

Appendix: Letters on the Vesey Affair¹

1. *A draft letter of the Board of Managers of the Charleston Bible Society to Governor Thomas Bennett, Jr.*

Charleston, September 23rd 1822

Sir

As Individuals, deeply concerned, and as the Board of the Charleston Bible Society, to whom our Constituents have confided an important Trust, analogous, in its nature & design, to the great Principles & interests of Religion, Morals, Government & Social Happiness at large, our Attention has been turned with Seriousness to the recent merciful Interposition of Divine Providence, by which the Inhabitants of this City, and, [not im] probably, of a great part of the State, have been preserved from the Execution of a ferocious, diabolical Design, which privy Conspiracy had formed, in the Councils of Domestic Barbarians, among us: A Design fraught with every Principle of premeditated Wickedness, and calculated to open, in an unexpected moment, on the astonished view of our unsuspecting Citizens, and to bring home to their tortured feelings horrid Scenes of Anarchy, Desolation, Violence and Massacre. And, in the Contemplation of this Subject, we have been induced to conclude, conscientiously, that it is incumbent on the Citizens of this State, at large, to make grateful acknowledgments to our Heavenly Preserver, by a Strong Expression of their Sentiments & Feelings, for the signal Display of his Goodness & Mercy toward them, made on this memorable occasion.

We therefore take the Liberty of recommending, to your Excellency, the Exercise on this occasion, of that discretional Power, which by common consent & usage, if not by Law, is vested in you, as our Chief Magistrate, in favour of Religion; by appointing, at some proper time, a Day of Public Thanksgiving to Almighty God, for the Instance of his Goodness here recognized. And that it be recommended to our Citizens throughout the State, to be observed by them in the Manner which becomes a People who acknowledge God's superintending Providence, feel their obligations to his

¹ Square brackets [] indicate insertions by the authors of the letters. Angle brackets < > indicate insertions by the authors (Paquette and Egerton) of "Of Facts and Fables." We wish to thank Nicholas Butler, archivist at the South Carolina Historical Society, for his help in transcribing the originals.

makes little sense unless the Board of Managers, reading the evidence at its disposal, determined as honest men in good conscience that its old friend and brother-in-Christ had misconstrued the insurrectionary plot by downplaying it.

Goodness, & live under [the governing] Influence of pious Affections— Unless, <p. 2> indeed, countervailing Reasons, with which we are unacquainted, exist, to render, [in the Judgment of your Excellency], the Measure ineligible. Such Reasons, however, if just, we conceive, must be, not only very weighty, but of an uncommon character. Those of which we have been informed, do not, to us, appear sufficient.

That the conspiracy was confined to a few, & the Evil, therefore, to be considered as of no great magnitude, as to its Extent, & the Probability of Success; though it is a position admitted by some liberal Minds, which are inclined to think favourably of mankind; yet, to us, it appears to be, at least, problematical. Many of our discerning Citizens, not in the habit of indulging suspicions, did observe symptoms, both in Spirit & Conduct among the class of Persons designed to be drawn into the Measure, of what appeared to be the spirit of Conspiracy & Revolt [in exercise], or the Effects of Guilt, extensively operating among them, about the Time the Work of Darkness was to have been perpetrated; or when the Ministers of Justice were prosecuting in their Investigation. Among the Reasons ~~no~~ why more of the Conspirators have not been discovered, this no doubt is one [of weight]: Artful Measures were pursued to preserve Secrecy; so that Many, though Acquaintances, while actually engaged in Plot did not know that they were mutually so concerned. It appears, by different confessions, that they had the Address to keep their Design concealed from Discovery more than three years; which proves that they were deeply versed in the Arts of concealment. And if three Years ago (which has been also confessed) they had the Prudence to defer the designed Attack, from an Apprehension that they had not then a sufficient Force engaged to secure their object; there seems to be just Reason to conclude that having had so long a Time to prepare; having held Communications, by Messengers, with the Country; carefully formed their Plan, and fixed upon the very day and hour for its Execution; that they were then well assured they had large Numbers on their side; and that their Associates in the Country would have been in Motion, as soon as the prime Movers had taken the lead in the City.

But their Plan was <p.3> disconcerted. A Kind Providence interposed & frustrated their Designs. A disclosure was made; & they knew it. The Measures taken by your Excellency, & the subordinate Constituted Authorities, for counteracting their Operations which did not escape their Observation, ~~and~~ intimidated them. These seem to have been the True Reasons why they did not appear in Arms, resort to the Places of Rendezvous, or begin the Work of Death.

Though an Attempt when made, should have proved abortive, as to the main object; yet being made in a Time of general Security, which was their Plan, it can hardly be supposed that no partial success would have attended it; at the very Idea of which, [<illegible> even in a low Degree,] the Mind

recoils with horror. Thought here will not bear Expression!—But if from such Evils, as cause Humanity, Purity & Virtue to shudder, the most Merciful Providence of God has preserved us—How cordial, fervent, public & general should our Thanksgivings be? Even tho the City should have been their only object, how deeply must success have affected the State at large? And how pernicious must the Example have proved to Slaves throughout the Country?—

Some Cautious, & highly respectable Characters, who gratefully acknowledge the Divine Interposition on this Occasion; yet think, that from Political Considerations it would be best to have no Day of Publick Thanksgiving appointed: As it would spread the Knowledge of the Fact extensively, & produce such an Idea of its importance in our Estimation, of our Fear and Danger, as would prove an Excitement to such Villains as have been concerned in the late Plot to engage in a Similar Enterprise.—On this Sentiment we would remark that scarcely can more publicity be given to a subject than that to which this has already attained. The Legal Proceedings, & the Executions have been of such notoriety that, by the ordinary Channels of private Conveyance, Information of them must have gone, or will go to every part of the State. But the Publick Prints have teemed with this Information, not only in this State, but through the whole of the United States; Your Excellency's Communication on this subject appears in this Open Manner before the World; and the City Magistrates have sanctioned a Publication, which exhibits a Historical View of the Conspiracy, of their own, & of the Courts' Proceedings on the Occasion.

If merely political, or Social Considerations, furnished just <p.4> and sufficient motives for these Publications; and if no Evil is to be apprehended from them, while yet the Fact they disclose, its Magnitude, Criminality, and dangerous Nature, are by them exhibited in a Strong Light to the public View; it seems natural to ask, Why should so much Danger be apprehended from a pious, devotional reference to these subjects in the manner here contemplated; & especially, when already well known; & when every Mind capable of the least Reflection must be sensible of the Reasonableness & Importance of gratefully recognizing the Divine Interposition, by which we have been preserved? But, if gratefully acknowledging the Divine Goodness, on this occasion, as a People, is our Duty; should we not, though certain Danger attended it, be willing to encounter that Danger? And, may we not then, with confidence look up to Heaven for that protection which is a better Defense than numerous Armies, or Fortresses of Adamant?—May not, also, our Silence & Remissness on this Occasion, operate powerfully, in an indirect manner, to produce the very Effect we would avoid & Will they not be attributed, by the Persons from whom our Apprehensions arise, to our Consciousness of being in the Wrong; to our Fear, & Sense of Weakness; and thus by fixing on the true Principle on which the Policy is founded, as it

exists in the Minds of many, with the superceded Idea of our being irreligious, & therefore the more vulnerable; will they not, the rather [from this View of the subject,] be induced to renew their Machinations and Efforts? That there are many of them in every Part of the State who have Discernment, & the Faculty of Reasoning is evident.

But, Sir, we beg leave to observe, that in respect to the Black Population among us not Concealment, but Information on this subject, appears to be, at least to us, the Policy which the true Interests of the Community call for. We have no doubts Concerning the Moral & Religious Right of holding slaves, lawfully obtained; when they are treated with Justice & Humanity. And whatever Apprehensions we entertain, respecting the Evils which might be produced, partially and for a time, by an Insurrection of the Slaves, we have no Fear with respect to the Result, as their general object, & Cause of Excitement would be concerned. Rightly informed, the Great body of them, & especially the [more] enlightened & virtuously disposed, will see just cause for joining in General Thanksgiving to the Almighty; for frustrating <p.5> the late scheme of Madness & Folly, as will of Wickedness, which was calculated to pull down, in its Results, general Misery & Ruin ~~as well~~ upon the Heads of the Innocent [as well] as the Guilty among them. When they learn what was the Design of those villains who took the lead in the late scheme of Massacre; that it was to go off with their Plunder, in a Case of Extremity, & leave their deluded Followers, to bear [alone] the Indignation of an Injured Country, & to inherit Guilt, Shame & Remorse, united to legal Punishment, as the proper Fruits of their [mutual] Delusion & Madness; Nor, do we believe, they would entertain a thought of succeeding, at any Time, in such an Enterprise, were they brought to know, the comparative Paucity of their Numbers, when Contrasted with that of the White Population in the United States: to consider, their general Ignorance, particularly in the use of arms, & their being generally destitute of them; the stupid, inactive Condition of a large proportion of those upon whom they must rely; their liability to be betrayed; the Strong Inducement the well-disposed, and cautious, would have to discover their Designs; & the equally Strong probability, that success in such an undertaking, would not better their Condition.

To our benevolent Citizens, the Preservation of the Negroes themselves, as a Body, furnishes pleasing Matter of Thanksgiving to the Almighty; especially while they possess Strong Evidence, that many of them were not only free from any just Charge of Guilt in respect of the Insurrection, but are [in general] influenced by a Spirit of uprightness & Religion—

As these Considerations obviate, in our view, the objection we have heard advanced [against] the Appointment of a Day of General Thanksgiving, on this occasion, & as the Reasons for it, originating in Principles of Piety & Gratitude, are of a commanding nature, we have taken the liberty to lay

them with deference, but also with freedom, before your Excellency; hoping that they will meet with your concurrence.

But before we close this Address, we feel it incumbent on us, to invite your attention, Sir, to another subject; a subject which though not included in this, is related to it; and in which we, as Agents of the Bible Society, are particularly concerned. This is <p.6> the apprehension we have, from intimations, that in consequence of the late projected Insurrection, & the claims laid to a Religious Character by several of those who ranked as Leaders in the nefarious Scheme, ideas have been produced in the minds of many Citizens, unfavourable to the Use of the Bible among the Negroes; and that attempts will, probably, be made to obtain Legislative Interference, to prevent their learning to read it, or to use it freely.—Though we are sensible that the Power of Direction & Control, in this important Concern, does not rest with the Chief Magistrate of our State; Yet, we are also sensible, that his Sentiments & Recommendations have a powerful Influence, in giving Tone to publick Opinion & Feeling; and think, that in cases of delicacy, when the Cause of Truth, Righteousness, Humanity & Religion are to be advocated, they may be advantageously and laudably employed.

The Sentiment, Sir, that the Doctrines of Holy writ are unfavourable to the holding of Slaves, ~~has~~ [is] we grant, ~~been~~ a sentiment which many, & some very worthy Men have advanced; and which some still advocate; but, as we conceive, without just foundation. Its lawfulness is positively stated in the Old Testament, & is clearly recognized in the New. In the latter a luminous Exhibition is given of Slaves^v; & their Masters, enjoying Membership together in the Christian Church; while under the immediate care & Government of the Inspired Apostles: Their Respective Duties also, are taught, explicitly, and enforced by eternal <p. 7> Sanctions. By these Rules the former are not directed to claim a Right to Liberation, not encouraged to use Fraud, or Force to effect it; but to be faithful, good, & obedient: The latter [are required,] not to emancipate their Slaves, but to give them the things which are just, and equal, forbearing Threatening, & remembering that they also have a Master in Heaven.

The Bible, Sir, as well as all other Things, good and Sacred, which have come into the hands of men, may be, & has been abused. But to argue against its use, from the abuse it has suffered, is to adopt a Mode of Reasoning which is not logical, just, nor pious.

^v ὑπὸ ζυγόν δουλοὶ Bondmen [servants], or Slaves under the yoke. 1 Tim^v VI.1.2 <1: Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. 2: And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.>

The Scriptures are given to Man (without respect of Persons) to make him wise unto Salvation; and all are required, by Divine Authority to read them; because they contain the Words of Eternal Life. To prohibit the use of them therefore, in respect of any man or class of men, is to contradict & oppose the Divine Authority; and to suppose that the regular use of them will naturally lead to Conspiracy, Rebellion & Blood, is a reflection on the Divine Wisdom & Goodness, bordering on Blasphemy. But we have seen that, instead of encouraging Slaves to engage in schemes of this Nature, they establish Rules of a directly contrary character, & enforce them by considerations which far transcend all that Human Munificence can offer as reward; or that the Punishment of Human Laws can inflict.—Were we only reasoning from the cause to its Effect, on this subject, we should naturally arrive at this conclusion; that wherever the Truths of the Bible are received in an honest Mind, even by Persons in a State of Servitude, they must & will produce happy Effects in favour, not only of Piety & Devotion; but of willing subordination to lawful Authority, & Conformity to the Principles of Truth, Justice, Good-order, Peace & Benevolence—But in adverting to matters of fact, many can & do testify, that they have seen these Effects produced among the Class of people in Question, really and extensively.

Though it is true, that a considerable Number of the Persons who were concerned in the late Conspiracy professed to be a religious character; yet it is also true, that the most leading Characters among them, & the chief of the rest, were members of an irregular Association, which called itself the African Church, & was intimately connected with a similar Body in Philadelphia, from which their sentiments & directions in Matters of Religion were chiefly derived: Whose Principles are formed on the Scheme of general Emancipation, for which they are zealous advocates; & [which] they endeavour to support, by a misconstruction, or Perversion of the Scriptures. Very few, indeed, of the religious Negroes, in regular Churches among us, were drawn into the Plot; & in some Churches there were not any on whom a charge of Criminality had been proved. The Individuals composing the Great Body, of the well-known, regular, & esteemed Members, of Churches, have not been impeached. It would indeed seem that the <p.8> Conspirators were afraid to trust them. For since the Plot has been discovered, voluntary Information has been given, that Attempts, not then understood, were made to feel the Pulse of some of them, by artful, distant approaches, which not being countenanced were laid aside.

<Denmark> Vesey, the prime Mover of [in] this Plot, was, as we are informed, notorious for his libidinous & petulant Conduct. <Jacob> Glen, though a Preacher among them, and, for one of his opportunities, of extraordinary Talents, was generally considered as a Sharper, & one commonly chargeable with Falsehoods.

Nothing that we can discover, has transpired to make appear that the Meetings of the religious Negroes approved by the Churches to which they belong, for reading the Scriptures, learning their Catechisms, & the general Purposes of Devotion & religious Improvement, have been in anywise instrumental in producing or advancing the late horrid Design to which we refer; but on the contrary, we have reason to believe, they had a good Influence on the general state of Society, by the promotion of good Morals, as well as Piety among that Class of People.

This Circumstance corroborates a Sentiment which has long been entertained by some who have been careful in making observations, as well as in reasoning on this subject, with the true Interests of Society in view. It is this, that one of the best securities we have to the domestic Peace & safety of the State, is found in the sentiments and correspondent dispositions of the religious Negroes; which they derive from the Bible.—If this sentiment is just, it would seem, that instead of taking away the Bible from them, & abridging the truly religious Privileges they have been used to enjoy, to avoid Danger; the better way would be, to take Measures for bringing them to a more full & just acquaintance with the former; and to secure to them the latter, under Regulations the least liable to abuse. That strict Care should be taken to prevent abuses, & the Influence of designing Wicked Men among them is unquestionable, & highly important. And should be seriously regarded <sic> by Churches & Ministers, as well as by the Civil Government.

Should confidence, Respect, & some special Privileges be considered as <p. 9> generally attached, under prudent Regulations, to the character & State of those who manifest in Religion, a uniform, faithful regard to just sentiments, upright Conduct, the due subordination of Servants, and the general Peace & Good-order of Society, it is believed that such Regard manifested toward them, which is but reasonable, would have a happy Effect; not only on the Mind & conduct of the Slaves, but on the General Interests of the Community.

But should a Course of Policy, contrary to that which is here advocated, be pursued, with respect to the Negroes, either by a Law of the State, or the common consent of the Citizens, in reference to what some Wicked Men among them have done; not only, would the Innocent be made to suffer for the Guilty; but the Sufferers, feeling themselves deprived of what they esteem a great Privilege <sic> connected with their Spiritual & Eternal Interests, would, of course, feel unhappy, and be brought under the Influence of a Strong Temptation to become indifferent to the Interests of their Masters, if not to hearken to the voice of Seduction; the State, it is feared, would lose an important security for its domestic Peace; & the Gospel would suffer Obstruction in its operations & benign Influence, by that Arrest which Benevolence & Piety would experience, while employed in

disseminating the Word of Life among the Poor, & promoting the Use of those Means of Grace which are designed by Heaven for the Conversion & Salvation of Sinners.

We submit these considerations to your Excellency, & remain with high respect,

Sir

Your Obedient

Humble Servants

His Excellency

Governor Bennett

2. Governor Thomas Bennett, Jr. to the Board of Managers of the Charleston Bible Society

Executive
Department
Charleston
Oct' 1. 1822

Genl. Charles C. Pinckney Pres' &
the Members of the Board of the
Charleston Bible Society

The recommendation of a Board so respectable, as that which represents the Bible Society of Charleston, will ever command the most respectful attention; and on a subject so intimately connected with the cause of Religion (which it is essentially their object to cultivate, by a charitable distribution of the Holy Scriptures) my reverence and utmost consideration. With these sentiments, Gentlemen, your communication of the 23rd was received on the 25th, and perused with unusual interest. If the remarks contained in that address, derived additional weight from any circumstances, abstracted from its bearing the stamp of a deliberate act, maturely and solemnly adopted by the Board, they are manifest in the force of those impressions, which could prompt you to pass the bounds which limit the

purpose, and determine the objects of your institution, and in the sanction of a name which so happily unites to an elevated character, long experience, profound talents, and a thorough acquaintance with the history and policy of the State. The potency of these considerations, the character of your association, and the reasons with which your recommendation is supported, cannot fail to produce a considerable influence, on the decision required of me, relative to the subject which they embrace.

I shall not conceal from you, Gentlemen, that my early <p. 2> impressions were directly adverse to this measure, and in opposition to the views you have taken, of the cause, which should induce it; nor are those objections removed by the most deliberate reflection. So far from conceiving that it would be acceptable to the people of this State, that a day of thanksgiving to Almighty God be specially set apart for this particular instance of his goodness, and to which it is your desire ~~that it be exclusively devoted~~, I have been induced to believe that even within this vicinity so directly and deeply interested, a majority of the Citizens question its propriety. The grounds on which this doubt is predicated, may be traced to a laudable desire, tenaciously to protect the character of the State, against imputation morally and politically affecting it, and some fearful consequences, which are neither remote nor contingent. They would not have the world believe, that the slightest insurrectionary movements inspire [general] terror; that the public sensibility thus excited, is founded in impressions that in every slave, his master contemplates an incensed and implacable enemy, and that from a combination of such, he conceives the State is physically impotent to save him. They would not communicate such fears to their domestics; it is a mistaken policy, which should inform them, that the slightest apprehension of their power is entertained, or that we believe that any effort they can possibly make, would be attended with even partial success. I do not myself believe it, and I am convinced that nine tenths of the State do not believe it. They would not excite in the minds of the timid who are slaveholders, those prejudices and passions, which lead directly to measures of coercion and <p. 3> restraint, and to acts of severity and cruelty, at which a sensibility abroad vitally affecting the interests of the Slaveholding States, might be excited. My judgment may be warped and my reasoning powers feeble, but I do fear that if the present moment is pregnant with danger, we shall give birth to it. Much discretion is requisite. We must put ourselves in opposition to every course of proceedings, which shall conduce to prolong the public panic, or acknowledge its existence.

It will not be expected by you, that in reply to the reasons you have urged, predicated on isolated points of testimony*, entitled to but little weight, and discredited by a development of facts too formidable to leave them a resting place, in the mind of any one acquainted with all the circumstances, that I should fully pourtray <sic> my own views of that

painful transaction, or seek to counteract the force of your arguments, by an effort to shew that it was a plot, originating in the falsehood of an Individual, and depending for its ultimate effects, on a combination of circumstances, which were conceived in folly, wholly impracticable, and quite as visionary as the expected aid from St. Domingo and Africa. It has been my misfortune (perhaps), essentially to differ from those who anticipated a calamity, extending to the most horrid scenes, which a warm, vivid, and excited imagination could pourtray. I then expressed, and still repose the utmost confidence in the belief, that a formidable conspiracy cannot be matured in this State, and admitting (what is barely within the scope of possibility) that such as could be formed, might pass undiscovered to the moment of its accomplishment, the evils resulting would <p. 4> be limited and transient.

Human power is impotent in preparing the mind, and disposing the heart to offer an acceptable oblation to a just, wise and merciful Being. Short experience with some observation fully assures me, that it is not the recommendation of those in authority, which can produce that devotional state of feeling, not only essential, but indispensable in the observance of a day, set apart, to express our gratitude for benefits conferred, or to deprecate the wrath of Almighty God. Such a state of the public mind, can only be produced by Him, whose manifestations of favor, or intimations of anger are exhibited to those, whom he loves or those whom he would chide, when therefore a people rejoice, "beneath the light of his countenance", or "are sorrowful when it is withdrawn", the duty of a ruler is manifest. His invitation to the altar, will be accepted by hearts predisposed to acknowledge with Gratitude, that it is God who blesses; or with contrition and humility, the justness of his displeasure. Unaided by the impulse of such sentiments, he may "gather them, in the consecrated places of the most High", but a cold, listless and unacceptable offering will be laid before him. Nor is the duty less incumbent on rulers, to appoint days of religious observance, when occasions call for them, than it is to designate particularly the most conspicuous causes and which immediately affect the whole community. If I am correct in this, with what propriety can I ask the people to offer thanks to Almighty God, for his preserving and protecting care of the City, when such causes for thankfulness are every where found, in the health which has <p. 5> blessed and the uninterrupted industry which clothed their families, and the fruitful abundance which fills their habitations with gladness? Are we certain, that there is not a more positive cause for rejoicing, at the extraordinary health with which this City has been favoured during the past summer, than in the escape from a probable evil? This at least is my deliberate opinion, that under existing circumstances, we may with equal propriety appoint a day of thanksgiving throughout the State, for the health of the city exclusively, as for the occasion to which you have confined it.

It is the peculiar and happy attribute of our government, that the feelings and desires of the people, are annually expressed through their immediate representatives. To no tribunal with more propriety, can such subjects be referred, than to the Legislature. Associated from every part of the State, they are enabled successfully to effect those objects, which promote the general welfare and advance the general happiness. They bring together a knowledge of the sentiments, of the whole people, and are fully competent to adopt and determine such measures, as shall subserve the cause of Religion, morality and good government. I persuade myself, that as the representatives of a virtuous, intelligent and religious people, they will neglect no opportunity which suitable occasions present, to remind their constituents of the obligations, which they owe, to their Creator and Preserver; and should they deem this, a suitable subject for general thanksgiving, your desires will be crowned with success. Besides, it is a matter of some doubt and surely at variance with <p. 6> a wise policy, that the appointment, of such days, should be with the Executive. It is impossible that he can know minutely and distinctly, what is the will of the people, and in my opinion, it is conclusive that such appointments should emanate from their will. The usage too, supports this position, whether we refer for precedent, to the General State or City Governments. With but a few exceptions in our own State, the rule obtains. If it be the duty of the Executive, it is a censure on his conduct that the Legislature should supply the omission; if of the Legislature, the Executive should not interfere with their privilege. While a doubt on this point exists, I would prefer removing it by a reference to usage, which vests it in the Legislature.

I have endeavoured Gentlemen rather to assign the reasons which govern me, than to answer to arguments you have adduced, and although I have little hope of satisfying your minds, on the propriety of the grounds taken, they are submitted to you with entire respect.

The subject involved in the closing remarks of your address, becomes peculiarly interesting, from the view you have taken of it. Yet I cannot persuade myself, that there are in this community, or any ~~other~~ other on earth professing the Religion of the Gospel, those who would close that sacred volume, to any being for whom its instructions were designed; nor can I conceive that there is a beleiver <sic> devoutly founding his faith on those inspired pages, who could look for the justification of his conduct, to an all-righteous Judge, while denying to a supplicant for divine grace, the consolations which it affords, and the hopes which it inspires. This among others, is one of the consequences which as a Citizen of this State, I have most dreaded. Under the influence of strong <p. 7> excitement, we are the easy victims of dangerous errors. It is therefore the part of wisdom, to check the impulse which influence the passions, before we decide those questions,

which involve the privileges or happiness of others, or the glory and honour of our Country. The measure which you have recommended, of appointing a day of thanksgiving, would, I fear produce the unhappy effect, to continue that excitement, and thus defeat the important object of your last recommendation, by attaching to the event an importance to which it has no just title.

The character of the Southern States, has been somewhat freely attacked, by our Northern Brethren. They have said of us, in the asperity of rebuke, "that we deprived our slaves of the means of cultivating their mental powers, of enlightening their understandings, of improving their affections. That they were incapacitated from raising their minds to the source of intelligence, their hearts to the fountain of good; of acquiring the principles, learning the promises, practicing the duties, and enjoying the consolations of Religion. That they were cut off from the knowledge and hopes of that future and blessed state of existence, which crime and misery can never reach." What Carolinian, feeling indignant at this calumny, did not rejoice that he could oppose it, by the simple exhibition of truth? Who is it, cherishing a love for his native state, that would consent to brand her character; with so infamous a reproach? I believe and may venture to assert, that her Legislature will not. Can the advocates of these opinions (if indeed there be any, who seriously entertain such) believe, that the doctrine, "which subjugates the most powerful genius by its sublimity, and adapts itself by the clearness of its light, to the most feeble intellect," is a more fruitful source of those passions, which subvert social order and riot in scenes of revolt, confusion and carnage, than the wild illusions, the gloomy incantations, and horrible superstitions of mental darkness: or can they believe in contradiction to the evidence furnished by every nation and tribe on earth, that there is a placability in the mind and heart of man, which inclines him to be content with his present state, and indisposed to seek a knowledge of that Being, whose works fill all creation. If indeed these opinions are maintained, we may enter on that stern policy, and if possible, enjoy a security against anticipated dangers, at the price of all considerations of charity, and state reputation.

The leading circumstances of the late conspiracy in my mind, fully establishes the narrative of one of the conspirators, whose veracity was unimpeached by the Court, and supported by the Intendant and his master, "that its birth place was the mind of Gullah Jack and not of Vesey; and that the lure which he held out [to some] was the assurance, that he had 6000 men engaged, while he attracted others by promises of invincibility, founded on the potency of his incantations. Attaching to himself Monday Gell, and subsequently Denmark Vesey, who were both inclined to admit the influence of his supernatural powers, the nefarious project progressed under their patronage. That professors of religion were seduced, was the natural

consequence of their being first <p. 9> assailed by the insidious arts of those men, who knew the confidence they reposed, was less liable to be betrayed by such, when once entangled in their snares, and the pledge of secrecy solemnly given. It was not the religion of these men that they invoked; it was those passions which were unsubdued by her mild precepts, and to suppose that they were invincible to the wicked machinations or evil devices of these men, because they had received some religious instruction, is to estimate human nature beyond the standard which human actions indicate. <illegible> made to participate in their guilt, the transition from propriety of conduct to the most diabolical intentions, was natural, easy and inevitable. But as it does not follow, that all are thus easily won, and as we have the most substantial evidence, that others were enticed who did not follow, it would be an instance of injustice to which the temperate and enlightened of this community will never submit, that the severest chastisement which can be inflicted by man on his fellow, that of being cut off from the hopes and consolations of scripture, should fall on the innocent.

With these sentiments Gentlemen, I shall use the little influence which I possess, to avert the evil which so justly excites the deep concern you have expressed.

I have the Honor to be Gentlemen
 With Consideration of the highest respect
 Your Ob' Se'
 Tho: Bennett <p. 10>

*The various isolated points of evidence here adverted to are—that the conspiracy has been contemplated four years—that their plans were fully organized—leaders appointed—a place of rendezvous fixed—the hour of attack determined—aid expected from Africa, the West Indies, or Great Britain—an army of Gullah Jack of 6 or 9000 men—of Mingo Harth of 4000—of Peter Poyas comprising all Santee & St. Thomas—and of Frank Ferguson four plantations—or that all the negroes between this and Columbia were engaged—and that all the wells were to be poisoned. All of these things, have been stated, and no doubt may have been employed by the conspirators, as means of seduction, but are certainly not entitled to belief, and positively denied by those, who were the principal witnesses and most conspicuous actors.