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Opposition to the Constitution's Provisions Concerning Slavery

Edmund Prior to Moses Brown New York, 1 December 1787 (excerpt)

Thy favour of the 18th Ulto. I duly recd., and should have answered it Long since, but a Member of the Late Convention, who I had some acquaintance with, being Absent, I was unable to obtain that information I wished for, and altho he is yet away I shall nevertheless endeavour to reply to thine, The Great oversight of the Convention in respect to securing universal Liberty & Impartial Justice is generally attributed to the influence of the Southern Members, who had they duly ad[v]erted to the Publick declarations made in the days of their fear and distress, a very different determination in respect to Slavery would have taken place; With us it is however agreed that the State Legislatures will not be restrained from enacting such Laws for the prevention of the Odious traffick, as they may Judge expedient, for themselves, and I wish it may be the Case, hoping the advocates for the poor afflicted & oppress'd Africans will not be discouraged from pursuing their Laudable purpose—Its nevertheless allowed that should the Constitution be adopted the State of Massachusetts will no Longer be an Assylum to the Negroes, unless they Should, except that Article, in their adoption Nothwithstandg our Testimony is so opposite to the sentiments of that body yet cannot see, how we shall move in the business, farther than a Pat[i]ent gradual Perseverance, for the Work is evidently on its way, and I have no doubt will in time be effected, hope our Pat[i]ence may keep Pace with the Success & we Steadily press forward—at times I have been possessed with a fear Least from the Cause being so good and the unrighteousness & Cruelty of Slavery, we should be induced to attempt to drive, & thereby be in danger of Shifting our ground,—~~This fear has~~ which would then become an uncertain foundation,

Thine of the 19th with its inclosures was very acceptable, I had no expectation of any State going so far yet, its an excellent example for the others and I hope they will, adopt or enact Similar Laws—It has been published here & in Jersey & have no Doubt but in Philada. also. . . .

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