

# THE SINS OF CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY

*Gordon Barnes*

**Abstract:** Christian orthodoxy essentially involves the acceptance of the New Testament as authoritative in matters of faith and conduct. However, the New Testament instructs slaves and women to accept a subordinate status that denies their equality with other human beings. To accept such a status is to have the vice of servility, which involves denying the equality of all human beings. Therefore the New Testament asserts that slaves and women should deny their equality with other human beings. This is false. Moreover, these same passages in the New Testament implicitly assert that slavery and the subordination of women are morally permissible. This is also false. Therefore orthodox Christianity is false.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will argue that Christian orthodoxy entails the rightness of moral precepts that instruct people to have a serious moral vice. Moreover, the same teachings that instruct people to have a serious moral vice also endorse the social institutions of slavery and the subordination of women. These accusations are not new. However, when these accusations have been made in the past, they have seldom been supported by rigorous argument. In this paper I will supply the argument. Far from being a frivolous *ad hominem*, I will argue that this is a sound objection to Christian orthodoxy itself. Toward that end, here is how I will proceed. First, I will briefly review the history of Christian doctrine, identifying beliefs that are essential to Christian orthodoxy, and the way in which they appear to be immoral. This part of the paper is mostly historical, laying the groundwork for the argument. Then I will proceed to argue that Christian orthodoxy does, in fact, entail moral claims that are false. Finally, I will discuss the implications of all this for the truth of Christian orthodoxy. I will conclude that Christian orthodoxy is false.

## 2. WHAT IS CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY?

When I use the phrase “Christian orthodoxy,” I am referring to those beliefs that have been held as central to Christianity by the recognized leaders of the Christian communities throughout most of the history of the Christian religion. Any belief that has been held to be both true and central to Christianity by the recognized authorities in the Christian Church throughout most of the history of Christianity is thereby constitutive of Christian orthodoxy. Thus, the only way to determine what is essential to Christian orthodoxy is to look at the actual history of Christian doctrine. When one looks at the history of Christian doctrine, one criterion of Christian orthodoxy stands out. Orthodox Christians, past and present, recognize certain followers of Jesus, called the Apostles, as authorities in all matters of faith and conduct, and thus orthodox Christians accept whatever these authorities say in matters of faith and conduct. This is what distinguishes orthodox Christians from their opponents in the formative stages of Christianity, from late in the first century, all the way to the end of the fourth century. By the end of the fourth century, the teachings of the apostles had been written down, and they had the status of Holy Scripture. In the following passage, J.N.D. Kelly documents the attitude of the early Christians toward the writings of the apostles, now contained in the Christian New Testament, and treated as Holy Scripture.

There is little need to dwell on the absolute authority accorded to scripture as a doctrinal norm. It was the Bible, declared Clement of Alexandria about A.D. 200, which, as interpreted by the Church, was the source of Christian teaching. His greater disciple Origen was a thorough-going Biblicist who appealed again and again to Scripture as the decisive criterion of dogma. . . . ‘The holy and inspired Scriptures, wrote Athanasius a century later, ‘are fully sufficient for the proclamation of the truth’; while his contemporary, Cyril of Jerusalem, laid it down that ‘with regard to the divine and saving mysteries of faith no doctrine, however trivial, may be taught without the backing of the divine Scriptures. . . . For our saving faith derives its force, not from capricious reasonings, but from what may be proved out of the Bible.’ Later in the same century John Chrysostom bade his congregation seek no other teacher than the oracles of God; everything was straightforward and clear in the Bible, and the sum of necessary knowledge could be extracted from it. In the West Augustine declared that “in the plain teaching of Scripture we find all that concerns our belief and moral conduct.”<sup>1</sup>

From the early Christian writers of the first century to St. Augustine in the fourth century, a defining characteristic of Christian orthodoxy was the acceptance of the teachings of the apostles as authoritative. Moreover, this defining characteristic of Christian orthodoxy persisted for centuries after this early period. In 649, the Lateran Council, under Pope Martin I, declared that

. . . one who does not confess in accordance with the holy Fathers by word and from the heart, really and truly, to the last word, all that has been handed down and proclaimed by the holy Fathers . . . he is condemned.<sup>2</sup>

In 787, the Second Council of Nicaea declared that “Any one who does not accept the whole of the Church’s tradition, both written and unwritten—let him be anathema.”<sup>3</sup> The same attitude toward the writings of the New Testament as authoritative continued to characterize Christian orthodoxy right through the Protestant Reformation. If there was one point on which Catholics and Protestants all agreed, it was the authority of Holy Scripture. Even as Martin Luther challenged the authority of Church Councils, he maintained the absolute authority of Holy Scripture. According to Luther,

Everyone knows that at times they [the fathers of the Church] have erred, as men will; therefore, I am ready to trust them only when they prove their opinions from Scripture, *which has never erred*.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Catholic Church insisted on the authority of Sacred Tradition in addition to Scripture, the Church also continued to insist on the absolute authority of Scripture. After listing the books of the Old and New Testaments that are recognized by the Catholic Church, the Council of Trent declared that

If any one shall not accept all these books in their entirety, with all their parts, as they are read in the Catholic Church and are contained in the ancient Latin Vulgate edition as sacred and canonical, and if any one shall knowingly and deliberately reject the aforesaid traditions, let him be anathema.<sup>5</sup>

So both Protestants and Catholics agreed that the New Testament was authoritative in all matters of faith and practice. In fact, it was not until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that any self-described Christian questioned the inspiration and authority of Scripture. So for 1700 years the writings of the New Testament were universally regarded as a measure of Christian orthodoxy. I conclude, therefore, that the acceptance of what is contained in the New Testament, at least in matters of faith and conduct, is essential to Christian orthodoxy.

Corresponding to this belief, and rationalizing it, is the belief that the authors of the New Testament were inspired by God in writing it. The later epistles in the New Testament express this belief concerning the Hebrew Bible. For example, the author of *2 Timothy* says that “All scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching, reproof, and correction,” and the author of *2 Peter* says that “No prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.” This belief that the Hebrew Bible was inspired by God was eventually extended to the writings of the New Testament as well. In the following passage, J.N.D. Kelly documents the prevalence of this belief in the inspiration of the New Testament among the early Christians.

Origen, indeed, and Gregory of Nazianzus after him, thought they could perceive the activity of the divine wisdom in the most trifling verbal minutiae, even in the solecisms, of the sacred books. This attitude was fairly widespread, and although some of the fathers elaborated it more than others, their general view was that Scripture was not only exempt from error but contained nothing that was superfluous. “There is not one jot or tittle,” declared Origen, “written in the Bible which does not accomplish its spe-

cial work for those capable of using it.” In similar vein Jerome stated that “in the divine scriptures every word, syllable, accent and point is packed with meaning”; those who slighted the commonplace contents of *Philemon* were simply failing, through ignorance, to appreciate the power and wisdom they concealed.<sup>6</sup>

This belief that the prophets and the apostles were inspired by God has persisted throughout the history of Christianity. Every Council of the Catholic Church has affirmed it, and the Protestant reformers maintained it as well. According to Luther,

He who carefully reads and studies the Scriptures will consider nothing so trifling that it does not at least contribute to the improvement of his life and morals, *since the Holy Spirit wanted to have it committed to writing.*<sup>7</sup>

Only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did any self-described Christian question the inspiration of Scripture. Even today, the majority of Christians maintain that the writings of the New Testament were inspired by God. So the belief that the New Testament was inspired by God is also essential to Christian orthodoxy. In summary, then, Christian orthodoxy essentially involves the acceptance of the New Testament as authoritative in matters of faith and conduct, and the belief that those writings were inspired by God. The apostles literally speak for God, and therefore what they say must be accepted as true. That was the official position of the vast majority of Christians, including theologians and Church leaders, for at least 1700 years.

This brings me to the subject of this paper—the sins of Christian orthodoxy. Some of the most disturbing passages in the New Testament are passages in which the authors instruct slaves to accept their status as slaves. Several of the epistles in the New Testament contain this instruction. In order to understand these passages in their historical context, we need to have some idea of what slavery in the Roman Empire in the first century was like. So before I discuss the passages from the New Testament, I will first document the relevant facts concerning the practice of slavery at the time at which these passages were being written. With these facts established, it will become clear that Christian orthodoxy entails moral claims that are false.

### 3. ROMAN SLAVERY

Some people in the Roman world regarded slaves as human beings, with moral rights, and there were even some legal limits on the way in which slaves could be treated. For example, they could not be thrown to wild beasts without a conviction of criminal behavior.<sup>8</sup> However, generally speaking, the Roman law treated slaves as “things” and “property.”<sup>9</sup> They were bought and sold, just like any other piece of property. The historian Thomas Wiedemann describes the legal status of slaves in the Roman world as follows.

Romans assigned their slaves a legal position which clearly separated them from other, “free,” members of the community. Although chattel slaves

were human beings, and thus had certain moral rights, legally they were property in the absolute control of an owner—even to the extent that the owner could transfer his rights to someone else by gift or sale. All slaves were alike in being denied any legal claims on society.<sup>10</sup>

A consequence of the owner's absolute right of property over his slave was that the slave could not be entitled to own property himself; everything he had or acquired through inheritance or business dealings legally belonged to the head of his household.<sup>11</sup>

At Rome in particular, . . . slavery is clearly presented as a state of absolute subjection. The slave has no kin, he cannot assume the rights and obligations of marriage; his very identity is imposed by the owner who gives him his name.<sup>12</sup>

Another requirement of Roman law, formulated in a Senate Recommendation of 10 AD, which strikes us as particularly inhumane, was that if an owner was killed, all the slaves within earshot at the time had to be interrogated under torture and executed. The Will of the murdered man (which might provide for some of these slaves to be given their freedom) could not be opened until the enquiry was complete.<sup>13</sup>

So although slaves were viewed as human beings, with moral rights, they had almost no legal rights whatsoever. In the eyes of the law, they were mere property, to be bought and sold.

Practically speaking, the life of a slave in the first century was a life of unrelieved, compulsory labor.<sup>14</sup> We get some insight into the life of a first-century slave from the Stoic philosopher Seneca (4 BC–AD 65). In Book III of his work *On Anger*, Seneca admonishes slave owners not to treat their slaves so harshly. In the process of giving his admonition, Seneca gives us a good picture of what the life of a slave was like.

It is strange that we should think it a good thing to send a poor unfortunate slave to prison. Why are we so anxious to beat him at once and break his legs? We should wait until our anger has cooled off before fixing a punishment. For we punish by sword and execution, chains, imprisonment and starvation a crime that deserves only a light beating.<sup>15</sup>

What sorts of crimes would be punished by breaking a slave's legs, or executing him? According to Seneca, it could be something as minor as breaking a crystal cup. When Vedius Pollio was informed that one of his slaves had broken a crystal cup,

Vedius ordered him to be seized and to be put to death in an unusual way. He ordered him to be thrown to the huge lampreys which he had in his fish pond. Who would not think he did this for display? Yet it was out of cruelty.<sup>16</sup>

It is impossible to know just how widespread such abuse was, but there is reason to think that it was fairly widespread. First of all, there is the testimony of Seneca about the general treatment of slaves at the time. According to Seneca, slaves were treated “not as if they were men, but beasts of burden.” He says that owners were, in general, “excessively haughty, cruel and insulting towards slaves.”<sup>17</sup> As a contemporary observer with no obvious agenda, Seneca's testimony constitutes evidence that the abuse of slaves was

fairly widespread. Second, the other documents that we possess from this period contain many more stories of the abuse of slaves. Consider the following remarks by the second-century doctor, Galen (AD 129–199).

. . . I have criticized many of my friends, when I saw how they had bruised their hands by hitting their slaves on the mouth—I told them that they deserved to rupture themselves and die in a fit of anger, when it was open to them to preside over the administration of as many strokes of the rod or the whip as they wished a little later, and they could carry out such a punishment just as they wished. . . . There are other people who don't just hit their slaves, but kick them and gouge out their eyes and strike them with a pen if they happen to be holding one.<sup>18</sup>

Reports like this one confirm, to some degree, Seneca's testimony that the abuse of slaves in the Roman world was quite common.

How did people in the first-century Roman Empire come to be slaves? Beginning in the second century BC, there were two main sources of slaves in the Roman world. First, there were prisoners of war, and second, there were infants who were born into slavery by being born to slaves.<sup>19</sup> By the first century AD, many slaves were born into slavery by being the children of slaves, and many others became slaves by being sold into slavery as children.<sup>20</sup> For example, if a baby was exposed to die by a parent who did not want her, then anyone who was willing to raise the child could treat her as a slave.<sup>21</sup> In these cases of slavery there was no connection between slavery and criminal behavior. Prisoners of war were made slaves even if they had committed no crimes, and as Thomas Wiedemann puts it, "The Romans had no doubts that any war they engaged in was just, and the captives their property."<sup>22</sup> Obviously those who were born into slavery had committed no crimes when they became slaves. So slaves in the Roman world were not slaves because they were guilty of any crime. They were slaves either because they had been conquered by the Romans, and thereafter subjected to slavery, or because they had been born into slavery.

I have one inference to make from all of this. The institution of slavery in the first-century Roman Empire was seriously unjust. It was unjust because it denied equal human rights to a whole class of people for no morally sufficient reason. Note: this conclusion follows from the legal status of slaves alone, independently of the nature or extent of their abuse in actual practice. This is especially clear in the case of children who were born into slavery. To treat a human being as property from the day she is born; to deny her the freedom to choose her own course in life; and to deny her equal protection under the law, is seriously unjust. It is almost as obvious that prisoners of war should not be reduced to slavery either. This is especially clear when we consider the fact that many of the prisoners of wars with the Romans were not the aggressors in those wars. Such people were reduced to slavery simply for defending their homeland against an outside aggressor. To treat such a person as property, to be bought and sold; to deny him the freedom to choose his own course in life; and to deny him equal protection under the law, is seriously unjust. All of this follows directly from

the legal status of slaves—their inequality before the law—independently of how they were treated in actual practice. The probability that there was widespread abuse of slaves in the Roman world, as evidenced by the testimony of Seneca and Galen, simply compounds the injustice. The absence of any serious legal protection of slaves surely facilitated the physical abuse of slaves in the Roman world. That makes the institution of slavery in the Roman world all the more unjust.

#### 4. THE NEW TESTAMENT INSTRUCTIONS TO SLAVES

How did the authors of the New Testament respond to the injustice of slavery? Did they cry out against it? Did they demand justice for slaves? No. In fact, not only did they fail to denounce slavery, they actually instructed slaves to accept their status as slaves willingly, and with a sincere heart. Several passages in the New Testament give this instruction. I will begin with the following passage from the book of *Ephesians*.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. *Ephesians 6: 5–8*<sup>23</sup>

In this passage the author instructs slaves not only to obey their masters, but to obey them *with respect and sincerity of heart*. Slaves should not obey their masters for merely pragmatic reasons, to make the best of their situation. No, slaves are instructed to serve their masters wholeheartedly. In short, slaves are instructed to embrace their status as slaves. The author of *Colossians* repeats the very same instruction, almost verbatim.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. *Colossians 3: 22–24*

Here again, slaves are not only told to obey their masters, but also to have a certain motive in doing so. They are to obey their masters, not for pragmatic reasons, just to win their favor, but *sincerely*. The author goes on to say that Christ will reward slaves for their service, because it is really Christ whom they serve. So the reason that slaves should remain slaves, and embrace their station in life, is that Christ himself has ordained that they be slaves, and wishes them to remain in that state.

The author of *1 Timothy* adds this.

All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better,

because those who benefit from their service are believers and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them. *1 Timothy 6: 1–2*

Not only are slaves supposed to serve their masters with a sincere heart, they are actually supposed to judge that their masters are worthy of this respect. Slaves are to judge that their masters deserve to be masters. This passage goes on to indicate that some masters might be Christians, and that Christian slaves are to serve Christian masters even better, because in this way they will benefit someone who is a believer. There is no suggestion here that owning slaves is incompatible with Christian faith or practice. On the contrary, this passage suggests just the opposite—that the practice of owning slaves is perfectly compatible with being a good Christian.

The book of *Titus* continues in the same vein.

Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our savior attractive. *Titus 2: 9–10*

Slaves are not to talk back to their masters, nor steal from them. Rather, slaves should prove that they are worthy of their master's trust. The point of this behavior is to make Christianity attractive to unbelievers. Thus, according to the author, the attractiveness of Christianity depends, at least in part, on slaves' acceptance of the institution of slavery.

Finally, the author of *1 Peter* goes as far as to say that slaves should submit to masters who abuse them.

Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle, but also those who are harsh. For it is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. *1 Peter 2: 18–20*

Slaves are encouraged to suffer beatings willingly, even when they have done no wrong. When they endure such suffering, despite being innocent of any wrongdoing, they have God's approval.

In these passages, taken directly from the New Testament, slaves are instructed to accept their status as slaves, and to serve their masters sincerely, and with respect. They are not to talk back to their masters, or steal from them. Rather, slaves should demonstrate to their masters that they are completely trustworthy. Slaves should believe that their masters are worthy of this respectful service, and they are to serve their masters as if they were serving Christ himself, because in serving their masters they really *are* serving Christ himself. Slaves might have masters who are Christians, and they should serve Christian masters even better than they would serve non-Christian masters, because then they will benefit someone who is a Christian. In these passages there is no suggestion that slavery is incompatible with Christian faith, and the reference to Christian masters suggests the very opposite—that owning slaves is perfectly compatible with being a good



Christian. Finally, slaves should even submit to masters who abuse them wrongfully, and when they submit to such abuse, they have God's own approval. To anyone with a healthy conscience, this is deeply disturbing.

Those who hold that Sacred Tradition is an additional source of authority might appeal to the subsequent tradition of the Church to mitigate the offense of these passages. However, this response faces two insurmountable obstacles. First of all, even Christians who accept the authority of Sacred Tradition maintain that this Tradition cannot contradict the teachings of the New Testament. So no appeal to Sacred Tradition will soften the offense of these passages, since these passages come right from the New Testament itself, which is the authoritative source for any Christian Tradition. Second, the subsequent tradition of the Christian Church simply continues the very same teaching on slavery that is contained in the New Testament. The historical facts here are especially striking. In the first few centuries of the Christian Church, the Manicheans actually instructed slaves to emancipate themselves from their masters. So in the early days of Christianity there were people openly opposing slavery as unjust. What was the response of the early Christian Church? In direct response to this Manichean teaching, the Council of Gangra made this declaration in the year 340.

If anyone, on the pretext of religion, teaches another man's slave to despise his master, and to withdraw from his service, and not to serve his master with good will and all respect, let him be anathema.<sup>24</sup>

One might wonder if perhaps the institution of slavery had changed significantly by the time of this council. However, as Alan Watson has shown, the status of slaves remained the same, or perhaps even deteriorated, right through the time of Constantine. In 329 AD, Constantine issued the following statement.

Whenever such chance accompanies the beatings of slaves by masters that they die, the masters are free from blame who, while punishing very wicked deeds, wished to obtain better behavior from their slaves. Nor do we wish an investigation to be made into facts of this kind in which it is in the interest of the owner that a slave who is his own property be unharmed, whether the punishment was simply inflicted or apparently with the intention of killing the slave. It is our pleasure that masters are not held guilty of murder by reason of the death of a slave as often as they exercise domestic power by simple punishment. Whenever, therefore, slaves leave the human scene after correction by beating, when fatal necessity hangs over them, the masters should fear no criminal investigations.<sup>25</sup>

According to Constantine, if a slave-owner beats a slave to death, then he need not fear any investigation, much less any punishment. That was the nature of slavery in the Roman Empire at the time at which the Council of Gangra condemned the emancipation of slaves.

This statement from the Council of Gangra was incorporated into canon law and it was cited as authoritative for the next fourteen hundred years. Throughout this period, the leaders of the Christian Churches instructed slaves to accept their status as slaves. In his commentary on Paul's

first letter to the Corinthians, St. Theodoret (423–446 AD), the Bishop of Cyrrhus, said this.

. . . you should not try to escape from your status as a slave on the grounds that it is degrading for the Christian faith. And even if it is possible for you to win manumission, you must stay and be a slave, and await the reward you will obtain for this.<sup>26</sup>

In his *Pastoral Rule*, written around the year 600, Gregory I declared that “Slaves should be told . . . not [to] despise their masters and recognize that they are only slaves.”<sup>27</sup> The same attitude towards slavery was manifested, at least in the Catholic Church, right up to the modern period. In 1548, Pope Paul III declared that

Each and every person of either sex, whether Roman or non-Roman, whether secular or clerical . . . may freely and lawfully buy and sell publicly any slaves whatsoever of either sex . . . and publicly hold them as slaves and make use of their work, and compel them to do the work assigned to them. . . . Slaves who flee to the Capitol and appeal for their liberty shall in no wise be freed from the bondage of their servitude, but . . . shall be returned in slavery to their owners and if it seems proper . . . punished as runaways.<sup>28</sup>

So for 1500 years the Christian Church accepted the institution of slavery, and instructed slaves to accept their status as slaves. Therefore no appeal to Sacred Tradition will exonerate Christian orthodoxy from the charge of instructing slaves to accept their status as slaves. If anything, the tradition of the Christian Church after the apostolic age involves an even clearer endorsement of slavery than that contained in the New Testament. So henceforth I will focus exclusively on the New Testament, which is authoritative for all orthodox Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant.<sup>29</sup>

The authors of the New Testament instruct slaves to accept their status as slaves with sincerity and respect for their masters. Slaves should judge that their masters are worthy of the respectful service that they give them. In short, slaves should accept the status of a slave willingly. As I noted above, for anyone with a healthy conscience, this is deeply disturbing. However, to remove any doubts, in what follows I will demonstrate that these passages instruct slaves to have a serious moral vice. Since no one should have a moral vice, it follows that these passages say something false.

#### 4. THE CASE AGAINST CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY

In his seminal article, “Servility and Self-Respect,” Thomas Hill offers the following example to illustrate the vice of servility.

Consider an extremely deferential African American. He always steps aside for white men; he does not complain when less qualified whites take over his job; he gratefully accepts whatever benefits his all-white government and employers allot him, and he would not think of protesting its insufficiency. He displays the symbols of deference to whites, and of contempt towards African Americans: he faces the former with bowed stance and a ready “Sir” and “Ma’am”; he reserves his strongest obscenities for the latter. Imagine,

too, that he is not playing a game. He is not the shrewdly prudent calculator, who knows how to make the best of a bad lot and mocks his masters behind their backs. He accepts without question the idea that, as an African American, he is owed less than whites. He may believe that African Americans are mentally inferior and of less social utility, but that is not the crucial point. The attitude which he displays is that what he values, aspires for, and can demand is of less importance than what whites value, aspire for, and can demand. He is far from the picture book's carefree, happy servant, but he does not feel that he has a right to expect anything better.<sup>30</sup>

This is a good example of a servile person. When he is discriminated against, he accepts the discrimination that he suffers as appropriate. He does not accept this discrimination for merely pragmatic reasons, to make the best of his unfortunate situation. No, he actually endorses the discrimination against him as right and proper. He accepts the subordinate status that his society has imposed on him, and he behaves accordingly. This is servility, and it is a moral vice.

Why is servility a vice? Servility is a vice because, in the act of being servile, the servile person either denies or disregards his own moral rights, and thereby denies or disregards his own moral equality with others.<sup>31</sup> In denying or disregarding his own moral equality with others, the servile person not only disrespects himself, but also disrespects the moral law. How so? In denying or disregarding his own moral equality with others, the servile person thereby denies or disregards the moral equality of all human beings, since he is a human being. It is this denial or disregard of the moral equality of all human beings that makes servility such a serious moral vice. (It is no wonder that servility encourages exploitation. A person cannot deny his own moral equality with other human beings without simultaneously denying the moral equality of all human beings, and whenever people deny the moral equality of all human beings, this encourages exploitation.) Be that as it may, servility is a moral vice regardless of its consequences. That is because servility essentially involves a tendency to deny or disregard the moral equality of all human beings, and such a tendency is morally vicious.

Return now to the New Testament teaching on slavery. The authors of the New Testament instruct slaves to accept their status as slaves, not merely for pragmatic reasons, but sincerely, and with respect for their masters. Slaves are instructed to believe that their masters are worthy of their respectful service. Thus, slaves are instructed to endorse the master-slave relationship with their masters. Of course, the master-slave relationship, as it existed in the first century, is logically inconsistent with the moral equality of all human beings. Recall that the master-slave relationship gave the master absolute power over the life and death of the slave from childhood, or even birth. Such a relationship is logically incompatible with the moral equality of two human beings. So for a slave to accept her master-slave relationship with her master, not merely for pragmatic reasons, but sincerely and wholeheartedly, is for her to deny her own moral equality with another human being. In denying her own moral equality with another human being, the slave is denying the moral equality of all human beings. Thus, in

accepting the master-slave relationship, a slave is thereby denying the moral equality of all human beings. So by instructing slaves to accept their master-slave relationships, the authors of the New Testament were instructing slaves to think and act in ways that deny the moral equality of all human beings. This is the essence of servility, and so the conclusion is inescapable: the authors of the New Testament were instructing slaves to be servile. Since servility is a serious moral vice, this means that the authors of the New Testament are instructing slaves to have a serious moral vice.

Besides instructing slaves to have a moral vice, do the passages quoted above implicitly endorse the institution of slavery? This certainly seems to be how Martin Luther interpreted these passages. In his reply to the Twelve Articles of the German peasants in 1524, Luther defended medieval serfdom by arguing that the Bible endorsed slavery. In his reply to the Third Article of the German peasants, here is what Luther said.

ON THE THIRD ARTICLE “There shall be no serfs, for Christ has made all men free.” That is making Christian liberty an utterly carnal thing. Did not Abraham and other patriarchs and prophets have slaves? Read what St. Paul teaches about servants, who, at that time, were all slaves. Therefore this article is dead against the Gospel. It is a piece of robbery by which every man takes from his lord the body, which has become his lord’s property. For a slave can be a Christian, and have Christian liberty, in the same way that a prisoner or a sick man is a Christian, and yet not free. This article would make all men equal, and turn the spiritual kingdom of Christ into a worldly, external kingdom; and that is impossible. For a worldly kingdom cannot stand unless there is in it an inequality of persons, so that some are free, some imprisoned, some lords, some subjects, etc.<sup>32</sup>

To Luther, it was just obvious that the New Testament endorsed slavery, and hence the peasants’ demand that serfdom be abolished was clearly “against the Gospel.”

Luther does not offer any argument for his interpretation of these passages. However, in the nineteenth century, the defenders of slavery argued that the New Testament clearly endorsed slavery, and their argument is not easily dismissed. Here is the Baptist theologian Richard Fuller, writing in the mid-1840’s.

[In the apostolic age] Slavery was everywhere a part of the social organization of the earth; and slaves and their masters were members together of the churches; and minute instructions are given to each as to their duties, without even an insinuation that it was the duty of masters to emancipate. Now I ask, could this possibly be so, if slavery were a ‘heinous sin’? No! Every candid man will answer no!<sup>33</sup>

It is tempting to dismiss Fuller’s argument as a bad argument from silence, but that would be a mistake. Fuller’s argument turns on the fact that the authors of the New Testament are *not* silent about slavery. On the contrary, they give specific instructions to both masters and slaves concerning the sort of behavior that is appropriate in the master-slave relationship. Slaves are instructed to obey their masters, not merely for pragmatic reasons, but sincerely and with respect. Moreover, slaves are instructed to believe that their

masters are worthy of this respectful service. Masters, for their part, are instructed not to mistreat their slaves, but it is never suggested that masters should actually emancipate their slaves. So the question is this: do these instructions to slaves and their masters implicitly endorse the institution of slavery? In what follows I will argue in the affirmative: these passages implicitly endorse slavery.

My argument turns on the notion of *conversational implicature*, which was first developed by Paul Grice.<sup>34</sup> It often happens that the context of a conversation allows us to infer much more from a speaker's statement than what is logically or semantically implied by the speaker's statement. If I tell you that my car is almost out of gas, and you reply "Just one mile down the road," then I can infer that you mean to say that there is a gas station just one mile down the road. Of course, you did not explicitly say this, so how am I entitled to infer it? I am entitled to infer it because I am entitled to assume that you are following what Grice calls "the cooperative principle." The cooperative principle states that each person in a conversation will make a contribution to the conversation that is appropriate to the accepted purpose or direction of the conversation. When I tell you that my car is out of gas, I thereby establish the purpose of the conversation, which is to get me some gas. Therefore, unless I get evidence to the contrary, I am entitled to assume that whatever you contribute to the conversation will be appropriate to this purpose. The statement "Just one mile down the road" contributes to this purpose *only if* you mean to say that there is a gas station just one mile down the road. So I am entitled to infer that you mean to say that there is a gas station just one mile down the road. This is an instance of conversational implicature. I am entitled to infer more than what is logically or semantically implied by what you said because I am entitled to assume that you are following the cooperative principle. Moreover, what I am entitled to infer is precisely what follows from your speech in conjunction with the cooperative principle.

The cooperative principle entitles me to make inferences not only from what you say, but also from what you *do not* say. When I tell you that my car is almost out of gas, and you say "Just one mile down the road," I can infer not only that there is a gas station one mile down the road, but also that this gas station is open. How can I infer that? I can infer that because the established purpose of the conversation, which is to get me some gas, would require that you tell me if the gas station were closed. So, assuming that you are following the cooperative principle, since you did not say that the gas station is closed, I can properly infer that you mean to say that it is open. More precisely, in omitting to say that the gas station is closed, your speech conversationally implies that the gas station is open. The cooperative principle not only forbids inappropriate contributions to the conversation, but also forbids inappropriate *omissions* from the conversation. Sometimes the established purpose of a conversation requires that if you believe that P is true, then you assert that P. If, in such a context, you do not assert that P, then your speech in that context conversationally implies that P is not true.

Now return to Fuller's argument concerning the New Testament and

slavery. With the concept of conversational implicature, Fuller's argument can be developed and defended rigorously. First, the cooperative principle surely governs the discourse of the New Testament. So the authors of the New Testament can be expected to make appropriate contributions to the stated purpose of their discourse. Likewise, the authors of the New Testament can be expected *not to omit anything* from their discourse that would be required by the stated purpose of their discourse. So what is the purpose of their discourse in these passages concerning slavery? The context of these passages makes it very clear that their purpose is to give a very thorough moral instruction. The chapters that contain these passages contain very lengthy, detailed lists of all the types of behavior that are inappropriate for a Christian. The lists of inappropriate behavior include lying, stealing, unresolved anger, bad language, brawling, slander, sexual immorality, drunkenness, and on and on. Very little is left untouched. Of course, it would be unfair to expect any such list to be completely exhaustive of every type of immoral behavior. So if slavery were simply never mentioned, then this omission might be attributed to the necessary limits of any finite list. However, the problem, as Fuller rightly notes, is that slavery is not only mentioned, but discussed at length. Far from being omitted, slavery receives a thorough discussion. Now, since the purpose of this discourse is to give a thorough moral instruction, and since slavery is discussed explicitly, the cooperative principle implies that if the speaker believes that slavery is seriously immoral, he must say so. However, none of the authors of these passages says that slavery is seriously immoral. Therefore these passages conversationally imply that slavery is not seriously immoral. That is just to say that these passages endorse the institution of slavery. They implicitly assert that slavery is morally permissible. So the New Testament, which is authoritative for all orthodox Christians, says that some people should have the moral vice of servility, and that the institution of slavery is morally permissible. Both of these claims are false. Therefore some of what the New Testament says, in matters of conduct, is false.

One possible objection to this line of argument is that there are other passages in the New Testament that mitigate, or even negate the passages that I have quoted. For example, *Colossians* 3:11 says that in the Christian life there is no distinction between slave and free. Likewise, *Ephesians* 6:9 tells masters to stop threatening their slaves, because both masters and slaves have the same Master in heaven, and with Him there is no partiality. However, neither of these passages contradicts the passages that I have been discussing. First, consider the statement that in the Christian life there is no distinction between slave and free. This statement is very abstract, and so it does not wear its meaning on its sleeve. How are we to determine exactly what this implies concerning the proper conduct of masters and slaves? The most charitable approach would be to look at the other statements that this author makes concerning the proper conduct of masters and slaves, and interpret this abstract statement in the light of those specific instructions. But then the instructions that I have been discussing are the proper start-

ing point for interpreting these more abstract statements, and thus these more abstract statements do not contradict anything that I have said here. Now consider the statement that masters are not to threaten their slaves, because both masters and slaves have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality. This passage does instruct masters not to abuse their slaves, and thus it forbids Christian masters to abuse their slaves in the way that Seneca and Galen described as common. However, this does not in any way contradict the instructions to slaves to accept their status as slaves, and the institution of slavery. Moreover, as the passage from *I Peter* quoted above says, slaves are to accept abuse, even if it is unjustified. Finally, although this passage concludes by saying that God shows no partiality, given what else this author says (which I have quoted above), there is no reason to think that this has any earthly, practical implications. So this passage does not give us any reason to change our interpretation of the passages that I have already discussed.

The other text that might be used to argue against my interpretation is Paul's letter to Philemon. There are three principal characters in this story: the apostle Paul, who is the author of the letter; Philemon, who is the slave owner to whom the letter is addressed; and Onesimus, who was formerly a slave of Philemon, but subsequently ran away. After leaving Philemon, Onesimus found his way to Paul, and he became a Christian. After serving Paul for some time, the apostle decides to send Onesimus back to Philemon. In his letter to Philemon, Paul suggests that perhaps Onesimus was separated from Philemon so that Philemon might eventually have him back not as a slave, but as a beloved brother. Moreover, Paul asks Philemon to welcome Onesimus as Philemon would welcome Paul himself. Now, does this letter from the apostle Paul express a different position on slavery than the passages that I have quoted above? No, it does not. First of all, Paul is returning a slave, Onesimus, to his former owner, from whom he formerly emancipated himself. This very act suggests that Onesimus' proper place is with his owner. Second, Paul greets Philemon, who is clearly a slave owner, with nothing but praise. He tells Philemon that "the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother." So not only does Paul fail to condemn Philemon's ownership of slaves, he actually praises Philemon as a good Christian. Third, Paul's principal argument to Philemon, on behalf of Onesimus, is that Philemon owes Paul, and loves Paul, and so Philemon should receive Onesimus and treat him well *for Paul's sake*. That is the reason that Philemon should treat Onesimus well. There is no suggestion, anywhere in the letter, that Philemon owes anything to Onesimus for having owned him as a slave. Finally, Paul tells Philemon that if Onesimus has wronged Philemon in any way, then Paul will assume the debt himself. So Paul explicitly discusses the wrongs that might have been committed in this relationship between a master and a slave, and yet there is no suggestion anywhere that Philemon has wronged Onesimus by owning him as a slave. So, in summary, Paul's letter to Philemon does not express a view of slavery that contradicts the one that we find elsewhere in the New Testament. Although it does not

contain the explicit instructions to slaves that we have found in the other letters, it does not contain anything that contradicts them either.

Before I turn to the philosophical consequences of all of this, I will briefly outline a parallel argument concerning the New Testament and the subordination of women. Several passages in the epistles clearly instruct wives to be submissive to their husbands. *Ephesians 5:22*, *Colossians 3:18*, *1 Timothy 2:11–12*, and *Titus 2:3–5* all instruct women to submit to their husbands. I assume that no rational person today would deny that women and men are moral equals. However, if women and men are moral equals, then they should treat each other as equals in a marriage relationship. Now, this last premise is the premise of the argument that some will reject, but I see no good reason to reject it. There is no plausible supposition about marriage that implies that it changes the moral equality of men and women as human beings. So even in marriage, men and women remain equals, and they should treat each other as equals. So when the authors of the New Testament instruct women to be submissive to their husbands, they are instructing women to deny their moral equality with their husbands. In denying their moral equality with their husbands, women would be denying the moral equality of all human beings. This is the vice of servility again. So when the authors of the New Testament instruct women to be submissive to their husbands, they are instructing them to be servile, which is a moral vice. Therefore the authors of the New Testament instruct married women to have a moral vice. This argument is exactly parallel to the one concerning slaves, and I believe that it is just as cogent. Moreover, there is also the notorious passage in *1 Timothy*, in which the author instructs women to be submissive to men in the Church.

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. *1 Timothy 2: 11–13*

Women are instructed to be submissive to men in the Church as well as in the home. This is yet more instruction in servility. Moreover, these passages conversationally imply an endorsement of the subordination of women in both marriage and society. Here again, the argument is exactly parallel to the argument concerning slavery, and so I will leave it to the reader to construct it in detail. So the New Testament both instructs women to have the moral vice of servility, and implicitly endorses the subordination of women in marriage and society. This concludes my description of the sins of Christian orthodoxy. I now turn to the philosophical consequences of these historical facts.

## 5. THE FAILURE OF CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY

What follows from these historical facts concerning Christian orthodoxy, slavery, and the subordination of women? In the mid-1840's, when Richard Fuller was using the New Testament to justify slavery, Karl Marx was drawing a very different conclusion.



The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of Antiquity, and glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages. . . . The social principles of Christianity preach self-contempt, abasement, and submission. . . . So much the worse for the social principles of Christianity.<sup>35</sup>

If we substitute “Christian orthodoxy” for “Christianity,” then I think that Marx is exactly right. Christian orthodoxy essentially involves the acceptance of the New Testament as authoritative, and a corresponding belief that these teachings were inspired by God. An orthodox Christian accepts the moral precepts that are contained in the New Testament, and believes that these precepts were inspired by God. Since the New Testament instructs slaves and married women to have the vice of servility, an orthodox Christian will accept these precepts and believe that they were inspired by God. Thus, an orthodox Christian will accept precepts that instruct people to have a moral vice. However, any precept that instructs people to have a moral vice is false. Therefore, Christian orthodoxy entails a false precept and so is itself false.

It will be argued that the New Testament teachings on slavery and women are not really essential to Christian orthodoxy. Here we must distinguish between doctrines that are *immediately* constitutive of Christian orthodoxy, and doctrines that are *mediately* constitutive of Christian orthodoxy. A doctrine is immediately constitutive of orthodoxy if that doctrine is, itself, constitutive of orthodoxy. A doctrine is mediately constitutive of orthodoxy if it is logically implied by doctrines that are immediately constitutive of orthodoxy. I have not claimed that the New Testament teachings on slavery and the subordination of women are *immediately* constitutive of Christian orthodoxy. What I have claimed is that these teachings are *mediately* constitutive of Christian orthodoxy. Since Christian orthodoxy essentially involves the disposition to accept as true the teachings of the New Testament in matters of faith and conduct, and since these teachings are contained in the New Testament, these teachings are logically implied by Christian orthodoxy.

At this point, one might respond to the argument by modifying Christian orthodoxy to allow for the fallibility of the New Testament, while maintaining its general reliability. According to this modified orthodoxy, the authors of the New Testament usually speak for God, and they usually speak the truth, but there are exceptions. However, this reply is far too sanguine about such a horrible injustice as slavery. The New Testament endorsement of slavery and the subordination of women are not just two, minor errors. On the contrary, even if we focus only on the endorsement of slavery, this is an error concerning one of the worst, most long-lived injustices in recorded history. It is an error that facilitated Luther’s acceptance of the serfdom of the Middle Ages, and that justified the slavery of both the British Empire and the United States. In the United States alone, millions of African Americans were enslaved for life.<sup>36</sup> The political and religious leaders in the southern United States appealed directly to the New Testament to defend the institution of slavery. George McDuffie, the governor of South Carolina in 1835, argued

that “Under both the Jewish and Christian dispensations of our religion, domestic slavery existed with the unequivocal sanction of its prophets, its apostles, and finally its great Author.”<sup>37</sup> Likewise, the former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass recalls that Christian ministers owned and abused slaves, and they appealed directly to the authority of the Bible to justify their actions. According to Douglass,

I used to attend a Methodist church, in which my master was a class-leader; he would talk most sanctimoniously about the dear Redeemer, who was sent “to preach deliverance to the captives, and set at liberty them that are bruised”—he would pray at morning, pray at noon, and pray at night; yet he could lash up my poor cousin by his two thumbs, and inflict stripes and blows upon his bare back, till the blood streamed to the ground, all the time quoting scripture, for his authority.<sup>38</sup>

The New Testament was used to justify the enslavement of millions of people for over two centuries in the United States. To treat this error as one, small error is morally horrendous. An error on such a serious moral issue, with such grave consequences, requires the Christian to change her attitude toward the Bible and Sacred Tradition. Otherwise, she puts herself in a position to make such an egregious moral error as the endorsement of slavery. Any belief that would lead one to accept such a horrible injustice must be rejected, especially when one’s conscience could have informed one of the injustice of slavery. So this modified orthodoxy is not modified enough. Christian orthodoxy must be rejected completely.

## 6. CONCLUSION

I have argued that Christian orthodoxy entails the rightness of precepts that are false, and therefore Christian orthodoxy is false. So much the worse for Christian orthodoxy, but what about Christianity *simpliciter*? Does the argument of this paper have any implications for the truth or falsity of Christianity *simpliciter*? It is beyond the scope of this paper to try to define Christianity *simpliciter*, much less to draw any implications concerning it. However, the argument of this paper certainly raises questions about Christianity *simpliciter*. Throughout most of its history, Christianity has involved the belief that God revealed Himself and His will through the Bible. If, as I have argued, some of the moral claims in the Bible are false, then how does this affect the credibility of the Christian religion? Many Christians will argue that, given the human medium of divine revelation, the existence of some errors in the Christian revelation is to be expected. Thus, in their recent book, *The Agnostic Inquirer*, Sandra Menssen and Thomas Sullivan contend that, when it comes to divine revelation,

As long as we come to recognize the cultural presuppositions of the human messenger, there remains the possibility of grasping enough of the substance of the divine message—supposing a divine message has actually been sent—to allow the inference to the existence of a good God. In some ways we are like children repeating a message given by an adult: a child

may garble elements in such a message, but in many cases one can tell which parts of the message came from the adult.<sup>39</sup>

For Menssen and Sullivan, the existence of errors in a putative revelation does not completely undermine the hypothesis that this putative revelation is a genuine revelation. This position is in stark contrast to that of Ludwig Feuerbach. According to Feuerbach,

Faith in a written revelation is a real, unfeigned, and so far respectable faith, only where it is believed that all in the sacred writings is significant, true, holy, divine. Where, on the contrary, the distinction is made between the human and divine, the relatively true and the absolutely true, the historical and the permanent,—where it is not held that all without distinction is unconditionally true; there the verdict of unbelief, that the Bible is no divine book, is already introduced into the interpretation of the Bible,—there, at least indirectly, that is, in a crafty, dishonest way, its title to the character of a divine revelation is denied. Unity, unconditionality, freedom from exceptions, immediate certitude, is alone the character of divinity. A book that imposes on me the necessity of discrimination, the necessity of criticism, in order to separate the divine from the human, the permanent from the temporary, is no longer a divine, certain, infallible book,—it is degraded to the rank of profane books; for every profane book has the same quality, that together with or in the human it contains the divine, that is, together with or in the individual it contains the universal and eternal. But that only is a truly divine book in which there is not merely something good and something bad, something permanent and something temporary, but in which all comes as it were from one crucible, all is eternal, true and good.<sup>40</sup>

Who is right about this, Menssen and Sullivan, or Feuerbach? The answer depends on how an omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect being, like God, would be likely to administer His divine revelation. Would a being like God allow serious moral errors to be propounded right alongside His own revelation, in the very same text and tradition? Feuerbach thinks that the answer is “no,” whereas Menssen and Sullivan think that the answer is “maybe.” Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this paper to try to answer this question. So that task will have to wait for another occasion.<sup>41</sup>

*The College at Brockport, SUNY*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank Luke Hardy for all his help with the historical material in this paper. Without his research, I could not have documented all the facts about slavery that are documented here. I also want to thank John Kronen for many helpful conversations about the subject of this paper. Although he does not agree with all of my conclusions, his constructive criticism has been invaluable. I also want to thank an anonymous referee for *Philo*. His/Her comments and criticisms were extremely helpful. Finally, I owe a special debt to my brother, Bob Barnes. His historical, critical mindset has been a constant source of insight and inspiration.

## NOTES

1. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines, Fifth Edition*. (New York: Harper, 1978), pp. 42–43.

2. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Mercier Press, 1967), p. 56.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
4. References to Luther are to the Weimar Edition of Luther's Works, *Weimarer Ausgabe* 7, 315.
5. Rahner, *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, p. 60.
6. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 61–62.
7. Luther, *Weimarer Ausgabe*, 42, 474.
8. Thomas Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 173.
9. S. Scott Bartchy, "Servant / Slave," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, Second Edition, ed. Geoffrey Bromily, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 420.
10. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, p. 15.
11. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, p. 30.
12. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, p. 1.
13. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, p. 169.
14. R. Tuente, "Doulos / Slave" in the *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1986), pp. 592–593.
15. Seneca, *On Anger*, III, 32.
16. Seneca, *On Anger*, III, 40.
17. K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 119.
18. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, p. 180.
19. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, pp. 6–7.
20. S. Scott Bartchy, "Slavery," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, ed. David N. Freeman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 67.
21. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, p. 7.
22. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, p. 114.
23. The Bible, *New International Version* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1984).
24. Maureen Fiedler and Linda Rabben, ed., *Rome Has Spoken* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), p. 81.
25. Alan Watson, "Roman Slave Law and Romanist Ideology," *Phoenix* 37 (Spring 1983), p. 62.
26. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, p. 245.
27. Fiedler and Rabben, *Rome Has Spoken*, p. 81.
28. Fiedler and Rabben, *Rome Has Spoken*, p. 83.
29. As Michael McCormick has shown, slavery and slave markets existed in Christian Europe throughout the Middle Ages. See his "New Light on the 'Dark Ages': How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian Economy" *Past & Present* 17 (2002), pp. 41–53.
30. Thomas Hill, Jr., "Servility and Self-Respect," reprinted in *Virtue and Vice in Everyday Life*, Third Edition, Christina Sommers (ed.), (Fort Worth, Tex.: Harcourt Brace, 1993), pp. 734–747.
31. Hill, p. 742. By "moral equality," I mean equality in the respects that are relevant to deserving basically equal treatment.
32. *Works of Martin Luther*, The Philadelphia Edition, Vol. IV (Philadelphia, 1931), pp. 219–244.
33. Quoted in William Hagie, *Christianity and Slavery: A Review of the Correspondence Between Richard Fuller, D.D., of Beaufort, South Carolina, and Francis Wayland, D.D., of Providence, Rhode Island, on Domestic Slavery, Considered as a Scriptural Institution* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1847), p. 12.
34. H. P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in *Syntax and Semantics: Speech Acts, Volume 3*, ed. Cole and Morgan (New York: Academic), 1975.
35. Karl Marx, "The Communism of the Paper *Rheinischer Beobachter*," reprinted

in *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels On Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), pp. 83–84.

36. For the exact numbers of slaves in the United States from 1790 to 1860, see the United States Historical Census Data Browser, at the website of the Library of the University of Virginia: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/>.

37. George McDuffie, speech before the South Carolina legislature in 1835, reprinted in *Slavery: Great Speeches in History*, ed. Karin Coddon (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2002), p. 23.

38. Frederick Douglass, “The Church and Prejudice,” a speech delivered at the Plymouth Church Anti-Slavery Society, December 23, 1841, reprinted in *Frederick Douglass, Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), p. 4.

39. Sandra Menssen and Thomas D. Sullivan, *The Agnostic Inquirer: Revelation from a Philosophical Standpoint* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 84.

40. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (Harper and Row, New York, 1957, pp. 209–210).

41. Many audience members and commentators have asked me how the argument of this paper is related to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. According to that doctrine, the second person of the Trinity became human, and thereby submitted himself, and accepted a subordinate status. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address this topic fully. So I will limit myself to one thought here. The texts in the New Testament that speak of Christ as accepting a lower status also stress that he accepted this status *freely*. By contrast, there is no reason to think that either the slaves or the women who were instructed to accept a subordinate status in society were first asked whether they would accept it freely.