

nation preserved, with all his rights and privileges as they before existed. I cannot believe there is a citizen now within reach of my voice who would wilfully and maliciously destroy this government framed by our fathers; a government handed down from sire to son; a government which has bestowed upon us in times past so many blessings; I say I cannot believe that there is any one among us who would wilfully and maliciously and treacherously destroy this government. Many of us may be under the influence of mistaken ideas; many of us may in the heat of passion and in the excitement of the moment say and do things which upon proper reflection we would refrain from. But all of us would join together, ay, to-day, if we could welcome back this whole country as one country, as a united brotherhood, upon the foundation upon which it rested years ago. I believe if that could be done, hosannas would rise from every man here, be he democrat or whig, be he what is termed "secession," or be he Union. Truly our sight is clouded, our perception dulled by the veil of fanaticism in which we are now enveloped. May we not hope that the day will soon come when amidst the mighty storm which now prevails, amidst its darkness and thunderings, amidst its earthquakes and lightnings, the veil will be rent in twain again, when the God of justice, of peace, of mercy and of truth shall restore this people to His favor and His blessings.

Mr. TODD. I have no disposition whatever to prolong this debate, or to put off action upon the article now under consideration. And if I were satisfied that it is the desire of this House to discontinue the debate immediately, it would be highly gratifying to me, and I should deem it a privilege, to give my vote now without any further consideration of this article. I am not willing to be responsible for the continuance of this debate. And if it is the sense of this House, and it can be expressed to me in any way, that we should take the vote without any further discussion, I am willing and anxious to forego any desire I may have entertained to offer any remarks upon this subject.

Mr. BERRY, of Prince George's. I will state that this is a very important subject, and I know that there are a number of members of this Convention who desire to be heard upon it. We want to have a full, free discussion of the subject, and would like to hear the gentleman from Caroline (Mr. Todd,) or any other gentleman who may desire to speak; we will listen to him as long as he may please to address the House upon this subject.

Mr. TODD. Then, as there seems to be an indication that this discussion must be prolonged, I will proceed.

Mr. President, I have taken but a small portion of the time of this Convention, and shall therefore hope for a kind indulgence and a

charitable hearing from most of its members. I have already received a token of what I may expect from certain gentlemen, and I rise to-day under the embarrassing impression that I shall be called to the confessional, as on a previous occasion, to answer any personal interrogatories in relation to my private life, and my general relations to society, that may be suggested, by professional iniquity, or prompted by a warm and characteristic Southern chivalry. Sir, I wish to give notice in the beginning that, as on a former occasion, I shall not stoop to answer personalities; but if gentlemen curious on the subject, will call on me privately, it will afford me pleasure to give them an autobiographical sketch of my life, and how I came to be in this Convention.

I have arisen, Mr. President, to present some of the reasons that will influence my vote upon the article, the consideration of which is now pending. And first of all permit me to define my views of slavery. They are not of the extreme character. I cannot agree either with those who contend that slavery is necessarily, under all circumstances, *sinful*—or with those on the other extreme, who claim for it divine authority, and demand of the civilization and christianity of the age, its universal recognition.

Sir, were I to contend that slaveholding is, *per se*, morally wrong, I should place myself in opposition to my own convictions, which are the growth of my own observation and experience, and in opposition also to the teachings of that large and influential branch of the christian church of which I am happy to be a member, which, while it has in its church discipline from its first organization in this country, almost a century gone by, steadily propounded the question—"What shall be done for the extirpation of the great evil of slavery?" has, at the same time, through all that period, opened its doors of communion to both the master and the slave.

I wish further to qualify my position by a denial of any sympathy with *negro equality*; and the additional declaration, that I favor compensation from the General Government to loyal slaveholders, as a remuneration for the loss and inconvenience they may sustain by emancipation.

I propose, Mr. President, to discuss the following proposition:

That, in its aggregated existence and influence, slavery is an evil—a great evil—a moral, social and political evil, and ought, in the language above quoted, to be *extirpated*.

And first, slavery is an evil, because it is the *invasion of a natural right*.

I grew up from my cradle surrounded by, and under the influence of slavery, and was taught to justify it—to believe it right. But I remember, as amongst the earliest reflections of my unsophisticated mind, the query, "how can it be that I have a right to the