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Opposition to the Constitution's Provisions Concerning Slavery

Samuel Hopkins to Moses Brown Newport, R.I., 22 October 1787 (excerpt)

. . . I am hurt by the doings of the convention respecting the *Slave Trade*. It is as you suppose. They have carefully secured the practice of it in these States for 20 years, and prevented any Asylum for slaves during that term, unless every individual State, should suppress this trade. They have taken it out of the hands of Congress. We cannot determine that the major part of the delegates were pleased with this. Some of the southern delegates no doubt, insisted upon it that the introduction of slaves should be secured, and obstinately refused to consent to any constitution, which did not secure it. The others therefore consented, rather than have no constitution, or one in which the delegates should not be unanimous. I fear this is an *Achan*,¹ which will bring a curse, so that we cannot prosper. At the same time it appears to me that if this constitution be not adopted by the States, as it now stands, we shall have none, and nothing but anarchy and confusion can be expected.—I must leave it with the Supreme Ruler of the universe, who will do right, and knows what to do with these States, to answer his own infinitely wise purposes; and will vindicate the oppressed, and break the arm of the oppressor in his own way and time; and cause the wrath of man to praise Him.

It has been objected by some of the ministers against preferring a memorial to the General Assembly respecting the Slave trade; That the present ruling part in the Assembly, have appeared to be so destitute of all principles of justice, or regard to it; and have acted such an iniquitous part, that there is an impropriety in applying to *them* for justice; especially for the ministers of the Gospel to do it, whom they hold in the highest contempt, and would embrace any opportunity to pour contempt upon them, which we should give them by laying such a petition before them. This prevents any thing of that kind being done at present.

1. Achan's actions brought the wrath of God upon the people of Israel (Joshua 7).

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