

# The perversion of christianity: the perversion of christianity

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



As human beings it's so easy to convince ourselves to believe that what is generally accepted in society is justifiably correct. Rarely do we, as a society, question our actions as long as they yield desirable consequences such as convenience, profit or social benefit. Everything in our life can be purposefully fit around the most popular beliefs, this includes even the most sacred of thing such as The Holy Bible. This sort of religious distortion, used to justify man's self-serving will, is what writer and former slave, Frederick Douglass exposes in Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave his autobiography originally published in 1845.

In his story, Douglass gives us a myriad of obvious inconsistencies of people professing Christianity while also practicing slavery: ' The man who robbed me of my earnings at the end of each week meets me as a class-leader on Sunday morning, to show me the way of life, and the path of salvation.... He who proclaims it a religious duty to read the Bible denies me the right of learning to read the name of the God who made me. He who is the religious advocate of marriage robs whole millions of the sacred influence, and leaves them to the ravages of wholesale pollution'. This hypocritic behavior was rampant among slaveholders in the south. Douglass also explains the deeper more psychological aspects of those who persecuted him, such as that of his once master Edward Covey.

Edward Covey, an extremely devout Christian and leader in the Methodist church who prayed morning, noon, and night daily, appeared to be more religious than anyone and yet Covey faced no apparent moral internal conflict or apprehension at the breaking several of the Ten Commandments

with actions such as ordering his slave woman to breed with a hired man to produce more slave chattel for the purpose of his own personal gain. Covey had rationalized that any sin that such a devout Christian as he committed would be considered little to no offense to God. Douglass discusses how his persecutors covered and protected their sins with the cloth of Christianity and it is his examples of these self-justifying practices that reveal exactly how extremely manipulated the Christian doctrine was by these seemingly holy men.

For a time, Douglass was owned by a religious slaveholder and also lived in the Christian community of St. Michaels. Douglass' owner, Captain Auld, who was a Christian convert and easily found religious sanction in the Bible for his acts of cruelty. Douglass recounts having seen Auld tie up a lame young woman, whip her until blood was running down her naked body, and then quote Scripture to the bloodied girl in order to justify the beating: ' He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes'. Furthermore, in Douglass' experience, the religious slaveholders were the meanest, most immoral and most cruel in their treatment of their slaves. ' I should regard being the slave of a religious master the greatest calamity that could befall me,' Douglass then reports of his ownership by Captain Auld, and Auld's eventual loan of him to Edward Covey.

While in St. Michaels, Douglass witnessed inhumane treatment of slaves by the clergy, such as the Rev. Daniel Weede and Rev. Rigby Hopkins of the Reformed Methodist Church-who themselves owned slaves. Besides withholding food from their slaves, the reverends were merciless and just far

crueler men, justifying regular unprovoked beatings as necessary to whip 'the devil' from the slaves' souls. At the same time, these minister publicly professed their faith and were extremely devout and active in revivals, prayer and preaching. In the poem, 'A Parody' written by Douglass and appended to his autobiography, Douglass wrote two stanzas about Christian slave owning ministers: "Love not the world," the preacher said, And winked his eye, and shook his head; He seized on Tom, and Dick, and Ned, Cut short their meat, and clothes, and bread, Yet still loved heavenly union/Another preacher whining spoke Of one whose heart for sinners broke; He tied old Nanny to an oak, And drew the blood at every stroke, And prayed for heavenly union.

Remarkably, Douglass was astute enough and emotionally healthy enough to be able to observe that he was witnessing a perverted version of Christianity: 'I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity,' he wrote in the appendix of his autobiography. As he put it, "the 'Christianity of this land'-or the brand of Christianity practiced in the Southern slaveholding United States, was not the Christianity of Christ, which was pure, good, and holy". Douglass was sane enough not to blame God, nor the entire Christian faith. We should all make sure that religion is not a 'mere covering for the most horrid crimes-a justifier of the most appalling barbarity which the darkest, foulest, grossest, and most infernal deeds of slaveholders find the strongest protection' as it so blatantly was in the days of slavery in the southern U. S. and in the life of Frederick Douglass.