



John Hepburn, The American Defense of the Christian Golden Rule, or An Essay to Prove the Unlawfulness of Making Slaves of Men, 1715.

The more a Man becomes conformable to the Attributes of God, the more just and holy he is, and the more beloved of God, and consequently a more perfect Christian.

First, then, God hath given to man a Free-Will, so that he is a Matter of his own Choice (whether it be good or evil) and will in no way force and compel the Will of man. . . . And seeing then, it is thus with God and his Creatures, we ought also to do so by our fellow mortals, and therefore we ought not to force and compel our fellow creatures, the Negroes, Nay, not although we judge it for them a better way of living; For when we force their will, this is a manifest Robbery of that noble Gift their bountiful Creator hath given them. . . and consequently an Anti-Christian Practice. . . .

2dly. This Practice contradicts Christs command, who commanded us, *To do to all men as we would they should do to us*, or as we would be done by. Now the buying and selling of the *Bodies and Souls* of Men, was and is the Merchandice of the Babylonish Merchants spoken of in the *Revelations*. Now the Tyranizing over and making Slaves of our Fellow Creatures, the Negroes, every one knows, or may know, this is not the way they would be done unto.

Now, I have shown you, first, That this Practice opposes God and his Attributes, and 2dly, That it opposes Christ and his Command; And what is this in Effect but to bid Defyance, and to live in Opposition to Christ and his Gospel? and it so, it is a high Degree of an Antichristian Life and Practice.

And now, *my beloved Friends*, who are concerned in this Practice, as you love the Welfare of your immortal Souls, I intreat you (for it is for your sakes I labour) not lightly to look over these considerations, if ye think to receive a *Reward for Deeds done in the Body*; For how will ye answer when ye are brought before *Gods Tribunal*, and there appear naked and bear before the Son of Man, if ye have lived and dyed in Opposition to his everlasting Gospel, for the confirmation of which, for our sakes, cost him his precious Life, and now for a little worldly Interest, got in Opposition to Christ and his Gospel, by the Bondage and Inslaving of Negroes. . . .

3ly, I have shewed before, That GOD, who is no respecter of persons, hath given to all men a Freedom of their Wills, to pitch upon their own choice, for both Soul and Body, which are the only parts, next unto the Life, the free donation of our heavenly Father, in this terrestrial world; But it would seem by the Negro-Masters Practice and Arguments, that God did miss the matter, by his Wisdom, when he gave the Negros (his Creatures) the Freedom of their Wills; but our Negro-Masters have found out, by their Inguinity, how to men this (seeming) Defect, in two respects, to wit, that is to rob them of their Freedom. . . . And in the next place, they can highly enrich themselves by the Bargain. . . .

And when their Masters see fit they will *hang them up by their Thumbs*, and then command another Negro to beat him so long, as his Master sees fit; this he must not refuse to do, if it were his *own Father*, nay, further, they will force them to be very *Hang-men*, And notwithstanding of all this, some of them must go with a hungry Belly, and that which they do get to eat (ye need not doubt but it) is the worst the House affords. . . .

But to return to the Servants of such cruel Masters; By this Description all may see, that they are put under an unavoidable Necessity of sinning to maintain *self-Preservation*, an Instinct of Nature belonging to all Creatures of God; So self-preservation puts them to steal, rob, and lye, and many other sinfull Actions; may, some of them when they see themselves surrounded and trapped with all the Miseries aforesaid, and many more, then they go into Dispair, and miserably murder themselves. . . to get rid of their Tortures and miserable Slavish Life. . . .

Now for those heinous Sins, as Lying, Stealing, Robbing, and Self-Murder; they cannot escape Punishment, by the Justice of God. Now as I have said before, they being put under such necessity of sinning, and they themselves being but *Infidels*, I desire the Negro-Masters to inform me, who must answer for all these abominable Sins?

. . . . The parting the Husband from the Wife, and the Wife from the Husband, and their Children from them both, to make up their Masters Gains, they force them thus to break the seventh Command, and commit Adultery with other strangers, or other mens Wives or Husbands. These and the like Usages, is enough to make them believe, there is no God at all, and harden them in Idolatrous Worship, and make them blaspheme against the holy God, that he take not immediate Vengeance on such notorious Offenders. . . .

Source: J. William Frost ed. *The Quaker Origins of Antislavery* (Norwood, 1980), 88-93.