as the Commissions themselves will speake itt.

To conclude, I have don what was possible both to friend and enimy, have granted Mr. Bacon three pardons, which he hath scornefully rejected, suppoaseing himselfe stronger to subvert then I and you to maineteyne the Laws, by which onely and Gods assisting grace and mercy, all men must hope for peace and safety. I will add noe more though much more is still remaining to Justifie me and condemne Mr. Bacon, but to desier that this declaration may be read in every County Court in the Country, and that a Court be presently called to doe itt, before the Assembly meet, That your approbation or dissattisfaction of this declaration may be knowne to all the Country, and the Kings Councell to whose most revered Judgments itt is submitted, Given the XXIXth day of May, a happy day in the xxvIIIth yeare of his most sacred Majesties Reigne, Charles the second, who God grant long and prosperously to Reigne, and lett all his good subjects say Amen.

#### For Further Reading

Charles McClean Andrews, ed., Narratives of the Insurrections, 1675–1690. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952.

John B. Frantz, ed., Bacon's Rebellion: Prologue to the Revolution? Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1969.

Robert Middlekauf, Bacon's Rebellion. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964.

Wilcomb E. Washburn, The Governor and the Rebel: A History of Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957.

Stephen S. Webb, 1676: The End of American Independence. New York: Knopf, 1984.



## VIEWPOINT 10A

# Slavery Is Immoral (1700)

Samuel Sewall (1652–1730)

The key to profitability in the early American colonies was the raising and selling of cash crops, especially tobacco in Virginia and Maryland and rice in South Carolina. However, successful cultivation of these crops required intensive labor—something in short supply in the thinly populated colonies. Some colonists enslaved Indians captured in wars, but this solution proved unworkable, in part because many Indians quickly succumbed to diseases brought over by the colonists. Another attempted solution was indentured servitude (see viewpoints 8A and 8B), but this method of importing bound workers formed in its wake an impoverished white underclass of former servants—a development that often caused political

From The Selling of Joseph: A Memorial by Samuel Sewall, Boston, 1700 (Massachusetts Historical Society, Proceedings, vol. 7, 1864).

instability as seen in such upheavals as Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 (see viewpoints 9A and 9B).

A lasting solution to the colonies' labor shortage problem was finally found by importing black Africans as slaves. Since the early 1500s, Africans had been captured and transported to Spanish, Portuguese, and (later) British colonies in South America and the Caribbean. Although blacks were present in Virginia in 1619, it was not until the 1680s that they were imported in large numbers sufficient to begin to replace the white indentured servants as the main source of labor in Virginia, South Carolina, and other colonies. Unlike indentured servants, slaves were bound for life, lacked all legal and political rights, and their different skin color made escape much more difficult. By 1700 slavery was legal in all the English colonies in America, and Africans (mostly slaves) accounted for 15 percent of the population in southern colonies. Although legal in New England colonies, it was not as established or widespread as in colonies farther south.

Even though slavery did seem to many a lasting and workable solution to the colonies' labor shortage, the morality of slavery did not go unquestioned in colonial times. The following viewpoint is taken from one of the earliest antislavery pamphlets written in America. The author, Samuel Sewall, was a Puritan judge then serving on the Massachusetts Superior Court. He was one of the judges who condemned several people to death in the 1692 Salem witch trials, actions about which he later confessed error and remorse. In 1700 he became involved in a legal dispute with another judge, John Saffin, over the fate of a black slave Saffin refused to set free despite a contract calling for the slave's release. In defense of his position, Sewall wrote and circulated a pamphlet attacking slavery, The Selling of Joseph a Memorial, that was published in Boston in 1700.

What objections does Sewall have to slavery? How does he support his arguments? Is Sewall racially prejudiced against blacks, judging from this viewpoint? Explain your answer.

orasmuch as Liberty is in real value next unto Life: None ought to part with it themselves, or deprive others of it, but upon most mature consideration.

The Numerousness of Slaves at this Day in the Province, and the Uneasiness of them under their Slavery, hath put many upon thinking whether the Foundation of it be firmly and well laid; so as to sustain the Vast Weight that is built upon it. It is most certain that all Men, as they are the Sons of Adam, are Co-heirs, and have equal Right unto Liberty, and all other outward Comforts of Life. God hath given the

Earth [with all its commodities] unto the Sons of Adam, Psal., 115, 16. And hath made of one Blood all Nations of Men, for to dwell on all the face of the Earth, and hath determined the Times before appointed, and the bounds of their Habitation: That they should seek the Lord. Forasmuch then as we are the Offspring of God, &c. Acts 17. 26, 27, 29. Now, although the Title given by the last Adam doth infinitely better Men's Estates, respecting God and themselves; and grants them a most beneficial and inviolable Lease under the Broad Seal of Heaven, who were before only Tenants at Will; yet through the Indulgence of God to our First Parents after the Fall, the outward Estate of all and every of their Children, remains the same as to one another. So that Originally, and Naturally, there is no such thing as Slavery. Joseph was rightfully no more a Slave to his Brethren, than they were to him; and they had no more Authority to Sell him, than they had to Slay him. And if they had nothing to do to sell him; the Ishmaelites bargaining with them, and paying down Twenty pieces of Silver, could not make a Title. Neither could Potiphar have any better Interest in him than the Ishmaelites had. Gen. 37, 20, 27, 28. For he that shall in this case plead Alteration of Property, seems to have forfeited a great part of his own claim to Humanity. There is no proportion between Twenty Pieces of Silver and Liberty. The Commodity itself is the Claimer. If Arabian Gold be imported in any quantities, most are afraid to meddle with it, though they might have it at easy rates; lest it should have been wrongfully taken from the Owners, it should kindle a fire to the Consumption of their whole Estate. Tis pity there should be more Caution used in buying a Horse, or a little lifeless dust, than there is in purchasing Men and Women: Whereas they are the Offspring of God, and their Liberty is,

... Auro pretiosior Omni. [To Each More Precious than Gold]

And seeing God hath said, He that Stealeth a Man, and Selleth him, or if he be found in his Hand, he shall surely be put to Death. Exod. 21, 16. This Law being of Everlasting Equity, wherein Man-Stealing is ranked among the most atrocious of Capital Crimes: What louder Cry can there be made of that Celebrated Warning.

Caveat Emptor! [Buyer Beware!]

And all things considered, it would conduce more to the Welfare of the Province, to have White Servants for a Term of Years, than to have Slaves for Life. Few can endure to hear of a Negro's being made free; and indeed they can seldom use their Freedom well; yet their continual aspiring after their forbidden Liberty, renders them Unwilling Servants.

And there is such a disparity in their Conditions, Colour, and Hair, that they can never embody with us, & grow up in orderly Families, to the Peopling of the Land; but still remain in our Body Politick as a kind of extravasat Blood. As many Negro Men as there are among us, so many empty Places are there in our Train Bands [militias], and the places taken up of Men that might make Husbands for our Daughters. And the Sons and Daughters of New England would become more like *Jacob* and *Rachel*, if this Slavery were thrust quite out of Doors. Moreover it is too well known what Temptations Masters are under, to connive at the Fornication of their Slaves; lest they should be obliged to find them Wives, or pay their Fines. It seems to be practically pleaded that they might be lawless; 'tis thought much of, that the Law should have satisfaction for their Thefts, and other Immoralities; by which means, Holiness to the Lord is more rarely engraven upon this sort of Servitude. It is likewise most lamentable to think, how in taking Negroes out of Africa, and selling of them here, That which God has joined together, Men do boldly rend asunder: Men from their Country, Husbands from their Wives, Parents from their Children. How horrible is the Uncleanness, Mortality, if not Murder, that the Ships are guilty of that bring great Crouds of these miserable Men and Women. Methinks when we are bemoaning the barbarous Usage of our Friends and Kinsfolk in Africa, it might not be unreasonable to enquire whether we are not culpable in forcing the Africans to become Slaves amongst ourselves. And it may be a question whether all the Benefit received by Negro Slaves will balance the Accompt of Cash laid out upon them; and for the Redemption of our own enslaves Friends out of Africa. Besides all the Persons and Estates that have perished there.

## **Objections and Answers**

Obj. 1. These Blackamores are of the Posterity of Cham, and therefore are under the Curse of Slavery. Gen. 9, 25, 26, 27.

Ans. Of all Offices, one would not beg this; viz. Uncall'd for, to be an Executioner of the Vindictive Wrath of God; the extent and duration of which is to us uncertain. If this ever was a Commission; How do we know but that it is long since out of Date? Many have found it to their Cost, that a Prophetical Denunciation of Judgment against a Person or People, would not warrant them to inflict that evil. If it would, Hazael might justify himself in all he did against his master, and the Israelites from 2 Kings 8, 10, 12.

But it is possible that by cursory reading, this Text may have been mistaken. For *Canaan* is the Person Cursed three times over, without the mentioning of *Cham*. Good Expositors suppose the Curse entailed on him, and that this Prophesie was accomplished in the Extirpation of the Canaanites, and in the Servitude of the Cibeonites. . . . Whereas the Blackamores are not descended of Canaan, but of Cush. Psal. 68, 31. Princes shall come out of Egypt [Mizraim]. Ethiopia [Cush] shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. Under which Names, all Africa may be comprehended; and their Promised Conversion ought to be prayed for. Jer. 13, 23. Can the Ethiopian change his Skin? This shows that Black Men are the Posterity of Cush. Who time out of mind have been distinguished by their Colour. . . .

"It is . . . most lamentable to think, how in taking Negroes out of Africa, and selling of them here, That which God has joined together, Men do boldly rend asunder; Men from their Country, Husbands from their Wives, Parents from their Children."

Obj. 2. The Nigers are brought out of a Pagan Country, into places where the Gospel is preached.

Ans. Evil must not be done, that good may come of it. The extraordinary and comprehensive Benefit accruing to the Church of God, and to Joseph per-

sonally, did not rectify his Brethren's Sale of him.

Obj. 3. The Africans have Wars one with another:
Our Shins bring lawful Cantines taken in those wars

Our Ships bring lawful Captives taken in those wars. Ans. For aught is known, their Wars are much such as were between Jacob's Sons and their Brother Joseph. If they be between Town and Town; Provincial or National: Every War is upon one side Unjust. An Unlawful War can't make lawful Captives. And by receiving, we are in danger to promote. and partake in their Barbarous Cruelties. I am sure, if some Gentlemen should go down to the [town of] Brewsters to take the Air, and Fish: And a stronger Party from Hull should surprise them, and sell them for Slaves to a Ship outward bound; they would think themselves unjustly dealt with; both by Sellers and Buyers. And yet 'tis to be feared, we have no other Kind of Title to our Nigers. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets. Matt. 7, 12.

Obj. 4. Abraham had Servants bought with his Money and born in his House.

Ans. Until the Circumstances of Abraham's purchase be recorded, no Argument can be drawn from it. In the mean time, Charity obliges us to conclude, that He knew it was lawful and good.

It is Observable that the Israelites were strictly forbidden the buying or selling one another for Slaves. Levit. 25. 39. 46. Jer. 34. 8-22. And God gaged His Blessing in lieu of any loss they might conceit they suffered thereby, Deut. 15. 18. And since the partition Wall is broken down, inordinate Self-love should likewise be demolished. God expects that Christians should be of a more Ingenuous and benign frame of Spirit. Christians should carry it to all the World, as the Israelites were to carry it one towards another. And for Men obstinately to persist in holding their Neighbours and Brethren under the Rigor of perpetual Bondage, seems to be no proper way of gaining Assurance that God has given them Spiritual Freedom. Our Blessed Saviour has altered the Measures of the ancient Love Song, and set it to a most Excellent New Tune, which all ought to be ambitious of Learning. Matt. 5. 43. 44. John 13. 34. These Ethiopians, as black as they are, seeing they are the Sons and Daughters of the First Adam, the Brethren and Sisters of the Last Adam, and the Offspring of God; They ought to be treated with a Respect agreeable.

# VIEWPOINT 10B

# **Slavery Is Moral (1701)**

John Saffin (1632–1710)

John Saffin was a wealthy landowner and Massachusetts judge. In 1700 he became embroiled in a legal dispute when he refused to give a black slave in his possession his freedom. He viewed Samuel Sewall's tract *The Selling of Joseph a Memorial* (see viewpoint 10A) as a personal affront, and in 1701 published a reply defending the institution of slavery (and, indirectly, his own actions as a slaveowner). The tract, reprinted here, is notable in that many of its arguments appear repeatedly in later proslavery literature.

How does Saffin respond to Samuel Sewall's arguments? Why do you think both Saffin and Sewall focus on the Bible in developing their arguments? What beliefs does Saffin express about blacks?

A Brief and Candid Answer to a late Printed Sheet, Entituled, The Selling of Joseph

hat Honourable and Learned Gentleman, the Author of a Sheet, Entituled, *The Selling of Joseph*, A Memorial, seems from thence to draw this conclusion, that because the Sons of *Jacob* 

From A Brief and Candid Answer to a Late Printed Sheet Entituled "The Selling of Joseph" by John Saffin (Boston, 1701), as reprinted in Notes on the History of Slavery in Massachusetts by George H. Moore (New York: D. Appleton, 1866).

did very ill in selling their Brother Joseph to the Ishmaelites, who were Heathens, therefore it is utterly unlawful to Buy and Sell Negroes, though among Christians; which Conclusion I presume is not well drawn from the Premises, nor is the case parallel; for it was unlawfull for the Israelites to sell their Brethren upon any account, or pretence whatsoever during life. But it was not unlawful for the Seed of Abraham to have Bond men, and Bond women either born in their House, or bought with their Money, as it is written of Abraham, Gen. 14.14 & 21.10 & Exod. 21.16 & Levit. 25.44, 45, 46 v. After the giving of the Law: And in Josh. 9.23. That famous Example of the Gibeonites is a sufficient proof where there [is] no other.

#### **Different Orders of Men**

To speak a little to the Gentleman's first Assertion: That none ought to part with their Liberty themselves, or deprive others of it but upon mature consideration; a prudent exception, in which he grants, that upon some consideration a man may be deprived of his Liberty. And then presently in his next Position or Assertion he denies it, viz.: It is most certain, that all men as they are the Sons of Adam are Coheirs, and have equal right to Liberty, and all other Comforts of Life, which he would prove out of Psal. 115.16. The Earth hath he given to the Children of Men. True, but what is all this to the purpose, to prove that all men have equal right to Liberty, and all outward comforts of this life; which Position seems to invert the Order that God hath set in the World, who hath Ordained different degrees and orders of men, some to be High and Honourable, some to be Low and Despicable; some to be Monarchs, Kings, Princes and Governours, Masters and Commanders, others to be Subjects, and to be Commanded; Servants of sundry sorts and degrees, bound to obey; yea, some to be born Slaves, and so to remain during their lives, as hath been proved. Otherwise there would be a meer parity among men, contrary to that of the Apostle, I Cor. 12 from the 13 to the 26 verse, where he sets forth (by way of comparison) the different sorts and offices of the Members of the Body, indigitating that they are all of use, but not equal, and of like dignity. So God hath set different Orders and Degrees of Men in the World, both in Church and Common weal. Now, if this Position of parity should be true, it would then follow that the ordinary Course of Divine Providence of God in the World should be wrong, and unjust, (which we must not dare to think, much less to affirm) and all the sacred Rules, Precepts and Commands of the Almighty which he hath given the Son of Men to observe and keep in their respective Places, Orders and Degrees, would be to no purpose; which unaccountably derogate from the Divine Wisdom of the most High, who hath made nothing in vain, but hath Holy Ends in all his Dispensations to the Children of men.

In the next place, this worthy Gentleman makes a large Discourse concerning the Utility and Conveniency to keep the one, and inconveniency of the other; respecting white and black Servants, which conduceth most to the welfare and benefit of this Province: which he concludes to be white men, who are in many respects to be preferred before Blacks; who doubts that? doth it therefore follow, that it is altogether unlawful for Christians to buy and keep Negro Servants (for this is the Thesis) but that those that have them ought in Conscience to set them free, and so lose all the money they cost (for we must not live in any known sin) this seems to be his opinion; but it is a Question whether it ever was the Gentleman's practice? But if he could perswade the General Assembly to make an Act, That all that have Negroes, and do set them free, shall be Re imbursed out of the Publick Treasury, and that there shall be no more Negroes brought into the Country; 'tis probable there would be more of his opinion; yet he would find it a hard task to bring the Country to consent thereto; for then the Negroes must be all sent out of the Country, or else the remedy would be worse than the Disease; and it is to be feared that those Negroes that are free, if there be not some strict course taken with them by Authority, they will be a plague to this Country.

"It is no Evil thing to bring them out of their own Heathenish Country, where they may have the Knowledge of the True God, be Converted and Eternally saved."

Again, If it should be unlawful to deprive them that are lawful Captives, or Bondmen of their Liberty for Life being Heathens; it seems to be more unlawful to deprive our Brethren, of our own or other Christian Nations of the Liberty, (though but for a time) by binding them to Serve some Seven, Ten, Fifteen, and some Twenty Years, which oft times proves for their whole Life, as many have been; which in effect is the same in Nature, though different in the time, yet this was allow'd among the Jews by the Law of God; and is the constant practice of our own and other Christian Nations in the World: the which our Author by his Dogmatical Assertions doth condemn as Irreligious; which is Diametrically contrary to the Rules and Precepts which God hath given the diversity of men to observe in their respective Stations, Callings, and Conditions of Life, as hath been observed.

### Slavery and the Bible

And to illustrate his Assertion our Author brings in by way of Comparison the Law of God against man Stealing, on pain of Death: Intimating thereby, that Buying and Selling of Negro's is a breach of that Law, and so deserves Death: A severe Sentence: But herein he begs the Question with a Caveat Emptor. For, in that very Chapter there is a Dispensation to the People of Israel, to have Bond men, Women and Children, even of their own Nation in some case; and Rules given therein to be observed concerning them; Verse the 4th. And in the before cited place, Levit. 25.44, 45, 46. Though the *Israelites* were forbidden (ordinarily) to make Bond men and Women of their own Nation, but of Strangers they might: the words run thus, verse 44. Both thy Bond men, and thy Bond maids which thou shalt have shall be of the Heathen, that are round about you: of them shall you Buy Bond men and Bond maids, &c. See also, I Cor. 12.13. Whether we be Bond or Free, which shows that in the times of the New Testament, there were Bond men also, etc.

In fine, The sum of this long Haurange, is no other, than to compare the Buying and Selling of Negro's unto the Stealing of men, and the Selling of Joseph by his Brethren, which bears no proportion therewith, nor is there any congrueity therein, as appears by the foregoing Texts.

Our Author doth further proceed to answer some Objections of his own framing, which he supposes some might raise.

Object. 1. That these Blackamores are of the Posterity of Cham, and therefore under the Curse of Slavery. Gen. 9.25, 26, 27. The which the Gentleman seems to deny, saying, they were the Seed of Canaan that were Cursed, etc.

Ans. Whether they were so or not, we shall not dispute: this may suffice, that not only the seed of *Cham* or *Canaan*, but any lawful Captives of other Heathen Nations may be made Bond men as hath been proved.

Obj. 2. That the Negroes are brought out of Pagan Countreys into places where the Gospel is Preached. To which he Replies, that we must not doe Evil that Good may come of it.

Ans. To which we answer, That it is no Evil thing to bring them out of their own Heathenish Country, where they may have the Knowledge of the True God, be Converted and Eternally saved.

#### **African Wars**

Obj. 3. The Affricans have Wars one with another; our Ships bring lawful Captives taken in those Wars.

To which our Author answer Conjecturally, and Doubtfully, for aught we know, that which may or may not be; which is insignificant, and proves nothing. He also compares the Negroes Wars, one Nation with another, with the Wars between Joseph and his Brethren. But where doth he read of any such War? We read indeed of a Domestick Quarrel they had with him, they envyed and hated Joseph; but by what is Recorded, he was meerly passive and meek as a Lamb. This Gentleman farther adds, That there is not any War but is unjust on one side, etc. Be it so, what doth that signify: We read of lawful Captives taken in the Wars, and lawful to be Bought and Sold without contracting the guilt of the Agressors; for which we have the example of Abraham before quoted; but if we must stay while both parties Warring are in the right, there would be no lawful Captives at all to be Bought; which seems to be rediculous to imagine, and contrary to the tenour of Scripture, and all Humane Histories on that subject.

Obj. 4. Abraham had Servants bought with his Money, and born in his House. Gen. 14.14. To which our worthy Author answers, until the Circumstances of Abraham's purchase be recorded, no Argument can be drawn from it.

Ans. To which we Reply, this is also Dogmatical, and proves nothing. He farther adds, In the mean time Charity Obliges us to conclude, that he knew it was lawful and good. Here the gentleman yields the case; for if we are in Charity bound to believe Abraham's practice, in buying and keeping Slaves in his house to be lawful and good: then it follows, that our Imitation of him in this his Moral Action, is as warrantable as that of his Faith; who is the Father of all them that believe. Rom. 4.16.

In the close of all, Our Author Quotes two more places of Scripture, viz.; Levit. 25.46, and Jer. 34, from the 8. to the 22. v. To prove that the people of Israel were strictly forbidden the Buying and Selling one another for Slaves: who questions that? and what is that to the case in hand? What a strange piece of Logick is this? Tis unlawful for Christians to Buy and Sell one another for slaves. Ergo, It is unlawful to Buy and Sell Negroes that are lawful Captiv'd Heathens.

And after a Serious Exhortation to us all to Love one another according to the Command of Christ. Math. 5.43, 44. This worthy Gentleman concludes with this Assertion, That these Ethiopeans as Black as they are, seeing they are the Sons and Daughters of the first Adam; the Brethren and Sisters of the Second Adam, and the Offspring of God; we ought to treat them with a respect agreeable.

#### Loving All People Equally Is Impossible

Ans. We grant it for a certain and undeniable verity, That all Mankind are the Sons and Daughters of

Adam, and the Creatures of God: But it doth not therefore follow that we are bound to love and respect all men alike: this under favour we must take leave to deny; we ought in charity, if we see our Neighbour in want, to relieve them in a regular way, but we are not bound to give them so much of our Estates, as to make them equal with our selves, because they are our Brethren, the Sons of Adam, no, not our own natural Kinsmen: We are Exhorted to do good unto all, but especially to them who are of the Houshold of Faith, Gal. 6.10. And we are to love, honour and respect all men according to the gift of God that is in them: I may love my Servant well, but my Son better: Charity begins at home, it would be a violation of common prudence, and a breach of good manners, to treat a Prince like a Peasant. And this worthy Gentleman would deem himself much neglected, if we should show him no more Defference than to an ordinary Porter: And therefore these florid expressions, the Sons and Daughters of the First Adam, the Brethren and Sisters of the Second Adam, and the Offspring of God, seem to be misapplied to import and insinuate, that we ought to tender Pagan Negroes with all love, kindness, and equal respect as to the best

By all which it doth evidently appear both by Scripture and Reason, the practice of the People of God in all Ages, both before and after the giving of the Law, and in the times of the Gospel, that there were Bond men, Women and Children commonly kept by holy and good men, and improved in Service; and there-

fore by the Command of God, Lev. 24:44, and their venerable Example, we may keep Bond men, and use them in our Service still; yet with all candour, moderation and Christian prudence, according to their state and condition consonant to the Word of God.

## The Negroes Character.

Cowardly and cruel are those Blacks Innate, Prone to Revenge, Imp of inveterate hate. He that exasperates them, soon espies Mischief and Murder in their very eyes. Libidinous, Deceitful, False and Rude, The Spume Issue of Ingratitude. The Premises consider'd, all may tell, How near good Joseph they are parallel.

#### For Further Reading

Peter Charles Hoffer, ed., Africans Become Afro-Americans: Selected Articles on Slavery in the American Colonies. New York: Garland, 1988.

Winthrop Jordan, White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812. New York: Norton, 1977.

T. Benson Strandness, Samuel Sewall: A Puritan Portrait. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967.

Larry Tise, Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987.

Peter H. Wood, Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion. New York: Knopf, 1974.

