

An Excerpt from Uncle Tom's Cabin

In chapter 11 of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), by Harriet Beecher Stowe, a slave named George lets it be known that he is planning to escape. Mr. Wilson, a sympathetic white man, responds:

Why, George, no—no—it won't do; this way of talking is wicked—unscriptural. George, you've got a hard master—in fact, he is—well he conducts himself reprehensibly—I can't pretend to defend him. But you know how the angel commanded Hagar to return to her mistress, and submit herself under her hand; and the apostle sent back Onesimus to his master.

The biblical references are to Genesis 16 and Paul's letter to Philemon. George replies:

Don't quote Bible at me that way, Mr. Wilson . . . don't! for my wife is a Christian, and I mean to be, if ever I get to where I can; but to quote Bible to a fellow in my circumstances, is enough to make him give it up altogether. I appeal to God Almighty;—I'm willing to go with the case to Him, and ask Him if I do wrong to seek my freedom.