Philanthrop, Northampton *Hampshire Gazette* 23 April 1788 (excerpts)

. . . There is another objection which the gentlemen declare is insuperable, that Congress may not prohibit the importation of slaves prior to the year 1808; and that the states will be obliged to aid each other in defence and support of every thing, to which they are intitled by the constitution; but are we not already under the most solemn engagements to aid each other in defence and support of every thing, to which we are respectively intitled by the confederation; and by the confederation Congress would never have the power to prohibit the slave trade, the several states retained the right of doing as they pleased in that respect.

The idea that by civil connections, we become partakers of each others sins, I believe is of late date. While this country was connected with Great Britain, we heard nothing from the gentlemen to prove, that the connections ought to be broken because that nation promoted the slave-trade, more than any other people under Heaven. Before the late war, several of the colonies wished to abolish that trade, and passed laws for the purpose, which were negatived by the king; but I presume the gentlemen never urged that as an argument to prove, that we were absolved from our allegiance; if the principle is just, we cannot again be connected with Great Britain for the reasons abovementioned; nor with France, for they have adopted the same policy. Although the European nations, being replenished with white inhabitants, forbid the importation and slavery of negroes at home, yet all of them which have colonies or islands in America, encourage the slave trade. Nor can we be connected even with Connecticut or New-York, for the laws of those states justify slavery; our hand must therefore be against every man, and every man's hand against us.

A few years since, slavery was countenanced by the laws of this state, and many persons imported and held negroes in servitude: but were other persons therefore guilty, who had no concern in the practice, and ever expressed their disapprobation of it. If at that time a man in the state owned a negro, or was guilty of any other *nefarious* practice, and this doctrine of imputed guilt in civil society is just, the gentlemen were bound in conscience to drive the man out of the state, or leave it themselves.

From the printed debates in the Convention it appears, that the advocates for the constitution declared themselves as averse to slavery, as those who opposed it. Notwithstanding which, the gentlemen suggest that the late Convention at Boston voted for the barbarities exercised upon the negroes: and that establishing the constitution, is establishing the most ignominious kind of theft. A very small regard to decency, would have prevented these and several other gross and unmanly reflections, on the major part of the assembly, which is acknowledged to have been the fullest representation of the people ever known in the state. Should the gentlemen write further on the subject, I hope they will do it with less acrimony; and if their Christian charity, of which they

obtain the credit of a full share, compels them to bless the negroes, I hope it will restrain them from cursing the Convention.

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