William Rotch, Sr., to Moses Brown, Nantucket, Mass., 8 November 1787 (excerpt)

. . . thou queries how friends can be active in establishing the new form of Government, which so much favours Slavery; alass in this point I must refer thee to some advocate for it, as to my own part my heart has been often pained since the publication of the doings of the Convention; and much disappointed I am as I had entertaind some hope that so many wise men, would have form'd some System of Government, founded on equity & justice, that thereby it might have acquir'd some strength and energy, and that it might be on such a basis that we as a Society might lend our aid in establishing it so far as it tended to peace and morality; but we may say in truth that the wisdom of man (as man) can or shall not work the Righteousness of God; and whatever high encomiums are given to it (the Constitution) it is evident to me it is founded on *Slavery* and that is on *Blood*, because I understand, some of the Southern members utterly refused doing any thing unless this horid part was admitted, which occasions me to say its very foundation was on Slavery & Blood, as that I suppose was the corner stone; there are many parts which meets my approbation, as it so ~~fully~~ nearly approaches a mix'd Monarchy, wch. I think a good exchange for an Ideal Republican; but the valuable parts are all marred to a great degree in my view, and often brings me into a deep consideration of the consequence that must eventually attend; can we expect additional judgments will not vissit our land when the people have given their own late declerations the lie in so bare faced a manner, some complaint has been made, that no Bill of Rights was prefixed to their doings; but how was it possible that it could be done, for what are those Rights, except the very Rights in part, and the most valuable part which they have declard they would not protect; and I much fear it will be taken for an implicit encouragement, to pursue the trade, though I sincerely wish the Northern States may manifest a better principle of justice than the united Wisdom of the Continent has exampled them in, & as thou observes it breaks up this Assylum of liberty (the Massachusets) thus my dear Friend thou may see I can by no means alleviate thy mind in this respect, except in being united with thee as a fellow sufferer in this great cause of oppression, interceding when a little strength is afforded that the Father of Mercies may in his own time open the hearts of the people and incline them to true justice and judgment, and grant that the bonds of the oppressed may be loosed, and indeed notwithstanding, I fear that for a time, an encouragement may be the consequence of that article; yet as the work is on the wheels I fully believe it is the determination of Heaven that Slavery shall be abolished, though it may be through some sore judgments; I am much affected at this time with this Subject from a recent Instance, though it may be view'd by some as of the mildest kind, yet the depravity of the heart that is guilty of the fact sinks deep in my mind; Jno Slocum [probably John Slocum] of Newport has lately been here and demanded Cato as his Servant, Cato left Slocum and made this place

his Assylum for liberty, was hir'd by my Son S Rodman [Samuel Rodman] with whom he had lived near two years, and on considering, that if the new Constitution should be adopted (which was hardly doubted) he would then be fully within his power, where he had nothing to expect, but perpetual Slavery, in this circumstance he was advisd to compromise the matter with Slocum, which he did & agreed to serve him a year & then to be free, a manumission on these conditions was obtaind, but Slocums proposal was to lodge it in the hands of one of his own Children, but this base ~~proposal~~ intimation was rejected by Catoes friends, & S Rodman has it in possession; Cato is a very honest orderly man set out yesterday on his new years Slavery, he is I believe near forty years old, and altho it is but for a year, yet the darkness of that heart that requires it, gives me so bad an opinion of this man, that I think in this enlightend age, he ought not to lay claim to any great degree of Christianity.—I doubt I shall tire thee, I will therefore come to thy proposition, my heart is warm'd toward those poor blacks and I feel sometimes willing to spend and be Spent if I could contribute to their enlargement; I intend for Bedford if well in a week or ten days, when its not improbable I may meet thee somewhere, but perhaps it may be in Newport, as I hardly feel clear of J Slocum without either writing or seeing him, the later I would prefer if [I] could have thy company. . . .

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