





A DISCOURSE

ON THE

SLAVERY QUESTION.

DELIVERED IN THE

NORTH CHURCH, HARTFORD,

Thursday Evening, Jan. 10, 1839.

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TO THE NORTH CHURCH AND CONGREGATION.

*Brethren and Friends:*

I readily acknowledge your property in my discourse, and yield it to your service. Receive it as a proof of my regard, in the truth. Knowing the Christian good nature, with which some of your number who differ with me, have received my discourse and concurred in its publication, I yield it up with a mixture of sorrow and affection; wishing it were possible to make it more agreeable to their views, and, especially, to those feelings of eternal attachment, of which they make me conscious.

H. B.

## DISCOURSE.

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ACTS, XXVII. 41.

And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground.

NAVIGATION is dangerous, where two seas meet. The transition to my subject is obvious.

But let me remind you in passing, that Paul, who was pilot in this memorable scene, did much more magnify his office, than if he had only dared to speak in fair sailing and still water. Perhaps too, it may serve your comfort to add the last words of the chapter—And it came to pass, that they all escaped safe to land.\*

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Some of you will recollect that I addressed you on the subject of Slavery at an early period, or within a few days of the first outbreak of that movement which has since agitated our country. The approach of some great struggle and final contest of opinion on this subject, had long been evident, and the flame which now burst out so fiercely hot, I did not doubt, must burn, either wisely or madly, till the decree of an Irreversible Providence was accomplished in the downfall of this hideous institution. Not enlisting therefore, in a vain attempt to controvert God's providence, I made it my first care to fix the *principles* which ought to govern our

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\* The reader will easily imagine circumstances in a congregation, which might give pertinency to the text, and to this little preface, and make them serviceable in the promotion of good nature.

inquiries and preside in the settlement of our opinions. My attempt was to subject the movement, as far as we are concerned, to principle, and infuse into it the sober influence of reason and intelligence. And now, after watching the movement for so long a time, reading, conversing, hearing, with a mind fully open, as I think, to conviction, it is a great satisfaction to me that I find occasion to alter no one of the principles laid down, but, on the contrary, the best and sometimes the most painful reasons for adhering to them, with greater firmness. I only think that I could now state those principles with greater force and clearness. The development of new facts also, since that time, might induce me to alter the shade of one or two opinions then advanced subject to those principles.

Since the time of which I speak, the discussion here in our city, except so far as Colonization has been concerned, has been all in a given line; and in support of measures, in which I have never been quite able to harmonize. I have been purposing, therefore, for some months past, and looking for an opportunity to interpose some views of a different complexion.

Nor has it been a less cogent motive with me, that I am often pained to hear advanced opinions altogether unworthy of humanity and of that Christian liberty which can say with Paul—I was free born:—opinions I must think, which if they come of hostility in one direction, have too strong an odor of servility in another.

My object this evening will be to present a general view of the whole subject of slavery as related to the question of abolition. Of course I shall not be able to bring set arguments for every assertion made. My hope is rather to present a view, which taken in the whole, will appear to be so reasonably cast, as to furnish its own evidence.

As regards the matter of abolishing slavery in the Southern portions of our country, there are two great questions, which arise for discussion and settlement.

I. Whether such abolition is possible, or a duty obligatory on the Southern Legislatures. And

II. What is our duty in reference to the subject; what measures, if any, ought we to adopt with a view to hasten the result.

Let us glance at these questions separately.

The attempt has been often made, to show that holding a person in legal bondage is of course a sin in all cases, and in every moment of its continuance,—no matter what the circumstances, no matter what the laws of the State. I believe it is now generally understood by the Anti-Slavery\* advocates, that they gain nothing by the argument, and in fact, that it has no foundation in truth. The ground is too narrow. A thousand cases could be stated, in time sufficient for the statement, where no man in his senses, while the present laws continue in force, would charge the mere temporary holding of slaves as a crime. And in this view, all that we have heard in the way of calling our countrymen *pirates*, *man-stealers*, and the like, is a mere indiscriminate raving, entitled to no respect, and having no apology but ignorance. Or if an attempt be made to reason out the justice of these epithets, it is only by that small logic, which distinguishes the class of petty Reformers.

If our countrymen are guilty in this matter of slavery, it is in not holding what they know to be truth concerning it—not doing what they are able, as individuals, properly enlightened, to produce a right action in their legislatures—and neglecting, in the mean time, to guard the well-being of their slaves by acts of parental and Christian kindness. That many of them incur great personal guilt in the matter is not to be questioned. But yet, when we speak of them, we ought to remember the fearfulness and difficulty of their state. Which way soever they turn, they meet the view of something dark or frightful. It is too much to expect of them that they will look at the subject very coolly—the infirmity of human nature is scarcely equal to any such moderation. Besides, they are born into the institution, and it is one of the amiable and dutiful tendencies of human nature to approve or rest in the established habits and customs of ancestors. And thus, with-

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\* I use the term *Anti-Slavery* in this discourse to designate the society and its members: and the terms *abolition* or *abolitionist* without any such reference, but as terms of description.

out vindicating slavery on the one hand, or imputing it to mere pride, avarice, and ferocity, on the other, we find much to soften our judgments and teach us a just forbearance. If there was ever a people on earth involved in crime, who yet deserved sympathy and gentleness at the hands of the good, it is the slave-holding portion of our country.

But while I say this, there are some three or four features in American slavery, which no Christian, no man who has the common feelings of humanity, can think of without pity, disgust, and shame. I am reluctant even to make any exception here, in favor of those educated in slavery; for I have never found a truly virtuous minded man, from the slave-holding country, who did not yield what I say. The features, of which I speak, are such, if we look them in the face, as forbid all apology, all argument. Our nature positively refuses to reason farther. Not that we are here to give ourselves up to mere impulse, and forswear the exercise of our judgment, but that we are *ready* to judge, and to say at the first flash of vision—away with it—nothing can be worse—any thing beside must be better.

The obnoxious features in American slavery of which I speak are these.

First and chief of all is the non-permission of the family state, by the denial of marriage rites; by tearing asunder those parents whom God, more merciful than the laws, has doubtless accepted in the rites of nature; by stripping their children from their arms; by disallowing, if I should not rather say, extinguishing every affection which makes life human. I know of no term but one, which designates this feature of slavery. It is, without a figure, the cattle-state imported into humanity.

Another feature of American slavery is the absence of any real protection to the body of the slave, in respect to limb, life, or chastity. I am not ignorant of the various laws, in the statute-books, against extreme punishments and cruel usage in various respects. Still, it is philosophically true, that there are no such statutes, and they are not to be named in making out the legal view of slavery. For, owing to the exclusion of testimony against their masters, on the part of slaves, (necessary, perhaps, as a part of the institution,) owing also to the power the master has to overawe their complaints, or to take revenge afterwards, in case any attempt is



made to find protection against his cruelty, it may be said that they **CAN** do nothing, but bow their body to fury and lust, and vent their griefs in tears, which none but God will notice or regard. I blush also to say, that, in a certain high point of civilized honor and humanity, not even the form of a law exists, to maintain the show of protection.

A third feature of American slavery, as a legal institution, is that it nowhere recognizes, in the slave, a moral or intellectual nature. He exists for another;—in himself he is no man. He is a muscular being only, in the laws, or, rather I should say, he is a muscular tool, a thing composed of arms and legs and various integuments convenient to do work with. A frightful system of legalized selfishness has robbed him of himself. Light is denied him, the windows of his soul are shut up by express statute. As a creature of conscience, a creature of immortal wants, a creature in God's image, he has no legal existence.

Now observe—when I fix upon these three features of slavery and take my stand for abolition before them, I do by no means regard the view they present, as a picture of slavery in the life. I only say—this is what the law **PERMITS IT TO BE**. The great truth is here—the law draws back from the slave's well-being and protection, and leaves him, virtually, in the absolute power of his master as to family, as to body, as to mind, that is, as to every thing of any value in his being. The condition of the slave, thus deserted, is seldom as desperate as the law suffers it to be. In this matter, he depends entirely upon the mercy, or the caprice of his master. Sometimes, of course, he finds a parent in his master. Oftener he only exists, under him, in the rank of a tolerably well-kept drudge. No reasonable man, however, needs any other proof, than that masters are men, to assure him that, in the exercise of a power over their slaves so nearly absolute, there must be scenes of crime and woe, too horrid and foul for the inspection of day. For myself, I cannot think of slavery, in this view, knowing as I do, the selfishness, the ferocity, the demoralized passions of men, without such a sense of its woes and cruelties as I cannot restrain. It compels me to say—I will not reason the matter farther. No facts, no arguments, no apprehensions of mischief in a change, shall put me at peace with these things. They ought to be, will be, must be put away. And this to me is the abolition of slavery.

I say to the South, this institution is your own, not ours. Take your own way of proceeding. Modify your system as you please. Invent any new fashion of society you please, or introduce any old fashion. Create you a serfdom, or a villein socage, or sweep the whole fabric away. But let me declare to you that, until you have established the family state and made it sacred, till you have given security to the body, till you have acknowledged the immortal mind and manhood of your slave, you do an offence to God and humanity, in the continuance of this institution, which we must condemn. In this sense, I am ready to go for the abolition of slavery, and I cannot think that any man in New England, is so lost to the spirit of liberty and humanity as to feel otherwise.

You observe here, that I rest myself, not on any vagrant rumors or stories of hideous oppression. I fix on three simple points in the ground work of slavery, where I can study it, separate from all passion. I see it, in each of these three points, to be clearly distinguished from that institution endured or licensed, under the name of bondage, in the law of Moses. As a mere being of reason too, and natural feeling, I see enough, at first glance, in it, to put me into instant opposition. And that not in disregard of consequences: for I say at once, that a just God never did or will make it necessary that such an institution should continue. There can be no consequences worse than the thing itself, provided there be a disposition on all sides, to concur in its abolition, and no obstructions be thrown in the way, by ill-advised and pernicious measures.

I do not, of course, forbid, when I shut up the subject to this confined but conclusive view, that the discussion shall take a wider range.

Let facts be set forth. Not such as merely show the ferocity of *some men*, but such as show the ferocity of *slavery*. If it were my object to sweep away the marriage state, what horrid examples of cruelty in husbands could I produce. But such examples would be only specimens of monstrosity in men, not proofs of the merits of the domestic state. Draw out then the portrait of the domestic slave trade. Describe the disgusting scene of a slave-purchase in the market. Portray the miserable

slave-gang marching off to the far south-west, silent, weary, and sick at heart, for the wives and children left behind and never to be seen or heard of again on earth. Weep over the stain, which slavery brings upon the honor of our common country. Exhibit, in its true color, the miserable falsification which slavery gives to all our boasted pretences of liberty, our avowed principles of equality. Deprecate the judgments of a just God. Show the moral darkness of the great region of slavery, and claim it as the right of Jesus Christ, that his gospel should be preached and read by the slaves, and their immortal manhood acknowledged : giving due credit always to those masters, who have so far honored their Lord, as to become the instructors and guardians of their slaves ; and to those ministers of Christ, who have been the faithful dispensers of salvation, among so many discouragements.

Take up the prudential view, and show the masters, as you may by unquestionable facts, that if they should prefer to give their slaves entire freedom, they may do it with perfect safety. Show them, also, that they will lose nothing by emancipation. The slaves will still exist on their soil, and constitute an article of the general wealth, as truly as now. The labor-power will not be destroyed, and it will be commanded at as cheap a rate as now. Their plantations will produce as much, and the income of their whole territory will be as great as now. So true is this, that I would never consent to give them any compensation for the loss of their slaves, by emancipation. Let them be reminded, withal, that by the simple act of abolition, they will give themselves ten or twenty representatives in Congress, above their present number.

It ought to be a matter of great weight with us here at the North, though difficult to be used in any appeal to the South, that slavery has no agreement with the spirit of our institutions. Their electors are not simple freemen, in the Northern sense. They are rather so many little doges or sheiks who come together to vote in their own name and in that of their slaves. The equality, they speak of, is not the equality of citizens, but of so many masterships or slavedoms. The notions bred in them by their education, are too often correspondent. They grow up in command, not in concession. In childhood they make law, not learn subordination to it. They invigorate their will, but not their

notions of equal justice. Their organ is power, not reason. And, accordingly, when they come into the Congress of the nation, they too often come with a jealous and imperious spirit, which well nigh disqualifies them for a place in that reasoning and deliberative body. You have too long seen and felt what I speak of to be ignorant of my meaning. Here is the point, where our institutions have ever been most incommoded and their security most endangered.

It will instruct us also, in examining this subject, to advert, or rather to keep our eye fixed on the general movement of humanity in this and past ages. From the day when the feudal system received its death blow, to the present hour, the sun has not been more steady in his circuit, than the civilized world in its advance towards principles of liberty and equality. This advance is the law of human existence, which you can no more controvert than you can the law of the heavenly bodies. It was this which found a tongue and awakened a moral sense against the slave-trade in the British Parliament; this which opened British India to light; this which moved the popular reformers of the British Government; this which, at length, destroyed, by a grand stroke of legislation, the system of slavery in the British Colonies. The independent existence of our nation, and the new example of self-government here raised up, within the past century, are the sign of a mighty purpose, which penetrates the whole movement of humanity. We hear too, at this moment, that the Czar of Russia is preparing the emancipation of his serfs, and that all the monarchs on the Continent of Europe are vying with each other in the matter of popular education. After so many ages of deferred hope and ineffectual striving, the day of the people has come!—man is now to be recognized in the rights of his being, and valued in his immortal properties.

I turn here, on the one hand, to our Southern brethren, and say, here is a force in motion which you cannot long resist. The law of human society is against you, and you can as easily drive back the sun. The moral position of the world begins to reflect a peculiar disgrace on your institutions. You feel it now; you will feel it more; you will be compelled to yield to the feeling. I make no doubt that you are now firmly resolved to face out the odium of the human race; but you cannot hold that resolve. Man's will is stout enough for a short time, but it can no

more hold out in a long strain, than the muscles of his arm or his leg.

I turn on the other hand, to our Anti-Slavery brethren, and say, do not regard yourselves too hastily, as the beginning of a movement for liberty, or assume too much consequence to yourselves in the organization you have raised up. Neither conclude, too hastily, that what you are doing is a real advantage. The destruction of slavery will be accomplished, either with you, or without you; or, if you make it necessary, in spite of you. There is a law, in the case, above you, and above us all. The river has been in motion for ages, with a deep, strong, broad-sweeping current. You may disturb the clearness of its waters, you may pump off some fraction of it into bye trenches and ponds; but still, it will flow on in its predestined course, in the power and undiverted majesty of Him who bids it flow.

We cannot avoid asking too, as we discuss this subject, what will be the result to the slaves, if emancipated? Will it do them any real service? In reply to this question, I am obliged to say that I do not anticipate any such bright destiny opening on the African race, in this country, as seems to occupy the vision of our Anti-Slavery brethren. They cherish egregious expectations, in this matter, I am confident, and the zeal which actuates them is, so far, out of proportion. Their action would be more healthful, if they had a more modest estimate of the good, which is probably to be accomplished, in behalf of the colored race. The vision of a new created, enlightened race of Christian freemen, which they ever hold up before them, to inflame their benevolence and swell their appeals, I am sorry to feel, has too slender a support in the sober facts of history and the laws of population ascertained in political science. There is no example in history, where an uncultivated and barbarous stock has been elevated in the midst of a cultivated and civilized stock; and I have no expectation that there ever will be. When the Goths overrun Italy, they held, of course, the position of power themselves, and were, in fact, quite as elevated in their stock, as the Roman people, with the exception of some few noble families. On the other hand, the ancient Britons, the primitive stock of the island, being a barbarous race, soon dwindled to extinction under their Saxon conquerors. The Aborigines of our own continent, both in South and North America, are rapidly hastening towards the same fate. In

British India, New Holland, and South Africa, a like result is also approaching. My expectation is that the African race, in this country, would soon begin to dwindle towards extinction, in the same way, if emancipated. Some few persons would, of course, be much elevated by their new privileges; as we see in the case of individuals among our Indian tribes. I am far from thinking that the African is incapable of elevation. We have facts enough to prove the contrary. The difficulty is to elevate the race *as a race* among us. Our fathers were able, by their missions among the Indians, to produce some ripe examples of character, but they could never lift any whole tribe into such advancement as to save them from extinction. So in attempting to elevate the African race among us, there is too great a disadvantage against them in the beginning, to allow any hope of success. They need five hundred or a thousand years of cultivation to give them a fair chance. They cannot maintain the competition, they will be preyed upon and over-reached, they will not respect themselves, they will grow discouraged, they will, many of them, betake themselves to idleness, vice, and crime; by all these conjoint influences they will be kept down and gradually diminished in numbers. At present they are kept from a decline in population, only by the interest their masters have in them. Their law of population, now, is the same as that of neat cattle, and as the herd will dwindle when the herdsman withdraws his care, so will they. It would not be strange, if vices, which taint the blood and cut down life, should, within fifty years, penetrate the whole stock, and begin to hurry them off, in a process of premature extinction; as we know to be the case with another barbarous people, now fast yielding to the infection of death.

If we suppose that Christian benevolence will undertake for the race and will rescue them from the doom, otherwise sure to overtake them, doubtless much will be attempted and much done in that way. But the work is so great, the amount of Christian instruction and patronage requisite, so far beyond the possible supply, as effectually to cut off all hope of success. An attempt has been in progress, in this city, for many years, to elevate the African race. The most active and zealous members of our churches have labored in the work with much of their Master's patience and fidelity. Progress has indeed been made. But



these brethren will tell you, that they have discouragements to contend with, which no one could know, who had not tried the deficiencies of an uncultivated race. But when can you expect, that the immense colored population of the South will find a body of Christian teachers and friends engaged for them, as well manned, and vigorous, and bountiful, as the patrons of this little school and church? Not a tenth, not a fiftieth of this labor and charity can ever be their lot.

Furthermore, I have facts to show the probable decline of our colored population in a state of freedom, which leave us no need of speculation. Take the case of the Irish. It is not true, as many suppose, that they become an integral part of our nation to any considerable extent. They become extinct. It is very seldom that their children born in this country live to mature age. Intemperance and poor living sweep them away, both old and young together. If you will glance over the catalogues of our colleges and legislatures, the advertisements of merchants and mechanics, you will almost never find an Irish name among them, which shows you at least that they do not rise to any rank among us. At the same time, if you will search the catalogues of alms-houses, and prisons, and potter's fields, there you will find their names in thick order. Still more directly in point, it is proved by the last census, that in Massachusetts, where the increase of the white population, including those who emigrated to other states, probably amounted to between 20 and 30 per cent. in ten years; the colored population, including a constant influx from the South, increased only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. In Rhode Island they decreased. In Connecticut they increased only a half per cent.; in New Jersey, less than 2 per cent.; and in New York, only about 12 per cent. It would be well if our Anti-Slavery friends would revolve these evidences and allow their expectations in this direction to be a little moderated. They will never make that of the African race which they expect.\* At the same time, the masters at the South may see, in these facts, that they have no reason to fear emancipation, or anticipate any such terrible

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\*In the West Indies, there is; perhaps, a different prospect before the African race, viz: that they will become fixed inhabitants. They are already very much intermixed with the whites. The owners of the soil are, to a great extent, non-residents. And, more than all, the Islands are under a vigorous and impartial government in the mother country, and exempted from the petty prejudices and oppressions, which might otherwise break them down, if left to the mercies of domestic legislation.

results as De Tocqueville and some other writers have predicted. On the contrary, their greatest fear should be, in the continuance of the institution. Abolish it, and a new law of population begins. Continue it, and every year adds both to the danger and the difficulty, as it adds to the numbers of the slaves.

Now these are some of the more discursive thoughts, into which we may run, with advantage, in discussing the abolition of slavery. But still, we should be ever recurring to our simple position at starting, and there we should hold fast; saying to our southern friends—you may doubt the truth of our opinions on these remoter subjects, we confess the feebleness of our discernment, but here is matter which concludes all argument. Establish among your slaves the family state, defend their bodies, do it in a way to satisfy God and humanity, and we ask no more. To this they cannot answer a word, and yet, when they undertake to do the thing, they will find it next to impossible to satisfy their consciences, without sweeping away the whole system down to the very roots.

And glorious will be the day when it falls. Though it opens no very bright and hopeful prospect on the African race, it will at least bring them the acknowledgment of their manhood. To many individuals of them it will be the dawn of an auspicious morning, the beginning of a more elevated and happy life. And as to the poor herd who may yet be doomed to spin their brutish existence downward into extinction, it will be a relief to know, that a first day of conscious liberty made them one bright spot, in the compass of a sad and defrauded immortality. But our country, on that day, recruiting as she will her sickened hopes, and breathing unoppressed, in the freshness of that exhilarated morning, will most of all rejoice. To her it will be a day of honor and ineffable brightness. The bad education of slavery is no more to exist. Labor is no more to be a disgrace among her people. As the African race gradually disappears from the fields dishonored by their tears, her sons will multiply their hands of industry, a spirit of subordination and justice will be in their breasts, and she will possess one people. Then may she dare to promise herself a clear and blessed perpetuity. Her jealousies are extinct; her dangers are passed by. Her floods thereat shall clap their hands as they roll, and one jubilant brotherly hymn bursting upward and abroad, shall make her mountains



tremble in their distant seats, responsive to the common touch of harmony.

If then slavery ought thus to be given up, or abolished by the South, let us inquire—

II. What is our duty, at the North, in reference to this subject; what measures, if any, ought we to adopt.

Many, who are offended by the Anti-Slavery movements, do not stay to settle their own minds, as they ought, but declare at once, that we have nothing to do with the subject, and have even no right to touch it. But that is a doctrine which cannot be yielded to for a moment.

The territories of the United States are in the hands of our Congress, and subject to our legislation. The same is true of the District of Columbia. And when we consider the high moral position of our Congress, and the tremendous blow that would fall on the whole system of slavery, if Congress should come into action here, we find a prodigious responsibility laid upon us. Not that we are, of course, bound to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia as soon as we can possibly force the vote. But we are to urge the subject, till our friends become familiar with it, till abolition loses some of its horrors, till the kindness of our disposition is proved, perhaps, till Virginia and Maryland, whose good neighborhood we are under some obligations of courtesy not to incommode, are ready to vote with us: in short, till we can do it without destroying the Union, and so as to have the highest effect possible against the institution of slavery generally.

Again we are linked with slavery, by duties of mutual aid and defence. Thus if an insurrection arises, we may be called, according to the constitution, to march down our troops and aid in restoring the laws. And will it be said, in such a case, that we are to march home again and be hush as midnight on the subject of slavery, because we have nothing to do with it?

We have also a common character with the South, we are one nation, and have as dear a property in their good name, as they have in their own. If we hold our breath where the honor of our nation is thus deeply concerned, we are not Americans. A man's right hand cannot be a thief's and his left an honest man's. No more can a nation have its honor or its dishonor in single limbs and fragments.

Then again our holy religion is a spirit of universal humanity and benevolence. By it we are constituted brothers of mankind. Not prison walls, not oceans, not the boundaries of kingdoms, much less can any compacts or constitutional pledges put us, as some say, beyond the rights and duties of a mutual benevolence. The religion of our Master transcends all barriers, and carries us abroad to feel the pulse of joy and woe in every human creature. It brings China and Japan to our doors, and us to theirs; and cannot surely make us aliens to our countrymen, or permit us to be. I conclude then, that we have something to do with this subject. And now the question is, what have we to do?

This will be agreed to on all hands, that our measures are to be fitted to our end, and that our end is to secure the abolition of slavery by inducing the masters to act through their Legislatures. And in this you have the law of all our measures. If they are such as have no tendency to convince, move, or persuade the masters, they are bad measures. If they have a tendency to do this, they are good measures. If they have such a tendency, in the strongest degree, they are the best measures.

On this subject I must speak with plainness. I have watched the movements of our Anti-Slavery brethren, from the first, and I think without prejudice; and now they must bear with me, if I state some considerations, which induce me to dissent from their course. Their patience in the matter will show with how much sincerity they demand free discussion.

I remember with what carefulness and anxiety my brother who addressed these churches with so much interest a few weeks ago, set out on his mission to Europe. He said to me, a short time before sailing—I am going to France to see if any thing can be done there in the way of reviving the pure religion of Christ in that kingdom. I am to be sustained, in this, by a small private committee of gentlemen. It is a very delicate thing, to approach a proud and civilized nation; and if we make a society for such purposes, and allow our work to be set forth in the public prints, in might offend the French people as a thing too forward and presumptuous. In this spirit he went. He was a gentleman, in his feelings and manners. He put himself in the attitude of an inquirer and friend. He consulted, submitted him-

self to suggestions, put others forward, drew out their affections, gained their entire confidence. At length, after having made the circuit of Europe as a Reformer, and been received in that difficult mission by every monarch, with a favor never before extended to any private gentleman, he comes back to you charged with messages of love from the French Christians, and commissioned to be their open advocate at the door of your charities.

Here is the method in which the Anti-Slavery movement ought to have begun. Let one or two Christian gentlemen have gone South and conferred with the more candid and humane citizens, approaching them as gentlemen standing in a position of natural jealousy. Let them have taken the post of suggestion, inquiring whether it was possible to do nothing for the family state, nothing for the more adequate security of the slave's person, nothing for the education of his mind and the salvation of his immortal being. There have always been many aching hearts, at the South, in reference to these more horrid features of slavery, and it would have been easy to draw them forward into greater courage and efficiency. In this way, beyond all question, a strong movement could have been begun, in which the South would have taken the lead themselves. Much was beginning to be done, in respect to teaching the slaves to read and providing them with the privileges of the gospel. Maryland, Virginia, and Kentucky, too, were actually close approaching the act of emancipation, and nothing was wanting but a little time and forbearance in us to have secured the result.

But instead of beginning in this way, the first movement here at the North was a rank onset and explosion. I may speak plainly on this subject, because none of you were engaged in the movement, and I think you will generally agree with me. The first sin of this organization was a sin of ill manners. They did not go to work like Christian gentlemen. They went to work much as if they were going to drive the masters—as they do their negroes. The great convention, which met at Philadelphia, drew up a declaration of their sentiments, in which they visibly affected the style and tone of the declaration of independence. In one point of view, it is a noble paper. It is eloquent. The sentiments are generally what they should be. And yet it is coupled with a sort of effect, I hardly know whether to call it sad or ludicrous, when you figure to yourselves a body of men gathered

in solemn convocation at Philadelphia, and declaring independence, as it were, for slavery!—An act exactly fitted to alienate every friend they had or could have had at the South, and shut his lips forever.—An act, by which they wilfully and boorishly cast off the whole South from them, and kindled against themselves a flame of madness, so hot as to exclude all approach, and create an embargo against all their arguments.

They did not inquire whether Georgia was a colony or province of Connecticut, here to be legislated over and put down. Still, as the British philanthropists were driving a strong run of measures to put their Parliament against West India slavery, they thought the British fire would be good here also. Or perhaps they copied the temperance movement, with an admiration too indiscriminate, not recollecting that these sovereign States could be forced down by no array of numbers and severe opinion, as we were doing with our rum-folk here at home. There was, in short, a total want of discrimination as to the peculiar circumstances of the case. Nothing was thought of but to drive forward and put down slavery, some how or other. When I advert to this beginning it always fills me with sadness, not merely because it was so bad a mistake, as regards effect on slavery, but because it was so dishonorable to religion—and that in men who probably meant well in their hearts. They only forgot (as too many were doing, in the temperance and other movements, just at that time) that it is not the spirit of Christianity to drive or put down, but, where it may be, to conciliate, draw, and lead.

Do not remind me that finding fault with measures, even the best of measures, long after their adoption, is too easy to be a work of honor or of ambition. I showed you the fault of this movement, much as I have now done, in the first heat and rumor of the explosion, and long before any of you came into it. Do not remind me that those who will propose nothing and do nothing but oppose others, have little to boast of, in their freedom from mistakes and errors. I proposed to you, at that time, and to the citizens of Hartford generally, to embark in a course of active measures much like that which I would now approve, only a little more rank and strong-handed than I should now feel justified in advising. The proposition was received in silence. Some of you did nothing, others of you did what you ought not to have done. Neither plead, in the way of apology, that it is human to err,

and that error mixes with all the good attempts of men. It is human sometimes to err fundamentally, as well as partially; and that, I must think, is the error of the Anti-Slavery society. It not only excited against itself, in the beginning, such an array of unnecessary prejudice, as to make it a just claim that the society should now draw back and yield the ground to a new movement, but I doubt whether any association or combination of men, in this matter, can be otherwise than hurtful in its tendency, unless co-operated in by the South itself. The case, in other words, is so peculiar that associations are vicious in themselves, or not means to the end, unless co-operated in by the Southern people. I will state some reasons for this opinion.

In the first place, an association at the North, on this subject, must almost necessarily be odious to those on whom it is intended to act. It is an unknown thing, and fitted to awaken only jealousy. It is a combination of force, in its appearance, quite as much as of charity. It looks like an attempt to dragoon them into compliance. They too are sovereign States, and are properly jealous of their position. If you will put yourself fully into the place of a Southern legislator, you will understand what I mean. One of the British statesmen had spoken favorably of giving up Canada, but when he saw the combinations on foot and the war begun, he said No; we must wait first, and see whether we can hold Canada. And it was rightly said. Every sovereign State is bound to make it appear that it acts from itself, and in the right of its own sovereignty. If, therefore, I were a Southern legislator, strongly as I feel on this subject, I should think it my first duty to save the sovereignty of my State, and I would never so far humble it, as to vote the abolition of slavery at the beck of a Northern association. The Southern people, too, I have no doubt, will hold this purpose, with a strength proportionate to their pride of character.

Again, associations of men, while they are fitted to push some objects with vigor, are yet too irresponsible, and drive their work too heedlessly for the safe management of a matter as vast and critical as this. When a resolution is passed by any society, and especially by a society of reform, you will very often observe that there is something in it, which is not true, and which no individual would have ventured on saying without some qualification. The object is to swing a battering-ram against some-

thing, the resolution is drawn so as to hit, and the society pass it with acclamation. When, at the same time, no one present would like to shoulder the responsibility of advancing such a declaration without adding many things to temper its meaning—additions, perhaps, without which its truth is doubtful and its bearing in some other direction most hostile to valuable and sacred interests. Accordingly, truth is nowhere so loosely held or badly stated as you will find it in the resolutions of societies. At the same time, truth is here the highest of all wants. Without her presence and her soberest influences, nothing but mischief can be done. The real doctrines, too, of this subject, are difficult and likely to confuse any mind, which is not equal to the highest questions in ethics and government. The Anti-Slavery society has now been in active existence for some years, and I must be allowed to say, that, while it has enrolled much talent of different sorts, I have looked in vain for the evidence, that it has a man in its ranks, who is able really to follow out and settle on a just basis, the ethical questions involved in the subject. Many truths have been grasped with effect and set in a bold position, but there has always been a sad mixture of error in their resolutions and other declarations, which has kept aloof from their embrace many, who heartily approve their general object. This subject, too, is altogether too inflammatory, it takes too strong a hold of the human passions, to be safely entrusted to associations. On this account, I would sooner trust myself almost any where, than in a society of this nature. I should expect to propose things and vote things out of my heat as often as out of my reason. I should be very much afraid, too, lest I might get so much engrossed as to take up an egregious estimate of the importance of abolition, and begin to think it a matter about equal to Christianity, if not above it. We are sickened by too many exhibitions of this mischief. The Union is undervalued, and its preservation is often spoken of with lightness! I wish I could say that no resolution was ever passed impelling to the disregard of official oaths! It has been soberly argued, too, that the society is perfectly analogous or twin to the church, and that every true Christian is bound to join it in the same way! Attempts are openly made to alienate the people from the clergy, and diminish the respect due to their office; they are called dumb dogs; the most servile motives are imputed to them, and the institutions of



which they are set to be the head are too often jostled and trifled with, as being of no value, compared with the abolition of slavery!

As I am on this subject, allow me a word. If we must be dogs, I think it is well that we are dumb dogs, for barking will never put down slavery. But more seriously. It is doubtless true that some of the clergy have been thrown, temporarily, into a false position. But the stand they have taken, on the whole, is one which does them great honor. Many of them have seen and pitied the sad mixture of false opinion, which has been at work in this movement from the first. They are men accustomed and trained to ethical reasonings. They are more competent than laymen often are to such investigations, and it is a part of their office to guide the moral opinions of their people. And, in this view, the attempt to drive them into compliance, by filling the laymen with a conceit of their own superior wisdom in this matter, and of the servile motives of their pastors, is both revolutionary and wicked. For one, I can never yield, an inch, to these execrable and subversive attacks; and that, I believe, is the general sentiment of the New England clergy. They would feel that, in doing it, so far from becoming worthier patrons of freedom, they would, in fact, become slaves themselves. But this is partly digression.

I say then again, that this is one of those matters of reform, in which associations destroy rather than augment the moral power of those who engage in them. The movements of our societies have not touched the consciences of the Southern people, as many would be glad to believe, when they see the heat that is excited. There are two ways of producing heat, one where it comes before the conscience, to blind and silence its proper action; the other where it comes after and through the conscience—first enlightened. And here, manifestly, the first thing felt was wrath, as the first thing done was provocation. They have scarcely learned, as yet, at the South, that our societies are attempting to show, by sober facts, the possibility of emancipation. They really think that we are mad fanatics, as destitute of any reasonable and practical views on the subject as the women of Kamtschatka or Japan. And the reason is, in part, that we array ourselves in numbers, which both provokes their jealousy, and puts the moral weight of individuals and their opinions out of sight.

We should have vastly greater weight, if we stood singly. If our people were seen to be moved, as citizens, by a spontaneous and separate impulse, speaking, writing, preaching, voting, with a cool and determined, but kind opposition to slavery, (as I trust in God we shall ere long be,) there would be a moral grandeur in our position, and we should be felt. The wisdom of Dr. Channing, in this matter, is much to be commended. Had he been known as an active co-operator and busy writer, in any association, his weight would have been lost. But now he has spoken and left the argument to its power, and being seen to put his faith, not in numbers or in noise, but in what he regards as truth, he is felt.\* We have been greatly mistaken, as to the moral power of associations generally, but here they are specially impotent. If you wish to put a man of real weight quite out of the way, to hide him, or make his name a cipher, as regards this question, you need only put him into an Anti-Slavery association. He will lie there sweltering under the heated mass of numbers, like the giant under *Ætna*, and by men as little felt or regarded.

Such, in general, are my objections to associated action on this subject. They are objections too well supported by facts. At the same time, it ought to be said that most of these objections to associations, would have been obviated, by a union of Southern gentlemen in their councils and measures.

Let me now address a few thoughts to three classes of persons, who may be found in my audience.

First, I turn to our friends of the Anti-Slavery Society. I have spoken my mind to you, brethren, with great plainness, but not, I hope, with offence. If I know my own purpose in this matter, I have been moved, by no disagreement with your general object, but rather by a desire to accomplish it. Much that I have said you will not deny. You will only maintain that some such movement as yours, was necessary to awaken the public mind; and that you have certainly brought this subject into a more forward position than it could possibly have reached without you. On that question I have many doubts, which I think you could be made to feel yourselves. But it has not been my object to diminish your

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\* I would not be understood to express entire assent to his argument. There is at least a seeming confusion in it, of the absolute and the preceptive; of the principle of morals, and of the outward and variable applications of it.



merits, or to find fault with that which is done and cannot be altered. I have simply been endeavoring to settle the longitude with a view to our future course. Where we should have been, is rather a question of curiosity than one of practical consequence, and I leave you to entertain such opinions, in that direction, as please you. I only say, now, that we are here. So much has been done. It is undeniable that the public mind is now strongly excited, towards the subject of slavery—if you say, more strongly than it would have been, by a more gentle and correct course, I leave you to your opinion. I only say that the time has now come for correct measures. What we want now, is not agitation, but settlement. The time has now come for casting out the nettles of error, for ascertaining ripe conclusions, for adjusting right positions, and moving on together, as we best may, to accomplish our end. If you have done ill, I trust you are willing to amend; if you have done well, I trust you are willing to change; for there is no greater mistake than an obstinate adherence to measures, or a refusal to change when a change is demanded by some advanced stage or new position of the subject in hand.

And, now, I have a proposition to make to you. It is that you will consent to give up your associations, and allow us to come in together and work shoulder to shoulder. You are accustomed to admit that your society was guilty of some early indiscretions, and the violence you then did their prejudices, makes it an act of justice to the Southern people, that you should withdraw. You say, and perhaps rightly, that you have rectified your errors. Still I could point out some very recent acts, I allude to some of your resolutions at Middletown, which are without weight, and only fitted to injure the truth. It was with real grief and mortification too, as a lover of liberty, that I was compelled a few months since, when the interchange of an official correspondence with the South gave your national association so fine an opportunity to disabuse their prejudices and give a good impression of your cause, to admit that the courtesy and, I must say, the dignity of the correspondence were too exclusively on the wrong side. It is too much to ask of us now, that we trust ourselves to this form of action, and I ask you to give it up. Doing this, I will pledge you that in six months, if not at once, all your Christian friends will be of one mind with you, in respect

to the abolition of slavery. We are so now to a greater extent than you believe; but you keep us back, and we do nothing as heartily as we should, if it were otherwise. You make us qualify, if not suspend the declaration of our real sentiments, lest we should be taken to sanction some of the resolutions and other expressions, which you throw out from time to time, and which have nothing to do with the essential merits of your cause. There is no probability that we shall ever join with you. And do not think, that it is mere ignorance, which, at present, keeps us from doing it. I believe that I have watched your movement and known it as well as most of you have done yourselves; but never, for a moment, have I been impressed with any feeling of obligation, except the obligation not to unite with your societies. I never could have done it, without a violation of my conscience and my better judgment.

I am induced to think that your opinion of your friends, in New England generally, is a little mistaken. I grant that many New England men have been thrown into what may be called a false position. This has been due, partly to the indiscretions of your societies; partly to the belief, too hastily admitted by some, but now given up, that Colonization is to be a complete remedy for slavery; and partly, it must be admitted, to the mercenary sympathies and connections of a few with Southern commerce. But New England still, is, at bottom, thoroughly opposed to slavery. And, though it may seem strange to you, I will affirm, without scruple, that liberty in every form, and not least in the abolition of slavery, is a popular doctrine. Our fathers and all our statesmen of the old type were abolitionists. Could you ask a stronger evidence than that they abolished slavery themselves? \* Our clergy used to set forth, on fast days and other like occasions, as I recollect with the greatest satisfaction, the national crime of slavery. And when they prayed on the subject, they prayed for emancipation, did it, too, *pleno corde*, and without adding ingenious qualifications, as we are driven to do, to show that we are not members of your society.

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\* The assertion of De Tocqueville (which makes so prominent a figure in his chapter on Slavery,) that the New England people actually sold off their slaves while professing to emancipate them by statute, is a slander by which he was imposed upon. In Massachusetts they were suddenly and unexpectedly freed by the construction given, by their courts, to the preamble of their constitution. On extensive inquiry, I can find no instance, where a Connecticut slave was transported in evasion of the statute.

You recollect the great Missouri Question. There was shown the true New England feeling. I was a mere youth at that time, in a little retired nook among the hills of Litchfield county, but I remember how the spirit of the Missouri Question seized the very children of the schools. We could hardly understand the matter, but still we watched the news, as all were doing, with souls full of liberty and the Missouri Question.

Let me speak to you of a minister of God, whose feet stood before mine in this sacred place, and whose voice was the melody of life in your ears. His genius, you remember, as well as his heart, was fired with the holy theme of "Benevolence." It is consecrated still, we trust, to song in the courts of his Maker, though not, as here, to songs of grief and words of rebuke—

O proud Columbia, hide thy towering head  
 Low in the dust, in shame and penitence,  
 Till from thy robes be washed the stain of blood.

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I see thy glory with prophetic eye,  
 I see thee with thy crown of many stars  
 On thy fair head, and clothed in spotless robes,  
 Moving in state toward the Atlantic shore;  
 With one hand casting to the waves below,  
 The last of all thy slave-oppressing chains,  
 And, with the other, holding to thy breast  
 The Book of God. I hear the shouts  
 That ring from end to end of thy domain!

Such was the vision of your immortal friend and guide—a vision doubtless which he now beholds with clearer eye. If these walls, first consecrated by his voice, delight, as I believe, to echo the words, they must have a livelier response in your hearts.

And the same pulse which beats in your hearts, beats in New England. There is, in New England, a deep and settled opposition to slavery, and nothing is wanted but to let it forth. Your society is now the greatest obstacle to its manifestation. Tell us that you are convinced of this, and that, now, you will come out to meet us, and New England is one on this subject.

But how is this, you will inquire; have not we ourselves called out resolutions on this subject in the Legislatures of Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut? You are in danger. I reply, of

taking more to yourselves in this matter, than you ought. You know very well, that these Legislatures do not regard you, or your measures, as a society, with favor. Probably, not one in twenty of those who voted the resolutions in question, is a member of your society. They deprecate your course, they disclaim all fellowship with you, in the very act of voting. When you understand this, you may readily guess, that it is not your society which all at once has made them friends of liberty. They speak not with your voice, but with the ancient spirit of New England; they move, not in your line, but in their own. And if it be granted, that they have some regard, in this, to your weight in the elections, they feel, at the same time, a hearty repugnance to your alliance. And, to guard against the odium that might fall on them, they are in danger of acting only formally; when, if you did not furnish them with such a motive, they would be more likely to act in the spirit of their own principles.

Let me state, in a few words as possible, what I suppose has been and is to be the real movement of New England on this subject. First there was what you may call the era of feeling against slavery—feeling apart from action of any kind. This feeling was vented, in harsh and unmeasured terms, as feeling always is when there is no action upon the case and no investigation of it, with a view to remedies. The language of the amiable Wilcox, in the passage from which I have quoted this evening, you will find exceedingly severe. I recollect, too, that I used often to hear from the pulpit such terms of denunciation as would now quite disgrace an Anti-Slavery society. At length, having been too long recumbent on our feelings, action began, in the form of an attempt to colonize. Saying nothing of the plan itself, this passing from feeling to action was, philosophically speaking, a great stride. Having approached the subject now, in a more practical way; having thus seen the extravagance and abusiveness of our own language; we moderated expression and feeling, and, as often happens in such cases, made atonement, it may be, by too many grains of allowance. Your friends saw, at length, that Colonization could never reach the extent of this evil. They grew impatient, too, and declared that we were losing our spirit of liberty, because we did not use as hot language as formerly. And now they lifted the banner of Immediate Abolition, connecting with their doctrine some petty errors and extra-

vagances, which they magnified to the utmost, so as to make their motto sound as much like Total Abstinence as possible. They opened their cause, too, very unskilfully in other respects, as I have shown you. The country has been filled with wrangling and agitation. Sober men, excited by the tumult, have, in the mean time, been thinking, sifting out errors, and settling their views on this great question. And now I think I am right in saying that the ministry in New England, together with the better class of public men generally, are ready to take their stand practically and soberly for the abolition of slavery. Our Legislatures you perceive are willing to vote opinions which look this way. But mark—while this is true, there is no disposition manifested to fall into your strain of action, or to become identified with the odium unnecessarily attracted by your movement. They would feel, in fact, that an identification with your society would be only throwing themselves into the worst possible position for acting with effect. They would feel bound also, at all times, to protest against many of your doctrines and measures. They will go to work soberly. They will act as men who know how to value other things, than abolition. They will show that they love their country—and will not disregard the Union in pushing their measures. But they will gradually come forward into action; they will be steady in debate, strong, conciliatory, and, when the moment comes, decisive. Now then I say again, hold what opinions you will of the efficacy of your measures up to this time, have you not manifestly reached a point, where you can gain by a change? Withdrawing yourselves here in your present form, an act which would have a prodigious effect to soften the temper of the South, would you not also, at the same moment, put your cause into a new and vastly more commanding position at the North? Rely upon it, the moment you will do that, a new class of men will come into the work; the present inflamed state of feeling in the nation will subside; reason will come into her place; and the work will hasten forward to a successful result.

But you will say, let us look at this. How can we raise funds if we drop our organization? You do not want funds, I reply. But how then shall we sustain lecturers? You do not want any. If the ministry take their ground, you will not need to lecture us. But there will be no public meetings, nothing that will tell or keep

the matter alive ; in fact, there will be nothing done, and we shall betray our cause. You will greatly mistake if you reason thus. Our newspapers, secular and religious, will tell ; our electors' meetings, and the voices of our speakers at Washington will tell ; our pulpits will tell ; and our prayers will go up together and tell in the ear of Him who is the slave's Friend.

Do not think that so much action of machinery, so much bustle and noise, are necessary for effect. If God had been of the opinion that some are, He would have made every joint of the universe crack and rattle, the bird's wing would have swept the air with the roaring of a storm, the fly would have buzzed thunder. But He had no such absurd opinion of noise. His greatest power is the stillness of his universe. And so the greatest moral power of man is that which he exerts, when he is seen to be reposing, somewhat, on his own strength and the strength of his cause. Effect is never so remote as when every thing is done for effect.

You have supposed, perhaps, that I am doing nothing on this subject, because I do not profess, and debate, and associate, as some others do. But, for the sake of showing you how one may act in the still, unpretending sphere of a mere private citizen, let me boast a little. I met a gentleman from the South, not long since, who was exceedingly mad against your society of course. I told him that I had nothing to do with it, and disapproved many of its measures. But, I added, I will undertake to show you that you can and ought to abolish slavery. I went into the argument, which he heard very kindly, because I kept on the side of his sympathies and within the bounds of his reason. He said, at the end, you are the only reasonable man I have met with. Some of you tell me that you think slavery wrong, but justify our continuing in it. You tell me that it is wrong, and attempt to show me that it can and ought to be abolished. I then recommended to him a little book, which ought to be in the hands of every Southern gentleman,\* urging him to take it home and pass it among his friends. And it was a peculiar satisfaction to me that I could say to him, of one book, on this subject—it will give you some useful truths and will not abuse you. Another gentleman showed a more bitter and lowering temper. I said to him, Yes,

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\* Prof. Hovey's Letters on the West Indies.



they are rather hard upon you. But it is very unhappy that you do not establish the family state among your slaves, and instruct them as men in the Christian religion, instead of forbidding them to be taught, as you do. Do you think that you could re-organize your system so as to do this? Certainly. I am glad to hear you say that—will you do what you can to bring it to pass? He was cool, but dumb. He saw, as clearly as I did, the nakedness of slavery, and its incompatibility with such modifications. Now you see, in this, that noise and combination is not always power. If I have sent home thus two men, unjustified in the sight of their own consciences, I fear that I have done more, in this little, than many a one of your Anti-Slavery societies, with all its meetings and machineries. Pardon this vain confident boasting.

But there are other ways of action open to you, in the ordinary spheres of life and business. The pulpit and the press have their power. You may raise candidates, question candidates, as you do now, vote, debate, converse, write. In a word, you will sacrifice nothing; you will gain every thing. Let us see, now, whether you adhere to your plans, or listen to these salutary and friendly counsels.

I turn, now, to another class present, who will respond, I suppose, more or less heartily, to what I have said. Is it true, or not, that you may be relied on as thoroughly opposed to slavery? Do you not stand ready to do any reasonable thing to secure its abolition? Are you not kept back from the stand you would otherwise occupy, by the course taken by the societies? Will you not meet your friends here, and take your stand with them, if they will stand as individuals? There are many, I am sure, who will respond to these questions. And now, if our friends in the societies will not change their ground, let me suggest your duty.

And, first of all, I hope you will see the wisdom of not uniting with them. A great many persons, as soon as they have seen the abolition of slavery to be possible, and a duty, conclude at once that nothing remains but to give their names. Far from this. The greatest question still remains. These societies, my friends, are not fitted to their object, and must manifestly be given up before slavery can be abolished. And, in this view, it is

specially to be lamented that more persons should unite in them. Reserve yourselves for another mode and sphere of action, more simple, and, in the present case, more efficient.

But most of you will be sufficiently guarded, in this direction, without any caution from me. I am more concerned, lest you should let your opposition to others occupy you so exclusively, that you will neglect all action beside. But if you wish to bring them over to your opinion, you have something to do besides opposing them. Rely upon it, they will never unite with you in doing nothing. Or, if you wish to check their measures, you have no other way but to lead them in their object. A very scanty knowledge of human nature should teach you that a mere negative position is weak; and if you will take no other position, nothing can be more certain than that they will advance upon you. But if you will take upon you to do, what your reason and conscience approve; if you will show them, by your zeal and steadiness in all reasonable ways, that your heart is in their general object; you will draw them to you, by a force which cannot be resisted. They are deep in the work they have undertaken. If they follow it, as you say, with the blindness, they do it also with the devotion of an instinct. Here is the hold, by which if at all, you may conquer them to your measures and your friendship. You can do it only by attracting their ruling passion.

I hear it often said—let them withdraw first, let the country become quiet, and then we will come forward and act. Doubtless it is their duty to withdraw, and withdraw at once, but that, I fear, is not to be expected. And why should you demand such an interval of repose? If you desire to compose the public mind, how can you do it more effectually, than by sober and judicious action? What is more powerful to quiet the storm of error than the voice of truth? What sooner steadies the distracted opinions of men, than to fix the vision and direct the purposes, on the accomplishment of a reasonable object? And how would you sooner prove our good dispositions towards the Southern people, than by disclaiming their just causes of offence and beginning to do them the good which others have intended, but failed of by their indiscretions?

Do not misunderstand my object in this discourse. Mere holding back is seldom a post either of duty or honor. I have



seen too much of that policy. I know too well its impotence. Had I proposed to myself nothing else than to check our Anti-Slavery friends, I should have been silent. My object is higher and more comprehensive—it is to produce a more united, just, and vigorous action on this subject—it is, if possible, to take this movement into the hands of our whole people, give it a new character, and prepare a great stage of progress in it.

I call upon you, then, to come forward and take the post of duty. Your friends will not absolutely shut their ear to the proposition I have made them. They will bend a little towards you—they will listen to see whether it is in you to come forward. They will be in danger, I know, of undervaluing gradual beginnings and a less formal and concerted style of action; yet some of them, I believe, are in a disposition to make as much as they can of the smallest advances. And now there is a great responsibility lying on you, as well as on them. I throw it over to lie upon your shoulders. The three great features of American slavery, which I have named, must be an offence to every principle of goodness in your hearts. I charge you, then, in every sphere of life, as citizens and as Christians, to justify your own consciences, and be true to your post, as friends of God and humanity. It is no fault of your friends, that they have determined to cast their vote so as to save their principles. No man is a good citizen, or true to his own mind, who will not do it. If they err in this matter, it will only be when they shall determine to regard nothing else than slavery in their votes. Remember, however, that this is no secondary question. It is, more than any other single question, the hinge of our well-being as a nation. The right of petition, the right of discussion, are here at stake. In this question, is involved the existence of our Union; the honor of its name; the condition of two and a half millions of men robbed of their dearest rights; and the future well-being of a great and powerful, but much endangered section of our land. You cannot be indifferent to these weighty interests. You are the sons of New England; you are friends, too, of humanity, and lovers of your country. I invoke you also in the higher name of GOD and duty.—May He whose distinction it is, that he bringeth out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage; the wheels of whose chariot were filled, of old, with the eyes of an all-inspecting and equal justice; who sent forth His Son, in the later ages, proclaiming

liberty to the captive ; and now, by the motions of His Own most secret and blessed Influence, discovereth to all, who will know the same, the glorious liberty of His sons—thereby making all His counsels of government end in a righteous boldness and freedom—may He, I say, communicate of His own high dispositions to you, and strengthen your breast, with the same jealous spirit of impartial liberty, which penetrates His own.

Are there any of a third class present, who are accustomed to think no more of liberty and humanity than simply to oppose others who do—any who speak lightly of the slave's wrongs, and wish him no relief—any who are opposed even to discussion, mad against it in any shape and in every place? My friends, I have only a word to say to you. I need only tell you that you are New England men, to prove to you that you are now standing in a false position and one that is temporary. You do not now represent yourselves. You have been thrown out of your place, and it will not be long before you will come back to it. You cannot do it too soon.

Now then, brethren and friends, how small are all our strifes, when we stand in full presence of this great question, involving, as it does, the dearest purposes of humanity, the honor of our common country, the stability of our great institutions, the wrongs, too, and the griefs of afflicted millions! Who of us shall be the truest friends of these immeasurable interests?—this shall be our strife! On a sudden, I feel inspired, as I stand here, with a more sacred love to my country, and vow to be a more devoted servant of her well-being. I approach her altar—let us all approach—and here we lay on all our prejudices, our smaller jealousies, we give our minds to the light, our hearts to pity, our hands to duty, and all together to the strength, perpetuity, and freedom of our whole country.





