Germantown Friends’ Protest Against Slavery (modified)

Source: This statement was written in 1688 by members of a Quaker group in Pennsylvania. The Quakers were Christians known for their beliefs in equality and peace. This document was addressed to other Quakers.

These are the reasons why we are against the slave trade. First, is there anyone that would want to be treated in this way? To be sold or made a slave for all the time of his life? Even though they are black, we cannot believe that it is more right to have them as slaves than it is to have white ones as slaves. There is a saying that we shall do to all men like as we will be done ourselves.

Here in the colonies there is liberty of conscience, and we should also have liberty of the body. In Europe there are many who are oppressed for what they believe. Here there are those who are oppressed because of a Black color. We know that here there are some slave traders who sell the children of those poor Creatures to other men. Ah! Do consider this well, if you do these things, because would you want to be treated this way? Is this Christian? This makes a bad impression in all those countries of Europe, where they hear that the Quakers here handle men like they handle cattle there. For that reason, some in Europe have no desire to come here.

What thing in the world could be worse than if men should steal us away, sell us for slaves to strange countries, and separate husband from wife and children? Since this isn’t done to us, therefore we are against doing it to others. And we who say that we’re against stealing shouldn’t purchase stolen goods (slaves), and we should help to stop this robbing and stealing if possible. And enslaved men should be set free in Europe if possible. If we did this, then Pennsylvania would have a better reputation, and that would be good.

liberty of conscience = religious freedom

Modified from the original source available at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.