

## HOW WOULD YOU LIKE IT YOURSELF?

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A CONVERSATION BETWEEN C., A LAYMAN, AND P., A SLAVE-HOLDING CLERGYMAN.

C. You accept, my brother, and preach the law of God as the rule of life and standard of character?

P. Certainly.

C. Then you are bound to do unto others as you would wish them to do unto you; for that is Christ's law.

P. I cordially acknowledge that law, preach, and practice it.

C. Then if you had bought a white man by mistake, you would not consider yourself his owner in fact?

P. No; it is only the African race that we have a right to buy and sell.

C. Then, if I understand you, the golden rule would require you to give a white man freedom, just as you would expect him to give you freedom under the same circumstances.

P. That is my view.

C. Now will you show me how the skin, or the hair, or the heel, or the facial angle, or the part of the globe in which they are born, deprives the African race of the benefit of the golden rule, and releases you from the obligation to give them the benefit of it?

P. Why, do you not know that Abraham held slaves?

C. I know that he held servants; but they could not have been slaves in the American sense of that term. What security had he for his property in them? There was no law making them chattels; no fugitive slave law to restore them if they escaped; yet we see that Abraham had no fear of arming three hundred of them, and going off into a wild, mountainous country with them; an experiment you would not like to make with your servants. But, even on your ground, that the Patriarch had slaves, it would not justify a New Testament Christian in imitating him, for he had concubines too. You ought, accordingly, to sanction the Mormons, if Abraham's example justifies you. But even if it were so, I should want to determine a good many other points, before I felt it to be right in me to own a slave under your laws. I should want to know that this was not one of the things that Christ says was "allowed" on account of the hardness of men's hearts, but is now forbidden; that Abraham's relations to them were any thing more than those of a feudal baron to his retainers; that, if it is right to hold any human being by such a tenure as your codes allow, the African race is the one elected to that doom, and that Abraham's slaves were of that race. It



seems it would be a violation of the golden rule to enslave some races. It is, then, supremely important that we make no mistake, but get hold of the right class.

P. Well, have you never read that Noah cursed the negro race, and doomed them to slavery?

C. No; I never knew that. I suppose you refer to the passage in Genesis ix., 25: "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren."

P. That is the corner-stone of our peculiar institution, and no Northern fanaticism can shake it. Infidels may prate and rave, but we sit serenely under the over-spreading arch of a divine command, requiring the negro to be enslaved.

C. My brother, that will be a very important passage of the Scriptures for you, when, in the judgment-day, slavery and its doings will undergo a solemn scrutiny. But you have assumed several things here which I do not know to be true, and some which I know not to be true. For instance, you say that prediction is a command. That is not true. Christ predicted that he would be betrayed and crucified. Did he mean by that to command Judas to betray, and the Romans to crucify him? You assume that "serving" in that prophecy means American Slavery. You ought to be very sure that it does not differ in any essential feature. You assume that Canaan was a negro; but that I must deny. He was a son of Ham, whose descendants inhabited Palestine. And Moses recorded that curse to show the Israelites that God would subdue them, however formidable they might appear to be; which, in fact he did when he gave them into the power of Joshua and his host. Nay, so completely was the curse exhausted upon them, that the doomed nations were exterminated from Palestine, and none remain upon which it can still rest. Certainly they are not the present Africans, who are not descendants of Canaan in any sense. So that the Scriptures do not place the latter out of the pale of the golden rule.

P. We have satisfied our consciences on that point, and are not to be intimidated by your interpretations of scripture.

C. Well, there is another suggestion I have to make. I fear you may be found perverting scripture in a great many cases. If you depend upon this passage of the Bible, you must be sure that sound geographical and ethnological science will put a Congo negro under the designation of a Canaanite. You must take care that you do not get some of Japheth's blood under your scriptural bonds. How much white blood is necessary to make a Hamite a Japhethite? I do not know, but you ought to know. Because if it is a scriptural command that justifies you, you must be within the limits of that command.

P. Well, we are within those limits. Every thing that has a drop of negro blood in it may, and ought to be, a chattel, a thing

to be sold and bought and used for the owner's advantage, and forbidden to take the rank of manhood among the white races.

C. But, stop, my brother, you are stating Southern feelings, not divine doctrines. Have you any divine rule to determine of what race a person is whose parents are of two races? If you have not, you may be inflicting on Japheth a curse which God pronounced on Canaan. I confess I should regard it rather a dangerous business to be inflicting a divine curse on a man not named in the curse; not even traceable to the race cursed. It is always a delicate business to be an executioner, even under the best government. I should not wish, as a Southern man, to give myself and my fellow-citizens out as the executioners of divine vengeance on all Africa and Canaan included; a curse too, uttered nearly four thousand years ago. I confess, as a friend of the Bible, I should rather represent the punishment of that one sin of Ham as exhausted by this time.

P. Is that all you have to say against an institution vital to the prosperity of half the United States, and sanctioned by some of God's most eminent servants?

C. Oh, no! I have a great many things to say against it. But, since you have allowed me the privilege of speaking frankly to you, which, I believe, you Southerners do greatly pride yourselves upon, I designed to confine myself to one single point,—the bearings of the golden rule of our Lord on the institution of slavery, as it is explained and upheld by the codes of South Carolina and Georgia.

P. You will then permit me to say that you have lost sight of the golden rule in your remarks.

C. No; I have now prepared the way for its application. I have satisfied myself, at least, that you have no solid scriptural principles by which you put the African race and the Anglo-Africans out of the pale of the golden rule.

P. Well, what then? If I admit that it does apply to our servants, do you mean to say that we must do to others whatever they wish us to do?

C. By no means.

P. What do you then understand by the rule?

C. I understand that the rule is only another form of the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." If you love a man, you will not sacrifice his happiness or his interests to promote your own. Now you admit slavery to be an evil, a curse of God inflicted on a race. But if it is an evil inflicted on an innocent person, then you can not inflict it, and yet love your neighbor as yourself.

P. Do we not love our children when we restrain them against their will?

C. That, my brother, is not a violation, nor even an application of the rule. Your child wishes to be free from a restraint



necessary to his highest happiness. Your motive in restraining him is his own good. No honest man can claim that the motive, the life-spring of slavery, is the good of the slave. Southern philanthropy, however pure it may be, can not claim that. This then is the state of the case. If African buccaneers had stolen your father from this country, and were now holding you as you hold the African, you would wish, and rightly wish he would free you. That is the test of your duty.

*P.* Do you mean that we should to-day let loose all the negroes of the South without restraint?

*C.* Nothing of the kind. If you make them free, they will be under law as we are. If our brethren of the Slave-States will only candidly acknowledge that slavery is an evil of enormous magnitude and peril to North and South, white and black, to be got rid of by righteous and earnest efforts at the earliest practicable moment, it is all that the law of love demands. It is what you would like in similar circumstances.

And I conclude my conversation by putting before your conscience the single inquiry — How would you like it, to be considered a chattel, another man's property, liable to be sold at auction to the highest bidder; to have your wife put on the auction-block, her limbs examined by "men of the baser sort," amid rude jokes and vulgar comments; to have your wife and yourself sent, one to Arkansas, the other to Missouri, and your children to Louisiana, or up the Red River; to see your daughter insulted without the power to utter a murmur? My brother, I need not go on. You know slavery better than I. I only repeat — *How would you like it?*

*P.* Well, I have been defending other men's views; I am opposed to separating husband and wife. That I admit to be cruel and unchristian. The holding of them I can not conceive to be morally wrong.

*C.* Well, but my brother, do you consider what is meant by "holding slaves" under the laws of these States? Suppose you die suddenly and have ten slaves and three heirs; and the estate must be divided. Does not the law come in with its relentless grasp, and seize your ten slaves and sell them, not to suit your humane views, but to meet the demands of the market, and the wishes of heirs who do not share your feelings? You are not safe against bankruptcy. What security have you then against the auctioneer's hammer assigning your female servant to Texas, and her husband to Mississippi?

Brother, how would you like it to have your wife and children "held" under such laws, even by a pious man or a zealous preacher? HOW WOULD YOU LIKE IT YOURSELF?