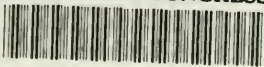


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ADDRESS

TO THE

PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES

ON THE SUBJECT OF

SLAVERY.



BOSTON:
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1834.

ADDRESS.

The Committee appointed by the New-England Anti-Slavery Convention to prepare an Address to the People of the United States on the subject of Slavery, beg leave to report the following :

With all the deference which is due from individuals to society, to the great union of free and intelligent beings on whose sympathy, respect and protection they depend ; with all the confidence inspired by the defence of a cause which requires for its complete success, nothing but an impartial hearing ; with all the fervent hope, all the fearful solicitude for the destinies of mankind, wrapt up in the fate of this country, we, the humble and devoted advocates of the oppressed, address you, our fellow-citizens, in behalf of more than two millions of men, our countrymen, whom we, the people of these United States, have doomed to absolute and perpetual bondage.

What is the burthen of our address,—the object of our petition ? Is it to provoke or offend—is it to wrong, or to desire to wrong our neighbor—is it to slander—is it to set ourselves up above others, as if we were better than they—is it to disturb the peace, or to loosen or to dissolve the Union—is it to promote divisions and to stimulate our different classes to discord—the North against the South—the East against the West—the enslaved American against the free Ameri-

can—or the colored man against the white ? No—It is none of these.

It is our object, in the first place, to set before you the nature and consequences of slavery ; not in order to convince you that slavery is an immeasurable evil, for this would be as useless as to attempt to persuade you that liberty is an inestimable good. But we wish to impress you with the idea that we cannot hold this simple and incontestable truth with impunity, that we drink the cup of freedom to our own condemnation, unless we are willing to confess and repair our wrongs—unless we resolve to *act* in obedience to the law of liberty which we have proclaimed, and by which we must be judged.

Every Fourth of July is to us a day of exaltation for what we have done, and a day of humiliation for what we have left undone. The Declaration of Independence, which is read throughout our land, bears record to our glory, our shame, our inconsistency. It proves the unlawfulness of the government established over the slave, in the same terms in which it justifies the self-government of the free. For it asserts that all government

among men derives its just powers from the consent of the governed; that it is instituted to secure the *inalienable rights* of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, with which all men are endowed *equally* by their Creator.

These self-evident truths, set forth in that document of philanthropic wisdom and heroism, are borne out by the testimony of inspiration. Let us place side by side the law of the white man, concerning his colored fellow-man, and the law of God, concerning all his children.

God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' Negro slavery denies God in man; the children do not recognise their Father's likeness, because it has pleased Him to set it in a dark frame.

The Son of God says, 'Be not ye called masters; for one is your master; one is your Father; and all ye are brethren.' This universal brotherhood, established by the God of nature, the Father of spirits, has it induced the white man, the professed Christian, to see in his colored fellow-man, a child of God, to be respected and loved by him as he respects and loves himself? Look at the history of negro slavery. All its authentic records, all its unpublished volumes may be summed up in one sentence. The white man, the professed Christian, has treated his brother, the colored man, first, as a beast of prey, and then as a beast of burthen and of draught.

The Son of man farther says, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' And, 'with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' To do unto others as we would have them do unto us—if this be the great law of justice by which we shall be judged—what must we think, we do not say of the *men*, for we would not interfere between them and their own consciences—but what must we think of the *laws* of our slaveholding states and territories, which the white inhabitants have made, and which the whole country has sanctioned? The law secures to the white man, the poorest as well as the richest, whatever property he inherits, or gains by his own industry, or by exchange with others. The earnings of the slave, the fruits of his life-wasting industry, are not his own; he inherits nothing but slavery, he bequeaths

nothing but slavery; he himself is the product of slave-breeding industry, a marketable and hereditary commodity. Is this doing unto others as we would have them do unto us? The ties of domestic affection, the covenant of nature which binds to each other husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, are acknowledged by public opinion, by the enlightened sentiments of mankind, as the highest incentives to individual industry, the richest source of social enjoyment, the main support of order, mutual good will, and improvement in society. The voice of nature and of reason has sanctioned the privacy of domestic life, and has placed the law of the land like a cherub with a flaming sword before the garden of life. But the law of the land, which declares the house of the white man his 'castle,' and guards it against the threats of intruders by imprisonment and death—the same law, like a faithless sentinel, admits to the unguarded dwelling of the colored man, every selfish and brutal passion, if it bears the color of legalized oppression; it licenses the profanation of all that is sacred and dear to the wretched victim of avarice and prejudice. Though conjugal fidelity, parental and filial affection and brotherly love be all placed in one scale, yet the market price in the other, seldom, if ever, fails to kick the beam. Is this doing unto others as we would have them do unto us? All civil and political power is in the hands of the white man,—the colored man has none. He is compelled to live under rulers in whose election he has no voice—under laws in whose enactment he is permitted to take no part—and under the verdict and judgment of courts which are constituted wholly by others, and where he is not allowed to defend himself by his own oath, or that of those of his own color. Is this doing unto others as we would have them do unto us?

The foundation of all rights, the right of personal independence and self-ownership, by which every human being is invested with the free use and disposal of his own body and his own soul, is denied to the slave. Resistance against violence, the natural right of self-defence, the right of the husband and the father to protect the virtue of his wife and child—if it be exercised by the colored man against the white, is deemed worthy of death. The right and duty of every human being to improve his mind, for which schools

and associations for the advancement and diffusion of knowledge are established throughout our land, the cultivation of the intellectual nature of man, is secured only to the free man. The simple art of reading, which enables every one to appropriate to himself what other men have done for the elevation and happiness of mankind, is withheld from the slave. The law in some parts of our country threatens death, even to the master himself, who should persist in teaching his slave to read. The safety of the slave State is thought to require this prohibition; the knowledge of the alphabet might enable the slave to find out, from the Declaration of American Independence, and from the word of God, that, by Divine right, and by the fundamental law of this country, every man is a freeman. If, indeed, the master should give his consent, which he may refuse or retract at any time, that christianity should be taught to the slave, it is only *such* christianity, rather such a religion, as is consistent with slavery. Is this doing unto others as we would have them do unto us? The only case of importance in which the law acknowledges a crime committed against a slave as a crime, and threatens punishment to the offender, the case of murder, affords but feeble protection to the life of the slave. The law enables the master to free himself from punishment by shewing that the slave came to his death in consequence of moderate castigation. Nay, the law secures impunity to the offender in almost every case of offence committed by a white against a colored man, by *rejecting black testimony against white crime*.

If doing unto others as we would be done by, is indeed the eternal standard of natural justice between man and man, what right have we, the freemen of this country, to our property, our families, our political privileges, to the possession of our own bodies and souls, while we persevere in denying the same privileges and blessings to our colored fellow-men? In strict justice, he who strips his unoffending fellow-man of his natural and civil rights, forfeits his own.

Enough has been said on the simple truth that slavery is in itself unjust, that it is a crime against human nature, a moral impossibility. That the effects of slavery are no better than the cause, would be readily believed on supposition, even if experience and

history did not supersede all speculation on this subject.

The evil consequences of slavery have been most deeply felt and forcibly set forth by slaveholders themselves. Its influence on the various branches of industry, particularly on agriculture and manufactures, is plainly delineated on the face of our country. The condition of our slaveholding states compared with that of the free, the contrast between the two great states on the banks of the Ohio, and between the western and eastern portion of Virginia—are facts too obvious and conclusive to require an elaborate treatise on the comparative advantages of free and slave labor.

And what are the natural effects of slavery on the mind and disposition of the master and the slave? A restless dissatisfaction, or a brutal contentment with his lot, aversion to all labor, because he labors not from the hope of a just reward, but from the dread of punishment at the hand of arbitrary power, addictedness to low and sensual enjoyments because others are withheld; these are some of the natural effects of slavery on the slave. On the other hand, constant fear of insurrection, disdain of useful labor as associated with the condition of slavery, love of power nourished in the master from infancy, with freedom to gratify all his passions and whims in relation to his unprotected slaves—is it probable that these circumstances should be favorable to the growth of private virtue, or of true republicanism? For, true republicanism does not consist in maintaining equality of rights among oppressors, but in honoring all men as equals in all their natural and inalienable rights.

When we say that freedom has a salutary, and slavery a hurtful influence on the mind and disposition both of the master and the slave, we mean that this is the natural result of that unnatural relation. Among the innumerable cases which have been brought forward in confirmation of this truth, there are undoubtedly some which have been exaggerated, if not invented, by those who have published them. But if we confine ourselves only to the official and authentic accounts of slavery, and its offspring the foreign and domestic slave trade, there is enough to rouse every dormant feeling of humanity, and inspire the most timid and indifferent to active and enterprising benevolence. It is true,

there are virtues, such as frankness and generosity, which are found among slaveholders as well as among consistent freemen; and we rejoice to acknowledge them in our southern brethren, without entering into an invidious inquiry concerning the comparative difficulty of practising the virtue of generosity in different portions of our country. It is upon the belief in the existence of those generous sentiments, that the friends of abolition rest much of their confident hope that the slaveholders of the South will take this great work into their own hands, and force an acknowledgment of their magnanimous love of liberty not only from their rivals at the North, but from the forsaken slave. On the other hand, we rejoice that there are many instances to prove that the state of degradation imposed upon the slave has not obliterated every feature of the divine image. That the spirit of man, however darkened, is not extinct in the slave, is evident from the occasional wild eruptions of the smothered fire of indignation and resentment, as well as from the striking instance of that fidelity, which is the moral support of an immoral power, and which has often saved the unsuspecting master from the fury of the revolting slaves. The same truth is confirmed by numerous instances of voluntary death preferred to a life of bondage, and by the still more cheering and elevating example of those who, after having worked out their own freedom, have not ceased to toil and to starve until they have redeemed their friends from servitude.

Whether the slaves are treated well or ill, whether they are contented or not, these are circumstances which do not affect the duty of emancipation. The very existence of laws against runaway slaves would be sufficient to prove that many of them, surely, are not contented. We have no right to assert that the slave is happy, in a condition the least particle of which, if it were imposed upon us, would be resisted unto blood, until we have offered to him freedom. We mean freedom in good faith; not the pitiful and precarious allowance of human rights that is settled upon the unenslaved man of color in most parts of our country; but liberty such as we have it, other than which we ought to be ashamed to offer. The state of ignorance in which we have placed him, may indeed render it inexpedient to call the slave to an

immediate and unlimited exercise of every privilege. Yet we certainly are not justified in asserting that the slave is content with his present lot, until we have offered to him the immediate enjoyment of all those rights for the possession of which he is now qualified, together with the means to fit himself, as soon as possible, for the exercise of every privilege enjoyed by the white freeman.

But suppose it true, what has been asserted, that the vast majority are contented and happy—*this* contentment and happiness should be considered not as the best, but as the very worst and most deplorable effect of slavery. If human beings, stripped of all the rights and attributes of humanity, are contented and happy, it is a proof that the hierarchy of nature which has placed man, the moral agent, at the head of all living creatures, is broken, that the animal has survived his spiritual nature. If it be true then, that the slave is fallen so low as to rest satisfied with his own degradation, and forget that he is a man, then slavery has indeed done its worst on him, and it becomes our most sacred duty to break the spell that has converted human beings into brutes.

Many objections to the immediate abolition of slavery have been brought forward, which, like the one already mentioned, the alleged contentment of the slaves, only require a fair and thorough examination, to be defeated or converted into auxiliary arguments for emancipation. It has been said, the slaves are not prepared for liberty. But it is clear that the first step toward civilizing and christianizing the negro is to acknowledge that he is a man, whose confidence we have to gain by confessing that we have wronged him, and endeavoring to repair the injury by abandoning forever the inhuman principle that man can hold property in man. It has been said that the slaves, if suddenly emancipated, would use their liberty for avenging their past sufferings upon the masters. But it would be strange indeed, if the standing army and the militia, the whole power of this country which has hitherto secured the unrighteous authority of the master over the slave, should not be able to uphold the rightful dominion of the law over the freeman. It seems stranger still to suppose, that by an unaccountable perversion of the most natural feelings, the colored man who has no cause for hatred and desire of

revenge against the white man, except the fact that he holds him in slavery, should hate, and desire to revenge himself upon him, for restoring him to liberty. Whatever strange kind of speculation may lead men to expect that love should beget hatred, this surely is not the logic of the human heart.

The history of the past, as well as the experience of our days, does not record one instance in which the immediate abolition of slavery has stirred up the freed man to violence, outrage and war. Within the remembrance of this generation, slavery has been abolished in St. Domingo, in the republics of South America, and recently throughout the vast empire of Great Britain. Different modes and forms of emancipation have been tried. In some cases, the enjoyment of perfect liberty on the part of the slaves has been preceded by an apprenticeship; in others full liberty has been granted at once; in some instances portions of land have been allotted to the negroes; in others they have been left without any means of support but their personal liberty; in others a part of the produce, or certain days in the week, have been secured to the free laborers remaining on the plantations. In all these instances, in which a whole state has abolished slavery, and in many others in which the comparative value of free and slave labor has been tried on a smaller scale, the safety and superior advantages of immediate abolition have been fully established. Great light has been shed on this subject by the Report of the Committee appointed by the House of Commons, on the extinction of Slavery in Great Britain. The confident anticipations of many of the witnesses who were examined by the Committee as to the safety and desirableness of that great national measure, for both masters and slaves, have already been verified, so far as the short time that has elapsed since the actual enfranchisement of the British West Indies has enabled us to judge of the results of this great measure. Already several islands have petitioned the government, and have obtained permission to substitute full and immediate abolition for the system of apprenticeship, which had been devised as an intermediate step from servitude to freedom; because it soon became evident, that the full advantages of a free labor system cannot be realized by any scheme of demi-servitude.

A thorough investigation of the much disfigured history of St. Domingo, which has been so often held out as a fearful warning against all attempts at immediate abolition, bears the most decided testimony to the safety of this philanthropic measure. Indeed, the history of Hayti speaks more strongly in favor of this cause, than the most sanguine abolitionist could have expected. For it is proved by competent eye witnesses,* that after the fearful contest which raged in that island from 1791 to 1793, and which from a civil soon became a servile war, and ended in a complete abolition of slavery, the slaves as soon as they were declared freemen, instead of trying to avenge the cruelties they had suffered, quietly returned to their plantations. There they continued to work as free laborers for a fourth part of the produce, besides having two days in the week entirely to themselves. And this cultivation of the land on shares proved so successful, that the island was fast advancing toward its former prosperity, when in 1801, Buonaparte conceived the inhuman and insane plan of reducing the enfranchised islands again to slavery.

In Guadaloupe, which had been quiet and prosperous in her freedom as St. Domingo was, the ruthless conqueror succeeded in restoring slavery, after the most fearful and bloody resistance. But he failed in St. Domingo. And if we would rightly estimate the *result* of this great struggle from servitude, discord, and anarchy, to liberty, law, and union, we must consider that during the continued warfare which did not wholly cease until 1820, the whole island became one republic, the arts and habits of peace were almost entirely abandoned, and the expensive works for cultivating the land on which the amount of exportable property greatly depends, were destroyed. We must consider also, that the natural disposition of the people inclines them to secure by moderate labor the necessities and comforts which the cultivation of a rich soil easily affords, rather than to strive and toil for wealth and commercial eminence. Again we must consider, that the industry of that island is kept down by the support of a large standing army to prevent invasion, and by an enormous nation-

* See particularly the French works of La Croix and Malenfant.

al debt to France. Under all these circumstances, which have necessarily reduced the produce, the exports and imports of St. Domingo, and affected the character of its inhabitants, if we consider that the population, which in 1804 amounted to about 400,000, had increased, according to the official census in 1824, to 935,335, and if we look upon the amount of freedom, security, and prosperity enjoyed in that island—we cannot help seeing in the whole unprecedented history of St. Domingo, a most satisfactory evidence of the safety and expediency of immediate abolition, even under the most unfavorable circumstances.

That the Africans will not work from any better impulse than the cart-whip, is an assertion so often refuted, that it is not worth while to dwell upon it. It is indeed not improbable, that the long continuance of slavery has degraded many so deeply as to require some impulses besides those of self-interest, honor, and family attachment, to stimulate them to honest industry; some legal restraints to prevent those who by a sudden act of abolition are made masters of others as well as themselves. Laws may be necessary like those existing in Hayti, which compel idlers and vagabonds, all those who cannot show that they possess the means of an honest subsistence, to cultivate the earth for their living; as in many parts of our country also, paupers are compelled to labor for the sustenance provided for them by the community. But the practical importance of these laws will continually decrease, as the natural effects of freedom supplant the artificial resorts of slavery.

The loss of property, growing out of immediate emancipation, has been urged as another objection to this measure. The general ground of this question, the comparative advantages of free and slave labor, have been so clearly demonstrated by scientific and experimental investigation, that few, if any, remarks are required on this subject. It would seem superfluous to prove in detail, that the master, the planter in particular, must be benefitted by the exchange of a slave-labor for a free-labor system. It frees him from the necessity of purchasing cultivators for his land, the price of which must rise in proportion to what he saves by not being obliged to buy *men*, in addition; he is

not at the risk of losing part of his capital by the sickness, or death, or escape of his slaves; he has not to provide for the sick, the children, the aged, except so far as they may have to be taken care of by the community. Instead of depending on laborers, whose interest it is to do no more work than the fear of the whip can induce them to perform, and to pass themselves off for being as unprofitable as possible; the employer of free labor has the choice of laborers, whose interest, whose heart and will are in their business, and whose reputation for efficient usefulness is at stake. Instead of finding it for his advantage to debar his slave from all knowledge, save what concerns him as a domesticated animal; instead of doing violence to his own nature by degrading that of his slave, the master or employer will be prompted both by his earthly and his spiritual interests, to promote the intelligence, the self-respect, the love of truth and justice, the religious principle in the free laborer.

These considerations are sufficient to show that universal and immediate emancipation must, in general, prove eminently beneficial, both to the slaveholder and the slave. Cases of individual suffering, which are incidental to every general plan of reform, will be easily remedied. But although the economical advantages of this reform are evident, it should never be overlooked that justice demands the immediate abolition of slavery, whether it be for the advantage or disadvantage of the slaveholder. Instant and persevering exertion to remove from the present, and to avert from every future generation, the crime and the misery of oppression, is all that we can do to atone for the past, and to wipe off a part of that fearful reckoning, which awaits us all at the bar of eternal justice.

There is one more objection to the promotion of anti-slavery principles, which operates as a powerful check upon many of our fellow-citizens; although we confidently believe that if they would subject it to a thorough examination, they would see in this very objection, the strongest argument for promoting the abolition of slavery in our country. It is said that the Constitution and the Laws of the Union acknowledge and secure the existence of slavery, in every State in which it is not prohibited by the State itself, as well as in the District of Co-

lumbia, and in several of the Territories. Hence, it is argued, that the agitation of this question in the free States, is an improper and dangerous interference.

It is true indeed, that the constitution as it is generally understood, though it nowhere speaks of slavery, is made to read so as to secure a power which, according to the principles of the Declaration of Independence, cannot be rendered just, by any decree or act of government. It is true, that the slave escaping from bondage in one State, finds in every other, even in those States in which slavery is by law prohibited, a powerful coadjutor of his master, in every judge or competent magistrate of the Union, who is obliged to deliver him up to the pursuing owner, however his own conscience may revolt against this official support of legal tyranny. It is true, moreover, that a standing army is kept and paid by these United States, chiefly for the protection of that special branch of industry in one part of our country which is proscribed in every other. It is true, that in case the slaves should assert and insist upon the rights solemnly ascribed to them, in common with all other men, by the Declaration of our Independence, not only the army, but, in case the army should prove insufficient, the militia, the whole people of these United States, are bound by law to assemble under the very banners under which they once achieved liberty for themselves, to put to the sword men who dare to claim the same inalienable rights. It is true, that a bargain, agreed to by the free states, entitles the slaveholders to send, in addition to the representatives to which their own number entitles them, twenty-five others to represent a portion of their population, which by their own laws are accounted a part of the *live stock*, together with horses and cattle. It is true, that in some of the Territories as well as in the District of Columbia, over which Congress has an absolute and exclusive right of legislation, slavery has a legal national existence and support. It is true, in fine, that Congress, being invested with constitutional power 'to regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the several states,' although it has branded as piracy the foreign slave trade, still tolerates the domestic traffic in human beings, which is characterized by the essential attributes of the middle passage. By means of this traffic, the produce of the

slave-breeding is conveyed to the slave-consuming states, and the various wants of the slaveholding community are continually supplied. Nay, the seat of Congress, the capital of the United States, is the centre, the very heart of this traffic, drawing fresh supplies from different quarters, and sending them to every part, to nourish and support the system.

The fact then on which the forementioned objection to anti-slavery movements is grounded, is incontestable. It is true that slavery, as it exists in our country, is supported by law, and by the constitution as it is generally understood. But can this be considered as a reasonable objection? Ought it not to be to us the most powerful inducement, to use every means which the constitution has left us, to remove this fatal inconsistency with the vital principle of our social institutions?

It is not our object now to enquire whether a law can be deemed valid, if it is contrary to the first principles of natural justice, contrary to the inalienable rights of man, particularly when these principles and rights are solemnly acknowledged by the sovereign will of the people as the supreme standard and test of the validity of any law. We only ask the people of the United States to consider what bearing that clause in the constitution which authorizes slavery, has upon the Declaration of Independence. The words of the only article which is understood as securing the claims of the slave-owner (Art. IV. Sec. III. 3.) are these: 'No person held to service or labor in one state under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.' Now it is evident that these words of the Constitution are not inconsistent with the acknowledgment of the inalienable rights of man, in the Declaration of Independence, if they are understood as having reference to such service or labor as may be due from one person to another, on any sufficient legal ground, except slavery. They are inconsistent with the Declaration of Independence only, if they be understood as applying to slave labor and involuntary servitude, as well as to free labor and hired services.—Suppose we had no other knowledge of the actual

intention of the framers of the Constitution, than the words of the law itself, would it not become a subject of grave consideration, whether the common understanding of that article in the Constitution, according to which, a slave escaping into a state whose laws do not acknowledge slavery, is delivered up to the pursuing master, is not inconsistent with *correct* principles of legal interpretation? Even if we do not look upon the Declaration of Independence as the acknowledged standard and test of the validity of any law; even if we consider the Constitution simply in the light of a more recent law, which, on this account, ought to take precedence of the Declaration of Independence in any point in which they are decidedly at variance; yet it is an undoubted principle of legal interpretation, that whenever there is an apparent collision between two laws, the later of the two ought to be interpreted *strictly*; that is, if the words admit of a wider and of a stricter acceptance, they should be taken in that sense in which they are not at all, or in which they are least inconsistent, with the principles contained in a previous law. Now it is certain that the words of the Constitution in the article alluded to, have and always will have an exact practical meaning, whether slavery is continued or abolished in this country, since in their widest acceptance, they secure the claims both of the slaveholder, and of the employer of a freeman, or master of an apprentice. It is evident, moreover, that if taken in their widest sense, they are opposed to the Declaration of Independence, inasmuch as they are understood to secure the right of property in man. It seems, therefore, more conformable to correct principles of legal interpretation, to understand them in that stricter sense, in which they do now and always will secure the right of the employer to the *hired* services of the laborer, and particularly that of the master to the services of the apprentice. When thus understood, there is a propriety in using the words 'to whom such service or labor is *due*.' But to whom else is service or labor '*due*,' but the man who in some way *pays* for it? We, in fact, see no other alternative than either to adopt this stricter interpretation of the forementioned article of the Constitution, or to admit that the fundamental principles of the Declaration of Independence, which acknowledges the inalienable rights of man,

as the only just foundation of government, have been repealed by a single clause of the Constitution of the United States—a repeal which would amount to an abrogation of justice itself.

It may be said that these principles of legal interpretation, however just in other cases, are not applicable in this, as the forementioned article of the Constitution was certainly intended by its framers to secure, under terms of a more general import, the legal claim of the slaveholder; and that this has been acknowledged and acted upon as the true and practical sense of the law by all the courts and magistrates of the Union.—We would not interfere with the application of the law thus interpreted. We would rather forego any advantage that our cause might derive from a different interpretation, than in any way lessen the binding power of that solemn compact which binds together the several branches of this great family of republics. We would adopt ourselves, and urge others to adopt the sentiment of the Farewell Address of the Father of his country:—"The basis of our political system is the right of the people to make and alter their Constitution of government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, until changed by the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all."

We acknowledge that there is sufficient reason to believe that the forementioned Article of the Constitution was designed to secure the legal claims of the slaveholder, as well as the master of an apprentice. But it seems as if its framers had couched their intention in such general terms, in order that the Article might remain applicable in case that slavery should be abolished in the different states. They seemed to be looking forward to a time, when the principles of the Declaration of Independence should have removed every species of government that is not derived from the consent of the governed, and has not for its object the establishment of the inalienable rights of man. To carry these principles into effect, the authors of the Declaration had pledged their 'sacred honor,'—a pledge which yet remains to be redeemed by their descendants.

The same spirit and prospective policy are manifest in the early history of congressional legislation; particularly in the ordinance for

the government of the great territory northwest of the Ohio, from which three states, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, have taken their origin. This Ordinance was passed in 1787, by the unanimous voice of all the States present at its passage, viz. Massachusetts, New-York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The six fundamental articles of this Ordinance, which still form the basis of the Territorial governments of the United States, were intended, according to the Preamble, 'for extending the fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty; to fix and establish those principles as the basis of all laws, constitutions, and governments, which forever hereafter shall be formed in said territory.' The sixth article declares, 'that there shall neither be slavery, nor involuntary servitude in the said Territory, otherwise than for the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall become convicted.'

But unfortunately in some later acts of Congress, this great principle was lost sight of; and the slaveholding states have promoted opposite principles, in order to open new slave markets in the territories, and support their own system of policy by similar constitutions of the neighboring states.

But our belief does not rest on human legislation, or on the interpretation of any document of human device, however venerable. It is enough for our purpose that the constitution and the laws have left to us means to spread and to carry into effect the doctrine of human rights, of universal liberty. The law, at least in the free states, allows the use of all means, except those which our own conscience would forbid; the constitution of the New-England Anti-Slavery Society permits no others than such as are sanctioned by *law, humanity and religion*. It is enough that we have freedom to speak and to print; freedom peacefully to assemble, and associate, to consult, and to petition the government of the Union as well as the legislature of every state, and thus by individual and united exertion, to act upon the public mind. Thus armed with all the legitimate weapons of truth, we feel bound in conscience never to lay them down until the principle that man can hold property in man is effaced from our statute books, and held in abhorrence by public opinion. After the most careful examination, we are convinced

that slavery is unjust in itself, and cannot be justified by any laws or circumstances; that it wars against christianity, and is condemned by the Declaration of our Independence. We are convinced that it is injurious to every branch of industry, and more injurious still to the mind and character both of the master and the slave. Its existence is the chief cause of all our political dissensions; it tends to unsettle the groundwork of our government, so that every institution, founded on the common ground of our Union, is like an edifice on a volcanic soil, ever liable to have its foundation shaken, and the whole structure consumed by subterraneous fire. The danger of a servile and a civil war is gaining every year, every day; for the annual increase of the slave population is more than sixty thousand; and every day about two hundred children are born into slavery. As the more northern of the slave states, seeing the advantages of free labor, dispose of their slaves in a more southern market, and by degrees abolish servitude, the whole slave population, and with it the danger of a terrible revolution, are crowded together in the more southern states. Under all these threatening circumstances, what have the southern states, what has congress done, to avert the impending calamity from the Union? Congress, which has full and exclusive power to abolish slavery in the district of Columbia and in the Territories, and to abolish the domestic as well as the foreign slave trade shrinks from touching the subject. The fear of instant difficulties to be encountered overcomes the more patriotic fear of the ever increasing evils engendered by provident delay, which reserves to our descendants, if we should escape them, the inevitable consequences of our own culpable neglect.

And what has been done in the slaveholding states to prepare the great change from a corrupt to a sound and vigorous state of society? There are indeed, benevolent individuals endeavoring to elevate their slaves by oral instruction, and by allowing them to cultivate portions of land for the joint profit of the master and the laborers. But the law and the general practice, so far from endeavoring to diminish, are calculated rather to increase the evil in order to render it more secure, to imbrute the slave more and more, and extinguish in him every aspiration

and pretension to be a man. Hence the laws against teaching a slave have become more numerous, and the penalties more severe, particularly in those states in which the colored population is continually gaining upon the white.* They refuse to free the slaves on the ground of their not being fitted for the proper use of freedom; and they refuse to prepare them for it, because the preparatory course would induce them to throw off the yoke instantly.

In this hopeless state of things, a few individuals, deeply impressed with the great and increasing evil of slavery, have thought it their duty to unite their efforts to undeceive the public mind, to rouse the fortunate heirs of freedom to a sense of their own obligation to extend and secure the blessings they possess. They saw that the most powerful men in the nation were inactive, either because the magnitude of the evil led them to doubt the possibility of finding an adequate remedy, or because they feared to disturb the political or commercial connections between the north and the south, or because they were prejudiced themselves, or thought it a hopeless attempt to conquer the prejudice of others. The disinterested devotion of the few who went forth to prepare the way for the gospel of universal freedom by teaching that slavery is a sin of which all the people of this country are more or less guilty, and ought immediately to repent and to reform—the generous efforts of a few ardent minds have kindled the philanthropic sympathies of many.

The hostility, and still more the indifference with which the sentiments of the first champions of immediate abolition were received by the majority of influential men in this country, may have betrayed some of them occasionally into unguarded and intemperate expressions. Still, the people at large begin to feel that the object as well as the motives of the friends of the oppressed are right; and as soon as the conviction of a good cause has once unsealed the deep fountains of the heart, and has engaged the energies of a free people, it is as vain to attempt to check or divert their onward course, as to coax or force Niagara to roll back its mighty waters from lake Ontario to Erie.

* Let it be remembered that those laws were enacted many years ago and before the Anti-Slavery Societies were thought of.

But the dissemination of Anti-Slavery sentiments, it is said, will be productive of a servile and civil war, and terminate in the dissolution of the Union. Now if there is anything in the theory of government that can be considered as an unquestionable truth, it is the principle that *free discussion* of every thing that concerns the constitution and government, is the indispensable condition, the conservative principle of every republic. The Constitution of our country has fully recognized this conservative principle, in ordaining that no law shall be enacted '*abridging the freedom of speech or of the press.*' And what more have abolitionists done, what else do they aim at, than *free discussion* of a part of our social system? To collect and to disseminate correct information, to argue, to answer objections, and to advise—these, and no other means, are authorised by the constitution of any Anti-Slavery Society in the United States. However strongly and urgently the sin and misery of servitude have been set forth in the writings that have appeared with the sanction of these Societies, yet they have never countenanced, but always most earnestly disapproved the use of force, and the desperate recourse to insurrection. They have appealed to the conscience and the self-interest both of the slaveholder and the slave; and on the ground of religion as well as worldly prudence, they have urged the masters to give up, of their own accord, their despotic power, and the slaves to be subject to their masters, with a religious trust that the voice of reason and christianity will ere long overcome the partiality of the law which makes the enjoyment of the rights of man to depend on the color of his skin. From the mouth of an abolitionist, the doctrine of subjection to his master is a solemn truth to the injured slave; and the words, Peace! Be still! when coming from the friend of freedom, are sufficient to assuage the wildest storm of revolutionary passion. From the mouth of an advocate or apologist of slavery, christianity itself, the gospel of eternal freedom and universal love, appears to the defrauded slave, only as a solemn pretext for oppression. Slavery is the true and lasting source of insurrection; it is the avowed or secret cause of all the serious differences between the members of this Union. Those, therefore, who directly or indirectly strive to secure the existence

of slavery in this country, are nourishing the seeds of a servile and civil war; and their efforts to avert it from themselves, only serve to insure its breaking in upon our descendants, with increased violence. The fact that in those States which depend most especially on slave labor, the colored population is continually gaining upon the white, is too obvious an indication of the future to require any explanation.

Some, indeed, have attempted to prove the security of our slave States, by quoting the experience of the States of antiquity, in some of which one fourth or fifth part of the population were able, for a considerable time, to keep the rest in bondage. But those who thus quote the example of the ancient world in order to quiet the apprehensions of the present, overlook the fact that in antiquity, slavery was a part of the law of nations, in the enforcement of which, each State was supported by the practice and political sympathy of every other. Not one of the ancient republics was founded, as ours is, on the solemn acknowledgment of the inalienable rights of man, with which the existence of slavery is absolutely inconsistent. All the nations around us, particularly those with whom we are most closely connected, our republican neighbors in South America, and England, from which we draw a constant supply of new ideas as well as articles of merchandize, have abolished slavery. Our own example, which has stirred up the nations to a determined search after liberty, reacts upon us; the reproachful feeling of our inconsistency is growing continually more general and intense, both abroad and at home. Thus all the circumstances and unavoidable influences under which we are placed, the spirit of our time manifested by its history, the growing conviction of the injustice and impolicy of this part of our social system, aggravated by the reproach of moral and political inconsistency, serve to impress us with the fallacy of every remedy for the evils and danger of slavery, except universal and immediate emancipation. There are dangers connected with any scheme of partial or gradual emancipation. For if you emancipate only a certain number, or declare that all shall be free after a certain time, the partial justice which you show to some, is an acknowledgment of the justice due to all, which cannot fail to rouse the in-

dignation of those whose rights have been set aside by this arbitrary arrangement. As soon, therefore, as the personal antipathies and prejudices which have arisen from a passionate and unsparing attack and defence of Anti-Slavery principles shall have given way before the power of free and calm inquiry, we feel confident that this great cause will unite all the friends of order, peace and union in our country.

Fellow-citizens! The subject of our appeal, if rightly understood, is not calculated to rouse the jealousies of one part of our country against the other. We have all sinned together. We entered into the crime together, when tempted by the British government in our infancy. At years of discretion, when we became free, we deliberately preferred power to righteousness, and *made the crime our own*. In our vigor we have continued to cherish it. The South has said, 'Let slavery alone;' and the North has, till recently, replied, 'We will let slavery alone.' Nay, all the freemen of this country are pledged by laws of their own enacting, to support the slaveholder in trampling upon all the native rights of man, which we recognize as the foundation of our social institutions.

The fact that in almost every part of our country, the mere difference of color is sufficient to exclude the unenslaved colored man from public hotels, stage-coaches and steam-boats, from profitable and honorable professions, from public schools and colleges, from the elevating and refining influences of society,—these facts are strong indications that the confinement of slavery to a certain part of our country, is owing to a difference of circumstances rather than principles. We all have sinned against the *spirit*, if not against the letter, of the law of liberty; for every social system bearing the name of a republic, unless it is founded on a profound and impartial respect of human nature, and the essential equality of human rights, is but a more or less successful counterfeit of true republicanism. It may pass for sterling coin among those who have given it currency, but the world at large will not fail to detect the base alloy mixed up with the pure metal.

What is the duty of the freemen, and more particularly the duty of the citizens of the free states, with regard to the existence of slavery

in our country? It is our duty to use all our power and influence, individually and by association, directly and indirectly, to abolish a system that is absolutely inconsistent with the fundamental principle of our government, and must, sooner or later, if not removed, prove destructive of our Union. Congress has power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, and the Territories, as well as the domestic slave trade. We, the citizens of this country, have a right to petition Congress to use this power; we, the constituents of Congress, have power to direct our agents to execute what the sovereign will of the people shall deem conducive to the permanent welfare, the true glory of these United States. Every session of Congress, every opportunity of exercising our political privileges for the extinction of slavery, so far as its existence depends on our own will, is a trial of our love of justice, our patriotism, our philanthropy; every neglect is a proof of our unworthiness of the privileges we possess. The direct political power of the citizens of the free States over the existence of slavery in this country, is confined to the constitutional rights of Congress; but their moral influence, their duty as men, as patriots, as christians, have no limits but the free power of their fellow-citizens to listen or to turn a deaf ear to the conscientious fears, the well meant advice of those, who are pledged with them for the welfare of our common country. We feel bound in duty to plead the cause of the oppressed with our brethren at the South, who have authority to abrogate the State laws, on which the existence of slavery depends. We have no legal or constitutional authority to support our plea; but we have a draft upon their hearts, which will not be protested. Much as we wish that the words of the constitution might be so defined as to preclude the possibility of slavery in this country, yet we believe that the means which the constitution has left, are sufficient to accomplish this purpose. We believe that the moral action of truth and love, on the hearts and consciences of slaveholders, are fully adequate to the complete and speedy overthrow of our nation's crying sin. We would speak to the minds and the hearts of our southern friends, to their earthly interests and their patriotic virtues. We would speak to them, not in the tone of vain self-

complacency, which ill befits those whose prejudices against the people of color are a strong offset to the fact that they are not actually slaveholders. Nor do we address them as interested, political rivals; for it is evident that, if the slaves were invested with all their social as well as personal rights, their interests being essentially the same as those of the rest of the inhabitants of that region, their emancipation would not diminish, but greatly increase the political influence of the South.* We would improve our more fortunate condition, to judge deliberately and calmly of the cause of the slaveholder and the slave. We acknowledge that among the slaveholders, there are many, who are prevented from immediately liberating their slaves, not by base and sordid motives, but some, by the state of the laws which discountenance emancipation; others, are kept back by inadequate or mistaken views of duty, or conscientious though groundless fears. On the other hand, we look upon the slave as a man, having all the rights of a man, which no one has any right to withhold from him, either from bad or good motives. It is urged in vindication of the present owners of slaves, that they are not the authors, but the innocent heirs of a great evil, superinduced upon their ancestors by the influence of a foreign government. But even if it could be shown, that the present generation were forced to accept the unhallowed inheritance, the origin can in no way justify the continuation of the evil. For it is in the power of the people of each slaveholding state, at any time, to abolish slavery—and no hereditary claim, though approved by all the sovereign powers on earth, and confirmed by long immemorial practice, holds good against the certificate of freedom which every human being brings with him into this world, from the hand of the living God.

Fellow-citizens! The Anti-Slavery Society, which is now growing so rapidly in every part of our country, although its seeds

* Some Northern opposers of our cause have raised a serious objection from the fact, that if slavery were abolished, the representation of the South in Congress would be increased, inasmuch as the enfranchised colored man would be counted as a whole man, whereas the slave is accounted only *three fifths* of a man. But what has the North to fear from such increase of representation in the South, when, in order to it, slavery, the chief cause of jealousy, will be done away?

were sown among the weeds and thorns of popular prejudice, the Anti-Slavery Society is not a new sect or party coming forward to mingle in the strife of politics, or the controversies of religion. It is intended to engage the friends of justice in every party; and it is actually composed of men of almost all the different religious and political denominations in our country. Its sole object is, to bring about by all lawful and moral means the immediate abolition of slavery in our land; to raise the colored man to that equality of rights with the white man, which the Declaration of Independence secures to all. Without objecting to any transient legal restraints and encouragements, which the influence of past servitude may render necessary, we claim for the colored man the immediate possession of personal independence and safety, the right to hold property, to be protected in all his family connections, to choose his own employment, to give valid testimony in any court of justice; we claim for him the free exercise of religion, the free expression of his sentiments, the use of every means of education by which he may fit himself as soon as possible for the exercise of every right enjoyed by the white man. This is what we mean by *immediate abolition*.

It may have become necessary, on account of misrepresentation, to disclaim as a sentiment utterly foreign to abolitionists, any desire for the intermarriage of the whites and blacks. Neither we nor they wish it. The report of such a sentiment being cherished by us, originated with our opponents, *not with us*. On the contrary, as the past and continual amalgamation, of which the mulatto race is the offspring, must be imputed to the criminal bonds of slavery, so we are confident that abolition, as it leaves the two races free to form their domestic relations according to their natural inclination and taste, will tend to prevent amalgamation.

We have laid before you, our countrymen, the object of our Society; we invite every friend of justice, every patriot, every philanthropist, to engage with us in an enterprise, which, considering all the physical and spiritual wants of the slave, *will be found to comprise the essence of every benevolent society in our country*. If the manner in which our Society has pursued its great object has

been worthy of it, we have a right to expect the sympathy and co-operation of every wise and benevolent man. If our measures seem to you ill calculated to accomplish the object of our Society; this great and holy object itself should induce the wisest and best men of our country, if they recognize our good intentions, and approve our principles, to join our ranks, in order to guide our steps in the right way.

You who believe in the gospel of redemption, you who believe that the day will come when we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, how will you stand before Him, who tries and judges the heart? —‘Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.’ And when a band of those, who in your day and generation were kept in slavery, shall rise on the right hand of the Judge, to witness against you, do you think that the testimony of the colored man, rejected here, will be rejected also, in the court of eternal justice? Or do you believe you may evade the sentence of the Judge, by pleading that you attended to all the bodily wants and comforts of the slave—when you refused food and clothing, freedom, respect, and love to the immortal soul? Or, do you think yourselves safe under the plea that you yourselves were not slaveholders—when in any degree it depended on your exertions to put an end to the very existence of slavery in this world?

You who discern the signs of the time, and are guided by them—do you remember how your forefathers left their father-land, to seek liberty among strangers and savages? Do you remember how the sons of the pilgrims rather ventured their lives and their all in desperate fight, than consent to pay a paltry tax, because imposed by unlawful authority? Did not your fathers sign the Declaration of American Independence and human liberty? And did not the same spirit that gave you strength to overcome the bands of oppressors and mercenaries in your devoted land—follow the fugitives to their own homes, and wake the nations of the old world? France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Poland, England, have felt the touch of the redeeming angel. A spirit of keen inquiry is

going through the world, to examine every creed and every charter; it does not believe in the 'divine right of kings;' it will not pass over the flaw, the fatal defect in the title of a State, that under the specious name of a republic uses the authority of the law and the sword of justice, to seal and secure the oppression of more than one sixth of its inhabitants. The world has heard the tocsin of truth, and is awaking. Man is felt to be man, whether European prejudice frown upon him on account of his station, or American prejudice because of his color. Europe, which had rekindled the extinguished lamp of liberty at the altar of our revolutions, still nourishes the holy fire; England goes before us as a torch-bearer, leading the way to the liberation of mankind. The despotism which our forefathers could not bear in their native country, is expiring, and the sword of justice in her reformed hands, has applied its exterminating edge to slavery. Shall the United States, the free United States, which could not bear the bonds of a King, cradle the bondage

which a King is abolishing? Shall a republic be less free than a monarchy? Shall we in the vigor and buoyancy of our manhood be less energetic in righteousness than a kingdom in its age?

You to whom the destinies of this country are committed, Americans, patriots in public and private life, on you it depends to prove, whether your liberty is the fruit of your determined choice or of a fortunate accident. If you are republicans, not by birth only, but from principle, then let the avenues, all the avenues of light and liberty, of truth and love, be opened wide to every soul within the nation,—that the bitterest curse of millions may no longer be, that they were born and bred in 'the land of the free and the home of the brave.'

CHARLES FOLLEN,
CYRUS PITT GROSVENOR,
JOHN G. WHITTIER,
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JOSHUA V. HIMES.

} Committee.

