

*From the Boston Recorder.*

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TO THE REV. SAMUEL OSGOOD, D. D.  
FROM RALPH EMERSON.

*(Concluded.)*

But not only is such action as that of the abolition societies, uncalled for and out of place at the north; and not only is it positively and greatly injurious to the cause of emancipation itself; but as it actually exists, it is productive of other evils of no little magnitude. This I barely suggested in my letters, without trespassing on your time to tell how or where. Shall I now be permitted to dwell a moment on one out of many of these. Though I have not met with it in print, yet I presume it must often have occurred to your own thoughts, on your wakeful pillow, when, as a minister of the gospel, a watchman of Zion, a lover of souls and of the harmony and welfare of the churches, you have anxiously pondered the causes that distract these churches of our Redeemer, and which hinder and paralyze the usefulness of their ministers. Tell me, my dear brother, whether, in those hours of fearful pondering, you can, even respecting your own self, console your anxious heart with the belief, that you shall be the means of saving as many souls as you should if there had been no such movements as these in our community? I will not here ask, whether you have preached just as much and just as well, and just as fully and perfectly performed all the other duties of a faithful pastor. Suppose you have. Still can you believe it has all been to just as good purpose? and that as many souls have been converted and as many edified by it, as if this agitating, engrossing, estranging, heart-enflaming question of abolition measures had never been heard of? No, my dear brother, no; you will never answer this question in the affirmative, never! Nor, on mature reflection, will probably any other of all the thousands of good ministers in the free states, to say nothing

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of the others in our land. It is but lately, that I met with a brother in the ministry from a distant town, who put to me the anxious question, 'what shall I do in my perplexing condition? I have some revival among my people; but the abolition question is strongly pushed, and some are anxious for me to take it up, and some for me to let it alone. I fear it will destroy the work,' &c. I need not repeat my reply. It is enough for you and me to know, that his case is probably but the type of most, if not all the other cases where there is any revival at this time. And, alas, for those many fields, once like the garden of God, on which there has been neither rain nor dew for these last five years! Not to attribute all, nor half, to this single baleful cause, yet who will deny that it is one great cause of all this fearful barrenness? And a still deeper sigh for those numerous places already to be found, which are actually made destitute of any minister at all, or are kept so by the action of this cause! Do you not know of ministers who have been dismissed either because they espoused one side or the other of this question? or else would espouse neither side? If not, I can point you to more than one. And where is the vacant parish, in quest of a particular candidate, and all ears are not open to learn, whether he is an abolitionist? And from this cause, how many ministers are kept from fields of usefulness which they would otherwise occupy. My situation compels me to hear more of this than some may. But you may have heard enough to fill the soul with unutterable grief. And why? to what purpose is all this loss of usefulness? and loss of souls? and who is accountable for it? and when is it to end? "Agitate, agitate, agitate," is the only response of some of the lecturers. "No," say others; but still keep up the subject of these measures," say they, "come what will, and give no heed to the man that questions their utility."

And when I, or any one ventures to entreat good men to pause, and for heaven sake to reflect on the consequences of this course to the souls of thousands among our own brethren in these States, and of tens of thousands among the slaves from whom the key of knowledge is thus taken away, are we to be regarded as foes to humanity? and our names blasted as vile? and that because we believe these evils to come thronging inevitably from such measures? and believing, cannot but speak? and speak our full convictions, too, on a theme so tremendous? Tremendous beyond conception, indeed it is, if the gospel is thus hindered by these measures, and churches

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married, and souls kept back from salvation.

If, being more occupied in other views of this subject, you have not yet regarded it in this light, may I be permitted to entreat of you to devote at least a few hours, to the solemn consideration of the present actual effects on the welfare of our churches, and the salvation of men. The theme is surely worth the meditation of any minister, for a day, a month, a year, if need be. I know you will not cast it behind your back. I ask again, is not your own immediate spiritual usefulness impeded by this state of things? Do not proofs of it meet you at every turn? I do not put the question because I know any thing of the present state of your people, for I do not. Nor at all on the score of your being an abolitionist.— This, for aught I know, may have rendered the evil less in your particular case. Nor do I wish you to answer such a question to me, or to any other man. But if you have reason to believe that some of your people, on the one side of this question, do not hear you with the same favorable ear they once did; and some on the other side, have become less devout or less anxious for salvation as they have become more zealous on abolition; and that not one on either side has become more serious or more devout in consequence of these measures, I am sure your eyes will run down with tears. You will pray that these days may be shortened; at least among the people with whom you are to stand before the judgment seat.— And if you find such the fact in your own case, notwithstanding all your care to guard against the evil, what may you suppose it in the case of other ministers? and especially with those who have not taken the side which you have thought the safest and the best? Nay; what do you know it to be with a great many on each side of the question? and with perhaps an equal number, who would not zealously espouse either side? And from this survey, can you be-

lieve that there are many pastors in our whole land, if there is even one, who, for the last five years, have been of as much spiritual benefit to their flocks, as they would have been if such measures had not been thought of?—Next look at the churches. Many of them rent by violent faction on this subject; if not already ruined, brother arrayed against brother, and some ready to bite and devour one another.—Then look at the churches that are either deprived of their minister or prevented from uniting in the settlement of one, because they cannot agree on this question; some of the members clamorous for an abolitionist; and some perhaps strongly set against such a man; and sober committee men at their wits-end, in a case so perplexing. And if this is not equally the case in all destitute churches, yet where will you find a single complete exception?—Again; look at the pastors already settled, and see how many are at this moment in fearful doubt whether they can be useful much longer where they are, let them be on which side they may.—And look yet again at the settled pastors, in their mutual relations to each other, and see the course they are taking, and the estrangement of feeling already produced between some of them, and in a fearful way of being extended much further.—One is lecturing at home and abroad, in favor of the societies, another, is speaking as freely against them; and a third is begging earnestly to be permitted quietly to hold his peace on the subject. Now, however wisely and kindly you may manage this thing, and thus retain the full confidence of all your clerical neighbors, can it be supposed that younger and more unguarded brethren will all do quite as well? And are they in fact so doing as to create no estrangement of feeling with those in whose parishes they go? or from which they keep at a distance, because not invited by the pastors?—Do not understand me as blaming you for lecturing abroad; or others for talking when abroad.

This is not the present point. But I say, that here is a state of things which has already produced feelings in the hearts of clerical brethren towards each other, which are fitted deeply to injure their mutual confidence and their usefulness, as well as their peace. And how or where this evil is to stop, I know not.

In connexion with the evils thus brought on the ministers and churches at home, I might very properly allude to the diversion of funds from some of the noblest Christian enterprises in which these churches are engaged, and even the direct opposition made to some of them, as that of foreign missions, for instance; and that, too, in this time of extreme need. But I forbear to extend the distressing picture. But who that prizes Jerusalem above his chief joy, will not weep at such a state of things? And what unprejudiced mind will not be at least a little apprehensive of the soundness of that system of action which is found so readily to array itself against objects so dear to the heart of piety and so essential to the prosperity of Zion.—And, as to the matter of fact, let me just ask, what movement has there been in New England, in our day, either among good men or bad men, which has produced so great, so rapid so pervading a mischief to the cause of religion, as this? Such hindrance of other good things? and such direct and positive evil? such maligning of good men, and especially of the ministers of the gospel.\* And what has here produced such divisions of *good men* against *each other*? Is not this the very thing which the great adversary exults to see, if it be not indeed produced by him.

But I must close this protracted communication. Should it leave some pious men to pause and review their course, and contemplate prayerfully the sweeping range of these measures, I hope the spirit of God will be with them to guide their minds and their hearts in the way that he shall approve.

Should you see fit again to address me through the press, I trust you will not place me in an attitude where my future silence will imply any disrespect to yourself. I now leave many things unsaid; and do not wish to take time to say them. You and I can write our lives away on so prolific a subject; but I, as you say of yourself, have other duties to perform, and gladly leave the theme to other and abler pens.

Yours most truly,

RARPH EMERSON.

P. S. Since writing this communication, I have met with the suggestion, that the late revival of religion in the Sandwich

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— \*If "Mr. Garrison is not hostile to the Christian ministry," as you take pains to say you have no evidence that he is, what but the measures in which he is engaged, should induce him to pronounce *a majority of the ministers to be wolves in sheep's clothing, who care more for the fleece than the flock.* If this allegation is true, we are of course much worse than any other respectable class of men. Nor are his the only hard speeches.

Islands, is a proof that the abolition movements among us, are not prejudicial to revivals. But the two cases are not similar, as they have no abolition societies there, nor even any abolition movements that we know of, (except that of preaching the gospel,) for the purpose of removing the kind of slavery that exists in those islands. And if they *have* such societies, for this purpose, the case is still different from ours, and rather like what it would be in our slave States, where I should be glad to see them, for reasons already assigned.

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