

Farmington Nov. 2. 1835.

Conversation with Kaufman

Dear Brother Thompson

Yours of the 17th ult., directed to me at Utica, N.Y. is now before me, & according to your request I cheerfully "state upon paper what I recollect of the conversation between yourself & Mr Kaufman, at Andover.

The conversation took place while you & I were at Andover, & in the house of Rev. S. Wilson. Mr Kaufman was brought to the house & introduced to your acquaintance by Mr Gregg, formerly tutor at Dartmouth College & then a student at Andover. The conversation turned, as Mr K. stated, on the sinfulness of slavery - Mr K. attempting to show that the Bible allowed of slavery in certain cases &c, & therefore that it could not be sin in all cases. The substance & order of the argument were as follows -

"Why, said Mr K. - I am certainly much mistaken, if slavery was not allowed by Moses, & surely it existed in Greece & Rome at the time of Christ & the apostles, & if it was such a sin how do you account for it that they did not preach against it as you do?"

"But they did preach against it, & in proof you quoted several passages, such as, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them' - 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself' - 'Masters give to your servants that which is just & equal' &c

"But, said Mr W., they did not preach against it as you do. They never denounced it, in so many words, as sin. On the contrary they preached servants obey your masters - And those called being a servant case not for it &c -

"So do we - So do we - was your reply, & you then proceeded to show how, on your principles, it was perfectly consistent to pronounce slaveholding a sin, & yet enjoin obedience & contentment on the slave - as in the case of a man smiting you on one cheek.

"But, urged Mr W., they never called it sin - where is there a single passage in which it is so called?"

And it was in this connexion, & when the heat of the discussion was at its height on both sides, that, in order to cut the matter short, you quoted - "Whoso stealeth a man & selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death."

"And you think then, do you, said Mr W. rather captiously, that slaveholders ought to be put to death?"

"If they were judged by the Mosaic law they would have to be -

"And you mean to say do you, that they ought to be put to death?"

I mean to say that if they were judged by that law they deserve & would have to die -

"And so, (with great warmth) you'd teach the slaves

to cut their master's throats, would you?

No - was your answer, & you went on to show how the Master might be thus guilty & yet the Slave not be authorized to take vengeance into his own hand.

Such as nearly as I can recollect was the course of the conversation & such the sentiments uttered. I do not pretend to have given the exact words but only the substance of the sentiments uttered. And that I am correct in the above account I am quite sure from the fact, that Mr Kaufman reported the same story ~~the~~ at the time & in substantially the same words, & that then, when the whole conversation was fresh in my mind, I declared it to be false.

As to the declaration of Mr W. therefore, that you said, "if we preached what we ought, or if we taught the Slaves to do what they ought, we would tell every one of them to cut their master's throat" - I have no hesitation in saying that you did not utter any such words, or any such sentiment on that occasion, nor have I ever heard you do so on any other occasion, though I have labored with you weeks together in the Cause of Emancipation.

As to the other form of phraseology, that "every Slave-holder ought (or deserves) to have his throat cut - Mr W. affirms that you employed these "very words" - that you "made use of this naked, unqualified, unconditional declaration"

and moreover, that he "repeated the question three or four times & you uniformly answered in the same manner". I affirm as positively that you did not employ these "very words" nor "make use of this naked, unqualified, unconditional declaration"; & as to the repetition of the question, it was the repetition of a captious opponent endeavoring to push you to the utterance of something of which he might take advantage. And as it was, your answer was qualified as stated, & was entirely destitute of the throat-cutting part of the phraseology.

Perhaps it may not be amiss to add, that in the subsequent conversation between W. & myself, after you left the room, he attempted to trap me in ~~the~~ a similar way. To sum up the whole affair, I say then, that Mr Kaufman's report of the conversation, in the points specified, is not true.

You are at liberty to make what use you please of this statement — Yours truly
Amos A. Phelps.

Conversation
between
Mr Kaufman & Amos A. Phelps
at
Andover.
1836