CONSTITUTIONAL ARGUMENT,

AGAINST

AMERICAN SLAVERY.

BY GERRIT SMITH.

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PETERBORO, *July* 18, 1844.

JOHN G. WHITTIER, of Massachusetts.

My Dear Friend,

I welcomed the organization of the Non-Resistant Society. I flattered myself, that, among its least benefits, it would help solve my doubts respecting the "Peace Question." I hung up its "Declaration of Sentiments" in one of the most public rooms of my house. It hangs there still. If its doctrines are not true, (and, though not yet convinced, that they are, neither am I yet clear, that they are not,) they, nevertheless, testify, most honorably, to the conscientiousness, self-denial, and intrepidity, of its signers. The organization of this Society was a bold assault on Civil Government: and the rightfulness of Civil Government I had never been taught to question. Still, I was willing to see Civil Government fall, if it could be shown, that to take human life is wrong;—for, I could not deny, that the taking—or, what, in principle, is the same thing, the threatening—of human life, is essential to the maintenance of Civil Government.

The Liberty Party, no less, of course, than other political parties, recognizes the rightfulness of Civil Government. It is, therefore, consistent for the Non-Resistants to oppose it; and they do oppose it. But, notwithstanding this opposition, the Party is increasing. It will not yield to the argument, that Civil Government is a wrong institution; or, in

other words, that the inviolability of human life, which is the fundamental principle of the Non-Resistants, is a right principle. But, their failure to overcome the Liberty Party, by the force of this principle, has not discouraged the Non-Resistants. They have, recently, rallied for a new attack, on a new ground—the ground, that the Federal Constitution is a pro-slavery instrument. Their grandest and most trumpeted deduction from the assumed pro-slavery character of this instrument is, that the Northern States should separate from the Southern States. A deduction, so illegitimate and absurd, should not, indeed, be suffered to call in question the soundness of the premises; but, it, necessarily, impeaches the wisdom of those, who make it. That wisdom had, already, become questionable. It had become so, when the Non-Resistants, alleging, that some four or five prominent members of the Liberty Party were bad men, made this allegation a sufficient ground for urging the Party to disband. It had become so, in view of the extravagance of the charges against these men; and in view of the wonder of the Non-Resistants, that these charges, which made our Stanton, and Leavitt, and Birney, and Tappans guilty of a State Prison grade of offences, were not believed. An old lady, who lived and died in my neighborhood, used to say to persons, who were about to carry their claims into Courts of Law: "Don't lay your action too high." Great as is the popular credulity, nevertheless, the Non-Resistants, in preferring the charges in question, "laid their action too high" for it. Abby Kelly expressed her surprise, last Fall, that I had not investigated these charges. I, very probably, should have investigated them, if they had not "laid the action too high" for my bump of marvelousness. Were I to see a newspaper article entitled: "W. L. Garrison a horse thief," or "Edmund Quincy a burglar," I should either not read it at all, or read it to enjoy a joke. The article would "lay its action too high" to merit my sober reading. And, yet, it could not surpass, in extravagance, the reproaches, which these very gentlemen have uttered in America, and

which their brother, John A. Collins, was commissioned to utter in England, of men, whose integrity is, certainly, as far above suspicion, as is that of their accusers.

But, to return from this digression:—why should slavery, as the Non-Resistants say it should, separate the North from the South? Why should Northern slaveholders disdain connection with Southern slaveholders? Why should "pot call kettle black?" The slaveholding North, so far from being less guilty than the slaveholding South, is as much guiltier, as greater light and weaker temptation can make it. The national parts of slavery—such as slavery in the District of Columbia and in the Territory of Florida—depending, as they all do, for continued existence on the will of the North—are as much more guilty than the slavery in the Southern States, as the people of those States are less aroused, than the people of the Northern, to the wickedness of slavery. Nay, the laws and usages, by which the free people of color in the Northern States, are vexed, hampered, outraged, crushed, constitute so gratuitous, so wantonly wicked, a chiming with the slaveholding policy of the South, and so indispensable a prop of this policy, as to make them not less guilty than her bloodiest slave codes. When I think of this project of separating the Northern from the Southern States, I am led to ask, as did Mr. Webster, in one of his Faneuil Hall speeches: "Where shall *I* go?"—and, finding my answer, also, in the words of another (, Mr. Gurley,) to reply: "I go with the South." If I must go with the North or the South, let it be with the least guilty—and that is the South.

The American Anti-Slavery Society, which, whatever it may have been up to this time, is, certainly, now, in the hands of the Non-Resistants, and does, certainly, now, take its tone from them, calls upon us to "agitate, agitate," for the separation of the Northern from the Southern States. Not to speak of any other evil, that will result from this agitation;—how strong will be its tendency to create and foster the delusion, that, in the matter of slavery, the North is

guiltless, and has nothing to do but to get out of the bad company, into which her innocence has been drawn!

Why should we regard the Federal Constitution as pro-slavery? Whenever I read it, it presents itself as a noble and beautiful Temple of Liberty. Whenever I read its Preamble, I see the Goddess of Liberty standing in the porch of this Temple; and, whenever I read its Amendments, so fraught, as they are, with the deep solicitude of our fathers for the utmost security of human rights, I see in them the buttresses, by which the builders of this Temple gave it additional strength and glory. Is the Constitution pro-slavery, because the Government of the United States has, almost from its beginning, been administered for the advantage of slavery? As well might you hold the Constitution responsible for any other trampling on its principles. To seek in that instrument for authority for the conduct of Government, in the cases of the Creole, Amistad, Florida War, or, in any other of its murderous and diabolical agencies in behalf of slavery, would be as vain, as to seek there for the justification of its violations of Indian Treaties. (What, however, were these violations for, but to serve the demands of slaveholders?) The fact, that the nation, in its national capacity, favors and upholds slavery, proves nothing against the Constitution;—for this it may do, and the Constitution not be responsible for it—for this it may do, in utter repugnance, and in bold defiance, of the Constitution.

I repeat my question: "Why should we regard the Federal Constitution as pro-slavery?" Is it, because it does not, specifically, provide for the overthrow of slavery in the States, which adopted it? It does not provide for the correction of any of their vicious practices; and is it, therefore, proper to say, that it is in favor of gambling and drunkenness? It certainly is, if it is proper to say, that its want of jurisdiction, in respect to the slavery of those States, merits the stigma of being pro-slavery. I ask again: "Why should we regard the Federal Constitution as pro-slavery?" Is it because of its guarantees of slavery? I hear and read,

frequently, of these guarantees. Even distinguished statesmen speak and write of them. But it is in vain, that I look into the Constitution for them. They are not there; nor any thing else, which bears the slightest resemblance to guarantees of slavery. Or, is the Constitution pro-slavery, because of the existence of slavery in the District of Columbia, in the Territory of Florida, and under the protection of the American flag? But, all this slavery is, manifestly, in violation of, not in accordance with, the Constitution. It was well said by Mr. Davis on the floor of Congress, last Winter: "Congress can no more make a slave than a king."

When it is said, that the Constitution is pro-slavery, the proper interpretation of the charge is, that the Constitution does itself favor slavery—does itself contribute to uphold it. But, that the charge, so interpreted, is unsustainable, none can deny. Who can deny, that the faithful carrying out of the principles of the Constitution would result in the speedy abolition of the whole system of American slavery? Who believes, that this system could endure five years, should Congress, at its next session, abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, and in the Territory of Florida, and, with a concurring Executive and Judiciary, go to the whole extent of its Constitutional duty, in withholding protection from the abomination, and in discountenancing it? Who believes, that American slavery could have endured until this time, had the Government conformed to the Constitution, and confined slavery to the original thirteen States? Must we call that a pro-slavery instrument, when they, who framed, and they, who adopted it, believed, and joyfully believed, that American slavery was to endure but a few years? That such was the belief, at that time, of well nigh the whole country, is manifest from the fact, that Congress, under the Confederation, in 1787, unanimously decided, and that Congress under the Constitution, two years after, did also, with the single exception of Robert Yates of New York, unanimously decide, that the vast territory north of the Ohio, from which we have erected several States, should

be forever clear of slavery. That the Constitution was framed in 1787, and adopted two years afterwards, shows a remarkable and instructive coincidence with the above dates. And must we call that a pro-slavery instrument, the pages of which are unpolluted by the words "slave" and "slavery ?"—and not one line of which will transmit to posterity the disgraceful fact, that slavery was ever among the crimes of the American people ?—and not one line of which will need alteration to adapt it, more perfectly, to the state of things in our country, when slavery shall have totally disappeared from it ?

Away then with the charge, that the Federal Constitution is pro-slavery ! Not so, however, it is said ;—for there are in that instrument, as alleged, some pro-slavery exceptions to its confessedly reigning anti-slavery principles. But, if these exceptions exist, it is, nevertheless, untrue, that they are entitled to give character to the instrument. The current of a stream is not determined by its eddies; nor a principle overthrown by the exceptions to it. The general principles, scope, and tendency of the Federal Constitution decide whether it is, or is not, pro-slavery. Nothing, however, would be risked by conceding, that the supposed exceptions have power to decide this question ;—for, in the whole instrument, there is not one pro-slavery line—not one line, which, justly interpreted, contributes to the upholding of slavery. All agree, that, if there is such a line, it is found in the provision, respecting *the apportionment of representatives ;* or, in that, respecting "*the migration or importation" of certain persons ;* or in those respecting "*insurrections" and "domestic violence ;"* or, in that respecting "*a person held to service or labor.*"

There is no evidence whatever, that the first mentioned provision was designed to promote slavery. On the contrary, it is a bounty on liberty, and presents a strong inducement to every State to raise its inhabitants to the rank of freemen. Rather than call it a pro-slavery provision, I would charge it with seeking to promote the anti-slavery

cause, not only at the expense of concerning itself impertinently with the internal institutions and arrangements of the States: but, even at the expense of violating the great Constitutional principle, that every man is a man—a whole man—and, in no part, a chattel. Not only, the Supreme Court of the United States, but all the ablest expounders of the Constitution, give this principle a place in it: and maintain, that the Constitution knows no man, as a slave—knows no man, as less, or other, than a person. I complain of the provision in question for its unmanning process. It should have suffered every man, especially every man, who has not lost his freedom by his crimes, to count *one*. This reduction of a man to the fraction of a man is an indignity to sacred manhood, which, even if one of its purposes was to subserve the cause of freedom, is not only unatoned for by that purpose, but is entirely unadapted to subserve that cause. Far better were it for that cause, if this three-fifthing of the man, who has fallen under the yoke of slavery, had not taken place; and if every such man had been counted a whole one. But, it is said, that, inasmuch as the slaves are not allowed to vote, and their interests are, therefore, not only not represented, but misrepresented, by those, who get elected to office, they ought not to be counted at all in the apportionment of representatives. There are States, however, in which white men, unless they have property, can not vote, and in which they are, consequently, misrepresented by those, who get office:—nevertheless, they are reckoned in this apportionment; and we all do, and should, think it right, that they are. The free people of color also (numbering some four hundred thousand) are, from the denial of the right of nearly all of them to vote, as much unrepresented, and misrepresented, as the slaves; and, yet, no one denies the propriety of their being included in the apportionment. It is contended, that the Constitution, studying the protection of the slaves, should have shut them entirely out of the apportionment. But, in my judgment, it should no more have done this, than have sought to protect the poor white

man and the free colored man, by visiting upon them a similar degradation. These three classes of men are all wronged;—not, however, in being counted in the apportionment—in being counted by the nation—but in being disfranchised by their respective States. They and their interests are unrepresented and misrepresented, not through the fault of the Constitution, but through their want of votes.

The Non-Resistants lay great stress on Mr. Adams' and Mr. Giddings' late Report. Shame on them, that they do! These two gentlemen would have us believe, that the Constitutional provision under consideration—that the counting of slaves in the apportionment of representatives—is the reason, why the Government is administered, in behalf of slavery. Shame on Mr. Adams and Mr. Giddings also! Shame on them for keeping out of view the fact, that the whites of the free States, being more than twice as numerous, as the whites of the slave States, can have an anti-slavery Administration, whenever they please. Shame on them for thus attempting to turn off the public eye from the true cause, why our Administrations are pro-slavery. That cause will cease, and only then, when Mr. Adams and Mr. Giddings, and the other men of the North, shall cease from the crime of electing pro-slavery men to office. That Mr. Adams and Mr. Giddings should, whilst holding votes for Henry Clay between their fingers, set up such a loud lament over the tendency of the Constitution to sustain slavery, would, most certainly, pass for the height of affectation, if it were not true, that even the wisest and best men may be the subjects of very glaring delusions. And is it not a great shame, that the Non-Resistants should use this Report of Mr. Adams and Mr. Giddings to justify their interpretation of the Constitution, when they so well know, that this Report goes to relieve the conscience of the North, by concealing the fact of the ability and duty of the North to overthrow the national parts, and arrest the spread, of slavery; and to relieve it, too, by referring the aggressions of slavery to a fault in the Consti-

tution and in our fathers rather than to ourselves and to our violations of the principles of that instrument?

The provision respecting the African slave trade, (for, I admit, that, if, not exclusively, it, nevertheless, respects that,) is to be regarded as anti-slavery, because it is a part of an anti-slavery agreement. This provision and the power of Congress over commerce show what is this agreement;—for, notwithstanding, they lack juxtaposition in the Constitution, they make up this agreement. But, for the qualification of the power by the provision, the power would not have been granted. That the agreement in question is anti-slavery is deduced from the following considerations.

Before the Colonies came under the Federal Constitution, they were independent of each other and of the world. They had, each, as perfect a right, as any State or Nation, to prosecute the African slave trade, and to prosecute it too, forever. But now, each agreed with its partners under the new compact—not that it would continue this trade for nineteen years, (that would have been a pro-slavery agreement—) but, that, if it continued it at all, it would discontinue it, after nineteen years, (and that makes it an anti-slavery agreement.) Had the agreement been, that each of the partners would, forthwith, discontinue the traffic, it would, certainly, have been of a far more meritorious anti-slavery character: but, that does not render the actual agreement pro-slavery. I enter into a partnership, mercantile or other, with a man, who is a drunkard, and I obtain from him a written stipulation, that he will drink no more intoxicating liquor after six months; and, that, should he, I may resort even to force itself to restrain his indulgence. Now, I readily admit, that a stipulation for the immediate relinquishment of his vice would far more deserve the name of a temperance stipulation. Nevertheless, I can not consent, that what I do obtain from him, argues no regard, on my part, for temperance. Still less, can I consent, that it makes me responsible for his continued intemperance, and numbers me with the opposers of temperance. So is it with the

Constitution. If it does less against the African slave trade, than is desirable, it, nevertheless, should have credit for what it does. Above all, that which it does against the trade, should not be construed into friendship for it.

I am aware, that it may be said, that a Colony, on coming into our Union, acquired a more efficient protection for its commerce, than it before enjoyed. Let this incidental advantage to the African slave trade—this incidental additional security for it—pass for what it is worth toward giving a pro-slavery character to the anti-slavery agreement under consideration.

I close my remarks under this head by saying, that the year eighteen hundred and eight has long since passed away; and that, if ever the Constitution had a pro-slavery operation, in virtue of its relation to the African slave trade, that operation has long since ceased.

The provisions concerning "insurrections" and "domestic violence" are neither pro-slavery nor anti-slavery. The powers, which they convey, are indispensable to prevent and arrest lawlessness and bloodshed—are indispensable, indeed, to the upholding of Civil Government. It is true, that these powers may, sometimes, be employed against a right cause; but they are, oftener, employed against a wrong one: for lawlessness and violence are, more frequently, called in to the aid of a wrong, than a right cause. If the provisions in question stand in the way of the lawless and violent abolition of slavery: so, also, do they stand in the way of the like abolition of every other form of evil; and, so also, do they stand in the way of every lawless and violent attempt to introduce, or establish, any form of good, They forbid the helping of the cause of liberty, by the lawless and violent breaking up of slavery. But, they, also forbid the helping of the cause of temperance, by the lawless and violent breaking up of distilleries and rum-shops; and the helping of the cause of purity, by the like breaking up of brothels. So, too, let a system of religion be ever so perfect, these provisions of the Constitution forbid the in-

troduction, or propagation, of it, by lawlessness and violence. I need say no more of these provisions, than that, inasmuch as they hinder not the application of lawful and peaceful means for the overthrow of slavery, they hinder not the application of the only means, which abolitionists choose to employ, or have employed.

The last provision of the Constitution, which I have proposed to examine, respects fugitives from service. Greater reliance is laid on this, than on any other, to prove, that the Constitution is pro-slavery: and the arguments drawn, and attempted to be drawn, from this provision, to prove the pro-slavery character of the Constitution, have been immeasurably more embarrassing to the Liberty Party, than those drawn, and attempted to be drawn, from any, or every, other part of that instrument.

Even under the pro-slavery construction of this provision, it can, Constitutionally, operate but little in favor of slavery. For no fugitive from the District of Columbia, or the Territory of Florida, or from any slave State, which is not one of the original thirteen States, or which, at farthest, was not erected within one of them; and no fugitive from any one of those thirteen States, who has ever been permitted to go beyond the present, or, at farthest, beyond the original boundaries of those States; can, in the eye of the Constitution, be a slave. Again, the tide of Northern anti-slavery sentiment has now risen so high, and acquired so much strength, as to bear to almost certain safety every fugitive, who is so fortunate, as to get upon it. Not ten in a thousand of the runaway slaves, who now reach a free State, are replunged into slavery. Again, if the part of the Constitution, which we are now considering, or any other part, be found to be in confiict with righteousness, let us remember, that the Constitution is, by one of its provisons, amendable. Let us, in that case, correct, but not discard it.

But, I am, now, to prove, that the provision in question is not susceptible of the pro-slavery construction or meaning; or, in other words, that it does not favor, or countenance, the recapture of fugitive slaves.

I will neither reject, nor adopt, any of the published views of this provision. I will pronounce them neither sound, nor unsound. Among these views is, that:

It is a provision capable of innocent uses—such as the recovering of fugitive apprentices, minor-children, &c. &c.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted, that one, and the leading one, of the objects, in bringing this provision into the Constitution, was to facilitate the retaking of fugitive slaves: and, it must also be admitted, that, if this object gives character and effect to the provision, the Constitution has a pro-slavery taint.

Another of these views is, that:

If it is a provision to promote the recovery of fugitive slaves, it is contrary to the Divine law, and is, therefore null and void.

It is certainly true, that, in such case, it is null and void, *in foro conscientiæ*: but, whether it is consistent for him, who swears to support the Constitution, or who, otherwise, recognizes its validity, to admit even this much, remains a question.

The last of these views, which I shall notice, is, that:

The Constitution is to be understood, as they, who adopted it, understood it; and that they looked upon the innocent face of this provision, and did not pry into the occult and guilty meaning, which is imputed to it.

There is certainly great force in this view. But, would there not, also, be great force in replying to it, that the framers of the Constitution were the agents of its adopters; and, that these adopters are concluded by the evidences of what their agents intended to do, and actually did?

Conceding every doubtful ground, and confining myself to that, which is certain, I admit that, on either of the two following conditions, the pro-slavery construction or meaning, of the provision, should prevail.

1st. If that construction, or meaning, is expressed in the provision.

2nd. If it could have been: or, in other words, if the

framers and adopters of the Constitution would have suffered it to be expressed.

That the first of these two conditions is unfulfilled, and that, so far, therefore, the provision is not susceptible of the pro-slavery meaning, is abundantly manifest from two considerations. 1st. The provision speaks of "service or labor *due*." But, by the definitions of the Southern slave codes, (and Southern slaveholders are, of course, concluded by those definitions,) the slave is a chattel; and hence to predicate indebtedness of a slave is, in the light of those definitions, as absurd, as to predicate it of a horse, or a stone. 2nd. The "Madison Papers" inform us, to use their own language precisely, that: "On motion of Mr. Randolph, the word 'servitude' was struck out (by the Convention, from Article 1st, Sec. 2,) and 'service' unanimously inserted, the former being thought to express the condition of slaves, and the latter the obligations of free persons."

We, now, proceed to the second condition. And I would, here, remark, for the purpose of abating any surprise at my extensive, perhaps too extensive, concession in this condition, that I made the concession, because there is not a little collateral evidence, that a part of the framers of the Constitution intended, that the provision should carry the pro-slavery meaning; and, that the remainder, if not also intending it, were, at least, willing to seem to intend it.

The question to be answered, at this stage of our remarks, is, whether the framers and adopters of the Constitution would have suffered the pro-slavery meaning of this provision to be expressed in it—to be distinctly, unambiguously, expressed in it. Who can read the "Madison Papers," and, in other ways, also, acquaint himself with the mind of the Convention, which framed the Constitution, and, yet, believe, that the Convention would have suffered it? Who can believe, that this Convention, which would not suffer the word "slave," or the word "slavery," or even the word "servitude," to have a place in the Constitution; which agreed with its Mr. Gerry, that it "ought to be careful not

to give any sanction to slavery;" and which, to use the very words of its leading member, Mr. Madison, on the floor of the Convention, "thought it wrong to admit in the Constitution the idea, that there could be property in man"—who, I say, can believe, that this Convention would have consented to let the Constitution declare, in plain and unequivocal terms, the right of the slaveholder to chase down, and to chase down unhindered, the poor innocent fugitive from slavery? More difficult, however, would it be for any one, who has informed himself of the strong anti-slavery sentiment, which then existed in almost every part of our country, to believe, that the Constitution would have been adopted, had it so spoken.

I need say no more to show what must be the answer to the question proposed at the beginning of my last paragraph. It must be prompt and decisive against those, who would make a pro-slavery use of the Constitution. Hence, there is no more foundation in fact for the second, than for the first, of the two conditions, on which, and on either of which, I admitted the right of giving the pro-slavery construction to the provision in question.

That there is any other condition, on which it is right to give the pro-slavery construction, I deny. It may be said, that the pro-slavery intention of the provision, as gathered from collateral testimonies, should govern the interpretation of it. I admit (, and the admission is perhaps, excessively liberal,) that it should, provided it (the intention) could have been expressed in the provision. But, I maintain, that, if it could not—that, if the moral sense of those, who framed, and those, who adopted the Constitution, would have revolted at, and forbidden such expression—that, then, these collateral testimonies are to have no weight whatever. To illustrate;—I will suppose, that I have made a written contract with my neighbor, under which I claim, that he has sold me a certain privilege. I seek to enforce my claim to that privilege, in a Court of Law. He resists. On the trial, I am constrained to admit, that I was aware, that the

idea of selling the privilege was deeply offensive and revolting to the moral sense of my neighbor; and that, in all probability, his execution of the contract could not have been obtained, had the contract described the privilege in plain terms, instead of attempting to describe it in circuitous and vague phraseology. In these circumstances, let me adduce what collateral evidence I may, that he intended to sell me the privilege; the Court will be steadfast against my claim to it;—and, the more so, if the contract, as is the case with the Constitutional provision in question, clearly expresses the right to certain other things;—and, still the more so, if, as in that case, it wholly fails to describe the claimed privilege. Thus defeated, I might regret, that I had not accosted my neighbor with a plain and direct proposition for the privilege;—for, possibly, he might have embraced it, and executed a contract expressive of it. But, my regret would be unavailing. So, too, the pro-slavery party may now regret, that it did not try those, who framed, and those, who adopted the Constitution, with a plain and direct proposition for the unmolested pursuit of runaway slaves. But, regret in this case, as well as in the other, would come too late. This party had its choice; and it chose to couch its guilty intention in circumlocution and obscurity, rather than risk defeat upon a direct and plain expression of it. Had it chosen the latter, it might, possibly, have succeeded—that is, it might, possibly, have succeeded in a bold and shameless attempt to reconcile the Convention and the People to such an expression. But, to say, that this party should benefit by the bare supposition of its possible success in a certain course—and, that too, when a contrary course was its actual choice—is the very height of absurdity.

I need say no more to show, that the innocent meanings, which lie on the face of this provision, should not be supplanted by the guilty one, which, it is said, to conceal. I need say no more to prove, that this provision is to be construed, as having no reference to slaves.

Is it asked, why these views, of the correctness of which I am so confident, have not been entertained by our Courts of Law?—it is readily answered, that it is because those Courts are involved in the public sentiment of our country, and because this public sentiment is tyrrannized over, debauched, bewitched, by slavery. The judges of our land are as little able, and as little disposed, as the clergymen of our land, to resist the authoritative commands and blinding influences of slavery.

I am glad to see so many pens employed to vindicate the Constitution from the charge of being pro-slavery. It is an anti-slavery instrument; and needs but be administered in consistency with its principles, to effectuate the speedy overthrow of the whole system of American slavery. It is a power in the hands of the People, which they can not fling away, without making themselves guilty of ingratitude to God, and treason to the slave;—for God has given it to them; and the slave vitally needs their righteous use of it. It may cost them much toil, and self-denial, and vexation of spirit, to recover that power from the perversions, by which it has upheld, and extended, the dominion of slavery:—but, to all this they must submit; and, the more readily, because they have shared, and largely too, in the guilt of those perversions. This shield, which God has given us to put over the head of the slave, we have, traitorously, made the protection of the slaveholder. This weapon, which God has given us, for fighting the battles of the oppressed, we have, murderously, wielded on the side of the oppressor. It will be a poor fruit of repentance, or, rather, a fruit of poor repentance, if now, when our hearts are smitten with a sense of our wrong use of this shield and weapon, we shall, from our study of ease and quiet, from our desire to promote a favorite theory, or from any other cause, throw them away, instead of manfully, courageously, perseveringly, and therefore, successfully, putting them to a right use.

With great regard, your friend,

GERRIT SMITH.