave owners in California, if any, and support for or by the Diocese of California. Though the free state and slave state sentiments were strong in San Francisco at the time, we have not found direct record of any Episcopal clergyman, clergy family, or lay leader who owned, housed, or used slaves. Nor is there documentary evidence of the diocese using slave labor for any purpose anywhere, within or outside of the state.

Neither has the Task Force benefited from the volunteer expertise or time to explore potential activities of the national Episcopal Church offices and agencies, which might have funded or supported California church work in the early years of the diocese. We have not explored the possibility that slave-related might have been used in support of seminaries or seminarians in California. Nor have we explored whether there are on-going slavery-related benefits in the form of endowments which fund current scholarships or Bible and prayer book societies.

However, it is obvious that the Diocese of California would have benefited to the degree, if any, that the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society invested resources in California that were the direct or indirect result of slave-based economic enterprises elsewhere in the country. Given the prominence of lay Episcopalians in the slave trade and in economic enterprises that used African chattel slavery elsewhere in the country, the financial dependence of many Episcopal churches and dioceses on those members and resources, and the biblical defense of slavery provided by many of Episcopal churches and church leaders, it is difficult to ignore the overwhelming probability that any significant support provided to the Diocese of California by the Episcopal Church from outside the state almost surely would have been tainted with the sin of human bondage.

Slavery: A Continuing Context

The United Nations has extended the definition of *slavery* to include *enslavement*, an informal condition by which human beings are treated as if they were slaves, a category that includes child and migrant labor, sex trafficking, and bonded labor. Under this definition, the United Nations estimates that there are at least 20 million people living in bonded slavery worldwide. The Indian government, itself, has identified at least 300,000 people living and working in bondage in that single country. In addition, the UN estimates that there are between 650,000-750,000 sex slaves in the world, with at least 14,000-17,000 in the United States. California is the primary portal for international sex trafficking in the United States.

In California, the struggles of agricultural laborers continue to raise issues of human bondage in the state. From the 1921 Alien Land Law (repealed in 1963), through the Bracero Treaty with Mexico and Cesar Chaves' United Farm Workers' strikes, laboring conditions in the state's sprawling agricultural heartland always have raised claims and denials of human servitude. Often, discussions about labor and capital, about the rights of individuals contrasted with the rights of the agricultural businesses for which they labor, resound with the economic and moral arguments over slavery. Where the Episcopal Church finds itself on these contemporary issues is not unrelated to its complicity of silence on the institution of African slavery 150 years ago.

The continuing existence of the evil of human slavery in the world raises four simple questions for the Episcopal Church. Representing Christ's body in love of God's people, does the Episcopal Church have a role in ending slavery in our contemporary world? If not, who does? If so, what will we do? Will we be silent again?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Moral Issue 1: The Episcopal Church historic silence regarding slavery, segregation, and social disparities relating from continuing racism and discrimination in America make it complicit in the sin of slavery and subsequent evils that the institution of slavery has spawned.

Goal: Raise awareness about the causes and consequences of racial discrimination and injustices affecting African Americans.

Recommendation: Educate and train our parishes and members in how to recognize and oppose racism in our daily lives as a requirement of our religious faith. We must break the silence about discussing certain topics, contrary to the way discussion of the sin of slavery was avoided in 18th and 19th century America. The Diocese of California must commit its spirit and resources to sponsoring dialogues and to finding solutions to address continuing racism in American society.
Sign up for Anti-Racism training as a congregation, parish organization, committee or individual. Leaders change from year to year in most parishes. Many parish leaders have not received this training.
Host a showing of the documentary, "Traces of the Trade" at your parish. Discuss the film and its meaning. Copies of this documentary are available from Racial Reconciliation Task Force, Peace and Justice Commission, and the Diocese.
Use contemporary books for a study group or Lenten series. The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander and Slavery by Another Name by Douglas Blackmon are recommended. These two books would be useful in gaining a deeper understanding of issues in our community.

Moral Issue 2: Repression and oppression of minorities was not limited to African-Americans in California; Native Americans, Asians, and Hispanics historically also have suffered from discrimination and oppression, both legal and extra-legal, too often with the complicit silence of the Episcopal Church.

Goal: Document the Diocese of California's past and possible continuing involvement in, acceptance of, support of, and benefit from enslavement and discrimination against Native Americans, Asians, Hispanics and others in order to begin the process of reconciliation amongst all of those who have suffered from discrimination and oppression because of the actions and inactions of the Episcopal Church.

Recommendations

- Research and report on the role of the Episcopal Church in civic life during the time of exclusionary laws and covenants, e.g. anti Asian immigration, covenants on housing, etc. Publish the report, share it on the diocesan website, and require the results to be added to Anti-Racism training in the diocese.
- Encourage and support congregations and especially church leaders to participate in cross cultural events, such as Afro Solo Arts Festival, Mission Cultural Center, Oakland Asian Cultural Center. Many arts events present a different, occasionally vastly different, remembrance of the past than the prevailing Euro-centric narrative.

Moral Issue 3: Human bondage, enslavement, and economic exploitation have not gone away. Growing disparities in the distribution of power, wealth, and resources around the world have made Balkan sex trafficking, Asian textile and electronics workers, African children diamond miners, American prisoners, and international migrant agricultural workers our contemporary slaves. The Episcopal Church must be careful never again to be complicit by silence in accepting and continuing the great moral evil of human slavery. We owe it to our past, as the ultimate act of contrition and reconciliation with God and with God's people, to ensure that we are not only vocal, but lead in the efforts to extinguish all continuing forms of human bondage and enslavement wherever and however they may occur in the world.

Goal: We dare not be silent again. The Task Force would like to see the Diocese of California lead the Episcopal Church in forging a national Church strategy to work with the United Nations to implement the *Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.*

Actions

- Encourage education on parish and diocesan level regarding contemporary practices in human bondage, enslavement, and human trafficking. Make available speakers and supportive educational material on contemporary slavery worldwide and in particular its practice and effects within California. Web resource is: http://www.antislavery.org/english/.
- Provide diocesan-wide education on the subject of legal incarceration, the economic and cultural disparities within the system, and the potential for enslavement within a privatized prison industry.
- Review the Diocesan investment portfolio, and disinvest the Diocese and all activities associated with it, including endowment and pension funds, from any companies, industries, and activities that utilize, support, or benefit from human bondage and enslavement, as defined by the United Nations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE WORK OF THE RACIAL RECONCILIATION TASK FORCE DIOCESE OF CALIFORNIA

Task Force Work

The Diocese of California Racial Reconciliation Task Force has realized that our work has two purposes: researching and reporting on the past as well as a concurrent role in education about the Church and slavery. Very quickly we realized that actual diocesan history was minimal, as the records were destroyed in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and great fire. Contact with historians around the state informed us that our work on slavery and the Episcopal church in California was especially unique; they wished us luck on the endeavor but had no information for us. We were blessed to have the unpublished biography of Bishop Kip made available to us by Rev. John Rawlinson. This great volume was a wonderful history on the formation of the Diocese and its involvement in San Francisco life.

From the beginning, the Task Force recognized that we were studying both the past and its effect on the present. A great resource made available was the film *Traces of the Trade*, which presented the story of a New England merchant family who were also the biggest slave traders in early United States history. The story of the de Wolfe's, told by one of their descendants, revealed much history left in the shadows: of slavery existing in Northern, not just Southern, states; of the profits of slavery in the banking, insurance, and transportation industries; as well as the fruits of slavery enjoyed by the Episcopal Church. We showed this film in several parishes in the diocese and at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, which sparked further interest in its showing in more locations. Audience conversations following the film challenged the film's assumptions as well as our own regarding the legacy of slavery.

Another well-received event was the presentation on slavery in California life by Mr David Crosson, former director of the California Historical Society. This talk enlightened the listeners about the extent of slavery in California, which had been admitted to the Union in 1850 as a “free state.” It also painted a picture of daily life in the time of slavery, of slave sales on Market Street, abolitionists and court cases, of the tensions and violence when hired slave labor and freedmen compete for the same work.

The work of the Task Force officially is complete, yet remains ongoing. We learned that the position of the Church in the 19th century was in support of civil order and not as prophetic witness, and the silence regarding slavery and the Civil War by Bishop Kip is evident of that support. We believe that silence was wrong. We believe that the evils of slavery are not limited to a far off past, but had their effect on the recent past with consequences that continue to affect American life today. The realization of the constitutional rights granted by the 13th, 14th, 15th amendments in the 1860's were not fully realized until the Civil Rights Acts of 1964. The disparity of health, education and economic opportunity in the Afro American community as contrasted with White Americans arguably remains a legacy of the effect of slavery.

The increasingly revisionist history of the American Civil War that denies the role of slavery in that conflict; the national whitewashing of a two century history of semi-legal imprisonment, servitude, and murder through the enforcement of Jim Crow laws; the amnesia about the century-long record of lynching African - Americans are part and parcel of the legacy of slavery and leave a dark stain on our national life that remains unspoken and unaddressed. The prophet Amos called for God's condemnation of Israel 'for they sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes' (Amos 2:6). Our national history and our Church's complicity in supporting civil order over human rights and Christian values is worthy of the condemnation of the prophets of Israel: Isaiah, Micah, Amos. We must acknowledge that we, as a Church, have not followed the path of God.

The research and documentation is complete, but the work of reconciliation remains ongoing. In *Traces of the Trade*, producer Ms Juanita Brown tells the de Wolfe descendants that the discussion about race and racism belongs not just amongst African American and Whites conversation but requires a White to White conversation to enact true reconciliation. We strongly encourage everyone to participate in the next steps and continue the walk toward reconciliation into the beloved community of the Body of Christ.

Mr Scott Pomerenk and the Rev. Eric Metoyer, Co-Chairs

Participants and Contributors

Members of the Racial Reconciliation Task Force

- Mr. Scott Pomerenk and the Rev. Eric Metoyer, co-chairs
- Ms. Roulhac Austin
- Ms. Lisa Brendt
- The Rev. Peter Champion
- Ms. Claire Dietrich
- Ms. Carolyn Gaines
- Mr. Lee Hagelshaw
- The Rev. Thomas Jackson
- The Rev. Connie Lam
- Ms. Carol Jan Lee
- The Rev. David Ota
- The Rev. John Rawlinson
- Mr. David Romaine
- The Rev. Will Scott
- Ms. Sheila Sims
- Ms. Dianne Audrick Smith
- Ms. Helene de Boissiere Swanson
- Mr. William Swanson
- Mr. Cane West

Production of *Final Report*

- Ms. Roulhac Austin: *First Draft*
- Rev John Rawlinson
- Mr. Cane West, Contributing Historian
- Mr. David Crosson, Historian, content and editorial consultant

APPENDIX B

Resolution Number 2006-A123
Study Economic Benefits Derived from Slavery
Concurred as Amended, 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church declare unequivocally that the institution of slavery in the United States and anywhere else in the world, based as it is on "ownership" of some persons by other persons, was and is a sin and a fundamental betrayal of the humanity of all persons who were involved, a sin that continues to plague our common life in the Church and our culture; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church acknowledge its history of participation in this sin and the deep and lasting injury which the institution of slavery and its aftermath have inflicted on society and on the Church; and be it further

Resolved, That we express our most profound regret that (a) The Episcopal Church lent the institution of slavery its support and justification based on Scripture, and (b) after slavery was formally abolished, The Episcopal Church continued for at least a century to support de jure and de facto segregation and discrimination; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church apologize for its complicity in and the injury done by the institution of slavery and its aftermath; we repent of this sin and ask God's grace and forgiveness; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church through the Executive Council urgently initiate a comprehensive program and urge every Diocese to collect and document during the next triennium detailed information in its community on (a) the complicity of The Episcopal Church in the institution of slavery and in the subsequent history of segregation and discrimination and (b) the economic benefits The Episcopal Church derived from the institution of slavery; and direct the Committee on Anti-Racism to monitor this program and report to Executive Council each year by March 31 on the progress in each Diocese; and be it further

Resolved, That to enable us as people of God to make a full, faithful and informed accounting of our history, the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church direct the Committee on Anti-Racism to study and report to Executive Council by March 31, 2008, which in turn will report to the 76th General Convention, on how the Church can be "the repairer of the breach" (Isaiah 58:12), both materially and relationally, and achieve the spiritual healing and reconciliation that will lead us to a new life in Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That to mark the commencement of this program the Presiding Bishop is requested to name a Day of Repentance and on that day to hold a Service of Repentance at the National Cathedral, and each Diocese is requested to hold a similar service.

APPENDIX C

Resolution Adopted by the 160th Diocesan Convention, Diocese of California, October 17, 2009

Resolved, That the 160th Convention of the Diocese of California directs the Executive Council to establish a Task Force to respond to Resolution A143 of the 2006 General Convention, to "gather information in its community on (1) the complicity of The Episcopal Church in the institution of slavery and in the subsequent history of segregation and discrimination, (2) examples of resistance to slavery and discrimination and (3) the economic benefits derived by the Episcopal Church from the transatlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery;"

Resolved, That the Task Force consult with the Anti-Racism Committee of the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church for resources to aid them in doing this work including historical research that pertains to the Episcopal Church in California;

Resolved, That the information gathering be used as the foundation for truth-telling, confession, apology, forgiveness, repentance and reconciliation;

Resolved, That the 160th Convention of the Diocese of California requests that the Bishop name a Day of Repentance and on that day hold a Service of Repentance as requested by Resolution 2006-A123; and

Resolved, That the Task Force Report its findings to the Executive Council by September 2010, 2011 and 2012 and the Diocesan Conventions in 2010, 2011 and 2012 as requested in Resolution 2009-A143.

APPENDIX D

Landscape of the Early Episcopal Church in California

By Cane West
Contributing Historian

Imagine the scene of San Francisco in 1847. The small sea town of less than 500 inhabitants nestled in the protective bay, running from the lower slopes of the peninsular hills down to the waters edge. The mixed population of Spanish and Americans mostly lived in quickly constructed log and canvas homes while the few adobe buildings identified offices and government posts. A Spanish mission, with several thousand indigenous inhabitants, lay to the heights to the southwest and the Spanish military encampment further up the peninsula remained from the centuries of Spanish sovereignty. San Francisco did not hold major importance in the political life of Spanish-held California and mostly concerned itself with caring for the thousands of livestock that roamed the wind-beaten hills and the sea trade of otter pelts and other animal products. Even when this region of California came under American authority and a few more American travelers arrived in the bay, much of the administrative systems and patterns of daily life stayed as they had for the previous decades. The Sierras to the East rose imposingly to check the influx of any but the most hearty travelers, and most visitors arrived by land routes from the more southern Spanish territories or by ship, requiring several months to arrive from the East Coast of the United States by navigating Cape Horn around South America. There was little reason to suppose that San Francisco and the Bay Area would hold any purpose other than its place as a sea trading post and its guardianship over ship traffic in the bay.

Now imagine the shockwaves when, in early 1848 in the foothills of the Sierras, gold was found at Sutter's Mill. California and the Bay Area suddenly became a place of dreams and plenty for the thousands upon thousands of travelers who decided to leave behind families and lives and brave a trans-continental trek or pass around the underside of the globe in order to find their fortune. Within a few short months, the small town moving in its own rhythms and greeting the occasional trade vessel on its docks wrenched through its parochial bounds and became filled with fortune-seekers, opportunists, and adventurers. Within two years of the discovery of gold, the population had erupted to around 25,000, a town stretched into a city before its time. Now, one could find Chileans, Chinese, New Englanders, African Americans, and Frenchmen trudging the uneven streets. The municipal government had to control a population of men rushing off to the gold fields and many returning with broken dreams, an economy suddenly focused around mining, excavation, and hard daily labor, and an ethos of anything-goes, gambling, and materialism.[1] Into this city, thrown off its previous track

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and filling the shores of the Golden Gate with the chaotic energy of excited humanity, the first tendrils of the Episcopal Church found their uneasy footing in the uncertain landscape of California.

The character of the early Episcopal Church was not that different from any of the other new arrivals in California. It was a place and a time where autonomy was prized and determination was needed. There was no past or bedrock to the society that was quickly forming on the edge of the North American continent, and the lives and institutions established on its hills and in its valleys could just as easily be the mustard seed thrown into the thin soil of the rocks as into the fertile soil of the field. There was no certainty for fortune or longevity, only the hope for opportunity. It is opportunity that is at the heart of this story of the early Church because California was defined by it, and the Church sought to bring its message of God to the thousands who were affected by that opportunism in different ways. The figures of those early days brought their Episcopal inheritance west, adopted some necessary characteristics of the place they encountered, and knit their place in the patchwork of the rugged California quilt. The greatest work and difficulty for the Diocese of California in its first decade was not eradicating prejudice, profiteering, or materialism on the shores of the Pacific but rather finding a way to offer their message of God to a society afflicted by all of those realities that it might still understand its place in God's creation.

After James Marshall discovered gold in the American River in January 1848, thousands of men were pulled from across the globe in "one overwhelming desire to be suddenly rich."[2] Most did not see California as a place to settle but as a place to make a quick buck, have an adventure for a handful of months or years, and return home wealthier than when they set out. Young and old alike came west in large parties or on their own and filled the city's plethora of local gambling halls and entered into the lawless fray. "Whatever depravity there is in man's heart," one traveler observed, "now shows itself without fear and without restraint." With the gold nuggets of the mines and the earnings of outfitters and traders, gambling became its own sort of entertainment economy, fortunes being won and lost as the turn of a card.[3] Death and hardship was also the reward that many unexpectedly found. One might spend months in the field and not find much more than enough to buy food, and the frustration made many quick to violence and desperation with gunfights and knives suddenly erupting on the streets.[4] Dreams of riches never became reality for many, and many who found small fortunes waded into the life of risk and plenty in the wooden temples of Aces and Jokers.

Katherine Chandler, "San Francisco at Statehood." San Francisco Museum.

2 William Stevens Perry, *The History of American Episcopal Church 1587-1883.* Vol. II. Boston: James Osgood and Company, 1885. 313.

3 Chandler. Reports of as much as $16,000 in gold dust being lost in a hand, though anyone could enter with antes of 50 cents to 5 dollars.

4 Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream 1850-1915*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973. Quote from J. D. B. Stillman.

The appropriately named Episcopal minister Flavel Mines arrived with these first "49ers," not having been sent as an official representative of the national Church but perhaps perceiving the need for God's community amongst the thorns of gold lust. In this "spiritual wilderness" he first held services in a private residence, probably one of the few ministers present in the quickly expanding city those early months outside of the Catholic mission. The next Spring he opened the doors to one of the city's first two Episcopal parish buildings,[5] a luxury for ministers becoming accustomed to using tents, work benches, and bar stools as their pulpits.[6] The self-drive and dogged determination of these early ministers would not have been much different than the feverish energy of their neighbors as the chaos of those days required a certain fortitude and perseverance in order to find one's way.

Ascertaining one's place in the new California was understandably difficult as nearly all who found themselves in the Bay in that first decade after the Gold Rush had recently left from some other land. Those men and women in the streets, gambling halls, and mines of middle California were immigrants. Similar in character and background to the previous generations of American westward migration, they were travelers and strangers who represented much of the wide geographic swath of America, from the Wisconsin store clerk to the New York lawyer to the Southern carpenter. Yet the Gold Rush was global in its reach, a migration of more than just westward wandering Americans. Europeans, South Americans, and Asians made their way across great land masses and expansive oceans. In fact, the national Church hoped to use California as a springboard into Asia, and in the Church's first rite of confirmation on the Pacific coast in April 1854, eighteen candidates were presented including "a native of China- one of that mysterious people with whom our intercourse is monthly increasing."[7] The infantile California church was coming of age in a social and cultural melting pot on a suddenly global scale all meshed into the relatively confined space of the Bay and the Sierra foothills.

The society that these newly encountered neighbors were forming might have been energized by hope and opportunity but it was not filled with harmony and ubiquitous equality. Discrimination was a sad, prevalent fact of life for the minority populations who also sought out prosperity on the edge of the Pacific. California entered the Union as a free state in 1850. In the parlance of the time, this mean that California, the 27th state, tipped the scales of federal power into the hands of the non-slave states and anti-slavery politicians.[8] During much of American westward expansion, slavery had extended in the southern United States as part of the new life and democratic property

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5 Perry, 315. The other was Rev. Ver Mehr who opened the doors to Grace Church in early 1850. He was a significant figure in the early church and helped lead the Episcopal congregations as a Convention leader focused on how to gain Episcopal approval for their new diocese.

6 Starr, 79.

7 Perry, 313.

8 California entered the Union as part of the Compromise of 1850. Among other things, it accepted California as a free state, abolished the slave trade in Washington DC, allowed other western territories to self-determine whether they would allow slavery's extension into their lands, and it reinforced federal commitment to a stronger Fugitive Slave Act.

rights that the western states and territories offered to its new inhabitants. Slave ownership often signified that a white man or family had become established in society and was as much a mark of status as economic benefit. California had little recent history with slavery, as it had been outlawed in Spanish Mexico in 1829, and its labor economy was perhaps not well suited to the form that slavery took in the American South. As a Free State and with a society ill adjusted to slavery, slave holding did not become a social identifier of success and status.

Slavery, however, was present in antebellum California. Slave owners brought slaves with them across the Plains to work in the mines, and some were hired out by their owners to earn wages as cooks, cleaners, and any number of camp-related tasks. An estimated 500 slaves worked in the California gold mines in 1852. That same year, ads appeared in San Francisco newspapers notifying the public of slaves being sold, suggesting the presence urban slaves who would have been involved in domestic labor, general unskilled labor, and perhaps assisting on the wharves extending out into the bay. Throughout the decade, a handful of cases appeared dealing with the application of the Fugitive Slave Act on slaves seeking their freedom in California, and the outcomes were mixed as the various origins of judges led some to sympathize with slave ownership and some with slaves' freedom. [9] So, while not large, slavery existed in a realm of social ambiguity, largely due to the diverse backgrounds of California's nascent population. On the whole, however, given the small presence of slaves in the population and its lack of social stature, slavery's presence was minimal in California.

Discrimination was not limited to the shackles of slavery, though. The 'Free' status of California stood in stark contrast to the experience of minority groups in the state as it was a society free of neither persecution, racism, nor persecution. The first evidence of this was the stripping of citizenship rights from Native Americans who had been citizens under Spanish law but not under California law. This was the most significant "other" population in early American California, a community of nearly 2,000 local Indians lived on the San Francisco peninsula in the 1840s, and was only the first to suffer under restrictive laws.

Women also fit uncomfortably into their new surroundings. Males made up 70% of the city population and were likely even more numerous in the mining camps. As the initial expeditions did not aim to settle, few families arrived in the early period.[10] This was a time when women were restricted in their social clout and, through separate spheres, their political voice was limited. They did, however, have a presence in churches and organizations for minority rights and many found employment in domestic work, in the

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[9] Delilah Beasley, "Slavery in California." *The Journal of Negro History,* Vol. 3, No. 1 (Jan. 1918), pp. 33-44. She suggests that not having cotton as a major cash crop and the tradition of large land possession versus a mix of small, mid and large-sized land ownership made it difficult for an easy integration of slavery into California life. Furthermore, much of the hard labor that slaves would have performed was in the gold fields and whites did not want the competition for riches. Beasley lists four cases regarding slave ownership and application of the Fugitive Slave Act between 1849 and 1858.

[10] "From the 1820s to the Gold Rush."

gambling halls, and even some in specialized art and printing jobs.[11] This was not a time for expansive women's presence in society, and their limited numbers in California exacerbated issues, but several individuals were able to make notable impacts in their immediate surroundings.

Among those arriving in California was also a small stream of Free Persons of Color, free African Americans mostly from northern states but also including some former slaves. A little over 400 FPOC resided in San Francisco in 1852, a small fraction of the city's population but comprising roughly half of the state's total free Black population. They built a community around churches, the first African Methodist Episcopal church was opened in 1852, and civic organizations, like the Franchise League, mainly focused on seizing racial equality in California's new society. A handful were able to open merchant enterprises and Mary Pleasant ran a successful boarding house, giving this niche community a small place of their own in the bustling streets of San Francisco. The community and their supporters, however, were challenging stiff legal and social prohibitions to their equal citizenship. In 1849, the California Constitutional Convention nearly passed a law barring any African American from entering California.[12] Black children were forced to attend segregated schools, which early on were held in the basements of the black churches. The small community's outcry for public voice was further stifled by their lack of voting rights and by a law passed in 1851 that disallowed Blacks from testifying against Whites in legal proceedings. And in 1852, enactment of a Fugitive Slave Law made uncertain that Black would not be there one day and snatched away the next. [13] California did not offer the same hope to the Black community that was advertised for White Americans and Europeans.

Outside of the law, African Americans faced much of the same prejudice that plagued them in the rest of the United States. Even before the Gold Rush, an editorial appeared in The Californian stating that "We see all [as] having equal rights," yet "we desire only a white population."[14] Greater insight into the racial status of labor was expressed by one Walter Colton at the California Constitutional Convention., "All there are diggers, and free white diggers will not dig with slaves...They will not degrade their calling by associating it with slave labor."[15] In San Francisco, White laborers threatened to strike rather than to work alongside Blacks. Labor opportunities for Blacks were thus often limited to unskilled jobs with little upward mobility. The community doggedly persevered, however, hosting a convention for African American's in 1855, and producing their own abolitionist newspapers and businesses. [16] The plague of America's prejudice did not lessen for African Americans and other minorities in this new society and was likely exacerbated by the economic individualism of California's

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11 Mary Brown, "A Woman's View 19th Century San Francisco Women Photographers." FoundSF, 1997.

12 Chandler. It did not ultimately pass partly because such a law was seen as politically inexpedient for the admission of California as a state.

13 Rudolph M. Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 100.

14 *The Californian* March 15, 1848.

15 Rockwell Hunt, "How California Came to be Admitted." *San Francisco Chronicle* Sept. 9, 1900.

16 Albert Broussard, *Civil Rights, Racial Protest, and Anti-Slavery Activism in San Francisco, 1850-1865.*

each-man-for-himself mentality; however, too many examples of unadulterated prejudice manifested to suppose solely economic motivations for the suppression of one class of worker. Social persecution had clearly migrated westward in the mad rush for California, and the Episcopal Church was dealing with a society full of discrimination in addition to wanton materialism.

It is difficult to fully understand the role that the emergent Episcopal Church played at this time. Given the small presence of the Church, only three parishes existed in the Bay area in 1858, two of which were in San Francisco, the impact of one or two congregations alone would be hard to measure.[17] It is clear that the work was arduous for the early agents of the Church. Reminiscing years later, the first Missionary Bishop William Kip looked back on his first decade of ministry in California saying "These were days of care and self-denial- days on which [I do] not willingly look back--years of trial and unrequited toil." The spirit of determination necessary in the 1850s speaks to the incongruity of his message of an orthodox church and Episcopal tradition in a land that, as he described, "had drawn restless adventurers from every quarter of the globe--the restraints of law [here] scarcely heeded." [18]

California in the years during and shortly after the Gold Rush was a place of "trial and toil" for most of its inhabitants. Alongside its amazing wealth and spreading prosperity were fickle fortunes, broken dreams, chilling prejudice, and a society suddenly too large for the small village that had existed on the slopes of the San Francisco only a handful of years before. The door of the Gold Gate made promises to none. In this reality, the early Episcopal Church seems to have lived an existence not much removed from that of the other immigrants who had come to weave themselves into the fabric of this newly transformed land. Perhaps Bishop Kip erred in his report on his early ministry. It is true that he did not solve the social ills of his adopted home nor reach inspiring heights of power, but he helped a Church perhaps more suited to the established institutions and culture of the East to find its foundation and strength on Western Frontier in the hectic human experiment of 1850s California.

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[17] Delilah Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California* (Los Angeles: 1919; reprinted, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969). This author suggests some partnership between the early leaders of the Church and the Black community but records do not exist, and much of the Black community's work was autonomous.

[18] Perry, 316.

APPENDIX E

". . . of every race, language, people and nation..."

A Christian Reflection on Slavery
the Rev John Rawlinson

(NOTE: In contemporary United States, it seems almost absurd to feel a need to provide a theological justification for opposition to slavery, or bondage by whatever name it is called. Nonetheless, it is valuable to refresh our understanding, since varieties of slavery continue in our time-- even in our Diocese! It is also important that, as Christians, we constantly sink our roots into the Biblical and theological soil which form and nurture us. It is useful constantly to refresh the practice of thinking and speaking both Biblically and theologically. Such frequent refreshment on one known topic hones our ability to do so on other topics.)

Before considering our Biblical heritage on the topic of slavery, it is important that we recall the nature of the Biblical Scriptures themselves. Of course, the Bible helps humanity understand God's will for us-- in eternal Commandment and by contemporary call to action in the world. However, because the Scriptural treasure is the product of multiple authors, in different contexts, in a variety of literary styles, and with attention to the spiritual needs and realities of their times, the Bible is also a record of the way and nature our human understanding of God has evolved. The earliest materials depict an anthropomorphic god[19] in parts of Genesis. However, by the time of The Revelation to John[20] the Church believed in a "God of all Creation."[21] Gone was the image of the narrowly anthropomorphic god. It was also true that by the time of John, contemporary Judaism had moved beyond the anthropomorphic portrayal of God.[22] So, the

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19 The "anthropomorphic" understanding is simply that God has a visible physical appearance like humanity-- arms, legs, eyes, etc. As a result, the artistic search is for the perfect human image which most closely resembles God. This view is that God behaves as does a typical-- or perhaps a very good-- human being. In the Genesis story of the Garden of Eden, the image of God is "anthropomorphic" in the respect that God "walked" in the Garden, and "called out" to Adam and Eve" and had human limitations in the respect that God did not know where to find them-- God had to search with human-like eyes to find them.

20 Also widely known as "The Apocalypse of John"

21 This belief is most clearly presented in John's vision of heaven, saying "I saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in front of the throne..."(Rev. 7:5)

22 Provisions were made for the "conversion" of people who were not genetically Jewish. Also, while not formally included within then-contemporary Judaism, it was common throughout the Roman Empire for Jewish synagogues to welcome people who were called "God farers" (or sometimes "God fearers"). These were people who found no spiritual comfort in the official Roman pantheon of multiple anthropomorphic gods with multiple and competing interests and actions. Instead, they wanted a monotheism combined with dependable ethical commands; they found this in Judaism. They were welcomed to attend synagogue observances, without formal conversion. Their presence in relatively large numbers is one of many indications that Judaism had left behind the

movement of the vision and understanding of the nature of God was from the anthropomorphic, territorial, and semi-tribal understanding of God to a vision of a universal God of all creation-- which inevitably includes all people.

Many people-- as an attempt at personal discipline-- try to read the Bible "from cover to cover"; few complete that journey! Most often the most fundamental description of God is passed over without a serious thought. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,"[23] is the familiar opening. Yet therein we encounter the first Biblical attribute of God-- creativity. Shortly thereafter we read an additional critical statement attributed to God, "Let us make man in our own image-- in the likeness of ourselves."[24] That means that humanity is made with creative capacities, and the expectation of God is that we will exercise such creativity throughout our lives. This is directly applicable to the matters of slavery!

When we discern an attribute of God, it is incumbent on us to try to implement that attribute, and to assess our lives by that standard. Since God and humanity share the quality of creativity, we need constantly to examine our lives to determine whether or not our actions are creative. So, with regard to slavery, we need to ask whether or not it is a creative act to enslave another person. That question needs not only to consider the benefit to the one who enslaves the other person, but also to ask whether or not being enslaved in creative and positive in the life of the one who is enslaved. On both sides, the answer has to be "No" the enslavement of another person is not a creative act.[25]

Included in the understanding that God created is the fact that God acts, and does so on a continuing basis. When Moses was called and directed to go to the Hebrew people as their leader, Moses asks what he should tell them about who sent him. The famous and puzzling answer is, "I am who I am." Then, within the same verse God tells Moses simple to say, "I AM sent me.[26] What we miss in that comment is that "I am" is a verb; it is a form of "to be." Even when we analyze the statement, it remains difficult to understand. However, the verb "to be" really means "to exist." In essence, God was telling Moses that the very nature of existence sent him. The essence of all creation was to be found in the leadership of Moses, moving toward the well-being of the People Israel. That nature of existence is always an action-- not a static thing. Occasionally that understanding "breaks through" into the popular consciousness. For example, a popular Latino musician-singer, Ricardo Arjona, surprised his fans a few years ago when he

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anthropomorphic vision of God, in favor of a more spiritual, universal and complex understanding of the nature of God.

[23] Genesis 1:1

[24] Genesis 1:26. For editorial reasons-- which are not important here-- the older anthropomorphic understanding of God follows the more recent (and less anthropomorphic) cosmic understanding of the nature of God. Here it is important to understand that the "image and likeness" of God was NOT intended to be in the anthropomorphic style; we are supposed to understand that we are made in the spiritual and conceptual image of God.

[25] At another, but related level, we must apply this understanding to other human relationships. For example, is the purpose of marriage accomplished when one partner dominates the other? Is a divine purpose accomplished when the owner or manager of a business imposes on a worker in a way which is not essential to the nature of the business. Our constant question needs to be, "Is this a creative act?"

[26] Exodus 3:14

wrote and sang a song, "Jesús es verbo, no sustantivo" ("Jesus is a verb, not a noun"). His meaning should be obvious. In a similar sense, Moses was being told that God is an action, not a thing. As a result, Moses was called to embody the actions of God, and not to be satisfied with the teaching of a static God-concept.

It is common to say that Judaism and Christianity are historical religions. That is not meant to indicate simply that they have, and do, exist in the scope of human history. Rather, it means that the Judeao-Christian is one which understands that human existence changes within a given historical context. In one sense, human life, and human history are progressive, and move through history. This sense of being a historical religion means that there is the belief that God acts within human history. The "verb" is constantly at work as a part of the continuity or a constantly renewing process of re-creation.[27]

With the understanding that God is active in the on-going process of the living creation, we need to look about us-- and within us-- to identify the actions of God. Moses was surprised-- and resisted-- the unexpected presence and call of God. Believers in an historical faith must be prepared to be surprised and to respond when the God of action appears to them, and calls for the believers to act. Again, we need to assess our lives. Is the enslavement of another person a Godly action? Is it possible that the "I AM" of Moses life is the enslaver of other people? On the other hand, does the enslavement of one person by another see God as a distant, uninvolved, and inactive thing?

Moses was called for two principal purposes. First, he was to lead the Hebrew people out of bondage in Egypt. Second, he was to form them into a common people, with a common identity. Our focus here is on his first responsibility. Of course, that responsibility is directly related to the focus of this study and report. However, that common experience also formed a central part of Hebrew identity-- and remains so today-- several millennia later.

If the ancient Hebrews had been inventing their fundamental and original hero, they certainly could have done better that the figure of Moses. He was adopted by the daughter of the Pharaoh-- or king-- of Egypt. So, he was raised amid wealth and power. His name was Egyptian, not Hebrew. He killed another person, and fled to avoid prosecution. When called by God, Moses presented several excuses for not embracing the call. He was aware that by experience, he shared nothing with those to whom he was sent as the principal leader. Indeed, his only shared factor was mere genetics. Nonetheless, it was the unlikely person of Moses whom God called., and who was-- and is-- at the heart of Jewish identity.

The initial part of Moses' leadership of the Hebrew people was of a very specific nature-- to lead them away from slavery in Egypt into freedom in the desert. That essential act is at the heart of

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[27] As an example, fundamental to the purpose of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, is the understanding that God was acting in, and through, the lives of the Apostles, and the members of the early church. So, the story of the Pentecost experience is based on the belief that God-- by means of the Holy Spirit-- was acting in the lives and the history of the gathered Apostles, and was doing a new thing. Their experience then lead to the growth of the faith and the community. The on-going story of that book is the story of God's constant action in history.

the Pentateuch.[28] That escape was appropriately termed "the exodus" and the story is told in a Biblical book of the same name. Not only are there frequent citations of the escape from slavery in the Pentateuch, careful directions are included for being ready for that escape. The end of those instructions includes the provision that following the experience itself that day should be observed as "a day of remembrance... for ever."[29] That provision placed the remembrance of being freed from slavery at the heart of Jewish spiritual practices as an annual event for the entire family, at the dinner table-- ceaselessly. That, of course, gives that memorial event a high status in the life of the family, and in Jewish spiritual practices! Indeed, that single meal has a special name-- the Seder.[30]

In practice the Seder is a "teaching moment" to put it into modern terms. The tradition is that the youngest child asks questions which relate to the meaning of the foods and their purpose in the event of being ready to leave (exit) on a moment's notice. The father of the family is responsible for answering the child's questions. There are a variety of texts which are used for the questions and answers; however, the event is not rooted in a given text, but rather in the exchange of information from one generation to the succeeding one. The focus is on God's providing careful instructions for the departure so that the people are properly prepared for the great act of being freed from their slavery. So, Jewish spiritual practice is for an older generation to teach the younger generation that God wanted them freed from slavery, and was actively involved in their escape from that slavery-- and to do so on an annual basis in a special mealtime in which the whole family was gathered. There is no other event in Judaism which has such special provisions. The result is that God's desire that people not be in slavery is at the heart of Jewish family teaching and religious practice.

There are gaps in the careful recording of Hebrew/Jewish history. Records of some things were not kept. The many wars and conquests resulted in the destruction of cities and records. Details of Jewish life during the exile in Babylon are largely unknown. As a result, we cannot undoubtedly prove that the Passover, and its Seder meal, have been observed continuously since the Exodus. It is likely and logical that the practice has continued for those millennia. If there was an interruption in its observance, we know that the Passover-- and Seder meal-- have been observed continuously since before the birth of Jesus. That means that we know there has been repeated Jewish teaching that God wants people freed from slavery for more than two thousand years.

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[28] The first five books of the Jewish and Christian Bible-- Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In those books there are eleven (11) references to God freeing them from Egypt and bondage (Ex. 1:14, Ex. 13.3; Ex. 13:14; Ex. 20:2; Lev. 26:13; Deut. 5:6; Deut. 5:15; Deut. 6:12; Deut. 8:14; and, Deut. 13:5). Another seven (7) citations mention that God brought them out of Egypt-- without any specific mention of slavery (Ex. 29:46; Lev. 19:36; Lev. 24:43; Lev, 25:38; Lev. 26:45; Num. 24:8; and Deut. 26:8). Another passage (Ex. 2:23) mentions only to their slavery in Egypt. The combined effect is that nineteen (19) specific references point to divine action in freeing them from slavery/bondage in Egypt.

[29] See Ex. 12:1-14. Because the preparations, and the meal associated with the preparations, are to be done as a family, it was established from the beginning as a private commemoration, not a public one.

[30] The word "seder" is Hebrew, and literally means order, or arrangement. During the meal the arrangements for the departure from slavery are rehearsed. Both the nature and reasons for those arrangements are reviewed. In some ways, it might be likened to a military briefing before coordinated action is taken.

By the time of Jesus, the Passover was not only celebrated in the family homes, there were also Passover observances in the Temple in Jerusalem, and huge crowds of pilgrims gathered around the city to take part in the festivities.[31] The estimates of the number of annual pilgrims are varied, and many range up to over 300,000. However a reasonable estimate is that each year about 100,000 persons from all parts of the Mediterranean world, and probably from areas as far east as China.[32] With that quantity of pilgrims annually celebrating the release of the Hebrew people from slavery, it is difficult to argue that this concept of freedom was not a central factor in Judaism!

We have noted that Jesus was present for the Passover in Jerusalem. The Synoptic Gospels say that he visited Jerusalem once as an adult-- for the Passover during the final week of his life. John tells of multiple visits Jesus made to Jerusalem for various major festivals.[33] Regardless of the precise number of Jesus' visits to Jerusalem, and in consideration of Jesus preaching in many synagogues, the picture which emerges is of an observant Jewish man who was well aware of the multiple important festivals, and their meaning.

Another difference between the Synoptic Gospels and John is with regard to the nature of Jesus' "Last Supper." Matthew, Mark, and Luke are clear in telling is that Jesus presided (like the father of a family) at a "Passover meal."[34] In all three versions, the Apostles ask Jesus if he wants them to make preparations for the Passover meal. It is only with his instructions that they make the preparations. Later, presiding at the Passover meal as the "father" in this pseudo-family meant that it was Jesus' role to do the teaching about the Exodus, and the reasons for God's actions in Egypt. Certainly, he well-knew the tradition of the Exodus, and the importance of God's action to free the People from slavery. If we are serious in following Jesus, we also remember the action of God in freeing the Hebrews from slavery, and we apply that particular lesson of opposition to slavery, as a general principle in our lives.

There is always difficulty in translating from the original Biblical languages to English, especially when sometimes the literal words do not convey the legal and cultural meanings of the original within modern socio-political environments. Various translators render some Biblical words as "servant", or "bond-servant," or even "slave." Regardless of the details of translations, it is undeniable that there are Old Testament references to people who are in a slave-like role of subservience to another person. Those passages have been used to justify slavery in many times and places-- including in our colonial times, and through our Civil War.

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31 This fact accounts for the large crowds which hailed Jesus during what is called his "Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem." Matthew wrote about "great crowds" (Mt. 21:7). Mark is more reserved, in saying "many people" (Mk. 11:7). Luke is even more subdued mentioning simply "people" (Lk 19:36). John combines the concepts in saying "the crowds who had come up for the festival" (Jn. 12:12).

32 *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* Abingdon Press, 1962, Vol. 3, p. 664, "Passover" Section 2. In the N.T. era.

33 In Jn. 2:13 he reports that "Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem." Then in Jn. 5:1 we are told that "Some time after this there was a Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." Then, of course, there was his final visit at the time of his death.

34 That specific language is used in Mt. 26:17-29, Mk. 14:12-25, Lk. 22:7-20. John, on the other hand, understood that the meal was essentially a chaburah; the ritual meal of a spiritual fellowship during which Scripture was studied and discussed.

The bond service we encounter in the Old Testament was quite different from slavery in American history, or in other countries then, and now. First, the bond service in the Old Testament was personal, not genetic. That is, during the Old Testament era an individual might be in a servile position, but that did not pass to other members of that person's family. American slavery was genetic-- is was a condition associated with one's genetic make-up. Second, the bond servant in the Old Testament was somewhat protected as to person and well-being by the ethical legislation of the Torah. For example, one can view the "Fourth Commandment" as an early form of labor legislation, because it carefully protects the servants. That is, it specifically provide for a sabbath rest not only on the part of the father but also for all members of the family, and for the servants.[35] Obviously, this was a protection for the servant. Third, at least in theory, a relationship of bondage in service was a contractural matter, which involved the willing participation of the person who was becoming the bond-servant. Fourth, such bondage was not forever; it was for a limited time.[36] It was not so in American slavery.

In addition to the specific factors limiting the human-created practice of slavery within Hebrew society, there is a larger limiting factor. Nothing in the Old Testament relieved the faithful Jew from conducting the whole of his/her life in keeping with the requirements to live the just and ethical life enjoined on them by the sweep of the Scriptures. So, the abuse and injury of another person was never waived by the Scriptures-- regardless of the civil category of the other person. What has come to be known as the "Golden Rule" regarding the treatment of others was not unique to Jesus' teaching-- contrary to the belief of many Christians; during Jesus time, it was a common summary of the ethical teachings of the Scriptures on the part of many rabbi's. Thus, in addition to the specific limitations and provisions for the treatment of bond servants, there was the general ethical standard of treating every other human being in the same way as one wanted to be treated. That is, probably, the most powerful and compelling prohibition against the mistreatment of another person-- bond or free! Finally, it is important to say that there is NO Scriptural provision encouraging the practice of slavery!

There is no place in the Gospels where Jesus deals with the subject of slavery. The "Golden Rule" has been mentioned as providing an over-arching conceptual guideline for the treatment of others. In another Gospel incident, Jesus provides a guide regarding the relationship between his followers. In a narrow sense, he was addressing a dispute regarding the exercise of power between his followers. Pointing to a parallel in the civil realm, he said that they should not "lord it over" one another.[37] This is then followed by an urging his Apostles to choose to do service to others. This is not the encouragement of an imposed servility, nor of the harsh limitations of slavery; it is encouraging the choice to work for the well-being of others. The later illustration of washing the feet of his Apostles includes both choice, and the maintenance of his own integrity and identity. Nothing in these instances suggests the status of a slave. And the attitude of not

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35 In providing for a sabbath rest, it specifically says, "You shall do no work... nor your servants...." In that way, servants (bond-servants, perhaps) may not be required to work while the owner rests. Those servants/workers are given the protection of being divinely entitled to a time of rest.

36 In Lev. 25:9-17 there is a detailed provision for a "Jubilee Year" every seventh year-- when bond-servants are to be freed.

37 In Matthew 20:25-28 he says, "You know that among the pagans the rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you." This is repeated in Mk. 10:42-45 and Luke 22:25-27.

dominating another human being seems to be Jesus' general perspective regarding human relationships. Nothing in Jesus' words or actions can lead one to believe that he approved or supported any form of the institution of slavery!

Over the centuries, those who want to bolster their desire to enslave others have pointed to Paul's letter to Philemon. They point to the fact that Paul sent Onesimus, the slave, back to his master. Paul also encouraged obedience to the master. At the simplest level, it is important to remember that Paul is not Jesus, and Paul was a follower of Jesus. So, in all things Paul was trying to emulate and implement the teachings of Jesus. That would not make him an advocate of slavery! Beyond that assurance, it is important to understand that Paul was functioning within the particular context of the Roman Empire, and that was a context which had to condition his response to the situation of a runaway slave!

In the letter to Philemon, Paul does not tell Philemon what to do with his slave. He tells him what he-- Paul-- would do, but is not going to tell Philemon what to do. He places emphasis on the nature and meaning of love, but is not going to tell Philemon what to do. He tells Philemon that the believers in Jesus should be equal, but he is not going to tell Philemon what to do. The letter is sent to Philemon to be read publicly to the church community, but he is not going to tell Philemon what to do. In every way, Paul's intention is clear-- Philemon is supposed to free the slave. In the public reading Paul is applying the pressure of public opinion-- Philemon is supposed to free the slave. While Paul does not specifically propose that Philemon grant legal freedom to Onesimus, here is no question that Paul was urging the act of manumission.[38]

Why does the letter not say that directly? It is quite simple, encouraging a slave revolt, or harboring a runaway slave, or actively encouraging the freeing of a slave was an act of rebellion in the Roman Empire-- punishable by death. There had been a slave revolt in Rome. After it was brutally put down, the Roman officials crucified those slaves on both sides of a road-- a total of 6,000 crosses-- for a great distance along the Appian Way leading out from Rome to Capua.[39] The bodies were left on those crosses to rot and smell, as a long-term warning. Paul could not keep and harbor the slave without risking both their lives! He could not send the slave back alone, or the slave would have been subject to death-- as a runaway. He wrote a letter which said that the slave had been with him, rendering important and useful service, and was being sent back to his master. That letter protected the slave's life! If the letter had told Philemon to free the slave, Paul and all his companions would have been subject to death.

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38 Even the most cursory reading of the letter to Philemon demonstrates that Paul did not urge the maintenance of slave status. Paul specifically says "I am appealing to you for ... Onesimus." In specific terms, Paul does not state the nature of his appeal; nonetheless, it is clear that he was NOT appealing for Philemon to continue the slave status of Onesimus because being a slave was what Onesimus most desired!

39 This was called the "Third Servile War" and lasted from 73-71 B.C. The fact that this was the "third" such war suggests the seething quality of the slave class in the Roman Empire. Its duration indicates its seriousness. The majority of Roman gladiators were well-trained slaves who were adept at killing opponents. As a result they were generally kept in prison-like conditions. The upper class fear of the slaves was a constant factor in Roman life. The possibility of a slave revolt was virtually seared in the minds of Roman political officials; it increased the Roman tendency to rule by terror.

So, in writing a letter to save the slave's life, was Paul supporting slavery? In sending the slave back to save the slave's life, his own life, and the lives of all his companions, was Paul supporting slavery? In "teaching" the concept of equality and love without formally violating the law and urging the freeing of the slave, Was Paul supporting slavery? In applying the pressure of the opinions of the others in the Christian community subtly encouraging the freeing of the slave, was Paul supporting slavery?

Paul well knew the Judaic tradition of the freeing from bondage in Egypt. He was raised and educated as an observant Pharisaic Jew. He had participated in the annual Jewish reminder of the centrality of freedom (the seder meal of Passover) throughout his early life-- and probably during his Christian life, also since it appears that the early Christians continued to observe many of the Jewish rituals and festivals. Does the letter of protection for the slave Onesimus mean that he did not understand the tradition in which he had participated (including the annual questions and answers about the meaning of that tradition during the Seder meal)? Or, does it mean that he had abandoned his Jewish opposition to slavery, in the belief that Jesus was an advocate of slavery? On the contrary, the evidence is clear that Paul-- who saw Jesus as the fulfillment of the Messianic promises, not the cessation of the Jewish tradition and hopes-- was no advocate of slavery, and he saw no warrant for slavery in the Gospel which Jesus preached!

Paul moved beyond the physical dimensions of slavery, into the spiritual realm. One of his frequent themes was that mankind is enslaved by sin, and the it is God's desire to free us from the bondage of sin.[40] As Paul spoke of the tension-- even opposition-- between "the Law" and "the Spirit" he was also speaking of the alternates of slavery and freedom. This, of course, is consistent with the enduring Jewish attitude toward slavery, as well as being an expansion and new application of the basic theme that God wants to free people from spiritual bondage. More than that, it shows that the Passover quality-- remembering that a central act of God in human history was to free the Hebrews from slavery-- was carried forward into the life of the early church. Even within the predominantly gentile congregations, the preaching and writing of Paul embedded the Passover concept at the heart of early Christian spirituality.

The message of freedom and acceptance-- and acceptability-- was important in the early church. Slaves were welcomed as members in their own right, and as equal with all others within the church. The relationship between Onesimus and Paul is an early indication of the way in which slaves responded to the spiritual message of freedom and equality. As a result of the power of that message of freedom, Christianity grew among the slaves of the Roman Empire.[41]

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[40] As an example of this theme, in Romans 6:16-23 he poses the alternatives of being slaves of sin, or slaves of righteousness. He, of course, says that the Gospel of Jesus Christ frees one from the slavery of sin. In this way, he says that God wants to free humans from the slavery to sin and give the gift of eternal life. Parallel to this literal invocation of slavery, Paul speaks of being free from the law of sin and death. This concept of God freeing people arises frequently in Paul's writings, and is associated with a variety of other phrases and concepts which Paul portrays as a form of bondage-- or slavery. Other examples of this stream of Paul's thought can be found in Rom. 14-25, 1 Cor. 15:56-58; Gal. 4:1-11, and Gal 5:1-2.

[41] See for example, Henry Chadwick, *The early Church*, Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1967, pp. 59-63; also see Rudolf Sohm, *Outlines of Church History,* Translated by May Sinclair, Beacon Press, Boston, 1958, p. 5.

Indeed, the Christian message of freedom from multiple forms of bondage has great power in our time. In spite of legal prohibitions, the caste system in India still exists. The "untouchables"-- known as the Dalits-- are at the bottom of the society, and are functionally excluded from easy and relaxed participation in the society. They are in a form of cultural and social bondage-- generally living narrowly restricted lives, and often suffering great privations, and personal physical harm. It is estimated that there are approximately 167 million Dalits who live in this form of semi-bondage.[42] The Dalits represent about 16 percent of the population of India.[43] It is also estimated that of the Christians in India about 60-70 percent are Dalits; they have been drawn by the message of freedom from the social bondage which surrounds them. Surekha Nelavala, a Dalit Christian theologian at Drew University, wrote of being "unabashedly liberationist" in her theological orientation. She added that "Dalit theology emerges from the experiences, sufferings, aspirations, and hopes of Dalits." She included her understanding that Jesus was involved in "...breaking oppressive structures and boundaries."[44] This perspective, is directly reflective of the slave mentality during the earliest and formative days of the church. There was no question then, as now, that the message of Christianity is freedom from bondage-- in all forms. The rising and popularity of "new" theologies-- such as Liberation Theology, Feminist Theology, and Dalit Theology-- gives witness that the work of freeing people from bondage is not ended. Because of the essential message of freedom, it is likely that Christians will forever discover, or hear from, groups and persons who yearn to be freed from bondage, and who will create new specific theological cries for such freedom.

The book of Genesis as we know it is the product of a masterful combination sources and perspectives. It is commonly noted that Genesis has two stories of the Creation.[45] In the nature of this divine creation we read the mythic stories of common ancestors-- Adam and Eve-- from whom all humanity is said to descend. So, from the beginning of creation the Judeao-Christian tradition saw all humanity as equals in the eyes of God. Therefore, from the divine perspective, no differences should be drawn between one person and another. That leads to the conclusion that there is no divine justification for slavery. Had God wanted different groups and categories of human beings, there would have been multiple acts of creation for the purpose of demonstrating God's desire for distinctions and subordinations.

In at least one Scriptural "incident" there is a clear statement that God does not want some people subordinated to others. During their early years in the Promised Land, the Hebrews had only the somewhat amorphous leadership of people who gained a reputation for knowledge and wisdom. The book of Judges ends with the reminder that, "In those days there was no king in Israel, and

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[42] While information is easily available on the Internet, one good and quick source is at www.navsarjan.org, which is self-styled as "a grassroots Dalit organization."

[43] *Ibid.,* and www.wikipedia.org, "Dalit".

[44] Surekha Nelavala, "Smart Syrophoenician Woman: A Dalit Feminist Reading of Mark 7:24-31, *Expository Times*, Vol. 118, No.; 2 (November, 2006), pp. 64-69.

[45] The first story is Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 is considered to be later in composition, and more sophisticated in nature. In Genesis 1:27 is the announcement of the creation of mankind. The second story of creation is Genesis 2:4-23. In Genesis 2:7 is an independent announcement of the creation of man. The difference is that in the first story, mankind is a general and undifferentiated creature, while in the second story there is a particular man-- followed by the creation of a particular woman. The result is that in these two-- Adam and Eve-- we have singular persons who later are regarded as the common ancestors of a*ll* humanity. This is the most simplistic beginning of what would be come an understanding of a universal God, who created all humanity alike, and without sub-classes.

every man did as he pleased."[46] That stage in their corporate life was followed by a popular request to Samuel, the prophet, for the selection of a king. God instructs Samuel to accede to the request, but to warn the Hebrews that a king will dominate the people and the land for his own purposes. In effect, they will be in bondage to a king who reigns over (e.g., dominates) them. The popular response was, "The people refused to listen to the words of Samuel. They said, 'No! We want a king.'"[47] For our purposes, it is important to note that God did not want the people to be under the domination of a king. Without using the word, it was God's warning that a king would enslave the people by the misuse of the power of kingship. So, in the form of a particular story regarding a particular socio-political request, we encounter a general perspective of God; it is not God's desire that individual humans should be under the personal and absolute control of another human being.

An element of the universal call and reach of God, and the promise of salvation is found in the works of some of the prophets.[48] This is a part of the transformation of the human understanding of God, and the movement from a tribal to a universal understanding of God. As a result of that extension of the understanding of the nature of God, and of God's actions in the world, the divine opposition to slavery was extended to all humanity. Indeed, this universalism of message and ethic is a part of the danger Paul and the early church faced. While the case of Onesimus was a particular incident within the Christian community, because the message of Jesus Christ was/is universal, the associated ethical stance is equally universal. So, Paul's opposition to slavery was not limited to the person of Onesimus, nor to the confines of a particular Christian community, it was universal; that was in effect a mental act of rebellion in the Roman Empire-- the belief in the universal and divine right of a slave to be free.

The ultimate expression of the universal vision of God is found in the Revelation to St. John.[49] This, of course, demonstrates the end result of the struggle of the members of the early church who wanted to freely include gentiles in the Christian community, and those who sought a narrowly Jewish vision of the fellowship of Jesus. In what has come to be called the Council of Jerusalem,[50] it was decided that gentiles could be included in the membership without first being circumcised, thereby becoming Jews. This was the extension of the Prophetic universalism, which carried with it the universal ethic of the early Judaeo-Christian community-- the Church. That included adherence to the definition of God as the one who brought the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt, and the concomitant opposition to slavery.

An important Christian doctrine is that mankind has free will.[51] The English Reformers saw an intimate connection between free will and the ability to do good works. The Anglican understanding is that one cannot do good works without the helping grace of God. However, if one is a slave, the domination of the slave by the master means that by law and social structures,

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46 Judges 21:25.

47 1 Samuel 8:1-22.

48 Examples include: Isaiah 55:5; Jeremiah 1:4-5; Jeremiah 3:17; and, Ezekiel 48:35.

49 The vision of heaven in Rev. 5:9 speaks of "every race, language, people and nation."

50 The story is contained in Acts 15:5-29.

51 It was considered such an important doctrine, with its connection to being able to do good works, that the English Reformers included comment on that doctrine as Article X, in the Articles of Religion, which can be found on page 869, of the Book of Common Prayer, 1979.

the slave is so controlled by the master that there is no independent authority to act upon one's urges and desired. The slave does not control his/her environment, and has no ability to act independently. As a result, the master has the power to impede the call and grace of God in the life of the slave. That gives the master a power superior to God in the life of the slave.

This has implications in the ethical realm. For a person to be ethically responsible, that person must be capable of making personal choices, and taking personal action. The essential argument of the Nuremberg Trials, following the end of World War II in Europe, was that the Nazi officials could not claim immunity by pleading that they were "only following orders" because they had the individual capacity to refuse the immoral orders, and the capacity to fail to act in ways which injured the innocent. The perspective is that responsibility and personal freedom are inextricably linked. As a result, the slave who is deprived of personal freedom, and personal responsibility is incapable of being held responsible for the morality or immorality of their actions. Since God's desire is that we have free conceptual will, and the capacity to act upon those ideas, slavery is anathema to the desires of God. One who does not "own" himself cannot make choices based on the complete freedom of will.

Another element of Christian life which is important with regard to slavery is the doctrine of revelation. The Hebrew prophets indicated how God had called them to their prophetic roles-- often contrary to their preference. Throughout their writings, the voice of God is presented as an unexpectedly recurring experience of revelation. While many contemporaries are discomforted by the thought, the doctrinal understanding is that divine revelation is an on-going process. Many United Church of Christ congregations have had banners outside their churches which say, "God is still speaking," which are intended to affirm that revelation is an on-going process. The Venerable John Weaver, the late Archdeacon of the Diocese of California spoke of the formation of the Diocesan Futures Planning Council with the same understanding. In one interview he said, "...God is speaking to these disciplines; he's speaking to sociology, psychiatry, economics, but the Church is only interested in one thing-- the theology." Later in the same inerview he said, "God doesn't speak just to priests. He's speaking to city planners, whether they know it or not. He's speaking to economists and sociologists, and psychiatrists and anthropologists and in a loud voice. He's shouting, you know."[52] The implication is that those to whom God makes a revelation also have the capacity to implement their experience of revelation. However, this is another instance in which it is important to note that by the very nature of any form of bondage, the slave-- or person under domination-- is either prevented or limited in responding and implementing the revelation of God. The essence of being "property" of another person is that property has no independent capacity. Such a limitation on the experience and implementation of divine revelation is not God's desire.

CONCLUSION

[52] These comments were made in an oral history interview prepared by John Rawlinson, and conducted by Don Peña a short time before Archdeacon Weaver died. The recording of that interview is in the possession of John Rawlinson.

By the nature of God's creation, all human beings are created and meant to be equal creatures with free will. As such, we are intended to have the capacity to act upon, and implement, the grace and revelation which we receive from God. Our understanding is that God is constantly active in the creation. There are constant processes of re-creation and renewal. There are moments in which people of faith identify God's action in the on-going stream of human history. One such moment is embedded in the history and spirit of the Jewish people; that is, God freed them from slavery in Egypt. God warned the Jewish people against having a king particularly because of the probability that royal power would be exercised to dominate and enslave the people; it was a warning echo of the Egyptian historical experience of the Hebrews. That sense of history-- especially having been freed from bondage by the act of God-- and the Jewish understanding nature of God was carried forward into the early Christian community-- unaltered. The Passover remembrance was one which Jesus observed in his own person, and which he celebrated with his immediate Apostles. In that way, he was responsible for placing that historical event and understanding into the life of his followers. The extension of the universality of God's salvation, and desire that humanity be free from limitations was specifically decreed by the Jerusalem leaders of the fledgling Christian community. Christian desires for the freeing of slaves within the Roman Empire were clearly, if sometimes subtly, expressed even given the fears and restrictions which pervaded the officials and laws of that Empire.

Christian theologies regarding the equality of all human beings, various theological expressions of the cry for freedom, God's desires for the proper exercise of free will and lives demonstrating morally positive choices, and God's efforts constantly to engage in on-revelation, all point to the divine expectation that human beings will allow one another to live in freedom. From the days when the Hebrews were freed from slavery in Egypt to this day, slavery is anathema to God's practices, and human faithfulness to God's will.