

A memorial  
To the select committee on the subject  
of abolition. This is respectfully submitted

Gentlemen,

The form which the question of abolition has assumed forecloses under present circumstances, both the necessity and the expediency of discussing that of slavery in the abstract. However great may be our horror of bondage, and however great the evils resulting from it, still there may be greater evils to be apprehended, as the fruits of intemperate measures to abolish it. Being decidedly of opinion that the proceedings of immediate abolitionists are calculated to produce those greater evils, I shall proceed to point out some of the reasons that opinion is based.

Politically, we must be well aware, that the advocates of abolition, can have no reasonable hope of effecting their purpose, but through the interaction of the General Government; for their measures are by no means calculated to operate on the governments or citizens of the slaveholding states, favorably to their cause. That Congress cannot interfere for the abolition of slavery without a manifest break of the constitution, is perfectly evident; unless that constitution be first amended. In either case, no doubt the dissolution of the Union would be the consequence, and thus for the sake of making an abortive attempt to abolish slavery, our abolitionists would have the mortification to find that they have forced a separation of the states, and smelted the chains of slavery more firmly on the limbs of those whom they ostensibly labor to set free.

But as we have no need to look forward to the dissolution of the Union, for political evils, the consequences of abolition measures. Already they array themselves, of numerous host, in the face of the country, and continually multiply on every hand. The sectional prejudices between the North and the South were rapidly disappearing and sinking into oblivion. The long mooted question which had so long agitated the entire community, had been disposed of to the general satisfaction of all parties; at least so far as relates to sectional limits. A general calm seemed likely to succeed to the political storm which had so long raged with unrelenting fury. The North and the South, in the spirit of friendship, had effected a Compromise, and recognized a mutual, and inseparable interest. Happy would it have been for our country, could that state of things been permitted to endure, and the spirit of conciliation suffered to perfect its salutary and glorious work. But the spirit of fanaticism knows neither prudence nor patriotism. Forever under the guidance of an ignorant and infuriated zeal directing its energies to the human passions alone, and obstinately bent on the accomplishment of its purpose, without regard to the means whether they be good or evil, it frequently creates greater and more numerous evils by the measures it adopts, than it would produce benefits if successful.

Thus with respect to the abolition of slavery, no man of sense and in his right mind, can for a moment suppose, that all the efforts of the abolitionists of the North could have the effect to emancipate the slaves of the South, on the contrary every person acquainted with human nature and existing facts bear me out, and in the assertion, must be fully satisfied that the ill natured interference of these persons in the matter of Southern slavery and their tirades abuse lavished indiscriminantly

on the slaveholder, would have the direct tendency to excite the angry passions and create a sense of danger which would lead to greater severity, as an act of self defense. Such has been one of the results. Indirectly, by means of anti-slavery movements, the negroes have imbibed the spirit of revolt. Actual or imaginary dangers menace the planter on every hand. He in turn, considers himself called upon for the protection of himself, and his defenseless family, to institute a more strict discipline, and construct the principles granted to his slaves. And thus, insisted of producing any good, the abolitionist, may set it down as a solemn truth, that he has arrested the march of improvement and amelioration which are gradually progressing among the slave population and inflicted an injury upon them, which half a century will not repair.

And what do they give us in return for all this? The destruction of that feeling of brotherly love, and that good fellowship, which had so happily sprung up and been cemented between the different sections of our country, within the past few years. A renewal of jealous and strife far worse than we have had to ever encounter before. They have created animosities, heretofore unknown; and which but for them, would never have existed. For the sake of making a Quixotic attempt which no man of common sense ever believed could prove successful, to give to two millions of blacks, they have set twelve million of white freeman by their ears, sowed the seeds of strife and dissension, throughout the land, and will, unless speedily checked in their nefarious course, light up the flame of civil war, deluged our fields with blood, and finally scatter our constitution and civil liberties to the winds of heaven. Could they hold out a rational hope, though a distant one, that they would thus liberate the captive and let the oppressed go free, even this would be something in the scale against the mischiefs they created. But a hope like this is but another name for folly, for the more determined and persevering their efforts, it is evident to every candid and well informed

mind, the more remote becomes the object for which they profess to labor. This conclusion comes from a very obvious reason. The southern planter considers his slave his property. In him, he considers he has a right. Whatever change time and reflection might produce on his feelings, threats and menaces, and angry abuses, instead of causing him to relinquish these, will only induce him to stand by and defend them with redoubled energy. Already has the alarm been sounded to the remote limits of our Southern region. Already have the freedmen of that section arrayed themselves under the banner of the constitution, and protested against northern interference with their reserved rights and domestic concerns. Already has the decree of summary vengeance gone forth against the renegades who dare to incite their slaves to insurrection and murder - more than one victim has suffered the bloody award- the spirit of disaffection extends itself like the flames on the western prairie, and ere we are aware lest the incendiary be arrested in his mad career, the hands of the aggrieved will be upon their arms, and the torch of civil war be lighted within our peaceful borders.

But in connection with this important and exciting subject, there are mischiefs other than those of a more political character – evils which deeply affect our moral system. Is it nothing, that our citizens are taught that the solemn pledges and guarantees connected with our constitution and securing to our southern brethren, their reserved rights may be violated with impunity? Has the good citizen no reason to complain, when the voice of fanaticism is suffered to advocate the startling doctrine that when the caprice of misguided individuals may deem it expedient the political faith of the government and the nation, may be broken, and the rights of our citizens outraged and trampled under foot; is it of no consequence that thousands of our fellow citizens by such teaching and such examples, and for the want of better information, should be led into the monstrous notion, that a faith once pledged, may be broken at pleasure, whenever they deem it expedient to do so? Shall we not indignantly raise our voices, when for the purpose of carrying forward a favorite

purchase, in the very face of reason, justice, and common sense, an obstinate portion of the community persists in measures which create mobs and riots, and are directly calculated to crush the laws, and set the civil authorities at defiance?

In such a case what becomes of our boosted morality? What becomes of our sense of justice? - What foreign nation will continue to respect us, when we thus cease to respect ourselves? What government will repose confidence in our honor to the fulfillment of our solemn treaties when we manifest the disposition to violate the rights of our own citizens and nullify the provisions of our own constitution? Dead indeed to the feelings of national honor and justice, and to individual morality, must be that man who would advocate and promote such a state of things, yet such is the course adapted and pursued in the cause of abolition, and which is far from going to substantiate our claims oft reiterated of our progressive morality.

Though we regret to make the statement, it is nevertheless true, that the religion of the day comes in for its share of reproach on this exciting question. They gladly record our sincere conviction, that christianity, as taught by its great Author and his immediate followers, and as recorded on the pages of the New Testament carefully refrained from all interference in this, as well as will all other political concerns—- To the spiritual welfare of mankind, and the moral conduct of its possessor, are its energies directed and confined. And as assert, without fear of contradiction, that the northern possessor of Christianity, who claims the warrant of the Bible to interfere in the matter of slavery, claims that to which he has no right that which does not exist and in doing so, deceives his fellow men. If honestly ignorant deceives himself. And here, permit me to remark, that it is no way high compliment to the Christian minister, or to the professor, to propose him so ignorant of the subject as to the self deceived, or so dishonest as to be guilty of the attempt to deceive others.

Again, we gladly bear testimony, that not a great proportion of christian devines, and their followers have entitled themselves in this cause. Those who have done so, are by no means among the best informed, and are, generally, of that description of persons who may properly be termed zealots and who always act on the impulse of the moment and with the mistaken notion that the end in all cases justifies the means. Very probably, however, the voice of public indignation has had the tendency to prevent, in some measure, the more extensive spread of the doctrine in the church. Fantasticism, whenever it can do so without a gross dereliction from its avowed principles, and the sacrifice of its interest, always launches itself on the ocean of popular excitement and uses it endeavors to move with the popular current, which generally flows in many communities in the channel marked out by fanaticism itself. The great competition which now exists between the numerous sects in this country, renders it necessary for all to adapt the measures instituted by any, in order that each may receive its due share of the benefits, except in extraordinary cases.

The march of abolition doctrines affords such a case. For once, the popular voice was raised in opposition to the doctrine of the Priest, religionists, who, when necessary, can mold principle to the form of interests, as well as other men, took the alarm, consulted expediency, and determined that they would either remain neutral, or sail on the popular current. Hence, a great proportion of them stand uncommitted while enough to distract the community, wilfully persist in their mad project.

We would not be understood in these, remarks as aiming a blow at Christianity - No - it has already been asserted, it is believed with truth that Christianity, as taught by Christ and his Apostles, and as

recorded in the New Testament, has nothing to do with the question at issue; and, it is now added, that as slavery then existed in its most detested forms, as the original preachers of Christianity forbid to meddle with it, they considered it as a subject out of the pale of the church; and their forbearance, and silence respecting it, is equivalent to an injunction on modern divines and professors, not to agitate it as a religious question, but to leave it entirely to the legislator and civilian to dispose of. But modern religionists are noted for intermeddling in all concerns, by which they think their interests may be promoted; and if they have no scripture warrant, they can readily forge one for the occasion. The mischiefs, thus engendered, are numerous and extensive.

In this first place, by such means, men are led to entertain false notions of the scripture doctrines, and to attribute to them objects and motives derogatory to their true spirit. In the second place they multiply debatable points; and as mankind are inclined more readily to quarrel about their religion than about any thing, they beget, foster, and promote a spirit of dissension which goes directly to sever the bonds of society, and to separate friend from friend.

In all conscience, one would think, the numerous creeds of the day present a sufficient number of controverted topics, but yet there are no limits to the exercise of clerical ingenuity to multiply them, and what will come next, after abolition shall have grown stale, human sagacity cannot foresee.

In the third place, as abolition, however, originally considered must finally resolve itself into a purely political, its introduction into religious bodies is directly calculated to give religion a political bearing.

Numerous attempts have already been made in this country to connect

religion with politics, as in the question of the Sunday mails; when one has failed another one has been brought forward; nor will religionists determined on gaining an ascendancy in the state, relinquish the object, until all hopes of success may have been annihilated. The religious aspect given to the question now under discussion, is designed for the same end. No matter how its advocates may profess to view it, it is truly a political question, and the attempt to carry it through by means of forcibly wielding it to Christianity, indicates plainly enough, the object which its religious advocates intend, if possible to achieve.

It may be thought that these remarks are somewhat severe, and intended to pass a censure on the entire body of religious professors. Severe as they may be, nevertheless they are strictly true. All the discrimination your humble servant would make is to exempt from their application, all those who conduct as well as whose language, plainly marks them as enemies of incendiary movements, and the active friends of order, of legal rights, of the laws, and of the constitution. Let no man's declaration of neutrality in this matter pass as current coin. Every man in his enlightened community has made up his mind on the subject. If he has not the independence to declare his opinions, he is not to be trusted, and may be safely set down as a friend of the disorganizers.

It is well known with avidity most religious enthusiasts seize on all the popular excitements to advance their cause. This excitement, appealing to the sympathies of the people, and clad in the garb of philanthropy and religion, affords an excellent hobby for their purpose. Many have openly mounted it. But there are thousands who are more wary, and fear that open measures would work them an injury, who publicly make no professions, who in private, with one class, manifest a sort of half-way disapprobation, and,



to another class, enforce the doctrine of the abolitionists with all the zeal and energy they possess.

It is painful to be under necessity of making up a judgment upon the character and conduct of any part of mankind; but facts warrant and sustain it, and it is honestly believed that these professed neutrals are doing more in this cause by secret means, than its public emissaries can achieve. Shall we then encourage hypocrisy? If not, then let us not give encouragement to measures which can into exercise, that pernicious mode of action.

We might fill a volume with remarks on this question, but time presses and they must draw to a close. To the honest, the enlightened, and the independent citizen, let us appeal - your country is in danger - her constitution is attacked - the names of your patriot sires are treated with irreverence - and the solemn pledges into which they entered, to secure to your prosperity, protection and safety, are regarded as but little better than leagues with devils. A portion of your fellow citizens, than whom not a more honorable and high minded people dwell on the face of the earth, are openly vilified and abused, and treated as thieves, robbers and cut-throats. The flame of civil discord is kindled through the nation, mobs incited to action, and slaves to insurrection and murder - while fanaticism, like an arch fiend from the lower regions, sits smiling with complacency, on the wide spreading mischief, which she has conjured up.

The holy altars of religion are polluted with incendiary offerings - The courts dedicated to the service of Almighty God, have, in numerous instances, been prostituted to the work of concocting conspiracy and rebellion. The pulpit, set apart for promulgation of the doctrines of peace and good will, have been made subservient to the designs of men, some of whom,

at least, have declared that the rebel slave who would lead the host of his fellows in bondage to freedom, even through seas of their masters' blood, would deserve an elevation equal to Washington!

You see even foreign renegades, employed by foreign royalists, and countenance by American fanatics, traversing your country, casting abroad arrows, firebrands and death, and aided in their nefarious work by dastards who are a disgrace to the name of American citizen, laboring with all their powers to sap the foundation of our government. And should they prove successful, what will you see hereafter? - May God avert the impending fate - but as surely as success may crown their efforts, you will see our Union dissolved - our country rent asunder by internal commotion, and its fields crimsoned with the blood of her children! You will see the fair fabric of the American republic shattered to atoms, prostrated to the earth, and smoldering in dust! You will see the priestly fanatic standing with his feet on the neck of a degraded and suffering people! You will see - but it is enough. Lift up the veil and look at the horrors which await our country at the hands of fanaticism, should she triumph, and if patriotism remain in your breast, you will not - cannot - cannot hesitate to strike the blow and crush the monster.

Resolved That any interference by the non slaveholding states on the subject of slavery, is incompatible with the preservation of the Union. We view with regret and alarm all attempts to incite such interference, or to disturb the peace of the country by the fruitless agitation of that exciting subject; and we hold it to be the duty of every patriot, to frown upon the first dawning of every attempts to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sound ties which now binds its various parties.

Silas James, Jr. member of  
the House of Representatives