

ducing the document, which I had not time to do, for it fully substantiates my position.

Mr. CHAMBERS. It seems to be my misfortune to be thrown upon the last hours of a discussion. I propose to make the best use possible of the time left for me; and lest I should not be able to get through, I will state to the Convention what it is my purpose to accomplish.

I shall endeavor to satisfy the Convention of these points:

That slavery is neither a sin nor a moral offence in the view of the Old Testament, or the New, or the Church of God, or the opinion of saints and servants of our master.

That it never has been considered in Maryland a sin or crime, except by a few persons whose habits and thoughts and education have been derived from without the State.

That it exists in Maryland by contract, in every sense of the term; a contract made by the framers of the Constitution; and especially, as it now exists, a contract among ourselves.

That this contract is protected in express terms by the Constitution of the United States.

That therefore this body has no right to manumit in the mode now proposed.

That if they did possess this right, it would not be expedient to exercise it.

That the measure, thus inexpedient, is not justified by any necessity of the country, not being in itself at all calculated to aid in crushing the rebellion; which is the great argument of the advocates of this measure.

I confess to the most perfect surprise at the manner in which this subject is debated here. I have heard the strangest exposition of Bible texts that I ever heard in my life except on one occasion. I was once travelling on a car in the North with a number of gentlemen, among whom was a preacher—of what denomination I did not learn—who was a very ardent abolitionist; and then I did hear the opinion advanced which was advanced by the gentleman from Baltimore (Mr. Stockbridge) last night, who thought that Onesimus was a brother either of St. Paul or Philemon. His idea was that he was a brother of Paul's, because St. Paul said he was no longer a servant but a brother beloved. I thought that was a remarkable idea, never having seen it before; and I could only remark that St. Paul must have had most fruitful parents, the most fruitful known on the face of the earth; for he addressed the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and all the various people to whom he wrote his epistles, by the same title.

Mr. STOCKBRIDGE. Did you understand me to take that position?

Mr. CHAMBERS. Certainly I did.

Mr. STOCKBRIDGE. That Onesimus was a brother of St. Paul?

Mr. CHAMBERS. Yes, sir.

Mr. STOCKBRIDGE. Not at all. I stated the principal facts of the case and quoted simply the words of the Apostle, to receive him, "not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." I never had the slightest idea that Onesimus was literally a brother; and the gentleman entirely misunderstood me.

Mr. CHAMBERS. One thing the gentleman did say. But I forbear to pursue that matter, for I should certainly be most unwilling to impute to any gentleman an argument of such absurdity. I am always happy to be corrected, if I have misunderstood what was said. The gentleman did say one thing—I presume I am right in that—that this idea of justifying slavery by this quotation, was an American idea, never heard of across the waters. I understood the gentleman in so many words to say that no writer beyond the water had ever adopted this view. Am I wrong in that?

Mr. STOCKBRIDGE. Yes, sir; I think that has been argued here; but I did not argue it.

Mr. CHAMBERS. I hold in my hand the second edition of a book published in Liverpool by a learned divine, Rev. R. Harris, in the year 1788; in which he goes far beyond any proposition that has been entertained here. He goes to the whole extent of saying, not only that slavery in the times of the Old Testament history was actually ordered by the Deity, but that it was enjoined since the Christian dispensation by the Apostles. I rather think that the converse of the proposition is true; that until this system of abolitionism originated, which is of comparatively late origin, within less than half a century, it was not in the power of any gentleman, whatever might be his industry, to find an intelligent divine who maintained that by the Gospel, slavery was a sin and an immorality. I have not seen such an authority. While denunciation, harsh terms and crimination, in the most offensive words, such as belong to none but the vilest criminal, have been heaped day after day upon slavery, gentlemen have forgotten that the memory of their ancestors, their fathers and grandfathers, is involved; that they were participants in this great sin and immorality, this worst of all evils.

I maintain that before the first book of the Old Testament was written slavery existed. It existed in the time of the patriarchs before Moses had a being. I maintain that it existed during the Mosaic dispensation. I maintain that it existed at the time when our Saviour came on earth; that it existed when the apostles addressed their epistles to the various churches; that it has existed from that time to the present; and that until lately it never was impeached as an institution or frowned upon in any form by the Gospel of Christ. In page 32 of this book, referring to Exod. chap. 21: v. 1, 4: