

Dear friend

When you asked me on Saturday morning to speak some evening at the fair, I had not determined fully in my own mind what my course should be. I have since determined not to speak & will state my reasons.

It is perhaps well known to you, that I have thought the directing spirit of both the Mass & the American A. S. society was narrow & intolerant, attempting to impose on all, the conscientious views of a few, without considering whether the premises were agreed, on both sides; as for instance, you & I think we with our professions cannot consistently remain in a proslavery church, or party. A very good rule for us, because we agree on the premises on which the argument is based, which leads us to this conclusion; but when we go further, & say that no a petitionist can consistently remain in either of these bodies, we forget the rights of individual

Ms. A. 9. 2. 22. 144

judgement & conscience, & become bigoted, & if we  
speak to those who differ from us, any conscientious  
feeling, or consistent action, intolerant,

A man thinks & many I doubt not honestly do,  
think, the constitution an antislavery instrument. That  
right have I to say, that such an one cannot con-  
sistently take office under that instrument, you pro-  
bably would say to this, that the resolutions passed by  
the societies bind nobody, & that the platform is free.  
It may be in form, but it is not in fact, & the treat-  
ment a man differing from ourselves receives in  
our meetings, is such as to prevent any one from  
wishing to hear it more than once. To our friends  
we can forgive much, but to those with whom we  
have differed, we can excuse nothing. D. L. Childs can  
vote for a slaveholder, & receive but a slight rebuke,  
while a man who honestly votes, or is voted for in  
the Liberty party, is condemned without benefit of  
clergy. Now for myself I consider them both as mis-  
taken, but think Mr. Childs the greater sinner, if either  
sins, because his light is greater.

But to come to the case in hand & which prin-  
cipally led me to my determination, Why should the  
Chromo type be considered more unfit for an adver-  
tising medium than the Post or Atlas. You will

probably say, the one is a secret & the other an open  
enemy. A very easy accusation to make, but not so  
easy to prove. The editor differs from us in his  
views of the course that should be taken, but he  
makes no secret of them. he is as fair and above  
board as the Post & more so. If you say that he does  
not wish the abolition of slavery. I join issue with  
you & require some proof. You will probably say that  
he would desert the cause, if some other measure  
should arise, & so would you. He would not abolish  
slavery by certain means, because he believes the  
evils that would result from their use, would be  
a new & greater evil. You would not abolish sla-  
very by physical force or purchase, because you be-  
lieve the same. I believe him to be honest in his  
opinion. I believe you to be same & compare these with  
your main idea of using moral power as the main  
lever, but regret the liberality which denies to me  
the right to judge what is consistent for me & what not.

I cannot speak at the fair therefore because I dis-  
agree with its managers in a matter slight in itself  
but which involves a principle. I do not wish to coun-  
teract the exclusiveness it has shown, should not  
wish to mar the harmony that prevails by finding fault  
with what was done, or I should feel bound to do if I spoke

I have stated as briefly, (though not very clearly!) as I could  
my feelings ~~my~~ feelings which by the way are not con-  
fined to myself, but are quite common among what are  
called old organized abolitionists. I have none this  
because I wished to say to you, what I make no secret  
of to others. I do it, or rather I differ from you with  
deep sorrow because as I said before my sympathies  
are with the old societies, but the vital question of tot-  
tion has become involved & I must confess that much  
as I wish to free the slave I am not willing to do it  
at the expense of freedom of thought.

I am sorry to trouble you with this at the present  
time & hope we may both receive & confer the full measure  
of freedom:

Yours truly

W. A. White

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Ms. A. 9. 2. 22. 144-



W. A. Phelps  
1846.

11  
177

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