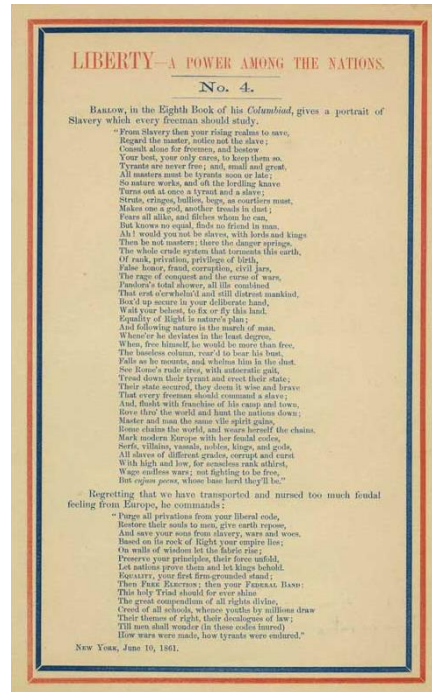


Literature and the Anti-Slavery Campaign, 1861

A primary source

This poster and text are provided courtesy of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.



Anti-slavery advocates in 1861 invoked founding-era poet Joel Barlow to decry the evils of slavery and to connect Union goals to the freedom-loving ideals of the American Revolution. The lines here are quoted from Barlow's *Columbiad*, of 1807, based on his *Vision of Columbus*, first published in 1787.

"From Slavery then your rising realms to save,
 Regard the master, notice not the slave;
 Consult alone for freemen, and bestow
 Your best, your only cares, to keep them so.
 Tyrants are never free; and, small and great,
 All masters must be tyrants soon or late;
 So nature works, and oft the lordling knave
 Turns out at once a tyrant and a slave;

Struts, cringes, bullies, begs, as courtiers must,
Makes one a god, another treads in dust;
Fears all alike, and filches whom he can,
But knows no equal, finds no friend in man.
Ah! would you not be slaves, with lords and kings
Then be not masters; there the danger springs.
The whole crude system that torments this earth,
Of rank, privation, privilege of birth,
False honor, fraud, corruption, civil jars,
The rage of conquest and the curse of wars,
Pandora's total shower, all ills combined
That erst o'erwhelm'd and still distress mankind,
Box'd up secure in your deliberate hand,
Wait your behest, to fix or fly this land.
Equality of Right is nature's plan;
And following nature is the march of man.
Whene'er he deviates in the least degree,
When, free himself, he would be more than free,
The baseless column, rear'd to bear his bust,
Falls as he mounts, and whelms him in the dust.
See Rome's rude sire, with autocratic gait,
Tread down their tyrant and erect their state;
Their state secured, they deem it wise and brave
That every freeman should command a slave;
And, flusht with franchise of his camp and town,
Rove thro' the world and hunt the nations down;

Master and man the same vile spirit gains,
Rome chains the world, and wears herself the chains.
Mark modern Europe with her feudal codes,
Serfs, villains, vassals, nobles, kings, and gods,
All slaves of different grades, corrupt and curst
With high and low, for senseless rank athirst,
Wage endless wars; not fighting to be free,
But enjum pecus, whose base herd they'll be."

Regretting that we have transported and nursed too much feudal feeling from Europe, he commands:

"Purge all privations from your liberal code,
Restore their souls to men, give earth repose,
And save your sons from slavery, wars and woes.
Based on its rock of Right your empire lies;
On walls of wisdom let the fabric rise;
Preserve your principles, their force unfold.
Let nations prove them and let kings behold.
EQUALITY, your first firm-grounded stand;
Then FREE ELECTION; then your FEDERAL BAND:
This holy Triad should for ever shine
The great compendium of all rights divine,
Creed of all schools, whence youths by millions draw
Their themes of right, their decalogues of law;
Till men shall wonder (in these codes inured)
How wars were made, how tyrants were endured."
