V2 Chapter 6 Primary Sources: Atlantic Slavery

Bartolomé de las Casas, *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies, with Related Texts* (1552)

[Introduction] An early Spanish settler in the Caribbean, the priest Bartolomé de las Casas at first benefited from the Spanish use of enslaved Native Americans. However, he soon became convinced that the enslavement of Indians was indefensible and advocated for an end to the practice. His *Destruction of the Indies* was published in 1552, shortly before his death.

[End introduction]

Source: Bartolomé de Las Casas, *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies, with Related Texts*, ed. Franklin W. Knight, trans. Andrew Hurley (Hackett Publishing, 2003), 2–3. Used by permission of the publisher.

Into and among these gentle sheep, endowed by their Maker and Creator with all the qualities aforesaid, did creep the Spaniards, who no sooner had knowledge of these people than they became like fierce wolves and tigers and lions who have gone many days without food or nourishment. And no other thing have they done for forty years until this day, and still today see fit to do, but dismember, slay, perturb, afflict, torment, and destroy the Indians by all manner of cruelty new and divers and most singular manners such as never before seen or read or heard of some few of which shall be recounted below, and they do this to such a degree that on the Island of Hispaniola, of the above three millions souls that we once saw, today there be no more than two hundred of those native people remaining. The island of Cuba is almost as long as from Valladolid to Rome; today it is almost devoid of population. The island of San Juan [Puerto

Rico] and that of Jamaica, large and well-favoured and lovely islands both, have been laid waste. On the Isles of the Lucayos [Bahamas] . . . where there were once above five hundred thousand souls, today there is not a living creature. All were killed while being brought, and because of being brought, to the Island of Hispaniola where the Spaniards saw that their stock of the natives of that latter island had come to an end. . . . Two principal and general customs have been employed by those, calling themselves Christians, who have passed this way, in extirpating and striking from the face of the earth those suffering nations. The first being unjust, cruel, bloody, and tyrannical warfare. The other after having slain all those who might yearn toward or suspire after or think of freedom, or consider escaping from the torments that they are made to suffer, by which I mean all the native-born lords and adult males, for it is the Spaniards' custom in their wars to allow only young boys and females to live being to oppress them with the hardest, harshest, and most heinous bondage to which men or beasts might ever be bound into. . . . The cause for which the Christians have slain and destroyed so many and such infinite numbers of souls, has been simply to get, as their ultimate end, the Indians' gold of them, and to stuff themselves with riches in a very few days, and to raise themselves to high estates without proportion to their birth or breeding, it should be noted owing to the insatiable greed and ambition that they have had, which has been greater than any the world has ever seen before.

Question for Discussion:

1. How does this source present the Spanish treatment of Native Americans?

The Enslavement of Venture Smith (c. 1735)

[Introduction] In 1798, a man named Venture Smith recounted his life story from his home in

Connecticut. This story is a remarkable tale of enslavement in West Africa and self-redemption in North America. The excerpt below tells the story of how he came to be captured and enslaved.

[End introduction]

Source: Venture Smith, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, A Native of Africa, But Resident above Sixty Years in the United States of America* (I. S. Stewart, 1897).

I was born at Dukandarra, in Guinea, about the year 1729. My father's name was Saungin Furro, Prince of the tribe of Dukandarra. My father had three wives. Polygamy was not uncommon in that country, especially among the rich, as every man was allowed to keep as many wives as he could maintain. By his first wife he had three children. The eldest of them was myself, named by my father, Broteer. The other two were named Cundazo and Soozaduka. My father had two children by his second wife, and one by his third. I descended from a very large, tall and stout race of beings, much larger than the generality of people in other parts of the globe, being commonly considerable above six feet in height, and every way well proportioned.

. . . Not more than six weeks had passed after my return, before a message was brought by an inhabitant of the place where I lived the preceding year to my father, that that place had been invaded by a numerous army, from a nation not far distant, furnished with musical instruments, and all kinds of arms then in use; that they were instigated by some white nation who equipped and sent them to subdue and possess the country; that his nation had made no preparation for war, having been for a long time in profound peace; that they could not defend themselves against such a formidable train of invaders, and must, therefore, necessarily evacuate their lands to the fierce enemy, and fly to the protection of some chief; and that if he would permit them they would come under his rule and protection when they had to retreat from their

own possessions. He was a kind and merciful prince, and therefore consented to these proposals.

He had scarcely returned to his nation with the message before the whole of his people were obliged to retreat from their country and come to my father's. He gave them every privilege and all the protection his government could afford. But they had not been there longer than four days before news came to them that the invaders had laid waste their country, and were coming speedily to destroy them in my father's territories. This affrighted them, and therefore they immediately pushed off to the southward, into the unknown countries there, and were never more heard of.

Two days after their retreat, the report turned out to be but too true. A detachment from the enemy came to my father and informed him that the whole army was encamped not far from his dominions, and would invade the territory and deprive his people of their liberties and rights, if he did not comply with the following terms. These were, to pay them a large sum of money, three hundred fat cattle, and a great number of goats, sheep, asses, etc.

My father told the messenger he would comply rather than that his Subjects should be deprived of their rights and privileges, which he was not then in circumstances to defend from so sudden an invasion. Upon turning out those articles, the enemy pledged their faith and honor that they would not attack him. On these he relied, and therefore thought it unnecessary to be on his guard against the enemy. But their pledges of faith and honor proved no better than those of other unprincipled hostile nations, for a few days after, a certain relation of the king came and informed him that the enemy who sent terms of accommodation to him, and received tribute to their satisfaction, yet meditated an attack upon his subjects by surprise, and that probably they would commence their attack in less than one day, and concluded with advising him, as he was not prepared for war, to order a speedy retreat of his family and subjects. He complied with this

advice.

The same night which was fixed upon to retreat, my father and his family set off about the break of day. The king and his two younger wives went in one company, and my mother and her children in another. We left our dwellings in succession, and my father's company went on first. We directed our course for a large shrub plain, some distance off, where we intended to conceal ourselves from the approaching enemy, until we could refresh ourselves a little. But we presently found that our retreat was not secure. For having struck up a little fire for the purpose of cooking victuals, the enemy, who happened to be encamped a little distance off, had sent out a scouting party who discovered us by the smoke of the fire, just as we were extinguishing it and about to eat. As soon as we had finished eating, my father discovered the party and immediately began to discharge arrows at them. This was what I first saw, and it alarmed both me and the women, who, being unable to make any resistance, immediately betook ourselves to the tall, thick reeds not far off, and left the old king to fight alone. For some time I beheld him from the reeds defending himself with great courage and firmness, till at last he was obliged to surrender himself into their hands. They then came to us in the reeds, and the very first salute I had from them was a violent blow on the head with the fore part of a gun, and at the same time a grasp round the neck. I then had a rope put about my neck, as had all the women in the thicket with me, and were immediately led to my father, who was likewise pinioned and haltered for leading. In this condition we were all led to the camp. The women and myself, being submissive, had tolerable treatment from the enemy, while my father was closely interrogated respecting his money, which they knew he must have. But as he gave them no account of it, he was instantly cut and pounded on his body with great inhumanity, that he might be induced by the torture he suffered to make the discovery. All this availed not in the least to make him give up his money,

but he despised all the tortures which they inflicted, until the continued exercise and increase of torment obliged him to sink and expire. He thus died without informing his enemies where his money lay. I saw him while he was thus tortured to death. The shocking scene is to this day fresh in my memory, and I have often been overcome while thinking on it. He was a man of remarkable stature. I should judge as much as six feet and six or seven inches high, two feet across the shoulders, and every way well proportioned. He was a man of remarkable strength and resolution, affable, kind and gentle, ruling with equity and moderation.

The army of the enemy was large, I should suppose consisting of about six thousand men. Their leader was called Baukurre. After destroying the old prince, they decamped and immediately marched towards the sea, lying to the west, taking with them myself and the women prisoners. In the march, a scouting party was detached from the main army. To the leader of this party I was made waiter, having to carry his gun, etc. As we were a-scouting, we came across a herd of fat cattle consisting of about thirty in number. These we set upon and immediately wrested from their keepers, and afterwards converted them into food for the army. The enemy had remarkable success in destroying the country wherever they went. For as far as they had penetrated they laid the habitations waste and captured the people. The distance they had now brought me was about four hundred miles. All the march I had very hard tasks imposed on me, which I must perform on pain of punishment. I was obliged to carry on my head a large flat stone used for grinding our corn, weighing, as I should suppose, as much as twenty-five pounds; besides victuals, mat and cooking utensils. Though I was pretty large and stout of my age, yet these burdens were very grievous to me, being only six years and a half old. . . .

The invaders then pinioned the prisoners of all ages and sexes indiscriminately, took their flocks and all their effects, and moved on their way towards the sea. On the march, the prisoners

were treated with clemency, on account of their being submissive and humble. Having come to the next tribe, the enemy laid siege and immediately took men, women, children, flocks, and all their valuable effects. They then went on to the next district, which was contiguous to the sea, called in Africa, Anamaboo. The enemies' provisions were then almost spent, as well as their strength. The inhabitants, knowing what conduct they had pursued, and what were their present intentions, improved the favorable opportunity, attacked them, and took enemy, prisoners, flocks and all their effects. I was then taken a second time. All of us were then put into the castle and kept for market. On a certain time, I and other prisoners were put on board a canoe, under our master, and rowed away to a vessel belonging to Rhode Island, commanded by Captain Collingwood, and the mate, Thomas Mumford. While we were going to the vessel, our master told us to appear to the best possible advantage for sale. I was bought on board by one Robertson Mumford, steward of said vessel, for four gallons of rum and a piece of calico, and called VENTURE, on account of his having purchased me with his own private venture. Thus I came by my name. All the slaves that were bought for that vessel's cargo were two hundred and sixty.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What picture of the slave trade in West Africa does Venture Smith's account depict?
2. What can we infer from this account about the impact of slave trade across the West and Central African regions?

An Account of a Slave Rebellion on a Ship Off the Coast of Africa (1750)

Source: From the *Maryland Gazette* (Green), Annapolis, November 14, 1750.

[Introduction] This account, from a local newspaper in Annapolis, Maryland, describes an uprising on a slave ship. It was published on November 14, 1750.

This rebellion has been cited in books such as Eric Robert Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (LSU Press, 2006). The account included here, though, is primary and was printed in several newspapers in 1750. These include the *Boston Newsletter*, September 6, 1750; the *Boston News-Letter*, June 21, 1750; the *Boston Post-Boy*, June 25, 1750; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 5, 1750; and the *Maryland Gazette*. The authors of *World in Motion* are pretty certain the full text of the newspaper story currently appears only in these newspapers and on the University of Virginia Geography of Slavery website on which they found it. **[End introduction]**

Source:

http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/saxon/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=/xml_docs/slavery/documents/mutiny.xml&style=/xml_docs/slavery/documents/display_doc.xsl

By Capt. Tarr who arrived a few days ago from St. Kitts, we have the following account that was sent him by Hamilton Montgomery, belonging to the ship King David of Bristol, bound from the coast of Guinea, viz. That on the 8th day of May last, the slaves on board the said ship rose about 5 o'clock in the morning, none of them being in irons on board.------The insurrection was contrived and begun by 15 that had for a considerable time been treated with the same freedom as the white men; and a great many of the latter dying, encouraged them to the design.------As the chief of these slaves spoke very good English, he often convers'd with the captain in his cabbin [*sic*], where all the arms were loaded.------and consulting with his comrades, knowing the small strength of the white men, they at once flew into the cabbin, and secured the arms in a few

minutes, kill'd the captain and five of the people, thereby putting it out of the power of the remainder of the ship's crew to make any resistance, so that they got down the hold to save themselves. But the head of the Negroes call'd to them, and told them, if they would come upon deck and surrender, he would save all their lives; which they soon did, except the chief mate, who remain'd in the hold for some hours after; but sending down a white boy to acquaint him, if he did not come upon deck, they would come down and cut him to pieces; he thereupon came up, and they directly put him in irons, as they had all the others before: About eight of the clock the same evening, they threw overboard nine of the white men alive, with their irons on: The chief mate was also brought on the gunnel, to be serv'd in the same manner; but one of the head Negroes interposed, and said, Who must take care of the ship? and withal declared, that if they destroy'd him, he would kill the first man that attempted it; whereupon they saved his life.---- Having let the ship drive with wind and tide for 24 hours, they at last insisted to have her carried to the Gold Coast, or Calabar, or St. Thomas's, an isle near the coast of Guiney; but the head Negro being a fellow of more sense than common, being persuaded there was no possibility of getting there, it was agreed upon to go where no white man liv'd; and Desiada was pitch'd upon, which they made on the 14th of May; and at 6 in the evening the Negroes obliged the chief mate to hoist out the boat, and they then put two white men and four Negroes on board to go for the isle; and if there were any Whites liv'd there, they were to return and kill the remainder of the crew.---But as the relator writes, he afterwards heard that they did not reach the island, and that he heard nothing of them 'til he got the ship to an anchor at Grand tier point, in Teage, a French island, on the 10th.----Where the French, upon giving some small assistance, not so much as venturing their lives, or anything like it, charged the expences to 3000 l. currency.----What further was done with the ship, or the Negroes, he does not write.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How do you imagine newspaper readers reacting to this story?

2. How might the story have changed minds about the abolition of slavery—either pro or con?

Liberation of the *Marlborough* (1752)

[Introduction] This remarkable account, authored by a British ship captain, describes the successful liberation of the slave ship *Marlborough* by those who would have otherwise been transported across the Atlantic as captives. **[End introduction]**

Source: *The London Magazine*: or, *Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* (February 1753), in David Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Yale University Press, 2010), 133.

By Captain Wright of the *Endeavor*, from the Coast of Guinea, we had the following account of the loss of the *Marlborough*, Captain Codd, of Bristol, by an insurrection of the Negroes the beginning of October last [1752]. Captain Codd having indulged 28 Gold-Coast Negroes with their liberty on deck to assist in navigating the ship, they behaved for some time in a very tractable, civil manner. But on the 3rd Day after he sailed from the bar of Bonny [Nigeria], while most of the crew were below cleaning the rooms, and none but the captain and two white men, armed with cutlasses left above to take care of the ship, all of a sudden the Negroes on deck snatched the arms from them, wounded the captain, and forced him up the fore-shrouds, where they shot him dead. The rest of the Negroes securing the quarter deck and small arms, became

soon masters of the ship, and spent the rest of the day in most cruelly butchering the crew (who were in number 35) except the boatswain and cabin-boy, whom they saved to conduct the ship back again; which they did after 8 days and came to anchor within the bar of Bonny. About the same time the *Hawk*, Captain Jones, of Bristol arrived at that place and hearing of the affair, bore down on her, with an intent to re-take her; but the Negroes were so expert at the great guns and small-arms, that they soon repelled him. After putting the Bite Negroes ashore that chose it, in number 270, the remainder, consisting of 150, weighed anchor, set their sales, and stood to sea, with intent, as is supposed, to go to their own country, tho' the undertaking was extremely hazardous, as they had no one to navigate the ship, the boatswain having jumped overboard the night before they sailed, and got to the *Hawk*; and it is supposed, that on his escape, the poor cabin-boy fell a sacrifice to their revenge.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How does this source complicate the common representation of Africans as helpless victims of the Atlantic slave trade?
2. How might the source (a British captain) be biased in his representation of the events?

A Physician on Injuries Faced by Sugar Laborers (1764)

[Introduction] James Grainger was a physician who immigrated to St. Kitts Island in the Caribbean in 1759. He offered his services in treatment of the island's European population and the enslaved Africans who labored on sugar plantations. He authored a lengthy essay on the diseases and afflictions he faced in 1764. He died from unknown causes in 1769. **[End introduction]**

Source: James Grainger, *An Essay on the More Common West-India Diseases; and the Remedies. To Which Are Added Some Hints on the Management and Care of Negroes*, vol. 6 (Mundell & Son and Longman & Rees, 1764), 65–66.

Boilers are very apt to get scalded; especially when they are obliged to continue their labours in the night time. If the skin is raised into blisters; these should be immediately snip'd, and the water let out, otherwise that will become acrid, and erode the subjacent part. Those who feed the mill with canes, are sometimes liable to have their hands ground off between the rollers, especially in the night time. "Wouldst though prevent this horrid accident? Leave off working during the night:—or if that cannot be done, at least change those who supply the mill every two hours; by this means their growing sleepy may be prevented."

I shall conclude this part with some few observations on sordid Ulcers, which too frequently infect the ankles of Negroes, especially in islands, where the soil is of a clayey nature. They are difficult to be cured. They bleed upon the slightest occasion, and generally produce an oedematous swelling of the member.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the tone of Grainger's essay?
2. What does it suggest about the nature of work faced by enslaved laborers and the state of medical knowledge at the time?

Ship's Log from the Dutch Ship *Jagtrust* (1778)

[Introduction] These are the ship's log entries for the final three weeks at sail of the *Jagtrust*, a Dutch ship sailing out of the Dutch settlement of Cape Town, South Africa, in 1778. The ship was returning from a slaving voyage along the East African coast. **[End introduction]**

Source: Robert Ross, "The Dutch on the Swahili Coast, 1776–1778: Two Slaving Journals, Part II." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 19, no. 3 (1986): 479–506.

Monday 5 January, there died an adult slave man and an adult slave woman.

Tuesday 6 January, there died an adult slave woman. Every day we gave meat of the cattle we had brought with us as refreshments.

Wednesday 7 January, died a juvenile male slave.

Thursday 8 January, died an adult slave woman.

Friday 9 January, died one adult slave man and one adult slave woman.

Saturday 10 January, died one adult male slave.

Sunday 11 January, died two juvenile male slaves.

Monday 12 January, nothing occurred.

Tuesday 13 January, one adult slave woman died.

Wednesday 14 January, a French sailor died.

Thursday 15 January, died an adult male slave.

Friday 16 January, died one adult slave woman.

Saturday 17 January, nothing occurred.

Sunday 18 January, suddenly without their being sick, there died a large adult male slave and a slave woman. To our great satisfaction we saw the mainland of Africa. A French sailor died.

Monday 19 January, once again, to our distress, three slaves, two adult men and one adult

woman, died.

Tuesday 20 January, an adult slave man died.

Wednesday 21 January, a juvenile slave boy died.

Thursday 22 January, in the night there died two slaves, an adult woman and a juvenile male; in the morning a French sailor died and in the afternoon yet another juvenile male slave, and an adult slave man. In the afternoon we sailed into the roads of the Cape of Good Hope, but were prevented by a strong Southeastern from reaching our goal, and so were forced to go to Robben Island, where we anchored at 3:30 in the afternoon. We immediately received some provisions and ten living sheep from the superintendent, for the Company's account, which were most welcome.

Friday 23 January, I sent a letter to Your Excellencies in which I dutifully made a hasty report, as the time available for writing was limited. To our dismay there again died three slaves, two adult and one juvenile males. We longed for a favorable wind, so we could sail into the roads of the Cape of Good Hope, because the daily deaths most distress us.

Saturday 24 January, died two juvenile male slaves and a French sailor.

Sunday 25 January, In the night the wind unexpectedly changed with a light air breeze. Both the seamen and I hoped to make use of such fortune, so we made every effort, and in the morning came into the roads of the Cape of Good Hope.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the captain's tone as he recounts the mortality of so many of the captives and crew of his ship?

2. What might this tell us about the nature of the slave trade?

John Newton, *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade* (1787)

[Introduction] John Newton wrote "Amazing Grace," one of the most famous hymns of all time. Few know, however, that he worked as a slave trader for some time before he was born again and became an ardent abolitionist. In the following excerpt from his 1787 *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade*, he muses on the cost of the Atlantic slave trade in terms of the conflicts it spawned within the continent of Africa. **[End introduction]**

Source: John Newton, *The Posthumous Works of the Late Reverend John Newton* (W.W. Woodward, 1809), 245–246.

I verily believe, that the far greater part of the wars, in Africa, would cease, if the Europeans would cease to tempt them, by offering goods for slaves. And though they do not bring legions into the field, their wars are bloody. I believe, the captives reserved for sale are fewer than the slain.

I have not sufficient data to warrant calculation. But, I suppose, not less than one hundred thousand slaves are exported, annually, from all parts of Africa, and that more than one-half of these are exported in English bottoms.

If but an equal number are killed in war, and if many of these wars are kindled by the incentive of selling their prisoners; what an annual accumulation of blood must there be, crying against the nations of Europe concerned in this trade, and particularly against our own!

I have often been gravely told, as a proof that the Africans, however hardly treated, deserve but little compassion, that they are a people so destitute of natural affection, that it is

common among them for parents to sell their children, and children their parents. And, I think, a charge of this kind is brought against them by the respectable author of *Spectacle de la Nature*. But he must have been misinformed. I never heard of one instance of either, while I used the Coast.

Newton on Conditions Aboard the Ship

With our ships, the great object is, to be full. When the ship is there, it is thought desirable she should take as many as possible. The cargo of a vessel of a hundred tons, or little more, is calculated to purchase from two hundred and twenty to two hundred and fifty slaves. Their lodging-rooms below the deck, which are three (for the men, the boys, and the women), besides a place for the sick, are sometimes more than five feet high, and sometimes less; and this height is divided towards the middle, for the slaves lie in two rows, one above the other, on each side of the ship, close to each other, like books upon a shelf. I have known them so close, that the shelf would not, easily, contain one more. And I have known a white man sent down, among the men, to lay them in these rows to the greatest advantage, so that as little space as possible might be lost.

Let it be observed, that the poor creatures, thus cramped for want of room, are likewise in irons, for the most part both hands and feet, and two together, which makes it difficult for them to turn or move, to attempt either to rise or to lie down, without hurting themselves, or each other. Nor is the motion of the ship, especially her heeling, or stoop on one side, when under sail, to be omitted; for this, as they lie athwart, or cross the ship, adds to the uncomfortableness of their lodging, especially to those who lie on the leeward or leaning side of the vessel.

Dire is the tossing, deep the groans.—

The heat and smell of these rooms, when the weather will not admit of the slaves being brought upon deck, and of having their rooms cleaned every day, would be almost insupportable to a person not accustomed to them. If the slaves and their rooms be constantly aired, and they are not detained too long on board, perhaps there are not many die; but the contrary is often their lot. They are kept down, by the weather, to breathe a hot and corrupted air, sometimes for a week: this, added to the galling of their irons, and the despondency which seizes their spirits when thus confined, soon becomes fatal. And every morning, perhaps, more instances than one are found, of the living and the dead, like the captives of Meaentius, fastened together.

Epidemical fevers and fluxes, which fill the ship with noisome and noxious effluvia, often break out, and infect the seamen likewise, and thus the oppressors, and the oppressed, fall by the same stroke. I believe, nearly one-half of the slaves on board, have, sometimes, died; and that the loss of a third part, in these circumstances, is not unusual. The ship, in which I was mate, left the coast with two hundred and eighteen slaves on board; and though we were not much affected by epidemical disorders, I find by my journal of that voyage (now before me), that we buried sixty-two on our passage to South Carolina, exclusive of those which died before we left the coast, of which I have no account.

Questions for Discussion:

1. According to Newton, what are the motivations of the slave ship's crew?
2. What are the consequences for the captives?

James Boswell, "No Abolition of Slavery, or, the Universal Empire of Love: A Poem"

(1791)

[Introduction] James Boswell is in some ways the opposite of John Newton. While initially supportive of abolition, Boswell later became hostile to the cause and in 1791 penned this poem praising the institution of slavery. **[End introduction]**

Source: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20360/20360-h/20360-h.htm

He who to thwart GOD'S system tries,
Bids mountains sink, and vallies rise;
Slavery, subjection, what you will,
Has ever been, and will be still:
Trust me, that in this world of woe
Mankind must different burthens know;
Each bear his own, th' Apostle spoke;
And chiefly they who bear the yoke.
From wise subordination's plan
Springs the chief happiness of man;
Yet from that source to numbers flow
Varieties of pain and woe;
Look round this land of freedom, pray,
And all its lower ranks survey;
Bid the hard-working labourer speak,
What are his scanty gains a week?
All huddled in a smoaky shed,

How are his wife and children fed?

Are not the poor in constant fear

Of the relentless Overseer?

The state of slavery is acknowledged both in the Old Testament and the New.

Question for Discussion:

1. What sort of religious and economic arguments does Boswell make in favor of slavery?

Resolution on Racial Reconciliation on the 150th Anniversary of the Southern Baptist Convention (1995)

[Introduction] In 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention was created as a result of a dispute within the Baptist Church about whether Baptists could practice or even support slavery. Over the course of the next several decades, the Southern Baptist Church ardently defended institutions such as segregation and continued to argue that American slavery had been largely benevolent. However, in 1995 the church dramatically reversed its position on the subject and issued an apology. **[End introduction]**

Source: http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/899/resolution-on-racial-reconciliation-on-the-150th-anniversary-of-the-southern-baptist-convention

WHEREAS, Since its founding in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention has been an effective instrument of God in missions, evangelism, and social ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach that Eve is the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20), and that

God shows no partiality, but in every nation whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him (Acts 10:34–35), and that God has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on the face of the earth (Acts 17:26); and

WHEREAS, Our relationship to African Americans has been hindered from the beginning by the role that slavery played in the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention; and

WHEREAS, Many of our Southern Baptist forbears defended the right to own slaves, and either participated in, supported, or acquiesced in the particularly inhumane nature of American slavery; and

WHEREAS, In later years Southern Baptists failed, in many cases, to support, and in some cases opposed, legitimate initiatives to secure the civil rights of African Americans; and

WHEREAS, Racism has led to discrimination, oppression, injustice, and violence, both in the Civil War and throughout the history of our nation; and

WHEREAS, Racism has divided the body of Christ and Southern Baptists in particular, and separated us from our African American brothers and sisters; and

WHEREAS, Many of our congregations have intentionally and/or unintentionally excluded African Americans from worship, membership, and leadership; and

WHEREAS, Racism profoundly distorts our understanding of Christian morality, leading some Southern Baptists to believe that racial prejudice and discrimination are compatible with the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, Jesus performed the ministry of reconciliation to restore sinners to a right relationship with the Heavenly Father, and to establish right relations among all human beings, especially within the family of faith.

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, That we, the messengers to the Sesquicentennial meeting of the

Southern Baptist Convention, assembled in Atlanta, Georgia, June 20–22, 1995, unwaveringly denounce racism, in all its forms, as deplorable sin; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we affirm the Bible's teaching that every human life is sacred, and is of equal and immeasurable worth, made in Gods image, regardless of race or ethnicity (Genesis 1:27), and that, with respect to salvation through Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for (we) are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28); and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we lament and repudiate historic acts of evil such as slavery from which we continue to reap a bitter harvest, and we recognize that the racism which yet plagues our culture today is inextricably tied to the past; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we apologize to all African Americans for condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime; and we genuinely repent of racism of which we have been guilty, whether consciously (Psalm 19:13) or unconsciously (Leviticus 4:27); and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we ask forgiveness from our African American brothers and sisters, acknowledging that our own healing is at stake; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we hereby commit ourselves to eradicate racism in all its forms from Southern Baptist life and ministry; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we commit ourselves to be doers of the Word (James 1:22) by pursuing racial reconciliation in all our relationships, especially with our brothers and sisters in Christ (1 John 2:6), to the end that our light would so shine before others, that they may see (our) good works and glorify (our) Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16); and

Be it finally RESOLVED, That we pledge our commitment to the Great Commission task of

making disciples of all people (Matthew 28:19), confessing that in the church God is calling together one people from every tribe and nation (Revelation 5:9), and proclaiming that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only certain and sufficient ground upon which redeemed persons will stand together in restored family union as joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

Question for Discussion:

1. What does this resolution by the Southern Baptist Church tell us about changing American attitudes toward race, slavery, and religion in the late twentieth century?