

6-2 Southern Novel Depicts Slavery, 1832

As anti-slavery forces gained strength, slave owners sought philosophical positions from which to defend slavery. Many pro-slavery contingents in the south maintained that they treated their slaves well and that it was necessary to protect the slaves from themselves, that their masters had their best interests at heart. John P. Kennedy wrote a novel, Swallow Barn, which depicted an imaginary plantation with an exemplary slave owner. The following excerpt paints an idyllic picture of happy slaves and kind masters with little mention of the poverty and drudgery of plantation work by slaves.

SOURCE: John Pendleton Kennedy, *Swallow Barn* (Philadelphia: Carly & Lee, 1832).

...in Virginia, it will be seen, that on the score of accommodation, the inmates of these dwellings were furnished according to a very primitive notion of comfort. Still, however, there were little garden-patches attached to each, where cymblings, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, watermelons and cabbages flourished in unrestrained luxuriance. Add to this, that there was abundance of poultry domesticated about the premises, and it may be perceived that, whatever might be in the inconveniences of shelter, there was no want of what, in all countries, would be considered a reasonable supply of luxuries.

Nothing more attracted my observation than the swarms of little Negroes that basked on the sunny sides of these cabins, and congregated to gaze at us as we surveyed their haunts. They were nearly all in that costume of the golden age which I have therefore described; and showed their slim shanks and long heels in all varieties of their grotesque natures. Their predominant love of sunshine, and their lazy, listless postures, and apparent content to be silently looking abroad, might well afford a comparison to a set of terrapins luxuriating in the genial warmth of summer, on the logs of a mill-pond.

And there, too, were the prolific mothers of this redundant brood,—a number of stout Negro-women who thronged the doors of the huts, full of idle curiosity to see us. And, when to these are added a few reverend, wrinkled, decrepit old men, with faces shortened as if with drawing-strings, noses that seemed to have run all to nostril, and with feet of the configuration of a mattock, my reader will have a tolerably correct idea of this Negro-quarter, its population, buildings, external appearance, situation and extent.

Meriwether, I have said before, is a kind and considerate master. It is his custom frequently to visit his slaves, in order to inspect their condition, and, where it may be necessary, to add to their comforts or relieve their wants. His coming amongst them, therefore, is always hailed with pleasure. He has constituted himself into a high court of appeal, and makes it a rule to give all their petitions a patient hearing, and to do justice in the premises. This, he tells me, he considers as indispensably necessary;—he says, that no overseer is entirely to be trusted: that there are few men who have the temper to administer wholesome laws to any population, however small, without some omissions or irregularities; and that this is more emphatically true of those who administer them entirely at their own will. On the present occasion, in almost every house where Frank entered, there was some boon to be asked; and I observed, that in every case, the petitioner was either gratified or refused in such a tone as left no occasion or disposition to murmur. Most of the women had some bargains to offer, of fowls or eggs or other commodities of household use, and Meriwether generally referred them to his wife, who, I found, relied almost entirely on this resource, for the supply of such commodities; the Negroes being regularly paid for whatever was offered in this way.

One old fellow had a special favor to ask,—a little money to get a new padding for his saddle, which, he said, “galled his cretur’s back.” Frank, after a few jocular passages with the veteran, gave him what he desired, and sent him off rejoicing.

“That, sir,” said Meriwether, “is no less a personage than Jupiter. He is an old bachelor, and has his cabin here on the hill. He is now near seventy, and is a kind of King of the Quarter. He has a horse, which he extorted from me last Christmas; and I seldom come here without finding myself involved in some new demand, as a consequence of my donation. Now he wants a pair of spurs which, I suppose, I must give him. He is a preposterous coxcomb, and Ned has administered to his

vanity by a present of a *chapeau de bras*—a relic of my military era, which he wears on Sundays with a conceit that has brought upon him as much envy as admiration—the usual condition of greatness.”

The air of contentment and good humor and kind family attachment, which was apparent throughout this little community, and the familiar relations existing between them and the proprietor struck me very pleasantly. I came here a stranger, in great degree, to the Negro character, knowing but little of the domestic history of these people, their duties, habits or temper, and somewhat disposed, indeed, from prepossessions, to look upon them as severely dealt with, and expecting to have my sympathies excited towards them as objects of commiseration. I have had, therefore, rather a special interest in observing them. The contrast between my preconceptions of their condition and the reality which I have witnessed, has brought me a most agreeable surprise. I will not say that, in a high state of cultivation and of such self-dependence as they might possibly attain in a separate national existence, they might not become a more respectable people; but I am quite sure they never could become a happier people than I find them here. Perhaps they are destined, ultimately, to that national existence, in the clime from which they derive their origin—that this is a transition state in which we see them in Virginia. If it be so, no tribe of people have ever passed from barbarism to civilization whose middle stage of progress has been more secure from harm, more genial to their character, or better supplied with mild and beneficent guardianship, adapted to the actual state of their intellectual feebleness, than the Negroes of Swallow Barn. And, from what I can gather, it is pretty much the same on the other estates in this region. I hear of an unpleasant exception to this remark now and then; but under such conditions as warrant the opinion that the unfavorable case is not more common than that which may be found in a survey of any other department of society. The oppression of apprentices, of seamen, of soldiers, of subordinates, indeed, in every relation, may furnish elements for a bead-roll of social grievances quite as striking, if they were diligently noted and brought to view.

What the Negro is finally capable of, in the way of civilization, I am not philosopher enough to determine. In the present stage of his existence, he presents himself to my mind as essentially parasitical in his nature. I mean that he is, in his moral constitution, a dependant upon the white race; dependent for guidance and direction even to the procurement of his most indispensable necessities. Apart from this protection he has the helplessness of a child,—without foresight, without faculty of contrivance, without thrift of any kind. We have instances, in the neighborhood of this estate, of individuals of the tribe falling into the most deplorable destitution from the want of that constant supervision which the race seems to require. This helplessness may be the due and natural impression which two centuries of servitude have stamped upon the tribe. But it is not the less a present and insurmountable impediment to that most cruel of all projects—the direct, broad emancipation of these people;—an act of legislation in comparison with which the revocation of the edict of Nantes would be entitled to be ranked among political benefactions. Taking instruction from history, all organized slavery is inevitably but a temporary phase of human condition. Interest, necessity and instinct, all work to give progression to the relations of mankind, and finally to elevate each tribe or race to its maximum of refinement and power. We have no reason to suppose that the Negro will be an exception to this law.

At present, I have said, he is parasitical. He grows upward, only as the vine to which nature has supplied the sturdy tree as a support. He is extravagantly imitative. The older Negroes here have—with some spice of comic mixture in it—that formal, grave and ostentatious style of manners, which belonged to the gentlemen of former days; they are profuse of bows and compliments, and very aristocratic in their way. The younger ones are equally to be remarked for aping the style of the present time, and especially for such tags of dandyism in dress as come within their reach. Their fondness for music and dancing is a predominant passion. I never meet a Negro man—unless he is quite old—that he is not whistling and the women sing from morning till night. And as to dancing, the hardest day's work does not restrain their desire to indulge in such pastime. During the harvest, when their toil is pushed to its utmost—the time being one of recognized privileges—they dance almost the whole night. They are great sportsmen, too. They angle and haul the seine, and hunt and tend their traps, with a zest that never grows weary. Their gayety of heart is constitutional and perennial, and when they are together they are as voluble and noisy as so many blackbirds. In short, I think them the most good-natured, careless, light-hearted, and happily constructed human beings I

have ever seen. Having but few and simple wants, they seem to me to be provided with every comfort which falls within the ordinary compass of their wishes; and, I might say, that they find even more enjoyment,—as that word may be applied to express positive pleasures scattered through the course of daily occupation—than any other laboring people I am acquainted with....

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1. What do you think about Kennedy's description of slave life? Is it accurate? How does it compare to other accounts you have read?
2. Although *Swallow Barn* is a novel, it reveals what Kennedy thought about African Americans. Kennedy uses these views to justify slavery. What are these views?
3. How does Kennedy justify slavery? How can we use novels and works of fiction to elaborate our historical perspective?

6-3 A Slave Tells of His Sale at Auction, 1848

The auctioning of slaves, the separation of mothers from their children, men from their families, was perhaps one of the most inhumane aspects of slavery. As anti-slavery opinions continued to rise, slave narratives became more and more popular to account for the atrocities of southern slave owners. No one was seen as more villainous than the slave trader himself, even by slave owners. The account of one slave's auction is captured here in a passage from Henry Watson's Narrative of Henry Watson, A Fugitive Slave. Written by Himself, which was published in 1848.

SOURCE: Henry Watson, *Narrative of Henry Watson, A Fugitive Slave* (Boston: 1848).

...My mother was the cook at what slaves call the great house. I was allowed to remain with her at the house. The last time I saw her, she placed me on the bed, which was in a room adjoining the kitchen, and bid me go to sleep, saying that she would be back again in a few moments. I did so; and when I awoke in the morning I found myself in the great house, wrapped in a blanket, before the fire. I could not account for this change that had been made with me through the night. I asked for my mother, but no one spoke. I went out into the kitchen, where she used to work. She was not there, and it was evident to me, that she was gone; where, I knew not. I returned to the house, and implored my mistress, with tears in my eyes, to tell me where my mother had gone. She refused, though a mother herself, to give me any satisfaction whatever. Every exertion was made on my part to find her, or hear some tidings of her; but all my efforts were unsuccessful; and from that day I have never seen or heard from her. This cruel separation brought on a fit of sickness, from which they did not expect I would recover. The old slave-woman who took care of me during my sickness, by way of consolation, gave me as much information as she could about my mother's being taken away. She told me that a slave-dealer drove to the door in a buggy, and my mother was sent for to come into the house; when, getting inside, she was knocked down, tied, and thrown into the buggy, and carried away. As the old woman related these things to me, I felt as if all hope was gone; that I was forsaken and alone in this world. More forcibly did I then feel the galling chains of slavery, the cruelty and barbarism arising from it, than I ever have since. I resolved, however, to bear with all patiently, till I became large enough to run away, and search for my mother.

I had recovered from my sickness but a few months, when one day, looking up the road, I saw a man riding towards the house; I ran with the rest of the children to hide ourselves until the man had gone. When I had remained concealed some time, I ventured out again, and found Mr. Bibb, my master, looking for me, who ordered me into the house; and when I got there, to my astonishment, I found the man whom we had hid ourselves from, sitting in the room. After he had inspected me to his satisfaction, I was ordered out of the room, and went to play, and had forgotten the whole affair, when my master called me again, and ordered me to hold the stranger's horse. I did so, and in a few minutes he came forth and ordered me to mount behind him. This, with his assistance, I did; but rode only a short distance; when I jumped from the horse and ran for the house as fast as I could. He succeeded, however, in overtaking me, and I was again put on the horse, this time in front of him; and in this way was I carried to Fredericksburg. I was then placed in the possession of Mr. Janer, better known as Parson Janer; the man that had bought me being the son of Mr. Janer, who was one of those jolly, good-natured clergymen, who, while he feasted his numerous guests in the parlor, starved his slaves in the kitchen. After remaining there awhile, it was determined to send me to Richmond. The same man that brought me, came for me and ordered me to take a seat on the stage-coach, and the next day I found myself in Richmond, and stopped at the Eagle Hotel, kept by Mr. Holman, where I remained two or three days, and then was carried to the auction room; entering which, I found several slaves, seated around the room waiting for the hour of sale. Some were in tears; others were apparently cheerful. This brought to my mind my mother, and caused me to shed many tears; but they fell unheeded. The auctioneer was busy examining the slaves before the sale commenced. At last everything was ready, and the traffic in human flesh began. I will attempt to give as accurate an account of the language and ceremony of a slave auction as I possibly can. "Gentlemen, here is a likely boy; how much? He is sold for no fault; the owner wants money. His age is forty. Three hundred dollars is all that I am offered for him. Please to examine him; he is

warranted sound. Boy, pull off your shirt roll up your pants—for we want to see if you have been whipped.” If they discover any scars, they will not buy; saying that the nigger is a bad one. The auctioneer seeing this, cries, “Three hundred dollars, gentlemen, three hundred dollars. Shall I sell him for three hundred dollars? I have just been informed by his master, that he is an honest boy, and belongs to the same church that he does.” This turns the tide frequently, and the bids go up fast; and he is knocked off for a good sum. After the men and women are sold, the children are put on the stand. I was the first put up. On my appearance, several voices cried, “How old is that little nigger?” On hearing this expression, I again burst into tears, and wept so that I have no distinct recollection of his answer. I was at length knocked down to a man whose name was Denton, a slave trader, then purchasing slaves for the Southern market. His first name I have forgotten. Each one of the traders has private jails, which are for the purpose of keeping slaves in; and they are generally kept by some confidential slave. Denton had one of these jails, to which I was conducted by his trusty slave; and on entering I found a great many slaves there, waiting to be sent off as soon as their numbers increased. These jails are enclosed by a wall about 16 feet high, and the yard-room is for the slaves to exercise in; and consists of but one room, in which all sexes and ages are huddled together in a mass. I stayed in this jail but two days, when the number was completed, and we were called out to form a line. Horses and wagons were in readiness to carry our provisions and tents, so that we might camp out at night. Before we had proceeded far, Mr. Denton gave orders for us to stop, for the purpose of handcuffing some of the men, which, he said in a loud voice, “had the devil in them.” The men belonging to this drove were all married men, and all leaving their wives and children behind; he, judging from their tears that they were unwilling to go, had them made secure. We started again on our journey, Mr. Denton taking the lead in his sulky; and the driver, Mr. Thornton, brought up the rear. I will not weary my readers with the particulars of our march to Tennessee, where we stopped several days for the purpose of arranging our clothes. While stopping, the men were hired out to pick cotton. While in Tennessee, we lost four of our number, who died from exposure on the road. After the lapse of three weeks, we started again on our journey, and in about four weeks arrived in Natchez, Miss., and went to our pen, which Mr. Denton had previously hired for us, and had our irons taken off and our clothes changed; for Mr. Denton was expecting visitors to examine the flock, as he would sometimes term us. There was a sign-board in front of the house, which informed traders that he had on hand, blacksmiths, carpenters, field-hands; also several sickly ones, whom he would sell very cheap. In a short time purchasers became plenty, and our number diminished. I was not sold for several weeks, though I wished to be the first, not wishing to witness his cruelty to his slaves any longer; for if they displeased him in the least, he would order them to be stripped, and tied hand and foot together. He would then have his paddle brought, which was a board about two feet in length and one inch in thickness, having fourteen holes bored through it, about an inch in circumference. This instrument of torture he would apply, until the slave was exhausted, on parts which the purchaser would not be likely to examine. This mode of punishment is considered one of the most cruel ever invented, as the flesh protrudes through these holes at every blow, and forms bunches and blisters the size of each hole, causing much lameness and soreness to the person receiving them. This punishment is generally inflicted in the morning, before visitors come to examine the slaves...

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1. How would Henry Watson's narrative have been used by abolitionists?
2. What do you think of the atrocities reported here? Do you think the story moved people to action?
3. Although the narrative is probably accurate, it is quite possibly written by northern abolitionists who are transcribing Watson's story. What evidence do you see of this? Does it diminish the impact of the story?

6-5 A Slave Girl Tells of Her Life, 1861

Harriet Jacobs's Life of a Slave Girl, first published in 1861, has become one of the classic narratives of slavery, told from a woman's view. Jacobs's tales of exploitation reveal a horror of slavery not sufficiently understood or discussed. The book's authenticity was under question for many years, as it was heavily edited by white abolitionists and published under a pen name. But its later authentication and compelling account mark it as one of the best slave narratives and necessary for comprehending the fear that was the life of slaves, particularly the women.

SOURCE: Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston: published for the author, 1861).

During the first years of my service in Dr. Flint's family, I was accustomed to share some indulgences with the children of my mistress. Though this seemed to me no more than right, I was grateful for it, and tried to merit the kindness by the faithful discharge of my duties. But I now entered on my fifteenth year—a sad epoch in the life of a slave girl. My master began to whisper foul words in my ear. Young as I was, I could not remain ignorant of their import. I tried to treat them with indifference or contempt. The master's age, my extreme youth, and the fear that his conduct would be reported to my grandmother, made me bear this treatment for many months. He was a crafty man, and resorted to many means to accomplish his purposes. Some times he had stormy, terrific ways, that made his victims tremble; sometimes he assumed a gentleness that he thought must surely subdue. Of the two, I preferred his stormy moods, although they left me trembling. He tried his utmost to corrupt the pure principles my grandmother had instilled. He peopled my young mind with unclean images, such as only a vile monster could think of. I turned from him with disgust and hatred. But he was my master. I was compelled to live under the same roof with him—where I saw a man forty years my senior daily violating the most sacred commandments of nature. He told me I was his property; that I must be subject to his will in all things. My soul revolted against the mean tyranny. But where could I turn for protection? No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death; all these are inflicted by fiends who bear the shape of men. The mistress, who ought to protect the helpless victim, has no other feelings towards her but those of jealousy and rage. The degradation, the wrongs, the vices, that grow out of slavery, are more than I can describe. They are greater than you would willingly believe. Surely, if you credited one half the truths that are told you concerning the helpless millions suffering in this cruel bondage, you at the north would not help to tighten the yoke. You surely would refuse to do for the master, on your own soil, the mean and cruel work which trained bloodhounds and the lowest class of whites do for him at the south.

Every where the years bring to all enough of sin and sorrow; but in slavery the very dawn of life is darkened by these shadows. Even the little child, who is accustomed to wait on her mistress and her children, will learn, before she is twelve years old, why it is that her mistress hates such and such a one among the slaves. Perhaps the child's own mother is among those hated ones. She listens to violent outbreaks of jealous passion, and cannot help understanding what is the cause. She will become prematurely knowing in evil things. Soon she will learn to tremble when she hears her master's footfall. She will be compelled to realize that she is no longer a child. If God has bestowed beauty upon her; it will prove her greatest curse. That which commands admiration in the white woman only hastens the degradation of the female slave. I know that some are too much brutalized by slavery to feel the humiliation of their position; but many slaves feel it most acutely, and shrink from the memory of it. I cannot tell how much I suffered in the presence of these wrongs, nor how I am still pained by the retrospect. My master met me at every turn, reminding me that I belonged to him, and swearing by heaven and earth that he would compel me to submit to him. If I went out for a breath of fresh air, after a day of unwearied toil, his footsteps dogged me. If I knelt by my mother's grave, his dark shadow fell on me even there. The light heart which nature had given me became heavy with sad forebodings. The other slaves in my master's house noticed the change. Many of them pitied me; but none dared to ask the cause. They had no need to inquire. They knew

too well the guilty practices under that roof; and they were aware that to speak of them was an offence that never went unpunished.

I longed for some one to confide in. I would have given the world to have laid my head on my grandmother's faithful bosom, and told her all my troubles. But Dr. Flint swore he would kill me, if I was not as silent as the grave. Then, although my grandmother was all in all to me, I feared her as well as loved her. I had been accustomed to look up to her with a respect bordering upon awe. I was very young, and felt shamefaced about telling her such impure things, especially as I knew her to be very strict on such subjects. Moreover, she was a woman of a high spirit. She was usually very quiet in her demeanor; but if her indignation was once roused, it was not very easily quelled. I had been told that she once chased a white gentleman with a loaded pistol, because he insulted one of her daughters. I dreaded the consequences of a violent outbreak; and both pride and fear kept me silent. But though I did not confide in my grandmother, and even evaded her vigilant watchfulness and inquiry, her presence in the neighborhood was some protection to me. Though she had been a slave, Dr. Flint was afraid of her. He dreaded her scorching rebukes. Moreover, she was known and patronized by many people; and he did not wish to have his villainy made public. It was lucky for me that I did not live on a distant plantation, but in a town not so large that the inhabitants were ignorant of each other's affairs. Bad as are the laws and customs in a slaveholding community, the doctor, as a professional man, deemed it prudent to keep up some outward show of decency....

I once saw two beautiful children playing together. One was a fair white child; the other was her slave; and also her sister. When I saw them embracing each other, and heard their joyous laughter, I turned sadly away from the lovely sight. I foresaw the inevitable blight that would fall on the little slave's heart. I knew how soon her laughter would be changed to sighs. The fair child grew up to be a still fairer woman. From childhood to womanhood her pathway was blooming with flowers, and overarched by a sunny sky. Scarcely one day of her life had been clouded when the sun rose on her happy bridal morning.

How had those years dealt with her slave sister, the little playmate of her childhood? She, also, was very beautiful; but the flowers and sunshine of love were not for her. She drank the cup of sin, and shame, and misery, whereof her persecuted race are compelled to drink.

In view of these things, why are ye silent, ye free men and women of the north? Why do your tongues falter in maintenance of the right? Would that I had more ability! But my heart is so full, and my pen is so weak!

There are noble men and women who plead for us, striving to help those who cannot help themselves. God bless them! God give them strength and courage to go on! God bless those, every where, who are laboring to advance the cause of humanity!

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1. Like Henry Watson's account of slave auctions, Harriet Jacobs's narrative was probably edited extensively by white abolitionists. Does this diminish its impact? Is all history somehow edited from the actual narrative?
2. Accounts of abuse within slavery are spread across time and location, from colonial America to the Civil War. How does Harriet Jacobs's account of sexual exploitation affect your view of slavery?
3. Why do you think women, by and large, have received less attention than men in the tale of slavery?

6-6 A Muslim Slave Speaks Out, 1831

Since the Moors had been in West Africa since 1100, it is no surprise that many of the Africans stolen into slavery and brought to the United States were followers of Islam. However, Islam and its role in slavery and the life of slaves has received considerably less emphasis than the importance of Protestant religions to slaves. The "Autobiography of Omar ibn Seid, Slave in North Carolina, 1831" is the tale of one Muslim slave, and makes for interesting reading. Seid was educated in mathematics, spoke Arabic, and was a cotton cloth merchant before being captured and sold into slavery. The following excerpt tells of his capture, escape, and servitude to General James Owen.

SOURCE: American Historical Review, 30 (1925).

You asked me to write my life. I am not able to do because I have much forgotten my own, as well as the Arabic language. Neither can I write very grammatically or according to the true idiom. And so, my brother, I beg you, in God's name, not to blame me, for I am a man of weak eyes, and of a weak body.

My name is Omar ibn Seid. My birthplace was Fut Tûr between the two rivers. I sought knowledge under the instruction of a Sheikh called Mohammed Seid, my own brother, and Sheikh Soleiman Kembreh, and Sheikh Gabriel Abdal. I continued my studies twenty-five years, and then returned to my home where I remained six years. Then there came to our place a large army, who killed many men, and took me, and brought me to the great sea, and sold me into the hands of the Christians, who bound me and sent me on board a great ship and we sailed upon the great sea a month and a half, when we came to a place called Charleston in the Christian language. There they sold me to a small, weak, and wicked man, called Johnson, a complete infidel, who had no fear of God at all. Now I am a small man, and unable to do hard work so I fled from the hand of Johnson and after a month came to a place called Fayd-il [Fayetteville]. There I saw some great houses (churches). On the new moon I went into a church to pray. A lad saw me and rode off to the place of his father and informed him that he had seen a black man in the church. A man named Handah (Hunter?) and another man with him on horseback, came attended by a troop of dogs. They took me and made me go with them twelve miles to a place called Fayd-il, where they put me into a great house from which I could not go out. I continued in the great house (which, in the Christian language, they called *jail*) sixteen days and nights. One Friday the jailer came and opened the door of the house and I saw a great many men, all Christians, some of whom called out to me, "What is your name? Is it Omar or Seid?" I did not understand their Christian language. A man called Bob Mumford took me and led me out of the jail, and I was very well pleased to go with them to their place. I stayed at Mumford's four days and nights, and then a man named Jim Owen, son-in-law of Mumford, having married his daughter Betsey, asked me if I was willing to go to a place called Bladen. I said, Yes, I was willing. I went with them and have remained in the place of Jim Owen until now.

Before [after?] I came into the hand of Gen. Owen a man by the name of Mitchell came to buy me. He asked me if I were willing to go to Charleston City. I said "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, I not willing to go to Charleston. I stay in the hand of Jim Owen."

O ye people of North Carolina, O ye people of S. Carolina, O ye people of America all of you; have you among you any two such men as Jim Owen and John Owen? These men are good men. What food they eat they give to me to eat. As they clothe themselves they clothe me. They permit me to read the gospel of God, our Lord, and Saviour, and King; who regulates all our circumstances, our health and wealth, and who bestows his mercies willingly, not by constraint. According to power I open my heart, as to a great light, to receive the true way, the way of the Lord Jesus the Messiah.

Before I came to the Christian country, my religion was the religion of "Mohammed, the Apostle of God—may God have mercy upon him and give him peace." I walked to the mosque before daybreak, washed my face and head and hands and feet. I prayed at noon, prayed in the afternoon, prayed at sunset, prayed in the evening. I gave alms every year, gold, silver, seeds, cattle, sheep, goats, rice, wheat, and barley. I gave tithes of all the above-named things. I went every year to the holy war against the infidels. I went on pilgrimage to Mecca, as all did who were able.—My

father had six sons and five daughters, and my mother had three sons and one daughter. When I left my country I was thirty-seven years old; I have been in the country of the Christians twenty-four years.

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1. The role of Islam within slavery is not as widely studied as that of Protestant religions. Why do you think this is?
2. What does Seid's narrative tell us about his treatment? Did different slave owners treat their slaves differently? Does this diminish the moral question of slavery? Why or why not?