

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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TIME TO
REFLECT,
TIME TO
REACT,
TIME TO
STAND UP

11/12/2017

<http://themajestysmen.com/here-i-stand-bravery-boldness-martin-luther/>

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CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY

Not just an issue from history

One hundred forty-three years after passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and 60 years after Article 4 of the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights banned slavery and the slave trade worldwide, there are **more slaves than at any time in human history -- 27 million.**

Today's slavery focuses on big profits and cheap lives. It is not about owning people like before, but about **using them as completely disposable tools for making money.**

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Terrence McNally. There Are More Slaves Today Than at Any Time in Human History. Alternet. Human Rights. August 24, 2009, 10:00 AM GMT. http://www.alternet.org/story/142171/there_are_more_slaves_today_than_at_any_time_in_human_history/



<http://accelerationofwomen.org/2014/12/human-trafficking-of-children-must-stop/>

“FBI Assistant Director, Ronald Hosko announced on Monday, the rescue of 105 sex-trafficking victims. The youngest child to be rescued was 9 years old.”

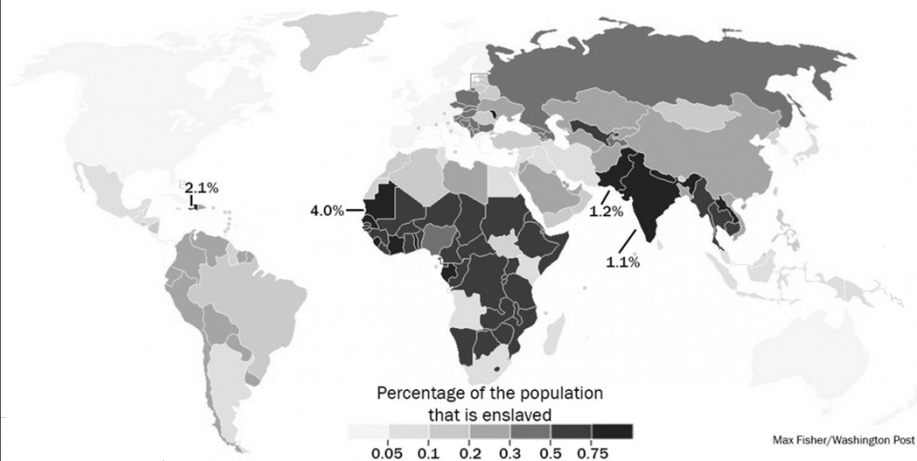
“150 Pimps Arrested And 105 Sex Trafficking Victims Saved.” [sourcestaff](#) July 29, 2013.

<http://thesource.com/2013/07/29/150-pimps-arrested-and-105-sex-trafficking-victims-saved/>

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**2013: 30
MILLION**

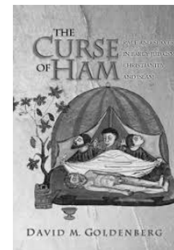
SLAVES LIVE. THERE ARE 60,000 IN THE U.S. BY MAX FISHER OCTOBER 17, 2013
[HTTPS://WWW.WASHINGTONPOST.COM/NEWS/WORLDBVIEW
S/WP/2013/10/17/THIS-MAP-SHOWS-WHERE-THE-WORLDS-
30-MILLION-SLAVES-LIVE-THERE-ARE-60000-IN-THE-U-
S/?UTM_TERM=.1E0E600BC54E](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldview/wp/2013/10/17/this-map-shows-where-the-worlds-30-million-slaves-live-there-are-60000-in-the-u-s/?utm_term=.1E0E600BC54E)



“The United States, per capita, has a very low rate of slavery: just 0.02 percent, or one in every 5,000 people. But that adds up to a lot: an estimated 60,000 slaves, right here in America.”

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CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY



- **What do the Scriptures say?**
- **How did Christians justify its practices?**
- **How did Christians resist its practices?**
- **What were the church policies, Catholic and Protestant, toward slavery?**
- **What is the church saying and doing now? In particular, what are Presbyterians doing?**

For a Detailed Account of the History of Slavery and its relation to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, read *The Curse of Ham* <https://press.princeton.edu/titles/7641.html>

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HEBREW BIBLE VERSES ON SLAVERY

Leviticus 25:44-46 ESV / As for your male and female slaves whom you may have: **you may buy male and female slaves from among the nations that are around you.** You may also buy from among the strangers who sojourn with you and their clans that are with you, who have been born in your land, and they may be your property. You may bequeath them to your sons after you to inherit as a possession forever. **You may make slaves of them, but over your brothers the people of Israel you shall not rule, one over another ruthlessly.**

Exodus 21:1-36 ESV / “Now these are the rules that you shall set before them. **When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing.** If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, **the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out alone.** But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ ...

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HEBREW BIBLE -- SPECIFIC GUIDELINES ON SLAVERY

Exodus 21:20-21 ESV / “When a man strikes his slave, male or female, with a rod and the slave dies under his hand, he shall be avenged. But if the slave survives a day or two, he is not to be avenged, for **the slave is his money.**

Exodus 21:26-27 ESV / “When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, he shall **let the slave go free because of his eye.** If he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, he shall let the slave go free because of his tooth.

Leviticus 19:20 ESV / “If a man lies sexually with a woman who is a slave, assigned to another man and not yet ransomed or given her freedom, a distinction shall be made. **They shall not be put to death, because she was not free;**

Deuteronomy 23:15 ESV / “**You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you.**

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ACTUAL PRACTICE

By the time of the fall of Jerusalem, it is clear that Jews not only had slaves, but had **virtually ignored prohibitions on owning other Jews:**

Jeremiah 34:8-9 ESV / The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to make a proclamation of liberty to them, that **everyone should set free his Hebrew slaves, male and female, so that no one should enslave a Jew, his brother.**

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NEW TESTAMENT

Ephesians 6:5-9 ESV / **Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ**, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

1 Timothy 6:1 ESV / **Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor**, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.

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NEW TESTAMENT

Colossians 3:22 ESV / **Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters**, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

1 Peter 2:18 ESV / **Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect**, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.

Titus 2:9-10 ESV / **Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything**; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

1 Corinthians 7:21-23 ESV / **Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)** For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

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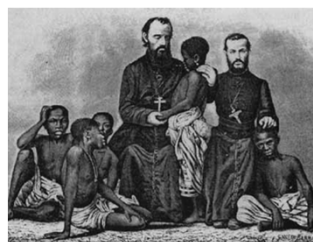
BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE: SUMMARY

Clearly **neither the Hebrew nor Christian Bible offer any real challenge to slavery, and mostly seem to support the practice.**

The Christian idea that we are all **“slaves of Christ”** (I Corinthians 7:21) even served as **a covert justification for the practice**, as well as encouraging Christians who were enslaved to be “obedient” slaves.

Such verses could not help but support the practice of slavery when it became widespread in the period of colonization.

The only recourse for (1700-1800 years later!) believers who wanted to condemn slavery was to focus on passages that apply general principles against the practice.



African Slave Trade 1450-1750 <https://www.preceden.com/timelines/54992-african-slave-trade-1450-1750>

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BIBLICAL ARGUMENTS ON PRINCIPLE

Luke 4:18 ESV / “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me **to proclaim liberty to the captives** and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at **liberty those who are oppressed...**

Galatians 3:28 ESV / In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, **there is neither slave nor free**, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Unfortunately, Jesus never commented on the practice of slavery directly.

Unfortunately, this verse was and has been taken “spiritually,” and was not perceived as a clarion call for social change.

REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS SUPPORTED SLAVERY

Biblical

Abraham, the “father of faith,” and all the patriarchs held slaves without God’s disapproval (Gen. 21:9–10).

- **Canaan, Ham’s son, was made a slave to his brothers (Gen. 9:24–27).**
- **The Ten Commandments mention slavery twice, showing God’s implicit acceptance of it (Ex. 20:10, 17).**
- **Slavery was widespread throughout the Roman world, and yet Jesus never spoke against it.**
- **The apostle Paul specifically commanded slaves to obey their masters (Eph. 6:5–8).**
- **Paul returned a runaway slave, Philemon, to his master (Philem. 12).**

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Today/Christian History magazine.

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THE CANAAN DEFENSE

20 And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:

21 And he **drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.**

22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, **saw the nakedness of his father**, and told his two brethren without.

23 And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.

25 And he said, **Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.**

26 And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. 27 God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

– **Genesis 9:20–27**

The story's original purpose was to justify the subjugation of the Canaanite people to the Israelites,^[4] but in later centuries, the narrative was interpreted by some Christians, Muslims and Jews as an explanation for black skin, as well as slavery. *Wiki Source* “Curse of Ham”



<http://www.realhistories.org.uk/articles/archive/religion-and-slavery.html>

“the infamous Curse of Ham, the widely-held interpretation of part of the Noah story in the Bible, that Ham was black and therefore black people were cursed with eternal slavery.³ **These racist interpretations are still used by white supremacists today.**” – The Real Histories Directory realhistories.org.uk

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A different perspective: <http://www.epm.org/resources/2010/Jan/18/are-black-people-cursed-curse-ham/>

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REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS SUPPORTED SLAVERY



Social

Just as women are called to play a subordinate role (Eph. 5:22; 1 Tim. 2:11–15), so slaves are stationed by God in their place.

- **Slavery is God's means of protecting and providing for an inferior race (suffering the "curse of Ham" in Gen. 9:25 or even the punishment of Cain in Gen. 4:12).**
- **Abolition would lead to slave uprisings, bloodshed, and anarchy. Consider the mob's "rule of terror" during the French Revolution.**

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Picture: <https://blackwomenofbrazil.co/2013/12/29/25-curious-facts-about-slavery-in-brazil/>

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REASONS WHY CHRISTIAN S SUPPORTE D SLAVERY



<http://atlantablackstar.com/2015/04/10/9-devastating-actions-white-slaves-masters-took-to-convert-black-people-to-christianity/>

Charitable and Evangelistic

Slavery removes people from a culture that "worshipped the devil, practiced witchcraft, and sorcery" and other evils.

- **Slavery brings heathens to a Christian land where they can hear the gospel. Christian masters provide religious instruction for their slaves.**
- **Under slavery, people are treated with kindness, as many northern visitors can attest.**
- **It is in slaveholders' own interest to treat their slaves well.**
- **Slaves are treated more benevolently than are workers in oppressive northern factories.**

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REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS SUPPORTED SLAVERY

Political

- **Christians are to obey civil authorities, and those authorities permit and protect slavery.**
- **The church should concentrate on spiritual matters, not political ones.**
- **Those who support abolition are, in James H. Thornwell's words, "atheists, socialists, communists [and] red republicans."**



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A CULTURE OF SLAVERY: BLACK SLAVE OWNERS

"The great African-American historian, John Hope Franklin, states this clearly: **"The majority of Negro owners of slaves had some personal interest in their property."** But, he admits, **"There were instances, however, in which free Negroes had a real economic interest in the institution of slavery and held slaves in order to improve their economic status."**

"In 1830, the year most carefully studied by Carter G. Woodson, about 13.7 percent (319,599) of the black population was free. Of these, 3,776 free Negroes owned 12,907 slaves, out of a total of 2,009,043 slaves owned in the entire United States..."



Anthony Johnson
"Considered the very first Slave owner in the 1650's"
<http://gentlemanscounsell.com/slavemasters/>

Henry Louis Gates. **"Did Black People Own Slaves?" The Root.** 3/04/13 12:03am

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A CULTURE OF SLAVERY: NATIVE AMERICAN SLAVERY

“the decision to engage in chattel slaveholding resulted from a **conscious and deliberate choice on the part of Indian slaveholders to embrace racial ideology that “degraded blackness and associated it exclusively with enslavement.”** For some influential and wealthy members of the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations, **adopting race-based slavery provided the most efficient way to maintain an increasingly tenuous hold on political and cultural autonomy in the face of aggressive American expansion, while pursuing self-interested economic and diplomatic goals.** *(Nakia Parker quoting and summarizing Barbara Krauthamer).*



Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole, or “the Five Tribes”) also participated in chattel and race-based slavery

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Barbara Krauthamer. *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South.* (2013).

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JUSTIFICATIONS OF SLAVERY

Justifications of slavery echoed the New Testament scriptures, not just in their lack of challenge to slavery, but also in their reasoning – social stability, that it was a political issue, obedience to civil authority, even ironically our duty to welcome people to Christianity no matter what status



Though slavery was part of both Native American and African traditions, in the US, slave ownership was a clear path to status, wealth, and cultural acceptance.

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<http://www.informafrika.com/afrikan-consciousness/i-was-once-a-christian-till-i-realized-christianity-is-slavery/>

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CATHOLIC REACTION -- THEN



Catholic church opposed slavery and the slave trade except for “enemies of Christ.” But there was a difference of interpretation between the Pope and your average lay Catholic on what “enemies of Christ” meant. The Spanish and Portuguese happily seized and enslaved anybody who wasn’t Christian, claiming that all heathens were by definition “enemies of Christ.” The Catholic hierarchy, though, only considered peoples actually at war with the Christians for religious motivations to be “enemies of Christ” - mainly **the Muslim Ottomans or Mamluks, and folks like the Livonians who fought against the Teutonic Knights.**

The Popes issued **bulls forbidding the enslavement of Africans and Native Americans who were not at war with Christians**, on the mere pretext that they were not followers of Christ. But the Catholic kings generally ignored them, and the Popes didn’t do much to enforce their pious objections.

Painting: Muslim Expulsion from Spain 1492

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Daniel Baker, M.A. in European History, George Mason University Answered Sep 16 2016 ²¹

CATHOLIC REACTION NOW

Pope John Paul II *“Letter to Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran,”* Secretary for Relations”

The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offense against human dignity and grave violation of fundamental human rights. Already the Second Vatican Council had pointed to 'slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, and disgraceful working conditions where people are treated as instruments of gain rather than free and responsible persons' as 'infamies' which 'poison human society, debase their perpetrators' and constitute 'a supreme dishonour to the Creator' (Gaudium et Spes, 27).

Such situations are an affront to fundamental values, which are shared by all cultures and peoples, values rooted in the very nature of the human person. ... Who can deny that the victims of this crime are often the poorest and most defenseless members of the human family, the 'least' of our brothers and sisters? ... The disturbing tendency to treat prostitution as a business or industry not only contributes to the trade in human beings, but is itself evidence of a growing tendency to detach freedom from the moral law and to reduce the rich mystery of human sexuality to a mere commodity.”

May 15, 2002, International Conference “Twenty-First Century Slavery — The Human Rights dimension to Trafficking in Human Beings” (organized by U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See Jim Nicholson and hosted by the Gregorian University) <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=7106>

PROTESTANT REACTION - THEN

Among the many Protestant churches, attitudes toward slavery varied.

Quakers and Methodists were early opponents of American slavery and the slave trade; the famous picture of the slave ship *Brooks* packed full of slaves was produced and distributed by Quakers.

Free black people, often rejected by their white fellow Christians, founded churches of their own such as the Bethel Church and the First African Baptist; obviously, these churches were anti-slavery too.

But the **Baptists and Presbyterians were largely pro-slavery until well into the 1800s**, when they **split into northern and southern wings** along with the rest of the country. The southern wings remained pro-slavery until abolition, and often afterward.

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Daniel Baker, M.A. in European History,
George Mason University Answered Sep 16 2016

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FROM THE "REFORMATION THEOLOGY" HOMEPAGE

What?!?

The very dangerous "Curse of Canaan" Argument Lingers ...

As a judicial ruling, God told Israel to dispossess the people in the land. They were either to kill them or in some cases enslave them. The Canaanites had already lost all of their rights and were under God's just judgment. **There was no justification for arbitrary chattel slavery in the Bible** -- (the kind which we knew in antebellum times) ... in fact the slavery which kidnapped people and sold them as property was punishable by death (Exodus 21:16).

No, **they were ONLY to kill or enslave under God's direct verbal orders**. Remember, He is God so His judicial ruling is more just than any human court has ever been since He knows all of our crimes perfectly. **So when Israel killed people they were simply acting as God's hand, speeding up the death sentence we all justly deserve.**

http://www.reformationtheology.com/2013/07/slavery_racism_in_the_bible.php

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PRESBYTERIAN REACTION ^{1861 SOUTHERN} SCHISM

HISTORICAL OPPOSITION

1797 Synod of NY and Philadelphia
“universal liberty” and abolition
of slavery”

1818 Synod

- A sin
- Utterly inconsistent with the laws of God
- Gross violation of sacred rights of nature
- Irreconcilable with spirit and principles of the gospel
- Duty of all Christians to abolish

Abraham was a slave holder

He did not free his slaves but was
commanded to circumcise them

Laws of Moses only regulated
slavery

Christ commended slaveholders
and received them as believers

Paul told slaves to obey their
masters

Paul told slaves to be content and
not change their situation

Both cases of runaway slaves in
the OT –Hagar and Onesimus
– commanded to return to their
masters.

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<http://www.americanpresbyterianchurch.org/apc-history/presbyterian-history/the-schism-of-1861/>

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PRESBYTERIANS ON SLAVERY TODAY

Affirming that Jesus Christ came that “they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10b), the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has **convened a roundtable from among its ministries to address human trafficking together with synods, presbyteries and local congregations.** The roundtable includes representatives from the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns, Office of the General Assembly- Immigration Issues, Office of Public Witness, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Men, Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Women, Self Development of People, World Mission.

A Toolkit for Action: Modern Slavery—Use the resources contained within this 40-page packet to explore modern-day slavery and learn how you can help.

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/human-trafficking/>

PRESBYTERIANS AND SLAVERY TODAY

Presbyterian Church Policies:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/human-trafficking/general-assembly-policy-human-trafficking/>



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<http://www.pcusa.org/news/2016/2/1/human-trafficking-beyond-super-bowl/>

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN OHIO



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<http://humantrafficking.ohio.gov/>

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SUMMARY

- Unfortunately, as Ken Wilbur points out in his book, *A Brief History of Everything*, **no major religion led the way to any kind of fundamental shift in our understanding of human equality.**
- Only when Enlightenment thinkers began to promote the idea of **natural rights**, or what Jefferson called our “inalienable rights,” did the church begin to step up and speak out against slavery.
- Note that the **1818 Presbyterian Synod**, in two of their positions, **used the language of the Enlightenment:**
- **“Utterly inconsistent with the laws of God”**
- **“Gross violation of sacred rights of nature”**
- And even then they recognized that **slavery could not be challenged with specific scriptures:**
- **“Irreconcilable with spirit and principles of the gospel.”**

Declaration of Independence:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that **all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights**, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Jefferson included strong anti-slavery trade language in the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, but other delegates removed it.
<https://history.stackexchange.com/questions/2836/early-attempts-to-abolish-slavery-in-usa>

CONCLUSIONS

While no sane Christian today would openly support slavery or human trafficking, **scripture itself seems more to support than oppose it.**

The issue then is a model of the need to interpret the Bible on principle rather than on its literal meanings.

If we allow that approach, **it would be inconsistent to disallow it on other related issues such as women’s rights or gay rights.**

We also need to recognize that though the **arguments supporting slavery** have lost the day, they **still find expression in racist ideologies continuing to be supported by some Christians.**

CONCLUSIONS

Not only do Christians need to resist Human Trafficking, they also need to challenge supposed scriptural “justifications” for racist ideologies.

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Racialism and Human Trafficking:

“In a recent report by the Office of Victims of Crime, of the confirmed sex trafficking victims, **40.4 percent of victims were African-American**. This is almost **four times higher than the percentage of African-Americans living in the United States**, which the US Census Bureau currently lists as 13.1 percent of the total population. The FBI claims an even more surprising statistic for arrests **under the age of 18, black children make up 55 % of all prostitution-related arrests in the U.S.**”
<http://humantraffickingsearch.org/human-trafficking-not-all-black-or-white>

“of the traffickers interviewed, the majority overwhelming believed that **trafficking white women would make them more money but trafficking black women would land them less jail time if caught.**”

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LUKE 4:18

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed ...



More on General Biblical Principles: “What does the Bible Teach about Human Trafficking?” <https://www.gotquestions.org/human-trafficking.html>

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<http://acelebrationofwomen.org/2012/08/the-recovery-of-human-trafficking-victims-take-action/>

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