

Brigham Young, before Territorial Legislature, January 23, 1852, CR 100 912, Church History Department Pitman Shorthand transcriptions, 2013-2021, Addresses and sermons, 1851-1874, Miscellaneous transcriptions, 1869, 1872, 1889, 1848, 1851-1854, 1859-1863, Utah Territorial Legislature, 1852 January-February, CHL.

1. Brigham Young speaks on slavery and for the first time publicly articulates a racial priesthood restriction, January 23, 1852.¹

Document

I have this section in my hand. [In] reading it over [I] made [a] little alteration in it. In [the] first place, with regard to slavery, inasmuch as I [believe²] in [the] Bible, [inasmuch as I] believe in [the] ordinances of [God and in the] priesthood order of God, I believe in slavery. Just as far as this act [is concerned], we believe in making this [African] creature amenable to certain [laws]; in their freedom they have subjected themselves to cursing. [In their] families, [in their] classes, [and] in their various capacities [they] have brought curses upon themselves and until the curse is removed by Him who has put the curse on this class, I am not authorized to [re]move it. I am a firm believer in slavery. I think this is reasonable according to the revelations; the Lord has revealed [that] the children of men [are to] be agents to themselves, unto the Lord their God.³

Now to the case before us with regard to slavery. [The bill] here [is] pertaining to slaves [who are] Africans [or] English, [or] Dutch, or ourselves. I go in for making just such laws as we want. [We are] perfectly independent of any other nation under [the] heavens. [We should] do that [which] we want

¹ Brigham Young, before Territorial Legislature, January 23, 1852, CR 100 912, Church History Department Pitman Shorthand transcriptions, 2013-2021, Addresses and sermons, 1851-1874, Miscellaneous transcriptions, 1869, 1872, 1889, 1848, 1851-1854, 1859-1863, Utah Territorial Legislature, 1852 January-February, CHL.

² Written *remember*; probable intent is *believe*. Watt sometimes wrote *br* for *bl*, and vice versa – the symbol *br* would represent *remember*, and the symbol *bl* would represent *believe*.

³ Young here is making the case that he has no right to free the slaves because slavery is traceable to the curse of Ham in the Bible (Genesis 9:25). In his estimation, God placed a curse on Canaan and therefore God would have to remove it. In essence, Young argued that he did not have the right to free another person's slaves and then claimed that his position was "reasonable according to the revelations." He then paraphrases the wording contained in four verses of LDS scripture: that men are "agents to themselves." In Moses 6:56, for example, it reads, "And it is given unto them [humankind] to know good from evil; wherefore they are agents unto themselves . . ." (For the other references see Doctrine and Covenants 29:39; 58:28; and 104:17). Young seems to suggest here that slave masters are "agents unto themselves" and it is up to them, not the legislature, to decide to free their slaves. It is a decidedly racial reading of "the revelations" in that it does not allow for black slaves to be "agents unto themselves," only white enslavers.

to be done regardless of [the] abuses of despotic governments. Whether they⁴ deem it to be right or wrong [is of] no matter to me, but to do the thing we ought to do to secure those blessings we are in pursuit of, that is my mind on in this matter.

The case [of slavery] comes up [and] causes feelings, or did because we have ~~always~~ already men in this valley [who brought their slaves with them] and [we] have had those who came here and have left. They came in good faith.⁵

They [Black Africans] enjoy the rights of receiving the first principles of [the] gospel which is liberty to all. These servants enjoy the privilege of being baptized [and having] hands laid on [their heads] for the Holy Ghost. They enjoy [the privilege] of so living before the Lord, [before their] masters, [and before their] friends [so] as to enjoy the spirit of [the] Lord continually. As far as⁶ [the] comforts [of] salvation, light, truth, enjoyment, [and] understand[ing] [are concerned] the blacks have the same privilege [as] white [men except] they cannot hold the priesthood. Inasmuch as they cannot bear any share in [the] priesthood, I ask⁷ whether they can bear rule in any place until that curse is removed? Consequently, they are “servant of servants.”⁸ We are [all] servants [as] Brother George⁹ has stated. He is [a] slave driven from his home. We are [all] servants. Now suppose we have [a negro] servant? It is just, right, [and] reasonable according to [the] holy priesthood [but I] say nothing about abuses.

Though the enlightened nation England has abolished slavery yet the most damnable slavery exists there. And you cannot die [here from starvation in the midst of plenty]. Find a black man [or] woman [in the U.S.] that [has traveled through the period of his or her life in hunger in the midst of plenty, yet there are] millions of them [in the cities of Europe who have lived close] by the luxuries of life

⁴ Young is likely referring to Congress or “the government” here.

⁵ The implication here is that enslavers came to Utah Territory in good faith that their property in slaves would be protected.

⁶ Watt wrote the word “as” twice here.

⁷ George Watt often changed a question Brigham Young addressed to the congregation to a statement, as he did here when he transcribed this speech. See his transcribed version in parallel columns below.

⁸ Genesis 9:25.

⁹ Likely referring to George A. Smith.

and [yet] die with starvation.¹⁰ That is [a] meaner slavery than to set them to work growing cotton. I would not wish to go to the enlightened nation of England because they are so far sunken in degradation and iniquity [that they] know not what slavery is. People do not know what it is but such a thing shall and will exist until the Lord God shall remove [it, until then it will] and [ought to] exist.¹¹

[Many] brethren in the south [have means vested in slaves]. Those of their servants want to come here, [but] when they come here, the devil [is] raised. This one talking, that one talking, [and a] strong abolitionist feeling [prevails with some people] whispering etc., [saying “do you think it’s right, I am afraid it is not right.”] I know it is right. There should be a law made to have the slaves serve their masters because they are not capable of ruling [themselves].¹²

The Lord God said that cursed [be] old Cain and [God] said that [only after] the last drop of [the] blood of Abel receives the priesthood and enjoys the blessings [of it], then Cain is calculated to have his share [but] not until then. Consequently I am firm in [my] belief of servitude.

The caption of this bill I do not like. I have altered it and [inserted] “an act in relation to manual service” instead of “African slavery.” Then I have taken the liberty to alter the latter part of it, “be it enacted.” I am willing [that] the bill be thrown back.

I would like masters to treat well their servants [and] to see that every person of [sic] in [the] territory [is] well used. When a master has a Negro and uses him well [he is] better off than [if] he was free. You will find they ~~are far better off here to be~~.¹³ As for masters knocking down [and] breaking [the] legs of [their] servants, I have [as little] opinion of that as anybody, but good wholesome servitude—I know nothing better than that.

Suppose I am in England and bring over [to America] 100 persons, males and females, and they pledge themselves to work so long to [be able to] get with those they love and [then what] if they come

¹⁰ Because this section of Watt’s shorthand is choppy we have relied on the wording and intent of Watt’s own transcription for our insertions within the brackets.

¹¹ We have relied on the wording and intent of Watt’s own transcription for our insertions within the brackets.

¹² We have relied on the wording and intent of Watt’s own transcription for our insertions within the brackets.

¹³ Watt crossed out part of this sentence and did not complete it.

here and abuse their benefactors? See [the] abuse [heaped] on Dan Jones who prevailed on Sister Lewis to spend every dime [she had]?¹⁴ They curse her and him. I say they ought to be her servants. This they [will] continue [to do] until they go [to] hell. [There are] many more such cases. In [the] future let them perform their labors according to writing, or I hope it will be in writing.¹⁵

Brigham Young before Territorial Legislature in parallel columns, January 23, 1852.

George D. Watt’s shorthand¹⁶

George D. Watt’s longhand¹⁷

<p>I have this section in my hand reading it over made little alteration in it in first place with regard to slavery inasmuch as I remember¹⁸ in Bible believe in ordinances of priesthood order of God I believe in slavery just as far as this act we believe in making this creature amenable to certain [loss/laws?] in their freedom they have subjected themselves to cursing families classes in their</p>	<p>Speech by Gov. Young in Counsel on A Bill relating to Affrican Slavery. Jan. 23^d 1852 I have this section in my hand referring to slavery headed “An bill Act in relation to Affrican slavery.” I have read it over, and made A few alterations. I will remark with regard to slavery, In as much I as I <we> beleive in the Bible, inasmuch as I <we> beleive in the ordinances of God, in the Priesthood and order, <and decrees> of God, I <we> must beleive in Slavery. This coulerd race have been subjected to severe curses, which they have in</p>
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¹⁴ Dan Jones (1810-1862) was born in Wales and immigrated to America where he captained a boat on the Mississippi River. He converted to Mormonism in 1843 at Nauvoo, Illinois. He returned to Wales as a missionary where he had tremendous success. In February 1849 he sailed from Liverpool as one of 249 Saints who emigrated on board the *Buena Vista*. Elizabeth Lewis (1812-1895) was also on board the *Buena Vista*; she possessed the means to aid many of her fellow converts to immigrate to the United States. The company arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in October 1849 and in December Dan Jones married Elizabeth Lewis as a plural wife. When Elizabeth died in 1895, the *Deseret News* printed notice of her passing on its front page and noted that “She was well known to the early residents of Utah as the wife of the late Captain Dan Jones. She received the Gospel in Wales and emigrated in 1849. At that time she was quite wealthy, and used her means with great liberality in enabling the Welsh Saints to come to Utah. In the year named she fitted out an entire company across the plains. She was known in early days here as ‘the Welsh queen,’ because of her beauty and dignified bearing. She remained firm to her religious convictions.” See “Death of Sister Jones” and “Deaths,” *Deseret News*, 6 May 1895, 1, 5; Ronald D. Dennis, “Dan Jones, Welshman,” *Ensign*, (April 1987).

¹⁵ Here Young signals his preference for contractual labor agreements.

¹⁶ Brigham Young, before Territorial Legislature, January 23, 1852, CR 100 912, Church History Department Pitman Shorthand transcriptions, 2013-2021, Addresses and sermons, 1851-1874, Miscellaneous transcriptions, 1869, 1872, 1889, 1848, 1851-1854, 1859-1863, Utah Territorial Legislature, 1852 January-February, CHL.

¹⁷ Brigham Young, January 23, 1852, Historian’s Office reports of speeches, 1845-1885, CR 100 317, box 1, folder 14, CHL.

¹⁸ Written *remember*; probable intent is *believe*. Watt sometimes wrote *br* for *bl*, and vice versa – the symbol *br* would represent *remember*, and the symbol *bl* would represent *believe*.

various capacities have brought curses upon themselves and until the curse is removed by him who has put the curse on this class

I am not authorized to move it I am a firm believer in slavery I think this is reasonable according to the revelations the Lord has revealed the children of men be agents to themselves unto the Lord their God now to the case before us with regard to slavery here pertaining to slaves Africans English Dutch or ourselves I go in for making just such laws as we want

perfectly independent of any other nation under heavens do that we want to be done regardless of abuses of despotic governments whether they deem it to be right or wrong no matter to me but to do the thing we ought to do to secure those blessings we are in pursuit of

that is my mind on in this matter the case comes up causes feelings and or did because [--?] we have ~~always~~ already men in this valley and have had those who came here and have left they came in good faith they enjoy the rights of receiving the first principles of gospel which is liberty to all these servants enjoy the privilege of being baptized hands laid on for the Holy Ghost they enjoy of so living before the Lord masters friends as to enjoy the spirit of Lord continually as far as as [sic] comforts salvation light truth enjoyment understand the blacks have the same privilege white they cannot hold the priesthood inasmuch as they cannot bear any share in priesthood I ask¹⁹ whether they can

there families, and their classes, <and> in their various capacities brought upon themselves. And until the curse is removed by him who placed it upon them they must suffer under its consequences; I am not autherised to remove it. I am A firm beleiver in slavery.

Now to the case before us with regard to slavery, with regad [to] slaves that [are] affricans, or that are English, or that [are] Dutch, or ourselves, I go in for making laws Just such laws as we want upon that matter, independant of any other nation under the heavens; let us do that we want to be done regardless of the abuses of despotic Governments. Whether they deem it to be right or wrong is no matter to me, but to do the thing we ought to do, to secure those blessings we are in pursuite of ought to be the first, and most weighty consideration with us; that is my mind upon this matter. This case comes up and causes feelings of not A pleasing carracter in the minds of some.

The affrican enjoys the right of receiving the ~~the~~ first principles of the Gospel, this liberty is held out to all these servants, they enjoy the liberty of being baptized for the remission of sins, and of receiving the holy Gohst by the laying on of hands; they enjoy the priviledge of living humble before the Lord their great master, so as to enjoy the spirit of the Lord continually; in short as far as the common comforts of life, ~~is~~ salvation, light, truth, enjoyment and ~~the~~ understanding is conserved the black affrican has precisely the same privilege, as the white man. <But> Tthey cannot hold the preisthood, and inasmuch as they cannot bear any ~~eh~~

¹⁹ George Watt often changed a question Brigham Young addressed to the congregation to a statement, as he did here.

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he is slave driven from his home we are servants now suppose we have servant

it is just right reasonable according to holy priesthood say nothing about abuses

though the enlightened nation England has abolished slavery yet the most damnable slavery exists there and you cannot die find a black man woman that [walk?]

millions of them by

the luxuries of life and die with starvation

that is meaner slavery than to set them to work growing cotton I would not wish to go to the enlightened nation of England

because they are so far sunken in degradation and iniquity know not what slavery is people do not know what it is but such a thing shall and will exist until the Lord God shall remove [away?] and [ought?] exist brethren in the south

those of their servants want to come here when they come here the devil raised this one talking that one talking strong abolitionist feeling

whispering etc.

share in the priesthood they cannot bear rule, ~~and until~~ they cannot bear rule in any place until the curse is removed from them, they are A servant of servants; we are servants, as Bro. <Counselor> Geo. Smith has stated, he says he is A slave, <he> has been driven from his home, and his rights, we are all ~~slaves~~ servants; now suppose that we should have A servant, and he should be A negro,

it is all right it is perfectly reasonable, and strictly according to the Holy priesthood. I loath the abuses ~~that are he<e>ped~~ to which the slave in A great many instances is exposed, although as A general thing that part of the negro race that are in servile bondage, are much more comfortable, and better provided for, than ~~thousands~~ the lower classes of the nations of Europe.

Though the enlightened nation England, has abolished slavery in her colonies, yet the most damnable slavery exists at the very heart of the nation. I am bold to say that you cannot find A black man or woman, in the U. S. that has traveled through the period of his life in hungar in the midst of plenty, Yet there are millions upon milions ~~who have~~ in the Cities of Urope who have lived amidst the choisest luzuries of life, and died at last in starvation; thousands died of starvation in England, the year that I was in that country.

That is meaner slavery than to set them to work in growing cotten, and shugar &c. I would not wish to go to the enlightened nation of England to know what slavery is because they are so far sunken in iniquity and so deeply degraded; ~~the~~ people contend about it to know what it is; we know it exists,

and such a thing shall and will exist until the Lord <God> shall remove it, until then it will and ought to existe. There ~~is~~ <are> A many Breⁿ in the south & A great amount of whose means is vested in slaves,

I know it is right there should be a law made to have the slaves serve their masters because they are not capable of ruling the Lord God said that cursed old Cain and said that the last drop of blood of Abel that was [upon it?] receives the priesthood and enjoys the blessings

then Cain is calculated to have his share [if it is?] not until then consequently I am firm in belief of servitude the caption of this bill I do not like I have altered it and instead an act in relation to manual service instead of African slavery then I have taken the liberty to alter the latter part of it "be it enacted I am willing the bill be thrown back

I would like masters to treat well their servants. To see that every person of in territory well used when a master has a Negro and uses him well better off than he was free you will find they are far better off here to be as for masters knocking down breaking legs of servants I have opinion of that as anybody but good wholesome servitude I know nothing better than that. Suppose I am in England and bring over 100 persons males and females and they pledge themselves to work so long to get with those they love and if they come here and

abuse their benefactors see abuse on Dan Jones who prevailed on Sister Lewis to spend every dime they curse her and him I say they ought to be

those servants want to come here with their masters, when they come here the devil is raised; this one is A talking, and that one is wondering.

A strong Abolitionist feeling has power over them, and they commence to wisper round their veiws upon the subject, saying "do you think its right, I am afraid it is not right";

I know it is right, and there should be A law made to have the slaves serve their masters because they are not capable of ruling themselves; When the Lord God cursed old Cain, he said, "until the last drop of Ables Abels blood receives the preisthood, and enjoys the blessings of the same, Cain shall bear the curse;"

then Cain is callculated to have his share next, and not until then; consequently I am firm in the beleif that they ought to dwell in servitude. The Caption of this Bill, I dont like, I have therefore taken the liberty to alter it. I have said "an act in relation to manual service" instead of Affrican Slavery; I have also altered the latter part of it.

I am willing the Bill should be thrown back to be remodeled. and

I would like Masters to behave well to their servants, and to see that every person in this Territory is well used. When A master has A negro, and uses him well, he is much better off than if he was free;

as for Masters knocking <them> down and whipping them, and breaking their limbs of their servants

I have as little opinion of that as any person can have, but good wholesome servitude I know there is nothing better than that.

Supose I am in England, and bring over 100 persons, males, and females and they pledge themselves to pay me in labour but as soon as they arrive here they refuse to abide by their contract and turn round and

<p>her servants. This they continue until they go [ink blot] hell many more such cases</p> <p>let in future let them perform their labors according to writing or I hope it will be in writing</p>	<p>abuse their benefactors. See the abuse that Dan Jones has received, who prevailed upon Sister Lewis to spend almost every Dime she possessed to help individuals to this place; they curse both her, and him. I say they ought to be her servants, and this they will continue to do waxing worse, and worse until they go down to Hell. Many more such cases could be brought to bear. There should be A law to govern this, that those who have made contracts to labour, they may perform their labours according to said contracts.</p>
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