

# **ANTEBELLUM SLAVERY**

**An Orthodox Christian View**

Dr. Gary Lee Roper

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# *Table of Contents*

<b><u>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</u></b>	<b><u>III</u></b>
<b><u>ABOUT THE AUTHOR .....</u></b>	<b><u>XI</u></b>
<b><u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</u></b>	<b><u>XIII</u></b>
<b><u>INTRODUCTION .....</u></b>	<b><u>XIV</u></b>
<b><u>FOREWORD .....</u></b>	<b><u>XIX</u></b>
<b><u>PREFACE .....</u></b>	<b><u>22</u></b>
<b><u>PART A: HISTORICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL VIEW OF</u></b>	
<b><u>SLAVERY .....</u></b>	<b><u>30</u></b>
<b><u>1 WHAT IS A SLAVE? .....</u></b>	<b><u>33</u></b>
<b><u>2 THE ANTIQUITY OF SLAVERY .....</u></b>	<b><u>38</u></b>

<b><u>3 VIEWS OF THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS ON SLAVERY.....</u></b>	<b><u>43</u></b>
<b><u>4 VIEW OF THE REFORMERS AND OTHER THEOLOGIANS ON SLAVERY .....</u></b>	<b><u>57</u></b>
<b><u>5 SLAVERY AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE .....</u></b>	<b><u>68</u></b>
<b><u>6 CONDITION OF SLAVES IN AFRICA .....</u></b>	<b><u>74</u></b>
<b><u>7 SLAVE INSURRECTION IN HAITI .....</u></b>	<b><u>83</u></b>
<b><u>8 SLAVERY IN THE OTHER AMERICAS; EMANCIPATION IN THE BRITISH WEST INDIES.....</u></b>	<b><u>89</u></b>
<b><u>9 WEALTH IN THE OLD SOUTH.....</u></b>	<b><u>96</u></b>
<b><u>10 THE CONCEPT OF HONOR IN THE OLD SOUTH .....</u></b>	<b><u>104</u></b>
<b><u>11 REVELATIONS ABOUT ATTITUDES TOWARD NEGROES IN THE NORTH AND THE WEST .....</u></b>	<b><u>114</u></b>

<b><u>12 THE RABID ABOLITIONISTS .....</u></b>	<b><u>125</u></b>
<b><u>13 MR. LINCOLN, HIS WAR, AND EMANCIPATION .....</u></b>	<b><u>148</u></b>
<b><u>14 TOTAL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION: EXCESSES OF THE WAR AGAINST THE SOUTH .....</u></b>	<b><u>154</u></b>
<b><u>15 SLAVERY TODAY .....</u></b>	<b><u>172</u></b>
<b><u>16 POLITICAL APOLOGIES LUDICROUS.....</u></b>	<b><u>177</u></b>
<b><u>PART B .....</u></b>	<b><u>184</u></b>
<b><u>TRUE VIEW OF SLAVERY IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH .....</u></b>	<b><u>184</u></b>
<b><u>1 THE FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT OF 1936-1938.....</u></b>	<b><u>188</u></b>
<b><u>2 IMPACT OF SLAVERY ON THE FAMILY STRUCTURE .....</u></b>	<b><u>195</u></b>

<b><u>3 WHO WAS BEHIND THE “GREAT SOUTHERN SLAVE AUCTION?” .....</u></b>	<b><u>199</u></b>
<b><u>4 RUNAWAYS, PATROLLERS, AND SLAVE CATCHERS IN THE OLD SOUTH.....</u></b>	<b><u>208</u></b>
<b><u>5 DR. R. Q. MALLARD’S ACCOUNT OF ANTEBELLUM SLAVERY.....</u></b>	<b><u>213</u></b>
<b><u>6 CHRISTMAS ON THE PLANTATION.....</u></b>	<b><u>219</u></b>
<b><u>7 A CLOSE FAMILIAL BOND .....</u></b>	<b><u>225</u></b>
<b><u>8 JOHN JASPER, SLAVE PREACHER.....</u></b>	<b><u>228</u></b>
<b><u>PART C.....</u></b>	<b><u>236</u></b>
<b><u>THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF SLAVERY .....</u></b>	<b><u>236</u></b>
<b><u>1 SLAVERY AND THE SIN OF HAM.....</u></b>	<b><u>240</u></b>

<b><u>2 ABRAHAM GAINS SLAVES IN EGYPT .....</u></b>	<b><u>246</u></b>
<b><u>3 ABRAHAM RESCUES LOT WITH HIS SLAVE ARMY .....</u></b>	<b><u>247</u></b>
<b><u>4 A RUNAWAY SLAVE.....</u></b>	<b><u>248</u></b>
<b><u>5 SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF MASTERS.....</u></b>	<b><u>251</u></b>
<b><u>6 ABRAHAM AND ABIMELECH .....</u></b>	<b><u>253</u></b>
<b><u>7 GOD BLESSED ABRAHAM WITH MANY SLAVES .....</u></b>	<b><u>255</u></b>
<b><u>8 ISAAC—A SLAVEHOLDER.....</u></b>	<b><u>256</u></b>
<b><u>9 JACOB—A SLAVEHOLDER .....</u></b>	<b><u>257</u></b>
<b><u>10 JOSEPH UNJUSTLY SOLD INTO SLAVERY .....</u></b>	<b><u>258</u></b>
<b><u>11 THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL ARE SLAVES IN EGYPT .....</u></b>	<b><u>259</u></b>

<b><u>12 SLAVERY AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS .....</u></b>	<b><u>260</u></b>
<b><u>13 SLAVERY REGULATED .....</u></b>	<b><u>263</u></b>
<b><u>14 HEBREW SLAVES &amp; HEATHEN SLAVES.....</u></b>	<b><u>265</u></b>
<b><u>15 THE FUGITIVE SLAVE LAWS AND DEUTERONOMY 23:15.....</u></b>	<b><u>267</u></b>
<b><u>16 EZRA AND SLAVERY.....</u></b>	<b><u>270</u></b>
<b><u>17 JOB ON THE TREATMENT OF SLAVES.....</u></b>	<b><u>272</u></b>
<b><u>18 JESUS AND THE CENTURION.....</u></b>	<b><u>274</u></b>
<b><u>19 THE APOSTLE PETER AND SLAVERY .....</u></b>	<b><u>277</u></b>
<b><u>20 ST. PAUL’S INSTRUCTIONS TO CHRISTIAN SLAVES .....</u></b>	<b><u>278</u></b>
<b><u>21 ST. PAUL AND SLAVERY .....</u></b>	<b><u>280</u></b>

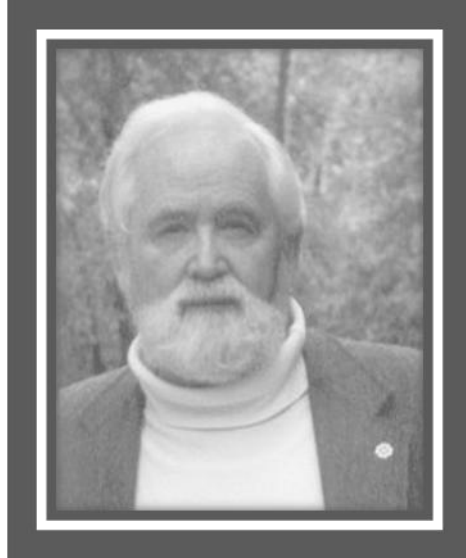


<b><u>22 ST. PAUL’S INSTRUCTIONS TO TIMOTHY .....</u></b>	<b><u>285</u></b>
<b><u>23 ST. PAUL’S EPISTLE TO TITUS .....</u></b>	<b><u>287</u></b>
<b><u>24 ST. PAUL AND THE RUNAWAY SLAVE .....</u></b>	<b><u>289</u></b>
<b><u>25 SLAVERY AND THE GOLDEN RULE .....</u></b>	<b><u>292</u></b>
<b><u>26 ATHEIST ATTACK UPON THE BIBLE’S STAND ON SLAVERY .....</u></b>	<b><u>299</u></b>
<b><u>27 EVERYONE IS A SLAVE! .....</u></b>	<b><u>303</u></b>
<b><u>28 THE END OF ANTEBELLUM SLAVERY .....</u></b>	<b><u>304</u></b>
<b><u>APPENDIX A, R. E. LEE’S COMMENT ON SLAVERY .....</u></b>	<b><u>310</u></b>
<b><u>APPENDIX B, HOPKINS ANSWERS HIS CRITICS, OCTOBER,</u></b>	
<b><u>1863 .....</u></b>	<b><u>316</u></b>
<b><u>APPENDIX C, LEARNED MEN WHO DEFENDED SLAVERY .....</u></b>	<b><u>321</u></b>

<b><u>BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CITED.....</u></b>	<b><u>337</u></b>
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<b><u>INDEX.....</u></b>	<b><u>352</u></b>
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## ***About the Author***



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Dr. Roper, an ordained Baptist minister, who adheres to the Second London Confession of Faith of 1677, has served for 25 years as a Pastor and 8 years in Christian education. He has taught systematic theology and consumer economics, and served as the Administrator of a Christian Academy. He has been a guest lecturer at several secular colleges and universities, both in the United States and abroad, and has preached at C. H. Spurgeon's Tabernacle in London, England. Religious columns by Dr. Roper have appeared in newspapers in Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi, Alabama, and the Cayman Islands. He has preached on every continent in the world and worked with a Colporteur in England and Scotland. He has worked with missionaries in France, Spain, Ethiopia, Kenya, Chile, El Salvador, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Philippines, Japan and South Korea. Dr. Roper is a lifetime member of the Sons

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**Reverend Dr. Stephen R. Woods**, Southaven, Mississippi; author, (The King's Bible, The Coming Man); and pastor of Hernando Presbyterian Church.

## *Introduction*

Slavery is a controversial topic in 2008. Before one reads this book, one should consider the process of how one comes to a decision of what is or is not moral. Are those weighty answers formulated by the popular opinion of the day, or by some higher authority? Is the popular opinion the higher authority for me, or do I make my own decisions? The following article defines three basic mindsets people utilize in making moral judgments. Consider which of these forms of conceptualization *you* are utilizing as you read this book.

### The Modern Mind

Clearly, it is true that there is no place for slavery in the epistemology of the “*modern mind*.” However, it is the *modern mind*, which has become divorced from the adherence to the Law of God or any other source of morality external to it. It is the *modern mind*, which has come to see itself as the sole arbiter of right and wrong. The fancy term for this way of thinking about things is postmodern deconstructionism. All epistemologies<sup>1</sup>, which guide human moral concepts and behaviors throughout history, may be placed into one of three categories.

The first form is **authoritarianism**. Some believe that our sense of morality comes from a source or sources both fixed and external to ourselves. Examples of such authorities might be the Bible, the Koran, the Constitution, or any other fixed external source. The majority of churched people at one time ascribed to this

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<sup>1</sup>Epistemology-the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge, particularly the foundations, scope, and validity of knowledge.

epistemological form, but no longer.

The second form is **secular humanism**. Some believe that morality is a consensus of what those in their communities believe it is to be. It is therefore external to the individual, but not fixed; as the mores of a social community can and most often will, change over time. For example, if the community in which one lives considers abortion wrong, then the individual would perceive it to be wrong. If the community believes it to be acceptable moral behavior, then so does the individual. The individual may deviate from that considered right under any of the constructs, but this is the basis upon which the individual mind judges morality. The church has been full of secular humanists since the sixties.

The third form is **postmodern deconstructionism**, or more commonly, just deconstructionism. This has become perhaps the most prevalent way of thinking about moral convictions and behavior since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Western world. When we read about the modern mind, this is likely what is meant. To the postmodernist, that which one perceives to be right for the individual is right. Neither the community (i.e. society) nor any fixed moral source binds the individual conscience. Nobody has the right, in the eyes of the postmodernist, to tell that individual what to do or how to behave. The individual does that which is right in one's own eyes! The morality of the postmodernist is neither fixed nor external, but both fluid and internal.

To the post modernist that is perfectly fine. They expect dominant mores to change in their communities over time. These are the folks who say that today the husband has no special authority in the home; that it is permissible to ordain women or homosexuals in church office, and what was acceptable in the days of the Apostle Paul may or may not be acceptable today because that was *then* and this is *now*! They can as a group, choose what to keep and what to reject from external fixed moral sources like the Bible, and hence, they see slavery as immoral. To them, it does not

matter what Paul wrote to Timothy about slavery or anything else; they have the moral authority to reject it. For the postmodernist, it is much simpler. Slavery seems illogical and unfair, and that is all they need to reject it. There is no external moral authority. This way of thinking is clearly unbiblical. In fact, it is evil. It is nothing less than the lie that Satan told Eve in the Garden of Eden. He told her that if she and Adam would eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that they would become as gods, knowing good and evil inherently within themselves.

This is essentially the definition of postmodernism. It is the lie of Satan to mankind. **Proverbs 16:25** says, ***“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”***

To the authoritarianist thinker who sees the Bible as the ultimate rule of morality, the validity of the institution of slavery can no more be denied than the validity of the institutions of marriage and family, human government, and even the church. All the institutions that God has ordained are regulated in Scripture, but none can be rejected as immoral or invalid in and of themselves. Abuses of any God-ordained institutional moral responsibility are sin regardless of the ordained institution involved. The institutions themselves are not evil, functioning within the Biblically prescribed boundaries.

May those who reject the Biblical mandates with regard to moral epistemology beware! Judgment comes, and human beings shall not escape condemnation by the sincerity with which they have believed error, but by our faith in Christ Jesus and His atoning work for His people. If the secular humanist or postmodernist reject some parts of the Holy Writ, what compels Him to believe any of the rest of it? If they do not believe what the Bible says about slavery, marriage, or abortion, how can they have any confidence in anything else that the Bible teaches? Importantly, how can they believe that Jesus Christ died for the sins of His people? I would



contend that the “modern mind” is truly disadvantageous to spiritual health and Godly morality.

Stick to the Bible as the rule of both faith and conduct! No one has the right to discard certain of the words of God as irrelevant.

The Reverend Dr. Stephen R. Woods, Th.D. D.Min.

October 2006, Anno Domini



It important that we approach this study with the proper outlook since

*“...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”* Hebrews 9:27 (KJV) *“He hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness...”* Acts 17:31 (KJV)

Then, we shall not be judged by the standard prototype of the masses, or by my own paradigm, but according to God’s Holy Word.

*“In that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel.”* Romans 2:16 (KJV)

We shall be glad on that day that we have submitted an authority that is fixed and eternal. Therefore I approach the subject of antebellum slavery in the epistemological form of **authoritarianism.** **Gary Roper**



***“The South has done more than any people on  
earth for the African race.”***

**The Right Reverend John Henry Hopkins**

**Bishop of the Diocese of Vermont**

**1863**

## FOREWORD

It is common for Southerners to revel in their heritage with great alacrity. We laud our culture, our food, our warm climate, and our famous hospitality. When it comes to celebrating our history, “New South” Southerners tend to be cautious. Too many Southerners fear “*offending*” with the display of a Confederate battle flag or any reminders of the Old South because their in-born sense of good manners and civility have been preyed upon by the unscrupulous. We cannot say too often that the victors of a war write the history. This was certainly the case after the “*Late Unpleasantness*.” Our godly ancestors, the preponderance of whom with kindness and patience, prepared an African source of labor to find their place in Western Civilization, and ultimately the “American Dream,” are now castigated and reviled. Considering non-slaveholding Southerners, our venomous pundits have declared: “They were looking forward to the day when they *could* become slaveholders themselves.” Alternatively, it has been said, “if they weren’t slaveholders, they tolerated them, and even fought a war for a country that depended upon that source of labor.” To these criticisms, the author says, in essence, “*So what?*” “The South did nothing wrong; a far greater temporal and eternal good was effected as a whole for those Negro slaves and their descendants who reached the American South. God makes no mistakes in His providential dealings with His creation. I shall not apologize, and here’s why!”

We have not used the term “African American.” The only African American we have known was our former neighbor, a

college professor from Ethiopia who came from Africa as an adult and became a naturalized citizen. When we were children, we were taught that it was polite to say “colored” to describe members of the Negro race. That, now, is taboo. In the 1960s and 1970s, Afro-American came into vogue. At this writing, it is stylish to say “African-American.” Who knows what word will evolve next? We are too old and set in our ways to feel at ease using them and others have felt the same way. A great granddaughter of Robert E. Lee said in her book, The Lee Family Cooking and Housekeeping Book:

**“Words are powerful, but not all powerful. I believe it is the perceptions behind the words that need to change. While that is happening (and it is), new terms will continue to be coined in the effort to change those perceptions and will in their turn be dropped, if, and when they do not have the desired effect. The above terms came into my life too late for me to feel comfortable with them, so I have used whatever feels right in context, with no intention of disrespect” (Zimmer, 10).**

The following pages are the result of fifteen years of assiduous research. They make it plain that white Southerners need not apologize for the charged crime of the benign slavery dominant in the American South. Black Southerners need not feel dishonored that their ancestors were bondsmen if they realize that the destiny of all men and nations is in the hands of a sovereign God; he can do with any of us according to His Sovereign pleasure. Moreover, ***“...all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28 (KJV)***

Please notice that the author places greater significance upon