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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

FREE-WILL BAPTIST

Free Will Baptists (Founded in N. Y.)

ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY,

READ AT

LEBANON, MAINE, OCTOBER 9, 1851.

DOVER:
WM. BURR, PRINTER.
1851.

OFFICERS OF THE F. W. BAPTIST ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

President, ELD. SILAS CURTIS.

Vice Presidents—ELDERS H. WELLINGTON, M. W. BURLINGAME, M. J. STEERE.

Recording Secretary, D. P. CILLEY.

Corresponding Secretary, I. D. STEWART.

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REPORT.

The freedom of the will is one of our denominational characteristics. But our faith stops not here: it includes the freedom of the entire man; ever subject, however, to the restraints of the "higher law." We claim this freedom for ourselves, and we grant it to others. Aye, more, we *demand* it for others; and for *all* others. Especially do we plead for the enslaved of our race in this boasted "land of the free and home of the brave."

We do it, because they are not allowed to speak for themselves. We do it the more earnestly, because the rod of oppression is held by the American people.

The same year that our Pilgrim fathers landed upon Plymouth Rock, and founded institutions that have blessed the world, *the same year* came a cargo of slaves to Virginia's shore; and then commenced an institution, that, like the serpent in the garden, has beguiled the people, and cursed the land. For more than two hundred years it has been growing with our growth, and strengthening with our strength.

Within its coils more than 3,000,000 of victims are now held, and its slimy folds encircle both Church and State. White laborers feel its sting, and free blacks the poison of its fangs. It now claims to be the corner-stone of our republican edifice, and the *sine qua non* in every well regulated government. It threatens the dissolution of our Union, if a free State is admitted, or the door closed against its entrance into territory now free. It enslaves every free black that enters its enclosure, and hunts its fugitives in all our domain. It now makes the kidnapping of freemen as feasible in our own land as in that of Africa, so far as national laws can do it. And more than all this, it calls upon us to disobey God in the return of fugitives, and threatens us

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with fines and imprisonment, if we obey Him rather than men. O slavery! "full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil;" may our right hand forget her cunning, may our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth, if we do not resist thy wicked encroachments.

It has been our purpose to devote the principal part of this Report to

THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY IN THE FREE- WILL BAPTIST DENOMINATION.

The position we now occupy in the Anti-Slavery cause was not attained without struggles, fierce and obstinate. The record of our movements, the opposition we encountered, and our continued advancement in the enterprise, is found in every department of our denominational action. It has been suggested that the *facts* are worthy of collection and preservation. As the wasting hand of time will be vigilantly placing them beyond the reach of our successors in life, we now seize some of the more important ones, and solicit attention to a historical Report.

The origin of the emancipation cause is assigned, by different men, to different periods of time. Drs. Franklin and Rush were emancipationists and officers of an Abolition Society *seventy* years ago. The Friends and Covenanters have been emancipationists, with no connection with slavery, for more than *half a century*. About the year 1820, Mr. Lundy, of Baltimore, commenced the publication of a paper, advocating the abolition of slavery. But it was *gradual* abolition, and rather favorable to Colonization. During the years 1829 and '30, Wm. L. Garrison was associated with him, and was the principal editor. Garrison then inscribed upon his banner "*immediate emancipation the right of the slave, and the duty of the master.*" Because he published the fact that a man from Salem, Mass., had shipped a cargo of slaves for the South, and made some truthful comments upon the transaction, he was thrown into prison, and there lay for *forty-nine days*. Being discharged, he returned to Boston, and, Jan. 1st, 1831, issued his first number of the *Liberator*. The next year was formed the New England Anti-Slavery Society. The meeting was held in the vestry of a colored church in the city, and only twelve men united at its organization. In December, 1833, was organized the American Anti-Slavery Society, in Philadelphia.—

This soon became an efficient organization, having as many as *sixty* agents in the field at a time. Slaveholders were alarmed. With the fury of enraged demons they exclaimed, "*Let us alone.*" And, *let us alone*, was the echo of their Northern allies.

Down to the time when this agitation commenced, truth compels us to say that we were no more Anti-Slavery than other denominations; unless our profound silence can be termed Anti-Slavery, when compared with the apologizing, justifying efforts of others. The Fathers of our connexion were called forth for a peculiar work.

The return of peace, at the close of the Revolutionary war, found us nationally free, but with vitiated morals and a formal religion. The great doctrines of the Bible were so explained as to savor much of fatalism, and the people were famishing for the bread of life. God raised up flaming heralds of the cross, who "went forth and preached everywhere," proclaiming a *free salvation* for all that would come, and a *free-will* on the part of man to accept or refuse it. Sinners were converted; churches organized; and a denomination formed, that was "earnestly contending for the faith," systematizing its action, and consolidating its influence. This was the appropriate work of many years; and if the slave was not remembered as he now is, who can find it in his heart to say that our fathers did not faithfully "serve their own generation?" Occupied by other duties, their attention seems not to have been directed to slavery, but when it was called to the subject, a majority of our ministers soon saw the path of duty and immediately walked therein. Some had their attention arrested by the lectures of George Thompson and other philanthropists, some by reading an article occasionally on the evils of slavery, some by reading the slanderous attacks upon abolitionists, and others by merely hearing that the subject was in agitation. It is a singular coincidence that in almost every Yearly Meeting, extending from Maine to the Mississippi, some of our most eminent men were prepared, in the onset, to take uncompromizing ground against slavery. Like Luther, Zwingli, and other Reformers, they commenced operations in their respective locations, without consultation with those abroad, and in some instances, without the least knowledge of the question's being agitated in any other part of the connexion.*

* Among the Anti-Slavery pioneers who organized the National Society, in 1833, was one of our ministers; and two years afterward he became an

In 1834, an editorial appeared in the *Star*, headed—**SLAVERY AND ABOLITION**. It took the position that slavery was an evil, but immediate emancipation was a *greater* one. It was an unjust demand upon the master, requiring such a sacrifice of his property, and cruel to the slaves, in turning them out into the world, incompetent to provide for themselves. Like pro-slavery everywhere, it feared that the cause of freedom would suffer more from the rashness of abolitionists, than be benefited by their good intentions. The effect of this article, written in a kind spirit, was like every similar production. It tended, for the time, to keep at ease those who had hitherto been so; to soothe the feelings of those who were beginning to be disturbed; and it *aroused* to redoubled effort those who were already awake. Upon the whole, it was doubtless overruled for good, as it elicited discussion, and led to investigation. Then, and then for all, was the light of our *Star* darkness. And, under the noontide splendor of our present light, we are ready to exclaim, “how great was that darkness!” But the palliating circumstances of that day should not be overlooked.

A few weeks after this, the junior editor was called from labor to rewards, and a change was then effected in the editorial department, by which its management since that time has devolved upon our present resident editor.

The first *recorded* action in the denomination that has come to our knowledge, was the adoption of a series of resolutions by the Rockingham Quarterly Meeting in March, 1835.

The resolutions were five in number, of which the following is one:—

“*Resolved*, That we will, as Christians, and Christian ministers, use our influence to promote the doctrine of immediate emancipation; in doing which we wish to treat the oppressor and the oppressed in the spirit of the gospel.”

The Records of the Farmington (Maine) Quarterly Meeting show no action till 1837, but some brethren are confident that resolutions were there adopted before the time of those passed by the Rockingham Quarterly Meeting. Be this as it may, a brother in the Quarterly Meeting

associate editor of the *Star*. At this time, however, the *Star* was silent on slavery, and no action had been taken by any religious body. But individuals were discussing the subject in all their social interviews. This colloquial agitation was the only kind among us for several months, and was a necessary preparation for its more public consideration.

was deeply anxious to procure an expression of opinion; and expecting opposition, at his request a minister came forty miles to second the effort. A resolution, expressive of the sinfulness of slavery, was introduced, and for an hour apiece, they labored to show the great wickedness of the system, and why Christian bodies should speak against it. They were followed by brethren, who labored with equal zeal, and for as long a time, to show that the resolution was dabbling in the turbid waters of politics, that we had nothing to do with slavery, and that agitation was all wrong. The resolution, however, was adopted by an overwhelming majority.

In 1835, Eld. Marks attended the Annual Meeting of the N. H. Anti-Slavery Society, and reported the speeches for the Star. In June, the same year, the New Hampshire Yearly Meeting, the oldest and most numerous in the connexion, held its annual session under circumstances peculiarly interesting. It was understood that Dr. Cox, from London, and Rev. Amos Sutton, returned missionary to India, would be there. That our first missionary to India, and one to the Mississippi valley, would there be ordained. These circumstances called out such numbers as had never before attended a Yearly Meeting. They came up from every hill and glen of the Granite State, and both Maine and Vermont were fully represented. By that vast concourse of people the following action was taken :

“Whereas the system of slavery is contrary to the law of nature, and the law of God, and is a violation of the dearest rights of man, therefore,

“*Resolved*, That the principles of immediate abolition are derived from the unerring word of God; and that no political circumstances whatever can exonerate Christians from exerting all their moral influence for the suppression of this heinous sin.”

The resolution passed the Yearly Meeting *unanimously*, and the *whole congregation* rose in its support. The Record says, “While the subject of Slavery was before the meeting, the greatest attention was apparent. Deep sympathy for the poor degraded slave was expressed by many a swelling bosom and falling tear.” The speeches made by Elders Marks, Woodman, and Place, and Drs. Sutton and Cox, were reported for the Star, and, being the first *published argument* from members of the denomination, it doubtless

had as much influence as any one effort in thus early turning our minds in the right direction.

Anti-slavery resolutions were adopted by the Penobscot Yearly Meeting the same month, and by the Vermont and Holland Purchase Yearly Meeting in August, following. For three years prior to this, the Printing Establishment had been under the control of the denomination, and managed by an Agent under the direction of a Publishing Committee, chosen by the General Conference. At a meeting of the Publishing Committee in September, it was

“*Resolved*, That the Morning Star shall not take any position, nor advocate any sentiments on the subject of slavery for political purposes ; but as the conductors of the Star do believe that *slaveholding is a sin*, we cannot consent that the Star shall be silent on the subject. We believe that no political circumstances can excuse us as *Christians*, and conductors of a *religious paper*, from using all the *moral influence* within our power to *reprove sin*. Still, under the present critical circumstances of our country, we believe that it is our duty to treat the subject with caution, and to reprove the sin of slaveholding with great kindness.”

In October, the General Conference convened at Byron, N. Y. The whole denomination was here represented, and the following resolutions were adopted, *no one voting against them* :

“(1.) *Resolved*, That slavery is an unjust infringement on the dearest rights of the slave ; an unwarrantable exercise of power on the part of the master ; a potent enemy to the happiness and morals of our slaveholding population ; and, if continued, must ultimately result in the ruin of our country.

(2.) *Resolved*, That as Christians, patriots, and philanthropists, we ought to exert our influence to induce all slaveholders to use their best exertions, in their respective states, to procure the abolition of slavery.

(3.) *Resolved*, That a candid discussion and mutual interchange of views, on the best method of abolishing slavery, is loudly called for by the present crisis.

(4.) *Resolved*, That it is the duty of Christians to frequently and fervently *pray* that the evil of slavery may be removed from our beloved country.

(5.) *Resolved*, That we have abundant cause for gratitude to God that, as a denomination, we are so generally united in our views on the distracting subject of slavery.”

For the first time, we here find the *denomination* speaking in calm but decided condemnation of slavery. As we contemplate this action from our present stand point, we discover nothing worthy of remark. But placing ourselves back *sixteen years*, to a time when political influence exerted its utmost power to suppress discussion—when popular feeling was boiling with indignation against abolitionists—and when mobs, imprisonment, and death had been the fate of some, and still threatened others, it will be seen that no small degree of moral principle and courage was then requisite to take the position we did. And especially at *that* time, as the same Conference instructed the Trustees of the Printing Establishment to procure an act of incorporation from the next session of the N. H. Legislature—a Legislature never partial to abolitionism—policy dictated a conservative course, but *duty* called for action. And, *thank Heaven*, “noble, sublime, god-like action” was then taken.

Conference adjourned, and time rolled on. But every revolving sun witnessed some new struggle with the apologists of slavery. It was one thing to adopt the resolutions they did when together, and quite another thing to defend and sustain them single handed, in their respective churches. Here came the “tug of war.” But, “remembering them that are in bonds as bound with them,” they faltered not.

Their conversation, prayers, sermons, and lectures, were not in vain. Accompanying these efforts were 5000 rays of Star light, weekly diffusing their illuminating influence throughout the connexion. The result was, that before the next General Conference, every Yearly Meeting, and almost every Quarterly Meeting, took *high* Anti-slavery ground.

But there is a dark side to this picture.

Disaffected members were here and there showing themselves in every direction. If a minister alluded to the vile system of slavery, and called upon men to give it no support; or even if he fervently prayed for the enslaved, some, in almost every church, would be incessantly complaining, and do nothing for his support. Others would absent themselves from meeting, and not unfrequently he found it necessary to remove to another field of labor. A few ministers were grieved because others, and particularly the Morning Star, sympathized so deeply with the poor slave; and thus trials arose in the ministry as well as in the laity.

Nearly \$15,000 were due the Printing Establishment for books and the Star—a debt of more than \$6,000 was resting

upon the Trustees personally,—and in their next Report they say, “We petitioned the N. H. Legislature for an act of incorporation, but our prayer has not been granted.”

The times were unparalleled for pecuniary embarrassment, and with the arrival of every mail came requests, sometimes twenty in a letter, vile and abusive, for the discontinuance of the *Star*, because of its anti-slavery character. And so numerous were these requests, that for two years the subscription list was gradually decreasing. Such was the state of affairs when the General Conference assembled at Greenville, R. I., in 1837.

To avert from the denomination the public odium heaped upon abolitionists—to reconcile the disaffected members—to secure an increased circulation of the *Star* and an act of incorporation—and more than all, to prevent the utter failure of the Printing Establishment, a *retraction* of our strong anti-slavery ground was demanded. Not a few in the connexion thought some modification essential to our prosperity. From *without*, the mandate came with *imperious authority*.

As our patriotic fathers, in their struggle for liberty, stood undismayed through the darkest gloom of our country's adversity, so the body of the denomination at this time proved themselves worthy of their noble ancestry, in opposing a system of oppression, with which British aggression bore no comparison.

In the early part of Conference, it was *unanimously*

“*Resolved*, That we *approve* the course which the *Star* has taken on the subject of slavery, * * * and we recommend that it continue the same mild, but decided course.”

The Committee on Slavery reported a series of resolutions, of which the following is a specimen :

“*Resolved*, That American Slavery is a sin of such exceeding enormity and magnitude, that every minister of the gospel should loudly testify against it, and every Christian should decidedly rebuke it.—That it is an outrage upon the rights and happiness of fellow countrymen, so cruel, so flagrant, and prevailing to so great an extent, that it becomes the duty of every friend of liberty, patriotism, and humanity, to bear decided testimony against it.”

These resolutions were adopted without a dissenting vote, showing no disposition to *retract*, or be “dumb dogs” on the walls of Zion.

Let us here break the thread of historical action, as taken by the General Conference, and return for the consideration of other action, to some instances of which allusion has already been made.

The agent of the Printing Establishment having tendered his resignation to the General Conference in 1835, a Board of Trustees was chosen to manage its affairs.

For about a year and a half, the Star had been advocating the sentiments of abolitionists, and this it still continued to do. One or two members of the Board were dissatisfied, and a meeting was called in December for the express purpose of considering the question.

The Board was known to be divided, but what the decision would be no man could foretell. Some insisted that slavery should be entirely excluded from its columns; some were willing it should speak, if its language was mild and compromising; while others urged the *duty* of boldly and fearlessly exposing the system in all its oppressive features. The meeting was an important one. It was to suppress from the denomination, through its official organ, all light and intelligence on the accursed system of slavery; or it was to increase and make permanent the light then shining with Christian effulgence.

The discussion was continued in the Board through the day; nor did it close with the expiring beams of evening twilight. Through the *live-long night* they considered the question with an interest, equalled only by the consequences that hung upon the decision.

It was not till the radiant beams of morning light were streaming in upon that wakeful, wrestling Board, that a vote was attempted. The question was then submitted: Shall the Star pursue its present anti-slavery course?

Every answer was in the *affirmative*, save *one* dissenting voice. Righteous decision! Glorious news to the millions in bonds!

In June, 1836, the Trustees of the Printing Establishment applied to the N. H. Legislature for an act of incorporation, which was denied them. And why this denial? Let the Reporter of the Legislative proceedings, and the leading journals of the party that controlled the Legislature, answer for themselves. The Dover Gazette, printed in the same town with the Morning Star, assigned the following reason, the very next week after the rejection of the bill. "It was securely progressing through the customary stages,

when it was mentioned among the members that this establishment had become the vehicle of abolitionism; this produced an instant inquiry into the truth of the suggestion, and the result was that the bill * * was, on Wednesday, refused a third reading by an overwhelming majority."

The Reporter for the N. H. Patriot, in giving the substance of the speech made by the Chairman of the Committee on Incorporations, used the following language :

"He had heard that it (the Morning Star) was an advocate of abolition, and he felt no disposition that the Legislature should lend its aid to publications, which the Legislatures of our sister States were entreating us to *suppress*." And to convince the House that he was not mistaken about the Star, he read extracts therefrom, proving, what we joyfully admit, that the Star contended for the abolition of slavery. After speaking of other objections to the Bill, the Reporter says, "The principal objection to its passage, however, was, the fact that the Morning Star, a paper advocating the doctrines of immediate abolition of slavery, was owned by and published under the auspices of the Society proposed to be incorporated; and that the granting of the charter, authorizing and legalizing such a newspaper, would be construed as favoring the designs of the abolitionists."

The Bill was finally rejected by a vote of 188 to 34.

This refusal of a favor, so just and reasonable, affected not the course of the Star. It continued to speak for the oppressed, and soon after had a slavery department, in which the subject was constantly and freely discussed. The Trustees continued to urge their petition for an act of incorporation, annually finding an increase of favor, but were ever rejected. To show that the real ground of opposition to the Bill was never changed, the following proposed amendment is in evidence, viz.: "If the Trustees of said corporation shall publish, or cause to be published, any books, tracts or pamphlets upon the subject of the abolition of slavery, the charter shall be void."

Thus we humbly petitioned for an act of incorporation, and thus we were denied, *for ten successive years*. In 1846, an entire change was effected in the politics of the State. The Legislature was strongly Anti-Slavery, and an act of incorporation was then granted us, with as great a majority as it had hitherto been rejected.

In this connection, it may not be inappropriate to show that we were successful laborers in the Anti-Slavery cause,

from a paper most violently opposed to agitation. The N. H. Patriot, the leading political paper in the State, in accounting for the recent triumph of anti-slavery principles, paid us the following compliment, in which due allowance will be made for the charge of seeking the overthrow of the Democrats.

We have no unkind feelings towards them or the Whigs; our hostility is against *slavery*. And if, at any time, they, or even nominal Christians, are found with the enemy, they must not expect us to reserve our fire. But to the extract:

“During many years, the Morning Star, at Dover, has labored indefatigably to spread among the Free-will Baptist denomination of Christians the conviction that the Democrats were a pro-slavery party. This has been the tendency of its course. It has held up the evils of slavery, in the darkest features of atrocity, and the Democrats have been, if not by express charge, by implication, denounced as the upholders of these evils. A portion of the clergy of the same denomination have pursued a similar course. In the pulpit, and by the fireside, they have preached abolition, raised sympathy, excited strong feeling, and prepared the minds of a great number of the people to believe that they must abandon all other things, to resist the denounced encroachments of the slave power.”

In 1837, we petitioned the New Hampshire Legislature for the incorporation of our Home Mission Society, but we petitioned in vain. Different reasons, doubtless, influenced different members to oppose the bill, but the New Hampshire Baptist Register, published at the capital, said the principal objection *urged*, was, that it was probably the design of the Society to send forth missionaries to preach abolitionism. Never discouraged in laboring for righteousness and truth, we pressed our petitions for three successive years, when our prayer was granted.

It matters not what our location may be—whether in the East, the West, or in central parts of the connexion—we are all inspired by the same love of liberty,—we are all encircled by the same bond of union. When we petitioned the Ohio Legislature for the incorporation of Geauga Seminary, pro-slavery men interested themselves for its defeat. They could not prevent the granting of a charter, but they succeeded in procuring the insertion of a clause that excluded colored persons from the privileges of the school. This

charter was indignantly rejected by the friends of the school, and the next year, after *great effort*, a charter was received, unstained by that pro-slavery blot.

Our College in Michigan, the Michigan Central, in its struggles for life and prosperity, among other opposing obstacles, has felt the suppressive influence of Christians and politicians who are in league with slavery. But there are no principles of compromise with slavery taught there, and the Institution shows itself worthy of the denomination under whose patronage it has been established.

We all take a lively interest in the "under-ground railroads," and those at the West, living in their more immediate vicinity, are most of them stockholders, and not a few are either shrewd officers or efficient laborers in the enterprise. By their aid, in common with others, thousands of fugitives are now safe on the Canadian shore, where Victoria's flag in freedom floats. And they still care for both soul and body. Boxes of clothing, and one teacher, at least, have been sent over by our brethren, and many of us have contributed for the support of missionaries among them.

At the commencement of the agitation, two brethren from the eastern part of the State attended the Maine Western Y. M. as Corresponding Messengers, and were kindly received. It was feared by some that the great object of their visit was to unite with their own abolitionists in a general anti-slavery discussion. To prevent this, a resolution was incautiously introduced, virtually declaring that slavery did not come within the range of their deliberations, and would not be entertained by the Y. M. Instead of closing, this opened wide the door for discussion, and for hours, from one adjournment to another, the propriety of adopting such a resolution was warmly contested, and the friends of free discussion, both in and out of the Y. M., were thus favored with an ample opportunity of speaking for the slave.

The result was the rejection of this resolution, the adoption of anti-slavery ones, and the enjoyment of a gracious revival of religion.

In 1837, the Rockingham Q. M. passed a resolution, approving "the principles, measures, and objects of the American Anti-Slavery Society." This brought out the famous "protest," published in the New Hampshire Patriot, a copy of which may not be uninteresting.

"For the N. H. Patriot.

"The following communication was prepared for the Morning Star:

“Whereas the Morning Star, a religious paper, published at Dover, N. H., under the direction of the Free-will Baptist General Conference, is sent abroad in the world as containing the sentiments of the denomination,—and whereas we believe slavery a moral and political evil, and to be very much regretted that it should ever have been countenanced on Columbia’s free soil; yet we, as a religious community, can never consent to digress so far from the cause we have espoused, as to lend our influence to any Society that we think has for its ultimate object the dissolution of the Union, or that will create dissension in the moral and religious community.

“Therefore we, the undersigned, professing ourselves to be Free-will Baptists, beg leave, through your columns, to enter this, our protest, on the following subjects which are propagated in your columns, [the Star, of course.—*Sec.*]

“1st. We disapprove of the measures of the Anti-Slavery Society, which is [are?] propagated in the Morning Star, and do not feel ourselves bound to sustain the vote passed in the Rockingham Q. M. in relation to said Society, and also feel and believe the paper may be filled with matter more edifying and interesting to a religious community.

“2. We disapprove of a religious paper descending so far below the object for which it was intended (agreeably to the Prospectus) as to meddle with the political contentions of the day, which has been done by the Morning Star.

“3. We disapprove of the doings of the last General Conference in the encouragement and inducement to preach by note.”

This “protest” was signed by *eleven* brethren, leading members of different churches; two of whom were ministers, prominent in the connexion. One of the two has since gone home to rest, and the other is now one of the most ardent friends of the slave.

In 1839, the General Conference assembled at Conneaut, Ohio. Some parts of the session were scenes of the most thrilling interest. The slavery question there came up as it had never before presented itself, and the firmness of our anti-slavery principles was brought to the test.

A communication was received from New Hampshire, signed by *four clergymen*, and as many *clerks*, on behalf of their respective churches, most of them the signers of the above-mentioned “protest.” It asked the opinion of Conference on the vote of the Rockingham Q. M., and gave it

as their opinion that the Star had descended from a religious to a political course.

This communication was referred, and the committee, not having the particular vote of the Quarterly Meeting before them, reported the two following resolutions, which were adopted :

“*Resolved*, That this Conference, believing the Anti-Slavery cause to be the cause of God, recommend to every Christian and every Christian minister to use all proper means to promote its interests.

“*Resolved*, That this Conference highly approve the decided and straight forward course of the Morning Star on the subject of slavery.”

During the summer previous to the Conference in October, a correspondence had been conducted between the Editor of the Star and Dr. Wm. M. Housley, of Kentucky.

This correspondence was published, and consisted principally of inquiries on the part of the Doctor, and answers on the part of the Editor. Dr. Housley attended the Conference, as it was expected he would ; and when the delegates arrived, he was already there, and had united with the church at Conneaut. It appeared, from satisfactory testimonials, that he had been a member of the Calvinistic Baptist church, and a licensed preacher ; but differing from them in doctrine, he had taken a letter of dismission and commendation. He proposed to receive ordination, if found worthy, and in addressing the Conference, he said, “A large number of the Baptists in the southern country are with you in sentiment, and should you plant a mission in Kentucky, probably you might gather into your connexion, from that State alone, 20,000 members within three years.”

It was noticed by some paper in Southern Ohio that Dr. H. was on his way to the General Conference, where he would unite with the Free-will Baptists, and, on his return to Kentucky, would carry with him all those Baptist churches that believed in a free salvation.

A council of five members from the church at Conneaut, and an equal number from the General Conference, was chosen for the examination of Dr. Housley, as to the propriety of his ordination. He related his Christian experience, his doctrinal views, his call to the ministry, &c., all of which were satisfactory. But the most important item elicited in the examination, was the fact that he was a *slaveholder*. He

claimed as his property a *mother* and her *three children*, valued at \$2000.

The bright visions of a large accession to our denomination, from Kentucky, immediately vanished, as this fact became known.

Among other questions and answers in the examination, were the following :

Question. What do you think of American slavery?

Answer. I think it a great moral evil, a scourge and a curse.

Q. Are you a slaveholder?

A. I am.

Q. Do you think it morally and religiously right for *you* to hold your fellow men in slavery?

A. Circumstances alter cases; if I could believe my slaves would be bettered in their condition by immediate emancipation, I should be as glad to have them liberated as you would; *but* they are ignorant, and *unprepared at present to take care of themselves.*

Q. All circumstances *as they are*, do you think it morally and religiously *right* for you to claim property in your fellow men?

A. It is a difficult question; I choose not to answer it directly.

Q. We will give you satisfactory bonds that your slaves shall have *three years'* good schooling in New England, and other necessary instruction to qualify them for useful life. Will you let us have them on these conditions?

A. No: unless I can have a remuneration for their value.

Q. If you should now see your slaves passing here, towards Canada, what would probably be your course?

A. I should arrest and claim them as my property.

The facts of the Doctor's connection with slavery being publicly known, the excitement was intense, and the decision of the Council was anticipated. Judge M., a man of great influence in Northern Ohio, called on the chairman of the Council, and entreated him not to report against the Doctor *merely* because he was a slaveholder. Said he, "Do it, and it will be destructive to the Free-will Baptist interests in all *this* country." A prominent man in the ministry said to a member of the Council, "Do you think the denomination will make slaveholding a test of Christian fellowship?" "*I do,*" was the reply. "Then," said he, with *great emphasis*, "I am no longer a Free-will Baptist."

As the Conference opened, the next morning, a crowded house was anxiously waiting for the report of the Council. It was soon presented, and in substance it said, "as Dr. Housley claims property in human beings, we cannot ordain him as a minister, nor fellowship him as a Christian."

The discussion that followed was exceedingly spirited. All the talent of Conference was called into action; and many of our brethren, not members of Conference, several ministers of other denominations, and lawyers, also, asked the privilege, and were permitted, to participate in the debate.

The report was opposed as being in advance of the times—uncharitable—and impolitic.

But it was finally *voted, without opposition*, "that the decision of the Council is highly satisfactory."

The subject of our connection with the slaveholding churches of North and South Carolina, was brought before Conference, and this connection entirely dissolved. The facts relative to the Free-will Baptist churches in Carolina, and the extent of our connection with them are simply these. There were individual Baptists in North Carolina more than a century and a half ago, but their origin is unknown. The first churches gathered there were by Elders Paul Palmer and Joseph Parker, many years after this; and several of the members were the descendants of the General Baptists in England. In 1764, the Philadelphia Baptist Association sent two of their ministers among these churches, and the next year most of them, with their ministers, changed their sentiments, and seceded to the Calvinistic Baptists. Elder Palmer was no more; but Elder Parker and a few others refused to secede. These few churches were regarded as obstinate, heretical, and enjoyed but little prosperity. About the year 1827, they heard of the Free-will Baptists at the North. A correspondence was opened, and the next year they published their records as "The Minutes of the Free-will Baptist Annual Conference of North Carolina;" the simple term *Baptist* having been previously used.

At this time, they numbered only 845 members. They soon increased in members, churches, and ministers; they corresponded with us, and sent us their annual "Minutes," and at one time, took nearly five hundred copies of the Morning Star.

Their ministers never came North, and Elder Elias Hutchins is the only one of our denomination that has

visited them. They never formally united with us; but they were with us in sentiment, and strongly attached, down to the time when the Anti-Slavery agitation commenced. Elder Hutchins says, "in conversing with them on the subject of slavery, many would admit it to be a great evil, and that slaveholders would have more to answer for in the final judgment, on account of their treatment to their slaves, than for anything else; but they generally justified themselves by saying that the evil was entailed upon them and could not be removed." The winter after the insurrection in Virginia, he sometimes said to them, "You extol to the skies the unhappy Poles and Greeks for their courageous and patriotic efforts to obtain their freedom, but when your slaves, as in the case of the late insurrection, rise against oppression, infinitely worse than that endured by the Poles and Greeks, you are full of rage, and shoot them as you would if they were so many tigers." After the agitation commenced, Elder Hutchins wrote to the most influential minister among them, proposing a private discussion of the slavery question. He declined the proposition, stating that such were the feelings of the people, he dared not discuss it. Nothing could be done; they discontinued the *Star*, they made no returns of their number or prosperity, and we voted to count them no longer with us. Their number then was 2 Q. M's, 45 churches, 36 ministers, and 3,000 members. Most of them have since joined the Campbellites.

The wrong of retaining *such Christians* (!) in our communion, or that of any other evangelical body, will be seen by the following statements made by Elder Hutchins before the General Conference. "During one of my visits to these churches, a member, who, in everything save slavery, was among the most mild, humane, and hospitable men, and devoted Christians I have ever seen, told me that he once pursued a runaway slave—an outlaw—and, on his refusing to stop, fired at him as he was getting over the fence. And said he, 'I tracked him for some distance by his blood, but he was never seen afterwards,' intimating that he died of the wound."

Another man, who was among the most zealous members of the North Carolina Free-will Baptist churches, told me that he wanted no better sport, than to take his horse, dogs, and gun, and pursue a runaway slave whenever one came near him; and that it was no more harm to shoot such a slave, than to shoot a deer."

Such *were* Free-will Baptist slaveholding Christians (!) and we believe them equally as good as any other denomination's slaveholding Christians (!) of the present day.

From the time that we sundered the cable of Christian fellowship, that bound to our free bark the old scow of oppression, we have ever and anon been in conflict with the privateers of slavery. Their excursions against us were planned and executed for the pleasure of slaveholders; and, in the eyes of some, they have deprived us of a reputable standing with other denominations—they have denied us for years, of incorporated privileges—threatened our ministers with lean salaries, if they opened their mouth for the dumb—and kept the office seekers in our churches, in constant alarm. But “having obtained help of God, we continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great,” that neither hope nor fear, flatteries nor frowns, worldly favor nor public scorn, shall divert us from our pledged opposition to slavery. Others may veer with the changing winds of popular opinion, and box the compass with the “*great expounder*,” but, like the needle to the pole, *our* fidelity to liberty and liberty's God shall be steadfast and persevering.

Believing that slavery is a system of robbery against both God and man, and knowing that the Lord “hates robbery for burnt-offering,” our Foreign Mission Society early voted to exclude the contributions of slaveholders from its treasury, and slaveholders themselves from membership. In 1841 the Executive Board agreed that it could not ask aid of Societies, in furnishing our missionaries with books for distribution, that are managed in part by slaveholders, and whose treasury is filled with the price of blood. Thus, while Christianizing the heathen of other lands, we have not failed to rebuke the system of heathenizing Christians in our own land. We may have lost donations from some sources by this action, but we have secured them from others. Gentlemen from other denominations have given us liberally, and a lady of Campton, N. H., willed her property, estimated at \$4,000, to the Baptist Mission Society, but, learning that it would pass through our Treasury uncontaminated with the avails of slavery, she altered her will and gave it to us.

Our Home Mission Society is no less free from pro-slavery influence. It neither plants nor aids churches that are non-committal on the slavery question.

Our Education Society is equally adverse to slavery.—The Biblical school teaches the strongest anti-slavery principles, and all its advantages are freely offered to young men contemplating the ministry, irrespectively of color.

In 1842, a denominational Anti-Slavery Society was formed. This Society has no funds at its command, nor agents in the field. The great object of the organization is to have an Anti-Slavery anniversary, in connection with the Anniversaries of our other benevolent Societies, that the fires of freedom may be kept burning on every Free-will Baptist altar. Half a day is thus annually devoted to the emancipation cause, and no meeting usually exceeds it in interest.

During Anniversary week in Boston, 1848, an Anti-Slavery Convention was there held, in accordance with the arrangements made at the previous General Conference. It was one of interest.

The General Conference at Topsham, Maine, in 1841, took a few steps in advance of any former position. There are times when calm, gentle efforts are perfectly ineffectual in contending with a gigantic foe. And in such contests, when the crisis comes, if we can come down upon the hosts of darkness like a thundering avalanche, we strike a blow that tells for the cause. This was the state of things in '41. The friends of liberty had been so successful in their assaults upon the dark prison-house of slavery, that the enraged keepers began to curse the whole North. To calm their anger, and to prove *themselves* free from the taint of abolitionism, Northern Doctors of Divinity, Professors of Colleges and of Theological Seminaries, came to the rescue of their *beloved slaveholding brethren*. They transferred to the Bible this hellish institution, all drenched in the blood of its victims, and vocal with their groans. They clothed its defenders with patriarchal authority, and then charged abolitionists with fighting against God. Individuals of other denominations had loudly complained, but it was for the Free-will Baptist denomination, in General Conference assembled, to rebuke this insult upon the Bible and the religion it teaches. It was there

“*Resolved*, That we look upon the attempt to impute Slavery to the Scriptures as moral treason against *God's Holy Word*; tending directly to the overthrow of all confidence in the Bible, and the God of the Bible, and to make infidels of the rising generation.”

More truthful sentiments were never penned by uninspired man. So *abhorrent* is American slavery that, when convinced that the God of the *Bible* approves it, men discard *such* a God, and claim to trust in the God of nature. It was said in the United States Senate, by Henry Clay, that "That is property which the law declares to be property; and two hundred years of legislation have sanctioned and sanctified negro slaves as property." But that Conference believed there was no power in the *Universe* that could sanction and sanctify the right of property in man as claimed by slavery; therefore they

"*Resolved*, That if the Bible upheld slavery, it would uphold a system of the most atrocious wickedness, and could not be confided in as a holy book."

The report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence contains the following strong language, quoted from Rev. J. G. Pike, a noted English author, which report was accepted and entered upon the journal of the Conference. "But of all its (slavery's) wicked supporters, none are more wicked than those who profess to be Christians, and yet uphold it or palliate its enormities, and would even brand Christianity with the eternal disgrace of sanctioning their wickedness. Christians, indeed! What! oppressors, Christians? Robbers, Christians? for every slaveholder is a robber;—he robs the negro of his rights and the produce of his labor.

Christians, indeed! Come, then, ye swearers, ye drunkards, ye adulterers, ye murderers, come all, and be acknowledged as Christians.

Come, Satan and thine angels, we will welcome you into the goodly band! Why should you not be acknowledged as Christians, as well as those who do your will, and work with your machinery."

Here it will be seen that we scaled the highest ramparts of slavery—its Biblical and Christian fortifications—and fearlessly measured swords with the vile monster of oppression. No honied words were used to effect a compromise; but, after the example of our Savior to the Scribes and Pharisees, unequivocal rebuke was faithfully administered. Years ago, we proclaimed to the world that we would neither exchange pulpits nor commune with slaveholders. Higher ground we could not well take; and from this high position we have never descended. Every General Conference since has re-affirmed its abhorrence of slavery, and

openly committed itself on every new issue between freedom and oppression.

Seven years ago, the denomination

“*Resolved*, That we believe it to be the duty of all Christian voters to act upon anti-slavery principles at the ballot-box.”

There is but one opinion among us as to the necessity of human government. We believe in its importance, but we take no extreme ground. On the one hand, we do not exalt it above the throne of God, deify the officers, and approve as sacred all their enactments. On the other hand, we do not regard it as undeserving the Christian’s notice and attention. Governments, like the individuals composing them, are imperfect and liable to err. God, alone, is infallible. As the *church* is not, much less can a *government* be, especially not if any of its members are slaveholders, infidels, licentious or intemperate. Good rulers and equitable laws are among the greatest blessings vouchsafed by God. But wicked rulers and unjust laws are among the most intolerable evils endured by man. This was the view taken by the Pilgrims in leaving their fatherland, and by their descendants in the days of the Revolution. And is it nothing to you, Christian friends, under what government you live? Then go to England, and be taxed exorbitantly for the support of a religion in which you have no faith. Then go to France, where the government selects the Sabbath for every election and public demonstration. Go to Spain, where the constituted authorities suppress the reading of the Bible and the conscientious worship of God. Go to Rome, and every month be compelled to confess your sins to the priest, and empty your purse for their pardon. Go to Russia, and become a mere tool in the hands of the autocrat for executing the wicked designs of a despotic government. Or *stay at home*, and catch slaves for your lordly masters at the South.

The Christian will not, he dare not, say that he has no interest in the character of the government under which he lives. But is it wise to leave the affairs of government in the hands of the irreligious? If it is desirable to have good rulers, should not the Christian aid in their election? If it is desirable to have good laws, should not the Christian aid in procuring them? If the great object of government is to protect man in the peaceful enjoyment of his rights, who has, or *ought* to have, a greater interest in seeing that it

suberves this important end, than the Christian? When great moral questions are to be decided by the election of particular men, it may be as much the Christian's duty to *vote* as it is to *pray*.

And has the *minister* no part to act in preserving from infamy and despotism a government established by the toil, blood and treasures of our sacrificing ancestors? A political babbler he should *never* be; but an active citizen—ever interested in whatever affects the morals or happiness of the people—he should *always* be. But we are told that he always compromises his dignity and prostitutes his calling by going to the ballot-box. That depends altogether upon the spirit with which he goes. If he has religion enough to there “do as he would be done by,” and to “have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men,” he is not only justified in voting, but it may be one of his most imperative duties. Is it not mockery to pray for an object, and all the while refuse to *act* in securing it? And think you there are no such prayers for good rulers and good laws?

But who are the men thus tender of our clerical reputation? Most of them we know to be men that are well pleased with the prompt payment of our taxes, and an occasional sermon on the duty of blind submission to the laws of the land, especially if they are “painfully repugnant” to the moral sense of the people; and they would be no less pleased with our votes, *provided they could control them*. Other men may accommodate themselves to the pleasure of politicians as they please, but the opportunity of exercising our elective franchise we ask not as a *favor*, we claim it as a *right*. We were *men*, with the civil rights and privileges of other men, *before* we were *ministers*, and we have yet to learn how a person ceases to be a man by becoming a minister.

These remarks on government, and the duty of the Christian citizen, seemed called for, not merely as an exposition of our views, but in justification of our anti-slavery action in politics. We are a voting people, and early remembered the slave at the ballot-box. One of our clergymen was on the Committee that brought out the first Liberty ticket before the American people. We praise God for liberty, and vote for men that would extend it. We deplore the existence of slavery, and vote for men that would prevent its extension.

Such being our views and practice on the slavery question in general, our position on the Fugitive Slave Law will be anticipated. The last Congress was a scene of the most exciting interest between the champions of freedom and slavery. For more than nine months, slavery claimed equal protection with liberty, and, in rampant fury, threatened the flow of blood if thwarted in its purpose. And during these nine months, a Spartan band, to freedom pledged, stood unmoved, while their colleagues quailed before the storm. But might prevailed against right. The North, through her treacherous servants, was compelled to bow the supple knee to the Moloch of slavery, and become bloodhounds for the South in hunting the panting fugitive. This, with two or three kindred measures, was "the salvation of our country"! "the quietus of all agitation"!

In just fourteen days from the passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill, our General Conference assembled at Providence, R. I. No religious body had then expressed an opinion of the law, so disgraceful to the nation, so aggravating to the North and so insulting to God. The subject was introduced by one of our brethren, a minister of Him who was sent "to preach deliverance to the captives." He asked advice, for he was himself a fugitive, liable every hour to be torn from his home, his family, and the flock of his charge. Sympathy for this distressed fugitive swelled every bosom. Christian indignation towards the law glowed in every countenance. And determined opposition to its requirements was frankly avowed.

The scene may be imagined, but never described. Suffice it to say that, after discussing the subject for an hour or two, it was referred to the Committee on Slavery, and a day assigned for the consideration of their report. When the day arrived, the capacious church was filled to overflowing. The report specified the particular nature and requirements of the Law, and closed with the following resolutions:

Resolved, That we deliberately and calmly, yet earnestly and decidedly, deny any and all obligation on our part to submit to the unrighteous enactments of the aforesaid Fugitive Slave Law. Also, that, regardless of unjust human enactments, fines and imprisonment, we will do all we can, consistently with the claims of the Bible, to prevent the re-capture of the fugitive, and to aid him in his efforts to escape from his rapacious claimants.

Resolved, That, as 'we ought to obey God rather than

men,' (Acts 5: 29,) in disobeying a cruel and wicked human law, and patiently submitting to its unrighteous penalties for such disobedience, we are 'subject unto the higher powers—the powers that be,' (Rom. 13: 1,) in the highest and holiest sense of that command; that is, in the same sense in which the apostles, primitive Christians, and subsequent Christian martyrs obeyed it, when they disobeyed the Jewish, Heathen and Popish laws.

"*Resolved*, That we do most deeply sympathize with those who, after having escaped from human bondage, are now in great fear, anxiety, and distress, on account of the passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill. We also recommend them to use all the means to preserve their liberty, that religion, conscience and reason will justify, under their harassing and distressing circumstances."

The report was discussed for nearly four hours by gentlemen from eight or ten different States, and unanimously adopted.

The crowded audience that had, at times, hung in breathless anxiety upon the lips of the speakers, and then again breathed the indignant sigh, as the revolting features of the law were presented, was called upon for an expression of opinion. With scarcely an exception, that immense throng approved the report. Since then, each of our twenty-six Y. M's has been convened, and not the first word of complaint has been whispered against the above action of the General Conference. Indeed, most of them have passed resolutions equally strong and decisive.

Because of our action on the Fugitive Slave Law, we are denounced by the pro-slavery press and demagogues, as a denomination of disorganizers. We deny and repel the charge. We again declare our faith in human governments, though we abhor some of their *inhuman* acts. We acknowledge our obligation to submit, even to unjust laws, ordinarily, till we can procure their repeal. But when the unjust laws are such as to contravene the laws of God, and offer us the choice of obeying their requirements, or suffering their penalties, the government has no right to complain if we obey God, and, without resistance, suffer the penalty it threatens to inflict. If "the powers that be are ordained of God," then are they clothed with no authority to require that at our hands which God himself has forbidden. When the government says, "*Thou shalt deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee,*" it

transcends the object for which it was established, and disobedience is then a virtue. Governments not only may, but *must*, do that which individuals are not allowed to do. But when an act is wrong in itself, no legislation can make it right.

It was intrinsically wrong to say that no one "shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days," save of the king of Babylon. And when "all the presidents of the kingdom, the governors and the princes, the counsellors and the captains, established a royal statute and made a firm decree" to that effect, and procured the signature of king Darius, thus clothing it with all the legislative authority of the realm, it was no more right than before; and both heaven and earth will forever honor the prophet Daniel for his love of prayer.

It was wrong in itself to aid the blood-thirsty enemies of our Savior, in their efforts to seek him for crucifixion. And when "both the chief priests and Pharisees had given a commandment that if any knew where he were, they should show it, that they might take him," (John 11: 57,) Judas was under no more obligation to betray him than before; and *hell alone* will honor him as the only law-abiding citizen among the twelve apostles.

And so the Fugitive Slave Law, being intrinsically wrong, cannot be made *right* by the legal enactment of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, with the signature of Millard Fillmore, duly countersigned by his _____ Secretary. Regarding God as our Supreme Ruler, in the language of the Kennebec Y. M., "we say to this government and to all the world, that the only obedience we will render to said Fugitive Slave Law, shall be to *suffer its penalties.*"

In surveying our past action and present position, a few truths press themselves upon the mind and demand an utterance. We cannot refrain from acknowledging the manifold blessings that the Lord has bestowed upon us in our labors of love for the poor slave. He has enabled us to speak and to prosper, though our foes have been many and mighty. Our denomination has been continually enlarging its borders, increasing its moral strength, and, during the ten years of warmest conflict—from 1834 to 1844—it nearly doubled its number of members. The number of subscribers for the *Morning Star* has increased since 1832, from 1700 to more than 9000. We have sustained no great loss from secessions, but our abolitionism is one of our strong bonds of un-

ion. There is now scarcely an efficient man in the ministry, who is not an abolitionist—a talking, praying, and (if he votes at all) a voting abolitionist. In the laity, a large majority are of the same class. There are many, however, that have held some trivial office, or *hope* to, and so keep in league with party leaders. These men have a few that look to them for direction, and thus there are too many of our numbers that are pro-slavery in their influence.

Those ministers and churches that took decided anti-slavery ground are almost invariably among the number that have enjoyed the greatest prosperity. While the few ministers and churches whose “religion,” *they say*, “had nothing to do with *niggers*,” have accomplished but little. And those members of churches that are abolitionists, are generally among the most efficient ones; while those who complain whenever allusion is made to slavery, have usually shown themselves as having the spirit of the world quite as much as the spirit of Christ. In the most powerful revivals that have been enjoyed in any of our churches within the last fifteen years, the duty of “remembering them that are in bonds as bound with them,” has been urged upon converts as a part of the religion they were professing before the world. And, instead of grieving the Holy Spirit and checking the revival interest, it has evidently promoted both spiritual and practical religion.

Having thus imperfectly traced the rise and progress of the Anti-Slavery enterprise in the denomination, it will be seen that our position is a prominent one among the hosts of freedom. But there is nothing of which we can boast. It may seem to some of us that we have done what we could; but were *our* parents, children and friends to day smarting under the lash, who would be satisfied with his efforts? But our fellow beings are there. Our Savior himself is there—brutally insulted in the person of his little ones. And shall we be weary in well doing? Never. No: never. They have heard that there were friends at the North who pitied their condition, and on every balmy breeze come their plaintive cries for help. From the depth of their anguish they look up to nature’s God, and the hope of deliverance at times flashes upon them. Days, months and years pass slowly away, and in the agony of despair they exclaim, “How long, O Lord,” how long!

Slavery never wore aspects more appalling than at the present hour. New Mexico and Utah are left exposed to its

blasting mildew. California may yet be divided, to give it a foothold upon the Pacific. The proclaimed annexation of Cuba, and the recent movements in the South, are all ominous of evil.

The greatest heroes of the age, who have braved famine, bloodhounds, and death itself, to obtain their freedom, find no repose beneath the stars and stripes of our national flag. What ruin to our beloved country slavery may yet work, God alone can tell. One thing is certain, it is bad enough for *anything*; and, being hell's great ventilator, its sulphurous stench may, for a time, suffocate the breath of freedom. But we will not fear; for "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Let it fill up the cup of its iniquity in hot haste; the day of vengeance draweth nigh.

We have reason to "tremble for our country, when we recollect that God is just, and that his justice cannot sleep forever." The bands of oppression must break. If *truth* and *mercy* break them not, *judgment will*. And if nothing else will suffice, *let it come*. Our bodies may rest with the dead before that eventful day, but our spirits, being with God, we shall join in the rapturous song,

"Jehovah has triumphed—his people are free."

I. D. STEWART, *Cor. Sec.*

Meredith Bridge, N. H., Oct. 1, 1851.

1300 chhs.

1200 Ministers.

60000 members.

Scattered over most
of Free States.

Reverend about 50
years old.





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