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A D D R E S S

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ROCHESTER ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY,

On the 19th January,

**AND AGAIN, BY REQUEST OF SEVERAL CITIZENS, AT THE COURT
HOUSE, IN ROCHESTER,**

On the 5th February, 1837.

By MYRON HOLLEY, Esq.

ROCHESTER;
PRINTED BY HOYT AND PORTER:
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1837.

ROCHESTER, *February 6, 1837.*

Myron Holley, Esq.

DEAR SIR,—The following Resolution adopted by the *Rochester Anti-Slavery Society*, on the 19th ultimo, at their annual meeting, will explain at once, the object of this note.

“Resolved, That the thanks of this Society be presented to Myron Holley, Esq., for the highly interesting and eloquent address delivered by him this evening, and that a copy be requested for publication in the Quarterly Anti-Slavery Magazine, published in New-York.”

We have the honor to be a Committee appointed by the Society to carry the above resolution into effect, and it is with much pleasure, that we enter upon the discharge of the duty imposed. With confident hopes of a favorable answer, and sentiments of high esteem,

We remain,

W. W. REID,
GEO. A. AVERY, } *Committee.*
BILL COLBY,

BRIGHTON, *6th February, 1837.*

GENTLEMEN,

It is very gratifying to me to learn, that my address, delivered, by request, in Rochester, last evening, was acceptable to the Anti-Slavery Society, of that City. I send you a copy for publication, according to the resolution and hope, contained in your polite communication of this date,

With great respect,

Your very obedient,

MYRON HOLLEY.

W. W. REID,
GEO. A. AVERY,
BILL COLBY, Esquires.

ADDRESS.

Friends and Fellow Citizens:

THE abolition of Slavery is an arduous undertaking. It should be prosecuted in that spirit of sobriety, and circumspection, and kindness, before which prejudice and selfishness will be seen to have no weapons, but such as they themselves have forged; and with that patient and hard-working resolution, which the very highest of our social interests, and the most imperative of our moral duties, ought to call up, for their advancement. The pattern of perfect humanity now, for eighteen centuries offered to the contemplation of man, though assailed by every provocation of interest, and prejudice, and power, and malice, could never be tortured into any aspect, even towards his enemies, but that of love. While we endeavor to advance one of the high purposes of his mission—the deliverance of the captive—let us proceed in his spirit, and be careful to adopt his manner. Those who seek to perpetuate wrong must commit wrongs. Those whose only objects are to restore and preserve rights, cannot possibly succeed, without a scrupulous regard to right, in every step of their progress.

In the outset of this address, it may be expedient for me to explain my ideas of the foundation, object and scope of human rights. Undefined and inaccurate views, on this subject, are probably among the principal causes of the diversity of sentiment, concerning slavery, entertained by men of respectable intelligence.

It will be taken for granted here—that there is a God, who created and will forever govern man—that he designed man for happiness—that the happiness of man can be found only in the proper use of all his affections and faculties—that the laws of God's moral government prescribe such use—that these laws are unchangeable and eternal—that the scene in which man is placed, the relations which he bears, the endowments with which he is clothed, and the revelations with which he has been favored,

are intended to draw his attention to these laws, and excite him to obey them—that obedience to them constitutes duty, is the only means of improvement, and leads to happiness.

These things being premised, we are prepared to understand the meaning of the word *right*. Right means *directed, ordained, commanded*. It refers to a law, and signifies whatever that law commands. It is a moral attribute, and of course refers to the moral law. Of this law God is the author. The foundation of right is in the will of God. The object of right is the same as that of the moral law—improvement, happiness; and its scope is as wide as the circle of duties.

But rights can refer only to beings subject to law. We can have no rights in relation to our Maker. He is above all law. Who can prescribe to Him? Whatever we derive from Him, life, liberty, the faculties of our minds and bodies, our natural connexions, the fruits of the earth, and the use of the elements, may be gifts, blessings, privileges, possessions, but in reference to Him, they cannot be rights. All persons and things are His, by a claim of earlier and higher origin than any right can be—by the claim of creation. But rights refer to equals. And all the rights of human beings, in respect to each other, are, and must forever be, subordinate to His claims. His claims extend through time and eternity, and embrace, not only the substance, but every property, function and power, of our nature, in every possible situation. With these claims all rights are necessarily consistent. Whatever is inconsistent with them is not right, but wrong.

In our country, it has become an admitted truth, that civil government derives all its just power from the consent of the governed. It is equally true, though *not* universally admitted, that the governed have no right to consent to any thing opposed to the will of God. Civil government is a contrivance of a moral nature authorized to make laws, for the common good, that is, to bring all the subjects of it, and to keep them, in a state of conformity with their moral obligations. And this it does, by securing to individuals all their honest possessions, and by stimulating them to the most beneficial exertion of all their faculties. In all the injunctions, prohibitions and sanctions, therefore, of civil government, an undeviating and sacred regard should be had, to the laws of morality. The maxim most essential to be obeyed, by those to whom is delegated the charge of framing a constitution is, *the supremacy of morality*; as the most essential to be obeyed, by those who would preserve the blessings of a free constitution, and uphold its rightful authority is, *the supremacy of the laws*.

With all its grave functions and beneficial uses, civil government is to be valued only, as it promotes the welfare of individuals. This is the

whole object of its institution : I do not mean the few individuals favored with better gifts than fall to the common lot ; but every individual, within its power. As contemplated by a government truly free, every individual, and *one* as much as *another*, is an *august* being, entitled to *inviolable reverence*, and bearing upon him the badges of a *celestial origin*, and the stamp of most *transcendant distinctions*. Individuals are the *end*, government is only one of the *means* ; a very important and comprehensive one, I admit ; but still much less valuable than the end. Governments change, expire, or at best belong only to this life, and are the workmanship of man. But an individual soul never dies, it cannot expire, it is the highest display of the divine wisdom and power submitted to human reflection and admiration, and capable of everlasting progress in knowledge and virtue. Its value is therefore unspeakable and incomparable. It was beautifully said, by a powerful political writer of our revolutionary age, “that government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence.” If it were possible to restore innocence, it would scarcely be necessary. All modern improvements of the human character, have tended to diminish the powers of government. And now the best political institutions wholly discard the old idea of the *omnipotence of government*. The American constitutions are specifications of definite, delegated and limited powers, leaving expressly to individuals all the powers not specified and delegated.

In truth, the principles of free government are derived from the New Testament. I do not mean, that our Savior interfered directly with established governments, when he came to fulfil his divine commission.—*That* would, in all probability, have produced immediate bloodshed, and have eclipsed forever the Sun of Righteousness. It would have been inconsistent with the peace he came to establish. But his sympathies were always most strongly evinced for the oppressed. He came “to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captive, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” And he filled the souls of his followers with those sublime truths, which will always lead to the extinction of tyranny, as far as they prevail, and can find peaceable means of exemplification. So far as his truths and his spirit prevailed, there was freedom indeed—not an inactive, sluggish, apathetic freedom, which would restrain the moral convictions from any form of lawful, honest, affectionate manifestation—but that exemption from prejudice and all unholy bonds, and that superiority to sin, which cleared the vessel of immortal life, for the constant and disinterested action of social love, which opened a full view, and constrained the zealous pursuit, of treasures, which neither moth nor rust can corrupt. This is the glorious

liberty of the sons of God. This liberty has found its way to an increased influence upon social institutions. This liberty is the essential object of republicanism, which, in its purity, must be conformed to Christianity, and designs to maintain truth, justice and benevolence, in all our civil relations.

Let not this view be regarded as factitious or profane. Recollect the teachings of Jesus. Reflect upon his declared objects and injunctions. He came to declare the truth. He commands us—to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us—to love one another, even our enemies, and to pray for them who despitefully use and persecute us. He taught most emphatically, the doctrines—of the immortality of human beings—of the infinite value of their moral endowments—of their equality before God—of their obligation to obey Him rather than men—of the supreme care with which they should cultivate their spiritual nature—of their duty to fear, not that which hurts the body, but only that which hurts the soul. These doctrines are calculated to advance and secure our true interests, and are never to be disregarded. They are the sacred and unchangeable supports of civil freedom. They forbid a willing submission to all authority, which obstructs the virtue of any or the improvement and happiness of all. They show the inappreciable worth of human rights and duties; and make them the highest objects of our unceasing and holy care. Accordingly, the most zealous and efficient asserters of liberty have been religious men—religious men, in the true sense of the word; that is, men, who best understood the conditions and obligations of their existence, and were most determined to fulfil them. Such were the Puritans, who subverted the tyrannic sway of the house of Stuart, in England—such were the venerable settlers of New England, who counted nothing on earth valuable in comparison with their rights—such were the authors of American Independence.

These are certainly teachings the most solemn, the most beautiful, and the most obligatory. To whom do they directly apply? To men as individuals. Our Savior always addressed men as individuals. He said little or nothing to associations, in their collective capacity; but communicated directly with the moral nature. He came to establish the kingdom of truth, morality and happiness. The subjects of this kingdom are to be found wherever God has given an intelligent and responsible nature, and this exists only in individuals.

One of the best of living writers remarks, “A human being is a member of the community, not as a limb is a member of the body, or as a wheel is a part of a machine, intended only to contribute to some general joint result. He was created, not to be merged in the whole, as a

drop in the ocean, or as a particle of sand on the sea shore, and to aid only in composing a mass. He is an ultimate being, made for his own perfection as his highest end—made to maintain an individual existence, and to serve others only so far as consists with his own virtue and progress. Hitherto, governments have tended greatly to obscure this importance of the individual, to depress him in his own eyes, to give him an idea of an outward interest more important than the invisible soul, and of an outward authority more sacred than the voice of God, in his own secret conscience. Rulers have called the private man the property of the state, meaning generally by the state, *themselves*; and thus the many have been immolated to the few, and have even believed that this was their highest destination. These views cannot be too earnestly withstood. Nothing seems to be so needful as to give to the mind the consciousness which governments have done so much to suppress, of its own separate worth. Let the individual feel, that he is placed in the community, not to part with his individuality, or to become a tool, but that he should find a sphere, for his various powers, and a preparation for immortal glory. To me the progress of society consists in nothing more than in bringing out the individual, in giving him a consciousness of his own being, and in quickening him to strengthen and elevate his own mind.

In thus maintaining, that the individual is the end of social institutions, I may be thought to discourage public efforts, and the sacrifice of private interests to the state. Far from it. No man, I affirm, will serve his fellow beings so effectually, so fervently, as he who is not their slave—as he, who casting off every other yoke, subjects himself to the law of duty in his own mind. For this law enjoins a disinterested and generous spirit, as man's glory and likeness to his Maker. Individuality, or moral self-subsistence, is the surest foundation of an all-comprehending love. No man so multiplies his bonds with the community, as he, who most jealously watches over his own perfection. There is a beautiful harmony between the good of the state, and the moral freedom and dignity of the individual. Were it not so—were these interests in any case, discordant—were an individual ever called to serve his country by acts debasing his own mind, he ought not to waver a moment, as to the good, which he should prefer. Property, life, he should joyfully surrender to the state. But his soul he must never stain or enslave. From poverty, pain, the rack, the gibbet, he should not recoil; but for no good of others ought he to part with self-control, or violate the inward law. We speak of the Patriot as *sacrificing* himself to the public weal. Do we mean that he sacrifices what is most properly himself, the principle of piety and virtue? Do we not feel, that however great may be the good,

which through his sufferings accrues to the state, a greater and a purer glory redounds to himself?—and that the most precious fruit of his disinterested services, is the strength of resolution and philanthropy, which is accumulated in his own soul?"

If the foregoing views are correct, there can be no responsibilities or duties to civil government, which should be permitted to counteract, limit or supersede those which every human being owes to the Most High. In all our political relations and efforts, it is impossible to shake off, or merge, any one of our *moral obligations*. These are forever inherent in our nature, they comprehend all others, and should always prevail.

The New Testament teaches us, that "God hath made of one blood, all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth." And observation establishes the fact that all men have a common nature. Nobody has ever imagined that any tribe of human beings has ever existed, who were not proper subjects of a moral government. They have all some knowledge of right and wrong—some degree of moral freedom—some social affections—some kind of articulate speech, by which knowledge may be imparted and received—and some sense of responsibility to a Power superior to themselves. It will be readily acknowledged, that, in these respects, there are very striking national differences. But none of these differences can be deemed such, as to reduce the least favored from persons to things. They do not interfere with what is most essential to personality, distinct conscious intelligence and will; and they cannot obliterate the capacity for indefinite and everlasting improvement.

We are informed, by authentic history, of great changes in nations, from barbarity to refinement. The polished Greeks were once wandering savages. The glories of the Roman name were produced by the gradual improvement of a band of robbers. After attaining to the greatest elevation of intellect and power, these same Romans became degenerate as to fall a prey to nations less numerous than themselves, without wealth, science, art or refinement. And the posterity of their conquerors have since become the leading nations of the earth. The progenitors of the cultivated, intelligent and proud British, twenty centuries ago, were half naked and painted barbarians. If inferiority of capacity, attainment and power, could justify subjection to bondage, every nation, but one, might have been rightfully enslaved; and, once enslaved, they might be held so for ever, for servitude would be sure to perpetuate the inferiority on which it was founded.

In our country, slavery was early introduced. The Dutch are asserted to have brought the first cargo of Negroes from Africa into America.—Subsequently they were largely and almost exclusively transported to our

shores, and sold, by British subjects. Sinking all the sentiments of humanity, and the obligations of religion, in the love of gain, British avarice, for a century and a half, sought, seized and manacled, upon their native soil, the innocent inhabitants of one quarter of the globe, and dragged and sold them into perpetual slavery on this continent. During this period, they stole and carried off a greater population than now inhabits their island; and destroyed, by their wars and burnings, and ravages, which they perpetrated to obtain human beings for sale, nearly as many as they stole. The darkest page of European history is that which records the atrocities of the slave trade.

Before the war of Independence, it is believed that all the Colonies now forming the United States, but South Carolina and Georgia, had endeavored to put a stop to the importation of slaves. Public opinion, in most of them, was strongly against it. Colonial Assemblies, and other public bodies, denounced it as a sin, and a great source of future danger. Some of the Colonies passed legislative measures for prohibiting it, and others, for subjecting it to a tax, amounting to a prohibition. But they were not able, in either way, to accomplish their purpose, being always prevented by the negative of the British king.

When the spirit of resistance to the arbitrary acts of the Mother Country, called delegates from the Colonies to meet together in Congress, to confer upon their common interests, slavery was considered as one of the grievances to be removed. In a paper designed for instruction to the delegates from Virginia, to the Congress of 1774, and drawn up by Jefferson, he says "*The abolition of domestic slavery is the great object of desire, in those Colonies where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state.* But previous to the enfranchisement of the slaves we have, it is necessary to exclude all further importations from Africa. Yet our repeated attempts to effect this, by prohibitions, and by imposing duties, which might amount to a prohibition, have been hitherto defeated, by His Majesty's negative." In the Declaration of Independence, as written by the same hand, the King of England is charged with having "waged a cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty, in the persons of a distant people, who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. Determined to keep open a market where men should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative, for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce." This clause is not found in the Declaration as adopted. It was struck out, as its author says, in com-

plaisance to South Carolina and Georgia, and the slave-traders of the Northern States.

In October, 1778, the legislature of Virginia passed a law prohibiting, under heavy penalties, the further importation of slaves; and declaring, that every slave imported thereafter, should be immediately free. And Robert Walsh says, in his "United States and England," that the example of Virginia was followed, at different times, *before* the date of the Federal Constitution, *by most of the other states*; and that the American Continental Congress passed a Resolution against the purchase of slaves imported from Africa, and published an exhortation to the Colonies to abandon the trade altogether. In 1787, the same body passed an ordinance, forever excluding slavery from the vast territory north-west of the river Ohio, then likely to become the theatre of new state establishments; and since, actually furnishing four free sisters to the majestic circle of our communities. This ordinance received the unanimous assent of the delegates in the old Congress, from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, and was ratified and confirmed by an act of the new Congress, during their first session under the constitution, without opposition from the same states.

At this period, our most revered statesmen and patriots were intent upon the great work of emancipation. Jay, in New York, and Franklin, in Pennsylvania, were both Presidents of Societies, organised to protect the rights of free blacks, to provide means for their instruction, and to open the way for general emancipation. And they both addressed the public, through the press and otherwise, in favor of abolition. Mr. Jay used the strong and just expression, "*that it was impiety to God to pray for freedom, without exerting ourselves to liberate the slaves;*" and Franklin exerted his inimitable powers of irony, to bring into discredit, the arguments of those who publicly resisted the efforts for discontinuing their bondage. In Virginia, Jefferson had declared, that the Most High had no attribute which could take sides with such as opposed their freedom, and that the day was not far distant, when *the public mind must bear general emancipation*, or worse will follow. But we have more venerable authority still, in the unambiguous acts of the Father of his Country. Washington made his will in 1799. In that he directed the speedy emancipation of all his slaves, with adequate provision out of his estate, for the maintenance of such as should be infirm and helpless, during their lives; adding the following remarkable prohibition, "And I do hereby expressly forbid the sale, or transportation out of the said Commonwealth, of any slave I may die possessed of, under any pretence whatever."

Moreover, in the State Conventions called to ratify the new Constitution, both its friends and enemies admitted that it gave the power, and was expected, to produce the abolition of slavery. In the Virginia Convention, Patrick Henry opposed it because, among other reasons, he said "Congress had the power of involving the southern states in all the horrors which would result from a total emancipation of their slaves, and that the northern states, uninterested in the consequences of such an act, had a controlling majority, which possessed the power, and would not, probably, want the inclination to effect it." In the Pennsylvania Convention, James Wilson said, in reference to the first clause of the ninth section of the constitution "under the present confederation, the States may admit the importation of slaves as long as they please; but by this article, after the year 1808, the Congress will have power to prohibit such importation, notwithstanding the disposition of any state to the contrary. I consider this as laying the foundation for banishing slavery out of the country; and though the period is more distant than I could wish, yet it will produce the same kind gradual change, which was pursued in Pennsylvania. It is with much satisfaction, I view this power in the general government, whereby they may lay an interdiction on this reproachful trade; but an immediate advantage is also obtained, for a tax or duty may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each person; and this, Sir, operates as a partial prohibition. It was all that could be obtained. I am sorry it was no more; but from this I think there is reason to hope that yet a few years, and it will be prohibited altogether: and, in the mean time, the new states, which are to be formed, will be under the control of Congress in this particular, *and slaves will never be introduced amongst them*;" and again, "If there was no other lovely feature in the constitution, but this one, it would diffuse a beauty over its whole countenance.— Yet the lapse of a few years, *and Congress will have power to exterminate slavery from within our borders.*" This James Wilson was in the convention which formed the Constitution, and had no superior in knowledge, eloquence, or attention to business, in that body of illustrious men. This speech in favor of its adoption, is thought by many who are most familiar with the subject, to be the ablest on record, in the proceedings of any state convention.

In my view these facts are of vital consequence in determining the true obligations of the various states of the Union, under the constitution, upon this most deeply interesting question; and are worthy of controlling influence upon individual minds, anxious to fulfil all their obligations.

It will be recollected, that by the treaty of Independence and peace with Great Britain, the Mississippi was our western boundary; and that

the territory north-west of the Ohio, in 1787, was the *only territory* not embraced within the limits of any state authority, over which the Congress of the confederation had jurisdiction. This ordinance, therefore, with the act of Congress under the new constitution, and the other authorities and facts, referred to, amounted to a solemn pledge of the country, in the days of its disinterested purity, both against the extension of slavery, and in favor of its not very distant entire abolition.

In the jealous tenacity of one part of the Union, of what they call property, enriched as it is to them, by the precious boon of greatly increased political power; and the rage of acquisition so prevalent, as to turn every occasion of governmental action, into the means of answering its insatiable cravings, of all the other parts, these great measures have been almost wholly overlooked—this pledge has been most injuriously disregarded.

The constitution does not contain the word *slave*. It is entirely free from that pollution. Presuming the *thing* was to remain only a temporary evil, wherever allusion is made to it, a periphrasis of expression will be found,—of a kind too, which, if slavery had no where existed in the Union, would have had a sensible application without ever bringing that subject to mind. One provision, however, of that instrument, which experience has shown to be of transcendent importance, is founded upon it. I mean *that* by which, in appropriating to each state, its proportion of Representatives in Congress, and of Electors of President and Vice President, five slaves are to be counted as equal to three freemen.

Much of the local heart burnings and vindictive party spirit, which have pervaded and perverted our public policy, have been derived from this regulation. It is utterly inconsistent with political equality, so essential to the preservation of the most steady, wise, and prosperous political action, and so carefully insisted on in most of our state constitutions. How it was supported in the convention of 1778, has not yet, to my knowledge, been made public. That the considerations on which it rested, were entirely insufficient to justify it, is proved by experience, and I think now obvious to impartial reflection.

By the old confederation, taxes were to be raised upon the states, to supply the common treasury, according to the value of lands and improvements. This rule was not satisfactory, and never carried into effect. A majority of the states, before the year 1788, had agreed to a rule, apportioning taxes upon *numbers*, including in the estimate of numbers, three-fifths of the slaves. To this rule some states objected, and it was not adopted. But when the new constitution was under discussion, this rule—uniting more voices than any other—was adopted, in respect to taxes.

And it seems probable, that being once adopted for taxation, a misapplication of the proposition that taxation and representation should go together, so earnestly urged in all our resistance to British usurpation, was the leading cause of its being finally received for representation. At that time too, no one thought that the whole revenue of the United States would ever be derived from duties on commerce; but believed that much of it would be produced by direct taxation, and that so far as direct taxation should be applied, the slave-holding states would feel its burthen more than the commercial and non-slave-holding states.

These ideas have proved fallacious. The whole amount of direct taxation, since the constitution was adopted, has been but \$5,000,000; and their just proportion of that has not near all been collected, in the slave-holding states; while the amount of revenue derived from commercial sources, comes up to almost \$700,000,000.

The proposition that taxation and representation ought to be inseparable, is founded upon this, that the property acquired by the blessings of God upon the labor of freemen, should, for no purpose, be taken from them, without their personal consent, or the consent of persons delegated by them to guard their rights. It never meant that any man, or collection of men, should, as compared with their free fellow citizens, have more votes, in proportion to their superior wealth. No honest freeman would, or ought, willingly to subject himself to a political provision, by which his pittance of property would give him but one vote, while his neighbor possessed of one hundred times as much, should have one hundred votes.—Such a provision would set up property as of higher value than reputation, liberty or life.

Besides it is probable, that the northern states were more willing to make concessions than the south, from their alarm at the consequences of a recent insurrection among them.

The concession was made in the convention; and it was, though not without great reluctance, agreed to, by the people of the States, to whom the convention submitted their work for ratification. In urging the adoption of the constitution, by the people of the north, those who addressed them through the press, always seemed conscious of the difficulty of justifying this concession. In the *Federalist*, the most argumentative, complete, enlightened, and influential publication, which appeared in favor of the constitution, the particular number explaining this provision, subjoins to the reasoning adopted, this extraordinary language, "Such is the reasoning which an advocate for the southern interests, might employ on this subject. And although it may appear to be a little strained in some points,

yet, on the whole, I must confess, that it fully reconciles me to the scale of representation, which the convention have established."

This concession was against liberty—against political equality, and against the dictates of morality. It ought, therefore, always to receive a strict construction. It was part of a settlement between the original thirteen states, produced by the consideration of their actual condition, their past sympathies, services and connexions, and the obligations which all felt to provide a government, equal to the task of securing the great interests for which they had asserted Independence, and which were in constant jeopardy under the old confederation; and it had application only to those states. It was not designed, and it ought never to be construed, to extend slavery. It could not fairly apply to any territory beyond the old thirteen States. But it has been so applied.

The Constitution authorises Congress to exercise exclusive legislation, in all cases whatsoever, over the District of Columbia, and the territory purchased by it, for the location of forts, magazines, dock yards, arsenals, and other needful buildings. It also authorises them to prohibit the importation of slaves from abroad, and their migration from one state to another, after the commencement of the year 1808.

That part of this authority which relates to the importation of slaves from abroad, has been acted upon by Congress. But the laws enacted have not been carried into effect. They indeed contain provisions, which justify the suspicion, that in their passage, a *formal compliance* with the public expectation, under this authority, rather than a *substantial one*, was designed. Many thousand slaves are annually introduced into the states and territories of the Union, notwithstanding the laws. Government has taken no measures to prohibit slavery in the District of Columbia, or other places over which it exercises exclusive jurisdiction; nor has it interfered to prohibit the migration of slaves *from one state to another*.

And now, so much has attachment to free principles declined, at the south, that respectful petitions to Congress, for the least offensive of these purposes, are the occasions of the most bitter sectional and personal abuse; and a large band of members from that quarter, unite in clamorous demands, that such petitions shall be rejected, without consideration, or even reading. To these odious attempts to suppress the most obvious of our political rights in Congress, are added, by state legislatures and the highest state functionaries, in the same quarter, threats of secession from the Union, and ruin, if Congress shall dare to move, at all, in conformity with the prayer of such petitions. Nor is this all. The head of one of the essential departments of the Government, has encouraged, and publicly connived at, the felonious violation of his charge. The right of free

communication by the press, and by oral addresses, has been violently set aside, by persons of distinguished influence. And many individuals, who had broken no civil obligation, have been unlawfully subjected to imprisonment, to malicious destruction of their property, to severe personal injuries—and to forced separation from their families and their business. The spirit of slavery has collected and urged on mobs to the work of destroying liberty, property and life, in all the free states of the Union, with very little inquiry or animadversion of those public agents, whose sworn duty it is to enforce the laws for securing these most precious of our earthly possessions.

Freedom of the press—of speech—and of intercourse among the citizens of our common country, are as well secured by our constitutions, as language can secure them. But no law executes itself. If the active love of freedom forsakes us, constitutional provisions to secure it will be nugatory. Have we cherished this love with becoming vigilance? Have the unshackled opposers of slavery done their duty, since they made the great concession, in respect to the rule of representation? They certainly have not. They have permitted encroachment after encroachment, upon their political equality, until it seems to be taken for granted, by those who have made the encroachments, that contumely threats, and violence are the appropriate instruments to keep them quiet, during the process of their further degradation. It is even said, and strenuously urged, at the south, with the concurrence of some unthinking individuals at the north, that *slavery is the exclusive concern of the states where it exists, and ought not to be discussed elsewhere*. And under this most astonishing assertion, some, who mean to be free, are assisting to chain up a constitutional and vital right in a case, practically degrading us below our natural equality with our neighbors!

What should hinder freemen from honestly and peacefully discussing any question affecting their sense of duty, or their political rights? What should deprive the present generation, or the future, of the faithful and affectionate counsels of the experienced, the patriotic, and the wise, concerning an evil, which is seen to be spreading a gangrene in the body politic, and which, if not eradicated, must speedily be followed by a general putrefaction?

The government of the United States is distinctly authorized to legislate concerning slavery. In this government, every freeman of all the states is interested. This interest should lead each of them to watch over it, to point out every source of evil, which he thinks likely to impede its just operation, and to take such measures to avert the evil, as he may deem most effective, provided they be lawful and moral. In legislating upon

slavery, Congress must ascertain facts, and embody principles; or they must not. To ascertain facts correctly, inquiry must be made, and much inquiry too, when the facts are denied, and can be gathered only from a large and an obstructed region. To embody just principles, where there are differences of opinion, discussion must be resorted to. If Congress is to use its authority, then, inquiry and discussion are indispensable.—Without them, the conclusion must be admitted, that Congress must legislate on the subject of slavery, in utter recklessness both of facts and principles. Such a conclusion, who will admit? If Congress, in legislating upon slavery, ought to inquire and discuss, then, certainly every freeman has a right to do the same; for, of whom is the Congress composed, and whom do the laws of Congress bind?

If we admit that some apprehensions may be entertained, where slaves are numerous, that disquiet and disturbance among them may result from such inquiry and discussion, what then? Shall facts, intellect, the moral sense, and the essential rights of a great people, be all held in abeyance, for fear of this disquiet and disturbance? and that too, when we know that such abeyance must be eternal; or the grounds of such apprehensions continually grow stronger? But why should the slaves be disquieted and disturbed by inquiry and discussion? Certainly not from the prevalence of right and liberty, as resulting from them; but from the determination of their masters to persist in denying right and liberty to them.

The truth is, that the only permanent, adequate, and trust-worthy means of security against the disquiet and disturbance in question, are a practical adoption of free and just principles. This is the teaching of Christianity—the theory of our government—and the decision of experience. It is the pertinacious slave-holders themselves, who subject their women and children to hazards the most frightful—not the philanthropic abolitionists. In the British West Indies, there were a much greater proportion of slaves to the white inhabitants, and they were more degraded, than in any of our states. If then, disquiet and disturbance was to follow from efforts for their emancipation, there these mischiefs would most fearfully have disclosed themselves. But those Islands are free; and have been so for several years; and those who have been freed, have since been more industrious and more quiet than they were before, and have committed fewer crimes. If a just Providence controls human affairs, the only way to exclude the most dangerous disquiet and disturbance among the southern slaves, is *to free them*. And the great law of social love, in its bearings upon our relations to our southern neighbors, requires, that we should most assiduously seek the total abolition of slavery—such an abolition as

would cut off all claim of property in them, and bring them under the restraints, the motives and the blessings of wise and wholesome laws.

To such an abolition, there are, in my view, but two great impediments. But these are both of mighty influence and fearful tendency. They are the profits of the domestic slave trade—and the unjust privilege arising from slavery to the masters, of superior power in electing the House of Representatives in Congress, and in creating the President and Vice President of the United States.

The legal prohibition of the slave trade from abroad, although it is very ill enforced, has enhanced the price of slaves, and increased the temptation to raise them, for sale, at home. A traffic in the spirits, blood, and bodies of men, is not likely to seek publicity, for many of its details. There are no returns officially stated and duly authenticated, of the annual proceeds, in dollars and cents, in any of the states, from this commerce. But by those who have had the best opportunities, and have sought to understand it, it is estimated, in the aggregate, at many millions. This trade is not less atrocious than that, which has at length roused the humanity of the civilized world to extinguish it; for though it has not yet struggled through war, and conflagration, and national ravage, to its object, it threatens all these soon; and is now frequently characterised, by deeper deceit, more wily treachery, more flagrant contempt of better understood obligations, and an equal disregard of the most sacred ties of life. That this trade is the chief source of the pecuniary profit of slavery, and not the advantages of slave labor compared with free labor, at home, will be easily admitted, by those, who have well investigated all the circumstances of the production of wealth by labor. The field from which this ill-gotten profit is reaped, is enlarged by every foot of territory added to our national dominion, in which slavery is tolerated.

The admission of the states of Louisiana, Missouri and Arkansas, into the Union, without the prohibition of slavery, has operated, and will continue to operate, as a most extensive encouragement of the domestic slave trade. These admissions were gratuitous and enormous sins—against the intentions of the original compromise between the old states—against the equal rights of all the freemen, in the non-slaveholding states—and against the highest rights of mankind.

Of the other great impediment to abolition, it is difficult to estimate the force. It will be sustained by all the powers of cruelty, cupidity and ambition. Can a freeman be paid for permanently giving up his political equality?—or can a good man found such giving up, upon moral wrongs, to be wreaked upon others? Is it not surprising, that in a country illu-

trious for its bold resistance to tyranny over the minds and bodies of men, the political rights of its mis-called freemen, are not equal? The surrender of this equality, by a portion of our fathers, in the exercise of what they thought, a generous devotion to essential common objects, and in the understanding that the course of political action should soon limit, and gradually extinguish it, is now made the pretext for denying to the descendants of those who made it, the most essential of their unsundered rights.

We all feel, and no freemen can help feeling, a deep interest in the character and qualifications of the President of the United States. Considering the dignity of his station—the powers entrusted to him—and his almost unlimited influence—the right of designating him is one of the most essential springing from our civil organization. At every recurrence of such designation, we see our whole political world agitated with efforts and solitudes. The sense of the consequences attending a proper or improper designation, pervades every breast, and calls into animated activity, all the powers of fact, argument, persuasion, combination and public spirit.

The immediate Representatives of the people, in the national legislature, exercise important authorities. In opposition to their will, no law can be passed affecting any of our federal rights. They watch for us, over the interests of foreign commerce and internal industry—of taxation—of science—of free communication with one another—of intercourse with other nations—and of war and peace. In relation to these concerns, and many others of the gravest import, they stand in the place of the people themselves.

In determining who shall be our President, and who shall be Representatives of the nation in Congress, the free inhabitants of the states whose policy best accords with the universal rights of mankind, are *undervalued*, in comparison with the free inhabitants of the states, which hold in absolute bondage large multitudes of their fellow beings. Slavery is made the means of extinguishing a part of the just political power of those who oppose it, and of conferring unjust political power upon those who uphold it. Under the first census of the United States, the freemen of the slave holding states had the privilege of electing 13 more Representatives to Congress, than political equality with the non-slaveholding states would have given them—and the legislatures of the first mentioned states, of designating 13 more electors of President and Vice President, than the same equality would have given them. Under the last census, the inequality is nearly in the same proportion, though the number of Representatives and Electors have greatly increased.

In Virginia, the political power of 5 of her freemen, in respect to the same high functionaries, is equal to that of 7 freemen in the state of New York. In South Carolina and Louisiana the political power of 5 freemen is more than equal to that of 8 in New York—the relative power of the freemen, in the slaveholding states, over the freemen of the other states, being greater in proportion to the increase of the number of human beings deprived of all rights, in the former. In consequence of the admission of slavery in the three new states west of the Mississippi, they send three Representatives to Congress, and designate three Electors of our Chief Magistrate, more than they could claim, by any equitable apportionment.

Ought any more new states, with such unequal and ill-founded political advantages, to be admitted into the Union? Can any well meaning citizen excuse himself to his own love of liberty, and say, that we ought not to explain, set up, and defend our equal rights—that we ought not to speak, and write, and publish the truth on slavery, so intimately affecting our interests and our duties?

It is not the purpose of this address to wound the feelings, or excite the passions of any man. Great and acknowledged evil has entered into our political institutions. Some of the features of this evil I would lay open to calm consideration; and I would urge upon all such interference, as will most effectually restrain and extinguish it. It is certain, that we have all a perfect right to interfere; I think it equally certain, that we are under the highest obligations to interfere.

No law and no right exists, to prevent us from petitioning Congress, for the abolition of slavery, in the District of Columbia. No law and no right exists, to prevent us from petitioning Congress, for the prohibition of the domestic slave trade, by such penalties as shall be effectual. No law and no right exists, to prevent us from associating together, to confer upon the happiest means of persuading our slaveholding brethren to concur with us, in any measure promotive of the common benefit; or upon the surest way of encouraging and upholding our Representatives, in presenting and urging upon the mind and conscience of our national Legislators, the great objects of our petitions.

But every effort towards the extinction of slavery has become dangerous. Such efforts cannot now be made without *firmness*, in addition to the love of freedom, intelligence and disinterested devotion to the rights of man. Those who resist such efforts are numerous, united and strong; many of them are also daring, active and lawless. The extinction of slavery is as great and worthy an object, as can command the sympathies

and services of man, and it is pressed upon our hearts, by new considerations and apprehensions connected with every day's intelligence from the seat of government. Shall we give it up? Or shall we persist to its full accomplishment? Persist, and the consequences will be, such national reputation, security, growth and improvement, as will fill every virtuous mind with a perennial spring of joy, and place republican institutions in a light which will attract the world to their adoption. Give it up, and the best hopes of man on earth would wither—slavery would be rapidly extended—all ordinary labor would be scorned—the rights of the poor would be crushed—free principles would be abrogated—usurpation, conflict and crime, would be let loose upon every thing most precious in the legacy of our immortal ancestors—and all thoughts of establishing free government, would be forever banished from the earth.

All experience teaches, that a supine contemplation of atrocious wrongs, impairs the moral sense, weakens the spirit, degrades the character, and constitutes a fatal rot, in the most essential timbers of the social edifice. It is replete with dangers; and where we have the right and power of active interference, eminently criminal. Neither the social sympathies, nor the moral convictions can be disregarded with impunity. They are the ministers of Heaven for good; and should always be reverently welcomed and obeyed. We are required to watch over them, and cherish them, as of more value than the external universe. They should never be suppressed, nor impaired, nor obscured. They constitute the pilot of all human safety, improvement and happiness. They are the only basis of free government. Right, obligation, duty, in all their relations, political, moral and religious, are rooted in them; and separated from them, if that were possible, would be only means of delusion the more to be dreaded, in proportion to the majestic beauty of their celestial livery.