

Springfield, Oct. 3. 1845

Friend Durley:

When I saw you at home, it was ~~at~~
~~of~~ agreed that I should write to you
and your brother Madison. Until I then saw
you, I was not aware of your being what is gene-
rally called an abolitionist, or as you call your-
self a Liberty man, though I well knew there
were many such in your county. I was glad
to hear you say that you intend to attempt to
bring about, at the next election in Putnam, a
union of the whigs proper, and such of the liberty
men as are whigs in principle on all questions save
only that of slavery. So far as I can perceive, by such
union, neither party need yield any thing, on the
point in difference between them. If the whig aboli-
tists of New York had voted with us fair face, Mr.
Calay would now be president, whig principles in the
dependent, and Texas not annexed; whereas, by the
division, all that either had at stake in the can-
didate was lost. And, indeed, it was extremely probable
beforehand, that such would be the result. As
I always understood, the Liberty men deprecated
the annexation of Texas, extremely; and, this being so,
why they should ~~refuse~~ ~~to~~ cast their vote, as
to prevent it, ever to me, seemed wonderful. What
was their process of reasoning, I can only judge from
what a single one of them told me. It was, this:
"We are not to do evil that good may come."
This general proposition is doubtless correct, but does
it apply? If by your votes you could have prevented
the extension of slavery, would it not have been
good and not evil so to have used your votes,
even though it involved the casting of them for a

Slaveholder! By the fruit the tree is to be known—
An evil tree can not bring forth good fruit—
If the fruit of electing Mr. Calhoun would have been
to prevent the extension of slavery, could the act of
electing have been evil!

But I will not argue farther— I perhaps ought to
say that individually I never was much interested in
the Texas question— I never could see much good to come
of annexation, inasmuch, as they were already a free
republican people on an am. model; on the other
hand, I never could very clearly see how the annexation
would augment the evil of slavery— It always
seemed to me that slaves would be taken there in
about equal numbers, with or without annexation—
And if more were taken because of annexation, still
there would be just so many the fewer left, where
they were taken from— It is possibly true, to some extent,
that with annexation, some slaves may be
sent to Texas and continued in slavery, that others
might have been liberated— To whatever extent this
may be true, I think annexation an evil— I hold it to
be a paramount duty of us in the free states, due
to the Union of the states, and perhaps to liberty ~~itself~~
itself (paradox though it may seem) to let the
slavery of the other states ~~alone~~; ~~while~~, on the other
hand, I hold it to be equally clear, that we should
never knowingly lend ourselves directly or indirectly,
to prevent that slavery from dying a natural
death— to find new places for it to live in,
when it can no longer exist in the old— Of course
I am not now considering what would be our
duty, in cases of insurrections among the slaves—
To recur to the Texas question, I understand the Liberty
men to have viewed annexation as a much

greater evil than I ever did, and I would
like to convince you if I could, that they could
have prevented it, without violation of principle
if they had chosen -

I intend this letter for you and Madison
together, and if you and he, or either, shall think
fit to drop me a line, I shall be pleased -

Yours with respect

A. Lincoln

*Ms. Williamson Durley
Tennessee
Alton*

