

Bishop Hopkins and the Dilemma of Slavery

ON Friday, January 10, 1851, the Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Vermont gave a lecture to the Young Men's Association of the city of Buffalo, New York. The title of his lecture was, *Slavery: Its Religious Sanction, its Political Dangers, and the Best Mode of Doing it Away*. This lecture was repeated the following Monday in Lockport, was published as a pamphlet,¹ and, in one form or another, its central content was to be repeated by the Bishop four times in the ensuing thirteen years with ever-increasing reverberations.²

Whether the controversial nature of this dissertation was a product of the times, or of Bishop Hopkins' method of handling it, is not a point at issue here. Undoubtedly both of these factors were in operation. But whatever the cause, the flames of controversy arose to such a pitch that they threatened to split the Protestant Episcopal Church, at least in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. And coals of vituperation were heaped upon the Bishop's hoary head by at least ten pamphleteers,³ and petitioners well over a hundred.⁴

¹ John H. Hopkins, *Slavery: Its Religious Sanctions, Its Political Dangers, and the Best Mode of Doing it Away* (Buffalo, N. Y., 1851).

² John Henry Hopkins: *The American Citizen: His Rights and Duties According to the Spirit of the Constitution of the United States* (New York, 1857); *Letter From the Right Rev. John H. Hopkins, D.D., LL.D. Bishop of Vermont on the Bible View of Slavery* (New York, 1861); *Bible View of Slavery* (New York, Papers from the Society for the Diffusion of Political Knowledge # 8 [1863]); *A Scriptural, Ecclesiastical, and Historical View of Slavery, from the Days of the Patriarch Abraham, to the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1864).

³ Henry Drisler, *A Reply to the "Bible View of Slavery, by J. H. Hopkins, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Vermont"* (New York, Loyal Publication Society # 39, Part I, 1863); Louis C. Newman, *The Bible View of Slavery Reconsidered. Letter to the Rt. Rev. Bishop Hopkins* (New York, Loyal Publication Society # 39, Part II, 1863); Mark Anthony DeWolfe Howe, *A Reply to the Letter of Bishop Hopkins Addressed to Dr. Howe In the Print Called "The Age," of December 8, 1863* (Philadelphia, 1864); Mark Anthony DeWolfe Howe, "Letter Addressed to Bishop Hopkins," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Nov. 6, 1863; [Henry Charles Leal], *Bible View of Polygamy* (Philadelphia, Union League Pamphlet, # 62, [Philadelphia, 1863]); [John Patterson Lundy],

To a considerable extent, the present period is similar to the time when the Bishop was publishing his "Bible View of Slavery," as it came to be called. Now there are civil rights workers instead of abolitionists and people are talking in terms of abolishing segregation and discrimination instead of slavery. Furthermore, there are many today who are caught in a dilemma similar to the one upon whose horns John Henry Hopkins found himself impaled. And in most cases people take even less time today to understand or analyze the nature of such a situation than did the irate members of the Diocese of Pennsylvania in 1863.

Bishop John Henry Hopkins was born in Dublin, Ireland,⁵ in 1792 and came to the vicinity of Philadelphia with his parents when he was a boy of eight. He was educated as far as possible at home and then went off to schools in Trenton and Bordentown, New Jersey. He became interested in iron manufacturing and eventually this business took him to the Pittsburgh area, but, not finding success in industry, he turned his attention to the law. An avid reader and blessed with a keen analytical mind, John Henry was soon one of the most skillful and respected lawyers in Pittsburgh.⁶

At first he attended the Presbyterian Church. However, because of his talent for music, he was asked to play the organ at Trinity

Review of Bishop Hopkins' Bible View of Slavery, by a Presbyter of the Church in Philadelphia [Philadelphia, 1863]; Frances Anne Kemble, *The Views of Judge Woodward and Bishop Hopkins on Negro Slavery at the South* [Philadelphia, 1863]; Daniel Raynes Goodwin, *Southern Slavery in its Present Aspects: Containing a Reply to a Late Work of the Bishop of Vermont on Slavery* (Philadelphia, 1864); Stephen Montford Vail, *The Bible Against Slavery, with Replies to the "Bible View of Slavery" by John H. Hopkins, Bishop of the Diocese of Vermont (and others)* (Concord, N. H., 1864); Rev. Thomas Atkins, *American Slavery, A Reply to the Letter of Bishop Hopkins, of Vermont* (New York, 1861); Charles May, *Remarks on Bishop Hopkins' Letter on the Bible View of Slavery*, n.p.n.d., from *Bibliotheca Americana* by Joseph Sabin (New York, 1879), IX, 522; anonymous Episcopal clergyman, *Bishop Hopkins' Letter on Slavery Ripped Up and His Misuse of the Sacred Scriptures Exposed* (New York, 1863); Leonard Marsh, *Review of a "Letter from the Rt. Rev. John H. Hopkins, Bishop of Vermont, on the Bible View of Slavery"* (Burlington, Vt., 1861); anon., *Bible View of Slavery; or, Bishop Hopkins Reviewed* (1864), Sabin, II, 135.

⁴ See list of signers of *Protest of the Bishop and Clergy of the Diocese of Pennsylvania against Bishop Hopkins' Letter on African Slavery* (Philadelphia, 1863). Hopkins, *A Scriptural, Ecclesiastical, and Historical View of Slavery*, 42-44.

⁵ John Henry Hopkins, Jr., *The Life of the Late Right Reverend John Henry Hopkins, First Bishop of Vermont and Seventh Presiding Bishop* (New York, 1873), 22.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 58-60.

Church, the only Protestant Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh at that time. Within months of this association, he and his young wife knelt at the altar as communicants, although they had not been confirmed since no bishop visited Pittsburgh in those days.

Hopkins, one of the more successful professional men of his new church and a rather forceful person, was soon elected to its vestry, and in 1823, when a replacement for the rector could not be found, he was elected lay reader. Immediately, he applied for admission to Holy Orders and gave up his five-thousand-dollar-a-year income as a lawyer for one of eight hundred as an unordained rector. Having read widely in the field of religion and being competent in the classical languages, he was ordained deacon in December, 1823, and priest the following May.

The Reverend Hopkins enjoyed a brilliant eight-year career at Trinity Church. He demonstrated artistic ability by designing a new church edifice, which he decorated by hand, and by composing most of the church's music. He proved his evangelical ability by increasing the number of communicants at Trinity by almost tenfold and by establishing seven other churches in the Pittsburgh area. He displayed legalistic and rhetorical ability by taking a prominent part in the conventions of the Church and was almost elected Bishop of Pennsylvania.⁷ His only failure was his inability to establish a theological seminary in Pittsburgh, and it was this disappointment which sent him on to Boston in 1831. When the seminary promised him there was not forthcoming he moved in 1832 to Vermont, where he became that state's first bishop. There he could start his own schools and push his drive for accomplishment in all dimensions of his ministry to the ultimate.

Before Bishop Hopkins came to Vermont, he had already organized a small school in Pittsburgh and had sired nine of his thirteen children, the oldest of whom, Charlotte Emily, was soon to marry Charles Fay, one of the theological students who came with the Bishop from Boston. Hopkins, seeing the need for training ministers for the small parish churches in the Diocese, established the Vermont Episcopal Institute, using theological students as teachers. Unfortunately, the panic of 1837 forced the closing of the Institute.

⁷ *Ibid.*, III.

A prolific author, the Bishop had written eight books and more than twice as many pamphlets prior to the year 1851, when he proclaimed what some of his later critics called "the new Gospel of Slavery." In his Buffalo speech, the Bishop's thesis was threefold.⁸ In the first place, slavery was not a sin since it was instituted in the Old Testament by Noah's curse of Canaan and perpetuated in the Tenth Commandment as well as in the customs of Abraham and the other patriarchs. Furthermore it was not mentioned at all by Jesus although slavery was quite prevalent in His time. And the Apostles, who surely knew the will of their Savior, recommended the necessity for the obedience of slaves and for the return of escaped slaves. These facts, combined with the general acceptance of slavery by the early Christian Church, indicated clearly, according to the Bishop, that the Scriptures were at least accepting of slavery and certainly contained no law against it. Therefore, since sin was the transgression of law, slavery could not be a sin.

Secondly, insisted the Bishop, slavery was, nevertheless, a moral evil. It was considered "a curse and a blight" by Jefferson and other southern Founding Fathers. It tended to discourage industry among the white population. Slaves were liable to break out in rebellion as they did in 1831, which made the white populace never safe from the threat of violence. And the slave population was growing at such a rate that the economy and polity of the South could not absorb them without the threat of ruin or a lowered standard of living. Therefore slavery had to be abolished, and the time was ripe for accomplishing this aim because the argument was getting too hot on both sides; the competition between slave and free states for each new state was destructive to the best interests of the Union; slaves were overflowing their boundaries; and Liberia, a slave colony, had proved that slaves could be trained to be self-governing.⁹

Thirdly, he proposed to accomplish abolition by buying slaves from slaveholders at the rate of forty thousand a year, using for this purpose interest from as yet unappropriated public lands, and shipping the redeemed slaves to Liberia. This plan was to be carried out only with the full consent of the southern states, and with due regard

⁸ John H. Hopkins, *Slavery: Its Religious Sanction, its Political Dangers, and the Best Mode of Doing it Away*, 5-10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 10-14.

for their constitutional rights. Hopkins listed nine benefits to be obtained as a result of abolition and hoped God would guide the nation's leaders to a wise decision. He further hoped all those concerned would realize that slavery, while it raised the status of the Negro from what it was in his African habitat and helped to Christianize him, was nevertheless an institution which, like war, was only permitted and not enjoined. Hence it could never be supposed that it was intended to last forever, and all the social trends in Europe, as well as in America, were against slavery on a permanent basis. Since the movement of the Western World and of Christendom, and the spirit of the Declaration of Independence were all away from slavery, Americans were in the embarrassing position of being backsliders. The South should realize that the demands of the North in this respect were reasonable. And they should speedily agree to some abolition plan.¹⁰

The dilemma of this interesting presentation was to be found in the Bishop's desire to follow not only the letter of the law—both of country and church—but also to maintain the integrity of the universal community—the political union, as well as the unity of the Holy Catholic Church. All his legal training and his well-developed need for a strict moral code demanded *both* of these goals.

The law of the Scriptures and of the Constitution had to be followed. Hence states' rights and individual rights had to be kept inviolate. Furthermore, one should not blasphemously read into the law what the lawgivers had not put there, and, in this light, slavery could not, therefore, be branded as a sin or a violation of law.

On the other hand, the goal of Christendom was to be ecumenical. This was the ultimate goal as presented in the Scriptures, and the subdivision of the Christian communion was retrogression. The progress of the country had been through unification; for the Church to grow in America, the Union had to be maintained. Yet slavery was threatening to divide both Church and country.

Slavery was the "thorn in the flesh" of all the Bishop's hopes for the future. "I am no friend or advocate of Slavery," he told his audience in Buffalo.¹¹ But to eliminate it by the law of Church or State could not be done without twisting the traditions of the Found-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14-16.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

ing Fathers and of the Apostles and Patriarchs. On the other hand, to allow slavery to continue was tantamount to destroying the Union, and with the sundering of the political union, the unity of the Church community was doomed. His only possible solution, at that time, was to appeal to the South to give up their slaves voluntarily and negotiate for abolition in co-operation with all of the resources of the federal government, according to some such plan as he proposed; to convince the North that the ultra-abolitionists—those who wanted total abolition immediately—were wrong and that an effective solution could only be a gradual one; to pray to God to influence the minds of those concerned with these decisions so that they would make them in the right way.

Now, on the surface this would appear—at least to a God-fearing man—to be an effective escape from the dilemma. Hadn't he received a most favorable response to his two speeches and to the printing of the pamphlet, which was ordered by three rectors of the Church in Buffalo? Had not both Daniel Webster and William Seward endorsed the idea of buying freedom for the slaves? And was not his plan in general agreement with the efforts of many persons in both North and South? But the man whose early life may have lacked deep, personal affection, made up for this lack as an adult by his intense love and devotion to his Church and for the community of men who walked in orderly, lawful ways. Perhaps this devotion to the Church as an institution blinded him to some of the personal vested interests operating in both North and South which were moving toward a head-on collision, and which were not above using his "blessed" Church to achieve their ends. Furthermore, his point of view was colored by the fact that, while raised and educated in the culture and intellectual climate of the North, he had quite early formed abiding ties with the South.

As early as 1841, his son-in-law, Charles Fay, had gone to the Diocese of Georgia, under Bishop Stephen Elliott, to start a school,¹² and later he had moved to Bishop Leonidas Polk's Diocese of Louisiana. These two churchmen, so deeply admired by Bishop

¹² *Journal of the Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Vermont (for 1841)*, list of clergy and their parishes, states that Rev. Charles Fay had taken letters dismissory to the Diocese of Georgia to the grammar school of the new Episcopal College at Montpelier Springs, Ga.

Hopkins and yet so deeply involved in the split of both the Union and the Church in the United States, were to make the problem of slavery increasingly painful for Hopkins.

In 1843, his oldest son and namesake was sent to Bishop Elliott to serve as his personal secretary while recovering from a throat ailment.¹³ He stayed in Georgia for two years and the attachment became so strong that Bishop Elliott was to refer to him as his "adopted son."¹⁴ In 1855, Hopkins' son Theodore went to St. Louis as rector of St. George's, and in that same year Hopkins visited St. Louis on a fund-raising trip to reopen the Vermont Episcopal Institute. His trip from St. Louis through the South to New Orleans, where Bishop Polk welcomed him, and also to Baltimore, strengthened his faith in the unity of the Church, both North and South.¹⁵

The willingness of southerners in coming to the aid of a poverty-stricken brother bishop in promoting his pet educational project certainly gained for them a warm place in his heart. This had nothing to do with personal financial gain or material status. The Bishop led a life of voluntary poverty in Vermont. What money he gained was usually immediately spent on some educational activity of the Church.

His warm feeling toward the South was even more intensified when he was called by Bishops Elliott and Polk to draw plans for the proposed University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, in 1859. The deeply religious experience of spending the Christmas season with the two Bishops atop Sewanee Mountain further strengthened the bond which made him cleave to them and their common Church regardless of all the tumult and shouting which was to follow.¹⁶ Small wonder that Bishop Hopkins later refused to participate in any act censuring the southern states for their secession in the General Conventions of the Church.¹⁷

¹³ John Henry Hopkins, III, "The Rev. John Henry Hopkins, Jr.," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, IV (1935), 271.

¹⁴ Hopkins, Jr., 355.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 306.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 312-315.

¹⁷ See *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church for 1862* and *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church for 1865*, also his *Life*, chapter XVIII and appendix pp. 463-465 for Bishop's letter of protest to Pastoral Letter of 1865.

In 1857, the Bishop was requested by a New York publisher to write *The American Citizen: His Rights and Duties According to the Spirit of the Constitution of the United States*. This book of 459 pages covers all phases of a citizen's life from the political and governmental down to education, social activities, and domestic affairs. The central focus throughout is on religion, and its necessary tie with our government through the oath of office and the implicit beliefs and ideas of the Founding Fathers. He believed fully in the separation of Church and State, as far as their functions and areas of activity were concerned. But he felt that ours was, at heart, a *Christian* government and therefore Christianity undergirded all our political activity. As a development of this idea, slavery and abolition came in for a very full treatment. His ideas were pretty much the same as those of 1851 except for the adding of direct taxation as an alternative way of financing abolition. However, the tone of his plea had definitely shifted. In 1851, the spirit of the times, according to the Bishop, was one of pleading with the South to agree with, and not blame, the North for wanting to do what the Declaration of Independence proclaimed in theory. In 1857, slavery, for the Bishop, was still an evil as far as its personal danger and economic inefficiency were concerned. The general climate of opinion was still against it. However, he insisted that there was no longer any condemnation of slavery based on the spirit of Christianity and the natural rights of man, as found in the Declaration of Independence. The Bishop was now appealing to the North in an effort to prevent its coercing the South or making it pay the cost of abolition. The South should not be blamed for what it inherited from its English forbears. This, of course, was written after the Bishop's successful fund-raising tour through the South and after his son and son-in-law's return from Georgia and Louisiana.

In December, 1860, a group of men from New York City called Hopkins' attention to the crucial nature of the times and to the central position of the question of slavery in the crisis. They asked him to favor them with his "opinions upon the Scriptural authority for Slavery and the Constitutional position of the contending parties." The Bishop responded within a month, by which time the first seven states had seceded, and his reply was published as a pamphlet entitled, *Letter from the Right Rev. John H. Hopkins, D.D.*,

L.L.D., *Bishop of Vermont on the Bible View of Slavery*. It was published at the expense of the New York gentlemen.

This pamphlet, written after the successful reopening of the Vermont Episcopal Institute, as a result, in part, of the Bishop's sojourn at Sewanee, contains several significant shifts in argument as well as in tone. Its beginning argument, of whether slavery is a sin or a moral evil, was the same as the one he favored in 1851 and 1857. However, he now strongly asserted that one could only decide about slavery—or any other moral question—by reference to the Word of God. And the Bishop, as a man of God, was a correct authority to whom to appeal even for this seemingly political question.¹⁸

The argument was a bit more embroidered with a defense of corporal punishment of slaves, citing the practices reported as being in effect in the South as no worse than those of the Old Testament.¹⁹ In presenting his New Testament argument, based on the statements of the Apostles and the silence of the Redeemer on the subject of slavery, he interposed the following: "How prosperous and united would our glorious republic be at this hour, if the eloquent and pertinacious declaimers against slavery had been willing to follow their Savior's example?"²⁰—an obvious hit at such northern abolitionists as Garrison and Phillips.

Later on he castigated those—evidently the northern abolitionists again—who "invent for themselves a 'higher law' than those Holy Scriptures which are given us as a 'light to our feet and a lamp to our paths in the darkness of a sinful and polluted world.'" Still later on, "Woe to our Union when the blind become the leaders of the blind! Woe to the man who dares to 'strike against his Maker!'"²¹

He then proceeded to "utterly discard these famous propositions of the Declaration of Independence"²² and show how the concepts of equality of men and of self-evident rights are to be rejected as worthwhile concepts in developing human relationships. They are not only held to be fallacious and untrue for previously given reasons,

¹⁸ Hopkins, *Letter from the Rt. Rev. John H. Hopkins, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of Vermont on the Bible View of Slavery*, 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 6.

“but further, because their *tendency* is in direct contrariety to the precepts of the Gospel, and the highest interests of the individual man. For what is the unavoidable effect of their doctrines of human equality? Is it not to nourish the spirit of pride, envy, and contention? To set the servant against the master, the poor against the rich, the weak against the strong, the ignorant against the educated? To loosen all the bonds and relations of society, and reduce the whole duty of subordination to the selfish cupidity of pecuniary interest, without an atom of respect for age, for office, for law, for government, for Providence, or for the Word of God.”²³

He denied the cruelty and immorality of southern slavery except in special cases. He denied the value of liberty for a slave who, he said, would not know how to use it. And he repudiated the analogy drawn by many of his opponents between the ethical status of polygamy and of slavery as treated in the Bible, saying that the Apostles inveighed against polygamy but not against slavery. Therefore, the former was sinful but not the latter. He further stated that “The slavery of the Negro race, as maintained in the Southern States, appears to me fully authorized both in the Old and the New Testament which, as the written Word of God, afford the only infallible standard of moral rights and obligations. That very slavery, in my humble judgment, has raised the Negro incomparably higher in the scale of humanity, and seems, in fact, to be the only instrumentality through which the heathen posterity of Canaan have been raised at all.”²⁴

Finally as to the Constitutional position of the contending parties, he wrote: “In my humble judgment, they [the southern states] have a right to secede, although I grant that the point, being entirely new, is not without considerable difficulty.”²⁵ He believed the question of the treasonous nature of secession should be decided by the Supreme Court. He still claimed that slavery was contrary to all his habits, and stated that what he had said in the pamphlet was only a repetition of what he had said in Buffalo in 1851. He closed “with the fervent prayer that the Spirit of Wisdom, unity, and fraternal kindness may guide our National Congress, the Legislatures of the

²³ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

several States and the sovereign will of our whole people, to a happy accommodation of the existing difficulty."²⁶

Now it is clear that this is a different Bishop talking. He was sixty-nine years old, instead of fifty-nine. He had been deeply involved with his brethren of the southern dioceses of the Church. And he had seen that the country and the Church were on the verge of a split—a split which would reduce the strength as well as the ecumenical nature of the Church effort. He knew that the South was intransigent with respect to giving up its way of life, and that the extremists of the North would settle for no less than abolition now! His only hope for unity rested on trying to convince those in his own geographical area to reduce or postpone the pressure they were exerting on the South. And he consented to write this pamphlet—a pamphlet in which he was desperately appealing to his northern colleagues to resist the extremism of the ultra-abolitionists—not because he was personally any more in favor of slavery than he ever was, but simply as a last ditch effort to preserve the political Union and likewise the community of the Church. What he did not know was the purpose for which the pamphlet would ultimately be used.

It is not clear exactly how the New Yorkers utilized the Bishop's letter besides general publication. A historian of the day states that the pamphlet was requested by a group of Democratic politicians and was used by them as a political document.²⁷ The Bishop's son claimed it was employed by a group of the Bishop's personal friends to cool down the fiery zeal of abolition. Shortly afterward, in April, 1861, just prior to the attack on Fort Sumter, the Bishop gave his permission for the reissuing of *The Bible View of Slavery* by the American Society for Promoting National Unity,²⁸ leaving out the part about secession. This was a final attempt at national unity, but after the attack on Fort Sumter it was lost like a whisper in a tornado.

Two years later, however, in April, 1863, the Bishop was again approached, this time by six laymen of the Church in Philadelphia. They asked if they could reissue the *Bible View* as it had previously appeared, and the Bishop gave them his immediate consent, leaving

²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 12.

²⁷ Henry Charles Lea, "Review of A Scriptural, Ecclesiastical, and Historical View of Slavery," *North American Review*, XCIX (1864), 621.

²⁸ Hopkins, Jr., 320, 321.

out again the section on secession. He had tried hard in the intervening years to keep his Church intact and had written the southern bishops begging them not to separate. But since a new national entity had been formed as a result of the Confederation, it was virtually impossible for the southern dioceses not to break away, as the canons of the Church forbade the crossing of national boundaries by any one communion of the Church. This distressed him very much and he did all he could in the General Convention of the Church in 1862 to leave the way open for the southern bishops to attend in the future, and blocked, as far as he was able, the attempts at censuring southern clergymen in the deliberations of the Convention. Undoubtedly, he felt that the reissuing of his pamphlet the next year would be a step toward unity. But once again he was caught by the dilemma of slavery and did not realize that these Philadelphia gentlemen, while members of his Church, were far more interested in gaining the election of Judge George Washington Woodward to the governorship of Pennsylvania than they were in any kind of unity. As a result, his reissued pamphlet became a prime piece of Democratic campaign literature in Pennsylvania, and, although it was opposed by others who attempted to show graphically how he and the Judge were teamed up in promoting the basest cruelties of southern slavery, it appeared that it might achieve the desired political result, a hope in which the Democrats were to be disappointed. As a countereffort, and evidently somewhat against the signers' better judgment, a protest was circulated against the Bishop's pamphlet, and was signed by Bishop Alonzo Potter of the Diocese of Pennsylvania and one hundred and sixty-three of his clergymen. In it they stated that "the subscribers deeply regret that the fact of the extensive circulation throughout this Diocese of a letter by John Henry Hopkins, Bishop of the Diocese of Vermont, in defense of Southern slavery compels them to make this public protest. It is not their province to mix in any political canvass. But as ministers of Christ, in the Protestant Episcopal Church, it becomes them to deny any complicity or sympathy with such a defense. . . . This attempt not only to apologize for slavery in the abstract, but to advocate it as it exists in the cotton States and in States which sell men and women in the open market as their staple product, is, in their judgment unworthy of any servant of Jesus Christ. As an

effort to sustain, on Bible principles, the States in rebellion against the government in the wicked attempt to establish by force of arms a tyranny under the name of a Republic, whose corner-stone shall be the perpetual bondage of the African, it challenges their indignant reprobation.”²⁹

The Bishop of Vermont was at once hurt and incensed at the protest and had already received more than a dozen written objections to his *Bible View*, one of them from a Vermonter, a non-churchman, and at least two from New Yorkers. But largely they came from Pennsylvania, in general, and Philadelphia in particular. Most were filled with well-reasoned diatribes, showing how the scriptures could be interpreted in other ways than the one the Bishop of Vermont had chosen. One was a humorous parallel called *The Bible View of Polygamy*, using the Bishop’s same form of argument regarding the Mormon situation to show how polygamy could not be ruled out by the Scriptures either. But the protest from a Brother Bishop calling his writings “unworthy of any servant of Jesus Christ” was the crowning blow. Hopkins had honestly *not* realized the political use to which his pamphlet was to be put³⁰ (although he would never admit that his move in giving permission for its reissue was not an effective one), and, when he found out to what use it had been put, he rationalized his mistake by claiming that “he knew it would be more widely circulated with the aid of Democratic Clubs than without them. His only object was to enable the truth to reach the minds of men. And he would have been doubly pleased if the Republican Clubs had taken hold of the same work, only with more zeal.”³¹ He was personally *not* in favor of slavery. He still advocated (although in a much more muted voice) its gradual abolition. He was simply caught on the horns—firmly and painfully now—of his dilemma. How could he maintain the Union—which was being destroyed by slavery—and not advocate breaking or remaking (which to him would have been just as wrong) the law of Church and State? He had only hoped that his pamphlet might hold off or mitigate the violence of northern ultra-abolitionists. He had hoped it would convince his northern brethren of the illegality of using law or force to outlaw slavery—that which the law did not,

²⁹ Hopkins, *A Scriptural, Ecclesiastical, and Historical View of Slavery*, 42–44.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 56–57.

³¹ Hopkins, Jr., 331.

in fact, outlaw. And he hoped that they, as good members of the Apostolic Communion, would see the supreme value of keeping the law inviolate and the Union intact. Instead, the already ruptured Church in the United States was almost torn apart again, and the Diocese of Pennsylvania with it. For while one hundred sixty-four Pennsylvania clergymen had signed the protest, more than sixty had refused to sign. Undoubtedly, both sides to the argument had been drawn into the political arena willy nilly, and this was strictly against the tradition of the Church. Undoubtedly, both sides had been used for the ulterior purposes of the respective political parties. The Bishop was thereby used as a tool against his own beloved Church and unintentionally produced a most destructive ecclesiastical reaction.

What could he do now? His status would not let him admit a tactical error to his inferiors. His whole nature had been wounded and affronted. His only defense was the use of his marvelously keen argumentative ability in dissecting all of the opposing diatribes and attempting to bolster his criticized views by actually going out even further on the limb and giving slavery a rather full defense, if not a completely clean bill of health.

This he did, against his son's advice, in March, 1864, when the southern cause was all but lost, and the time and effort could have been much better spent getting ready to heal the wounds of the Church and the Union. The title of his final blast in defense of his beliefs was *A Scriptural, Ecclesiastical, and Historical View of Slavery from the Days of the Patriarch Abraham, to the Nineteenth Century*. Each chapter was specifically addressed to his Brother in the Church, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Potter. It is quite probable that Bishop Potter had taken no strong position in organizing the protest, and that, to a large extent, it was instigated by others of his clergy, chiefly the Rev. Mark Anthony DeWolfe Howe, who made several brilliant and yet sensitive responses to Hopkins.³² Nevertheless, the "stab" of Bishop Potter was the unkindest cut of all, and Hopkins

³² Howe referred to the Bishop's sojourn at Sewanee Mt. with Bishops Polk and Elliott as possibly causing his change in attitude toward slavery and then added: "I think you too conscientious a man to yield knowingly in your judgment upon a great moral question, to any mere personal consideration. But you are human and subject to like passions with others; and, therefore, liable to be warped by the same petty and insignificant pressure which we see has turned thousands of intelligent men from their propriety." Howe, *A Reply to the Letter of Bishop Hopkins* . . . , 14-15.

vented his full invective on him in the form of a "brotherly admonition," following the advice of St. Paul (2 Thess. III, 6, 14-15), in which he says he will correspondingly henceforth withdraw from his company. Bishop Potter never responded to this "admonition" orally or in writing, so far as the records show, and in little more than a year was no longer alive.

The final cannonade in this battle came from the armory of Dr. Daniel R. Goodwin, Provost of the University of Pennsylvania and former President of Trinity College. In his book, *Southern Slavery in its Present Aspects Containing a Reply to a Late Work of the Bishop of Vermont on Slavery*, he gave the Bishop of Vermont at least as good as he sent. However, his response was characterized, as were the responses of many of the Pennsylvania clergymen, by a kind of sensitiveness to the Bishop and a sense of regret that they were somehow involved in this internecine war with a man whom they all respected for his high sense of integrity, strong sense of purpose, and great contribution to the Diocese of Pennsylvania as well as to the cause of Anglo-Catholic Christendom.³³

The dilemma of slavery was not only one which seemed insoluble within the framework of the Church as then constituted, but at this time of crisis it was pitting Church brethren against each other, both within the diocese and within the whole Church communion. Bishop Hopkins had the legalistic and argumentative skills for sharpening the attack and increasing thereby the precipitation of invective and further argument in return. But he had never resolved the dilemma within himself. He said many times that he was by nature and habit opposed to slavery. But he found it necessary to deny this very human reaction by subjugating it to the cold rule of law. Had he been a man of greater sensitivity he might have been more aware of the purposes of his pseudo-friends in New York and Philadelphia who requested the use of his *Bible View*. He might also have been able to respond to his brothers in the Church in a more sympathetic and less punitive way. But if he had had such skills, he would undoubtedly have solved the dilemma of slavery within himself.

It is true that because of Bishop Hopkins' contacts with the South before the war, as well as his willingness to give a sympathetic ear to

³³ *Ibid.*, 16; Goodwin, *Southern Slavery in its Present Aspects* . . . , 85.

its cause, that the breach between the North and South in the Church was quickly closed, and by the General Convention of 1868 all the dioceses were back together again. However, the Bishop of Vermont had barely time to see the fruits of this reunion on the horizon before he died on January 9, 1868. By then the dilemma-producing question of slavery was gone, but the Broad Church Movement was getting underway in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, and it was probably the dilemma of slavery which was, to some extent, responsible for pointing to the need for developing such an approach.³⁴

If the dilemma of slavery, as faced by Bishop Hopkins and his Church, has any light to shed on our problems today, it may be this—a dilemma is often the sign that our approach to a problem is no longer realistic. If this is true, the horns are within us. We can only escape by an inner reorganization, leading to a more unified approach to the problem. Though the Bishop never achieved this reorganization personally, he may have, in part, been the agent who helped his Church to achieve this goal.

Citrus College

RONALD LEVY

³⁴ The Broad Church Movement in the Protestant Episcopal Church had its roots in England just prior to the middle of the nineteenth century. It was picked up in America during and after the Civil War by men such as Bishop Alonzo Potter, Dr. W. A. Muhlenberg, and Phillip Brooks. Basically, it was a "third force" in the Church in contradistinction to both the Anglo-Catholic and the Evangelical Movements. It was characterized by many theological aspects. But its most distinguishing characteristic was the insistence that the church be concerned with problems of a secular nature—of which the Civil War and slavery are examples. It is in this way that the debate over slavery, and its subsequent resolution, led the way for the increased development of this aspect of the Protestant Episcopal Church.