

Selected Quotes from **Frederick Douglass** (1818-1895)

“What I have said respecting and against religion, I mean strictly to apply to the slaveholding religion of this land, and with no possible reference to Christianity proper; for, between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference ... Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity.”

-Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, 1845

“But you will ask me, can these things be possible in a land professing christianity? Yes, they are so While America is printing tracts and bibles; sending missionaries abroad to convert the heathen ... —the slave not only lies forgotten ... but is trampled under foot by the very churches of the land. What have we in America? We have slavery made part of the religion of the land.”

“I love that religion ... which makes its followers do unto others as they themselves would be done by. If you demand liberty to yourself, it says, grant it to your neighbors. If you claim a right to think for yourself, it says, allow your neighbors the same right.”

-“Reception Speech,” Finsbury Chapel, England, 1846

“I feel that I have a right to speak, and to speak strongly. Yet, my friends, I feel bound to speak truly.”

-Lecture in Rochester, NY, 1850

“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, to-day, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.”

-“What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (speech in Rochester, NY, 1852)