



AN ADDRESS

TO THE

PEOPLE OF NEW JERSEY,

BY THE

Abolitionists of the State

FAVORABLE TO POLITICAL ACTION

AGAINST

AMERICAN SLAVERY,

In Convention at Paterson, Jan. 12, 1841.

NEW-YORK:

PHERCY & REED, PRINTERS, 9 SPRUCE-ST.

1841.

ADDRESS

TO THE

PEOPLE OF NEW-JERSEY, &c.

To the People of New-Jersey:

The State Convention of Abolitionists, met at Paterson on the 12th of January, 1841, to take measures for the abolition of slavery in our State and nation, and to secure the ascendancy of free principles in New Jersey, beg leave to set before you a brief view of our objects and plans, for the purpose of securing your

co-operation in their speedy accomplishment.

We regard the holding of men in slavery as a gross violation of natural right, always a crime against the law of God, a reproach peculiarly dark to a people professing republicanism, a source of the Divine displeasure, and a principal cause of most of the evils, both financial and political, that we have to fear or to suffer. Hence the abolition of slavery becomes evidently the highest political interest of the country, and no question now before the people ought to take precedence And as slavery is created by law, and is countenanced and upheld by the national government as well as by the authorities of our own State, it is plain that no man can support slaveholders or pro-slavery men in office, either in the State or Nation, without virtually prostituting his vote in favor of slavery. We therefore, call upon you to unite with us in the resolution that we will vote for no man to the National, or State legislature, who is not sound in principle on the subject of human rights, or who will not employ his official influence, as far as is proper, in promoting human liberty and hastening the extinction of slavery.

The Statute book of New Jersey is still disfigured with the laws of slavery, and with the most unreasonable and oppressive enactments against a class of our fellow-citizens, as useful and deserving as any, and who have given no just provocation for such arbitrary disfranchisement. We have petitioned our State rulers to repeal all these partial and unjust statutes, as uphold slavery, or impose disabilities upon men for their color or descent. But those petitions have been treated with cold neglect, not, we charitably believe, because our statesmen approve of slavery, nor on account of the interests of a few dozen of slaveholders among us. who are as well able to pay for the labor they require as the rest of us; but chiefly because of the unjust ascendancy of the Slave Power in the National Government. Men of both parties, who feel that slavery in New Jersey is wrong, are afraid to act in relation to it, lest it should jeopard the interests of their party at the South.

If it is morally wrong for us ever to vote for men to be rulers who are too ignorant to comprehend, or too corrupt to embrace the true principles of liberty, our experience has shown us the necessity of making an Independent Nomination of our own, to save ourselves from the crime of trifling with the high prerogative of the Elective Franchise, entrusted to us by our Creator, and for which we are to give account to Him. The nomination of those pure patriots and enlightened statesmen, James G. Birney and Thomas Earle, for the offices of President and Vice President, was a blow at the root of the poisonous tree that overshadows our land, and was the commencement of a course of practical measures, before which we fully believe slavery is destined to fall, and without which we see no reasonable prospect that it can ever be peacefully overthrown.

The same system of measures we now propose to carry out in the State of New Jersey, as necessary

both for the accomplishment of our national objects, and for the establishment of a righteous government inour own State. We have, therefore, chosen delegates to the National Nominating Convention, to be held in the city of New-York in May next, for the purpose of nominating the Liberty candidates for President and Vice President in 1844. We have also appointed a Central Corresponding Committee for the State, to take charge of our own movements. And we have resolved that we will nominate for ourselves, and will advise all the true friends of Equal Rights to nominate and vote for men of sound principles for every legislative office in the State. Such a measure is necessary to give vigor and unity to our movement, to secure the weight of all official influence in favor of Liberty and against Slavery-to bring into public life a class of men who love truth and justice, and freedom more than party, and to avoid the manifest inconsistency of giving up important posts to those who will hurt our cause. No one would vote for a professed monarchist to these offices. And yet, a supporter of slavery is much more unsuitable and dangerous in public office, because slavery comprehends in itself all that is antirepublican in principle, despotism, aristocracy and monopoly. Suppose all these offices to be filled with men of the right stamp for a series of years, would it not exert a great influence in favor of our cause. ? Rely upon it, the friends of slavery feel it to be so, and they will do all in their power to divert us from our course, that they may secure this advantage on the side of slavery.

In putting forth our claim that the Government of the State ought to be administered upon anti-slavery principles, we only demand that it should act out the fundamental maxims of republicanism, as laid down by the fathers of our nation in the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal, and are alike endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights,—that it is for the preservation of these

rights chiefly, that governments are instituted among men; and that when a government fails to do this, it is the right and duty of the people to change it. No government can do this, which allows and protects the enslavement of a portion of the people, or which confers exclusive privileges or prerogatives upon a part of the people, on the arbitrary grounds of a difference in birth, descent, wealth, learning, or personal appearance. In short, the foundation principle of the whole anti-slavery movement is the doctrine of Equal Rights. Let this be the basis of all political measures, this the touchstone of political merit, this the rallying word of every true republican citizen.

In looking at our own State, we find that we are without any real security for our own rights. Having no Constitution but an act of the Legislative body, our legislature is in fact as unrestrained as the British Parliament, of whose omnipotence it has been boasted that it can do every thing it pleases, except to make a man a woman. The manner in which the right of suffrage has been treated, enlarging it in one direction, contracting it in another, and clogging it with invidious and unreasonable conditions in another, proves that as citizens of New Jersey, we hold every one of our personal rights at the mere will of an accidental or interested majority. We, therefore, invite our fellow citizens to join us in lawful measures to establish

A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION FOR THE STATE.

The Constitution we demand is one which will guarantee Equal Rights to ALL MEN—which will secure as far as possible the making of Equal Laws and the administration of Equal Justice to All Men;—and which will effectually restrain the legislature from tampering with the Sacred Right of Suffrage, or conferring exclusive privileges of trade or business upon any class of men; while it binds the government to take all wise and proper measures to promote education, industry, good order and general happiness. It

should secure to every man, after such a residence among us as shows his actual habitancy, the right to vote in elections, and thus to participate in making the laws by which he is to be governed, taxed, and made liable to punishment. It should prohibit the legislature from burdening this right with odious restrictions in the case of citizens of foreign birth, or any other class. It should take away the power of the legislature to create monopolies, or to tie up the hands of their successors: to grant special privileges in banking or other business to one portion of applicants, not granted on the same terms to all others; or to dictate to individuals how they shall transact their own business, or to give any class of citizens an undue advantage against the free competition of others. It should require the legislature to make laws by which individuals of limited means can associate in a convenient manner for all branches of business. It should enjoin upon the legislature the strictest economy in the public expenditures, fix public salaries upon a scale corresponding with the general incomes of private individuals of equal talent, and secure all the rights of personal liberty, enjoyment and transmission of property, religious liberty, the freedom of speech and of the press, and the right peaceably to assemble for any lawful or virtuous purpose, unmolested by mobs or violence. It should secure a rigid accountability in all offices, by taking away the appointing power from the legislature and giving it to the people themselves, or in some cases to the Governor, providing also for short terms of service in all offices. It should make provision for the support of Common Schools at the public expense, by a tax upon property. It should debar the legislature from granting license, either with or without an excise, to theatres, lotteries, horse-racing, liquor-selling, or any other practice which is immoral in itself or hurtful to the public welfare. It should utterly prohibit slave-holding within our territories,

and require the legislature to provide adequate penalties for any person who should hold a human being as a slave, or as property, on the soil of New Jersey, un-

der any pretext whatsoever.

Such a constitution we desire to see established, and we design to nominate men for both branches of our legislature, at every election, and in each county where practicable, who will, if chosen, aid in passing a Bill for calling a State Convention, for the purpose of forming a Constitution which, when ratified by the people, shall be the just Constitution of New Jersey.

Fellow-citizens,-We have not commenced this system of measures as an experiment, or under the excitement of a transient ebullition of feeling. have begun, to finish. We expect to pursue our plan steadily, calmly, unawed and unseduced, until we succeed-until we see slavery abolished, and the ascendancy of free principles fully established in New Jersey. Are we not right in so doing? How can we allow mere questions of pecuniary advantage or of party ascendancy to overshadow the great question of Human Rights? The experience of fifty years shows that it is impracticable to maintain a stable policy, or to avert the most ruinous fluctuations, or to secure the real enjoyment of our own rights, or to devise an administration favourable at once to free labor and to slavery, or to secure harmony and UNION at home, or peace and honour abroad, unless slavery is put By constitutional, peaceful, and legal means, in kindness both to masters and slaves, it can be put And in putting it down we gain the most signal triumph, and add the most impregnable security to republican liberty that history can record.

We feel that we shall succeed. Although we are now few in number and feeble in influence, in the eyes of mankind, we yet are strong in the justice of our cause and the truth of our principles, impregnable in our resolution and our hope, and the God of our fathers, who is on our side, is more than a multitude of a host. In his wisdom we are wise, and in his strength we are strong, and through his aid we hope to accomplish the greatest reform in government that has ever been achieved without bloodshed.

It is for our countrymen to say, by their votes for or against the Liberty ticket, how soon we shall succeed, or how long we shall have to struggle. By your support and co-operation, the work may be done at once, the sooner the better, and our organization will then dissolve of itself. By your indifference, the struggle may be protracted, and the public mind harrassed with this question for years, perhaps for a generation, but the result must come. Let the evils which may flow, the distractions in our councils, the sufferings to our enslaved brethren, the postponement of other important questions which can never be actually settled while slavery remains—let this responsibility fall where it belongs, on those who turn a deaf ear to the call of liberty.

With the most earnest desire for the prosperity and happiness of our nation, and with a solemn pledge to persevere in the maintenance of these principles until success shall crown our endeavors or death call us from our work on earth, the first liberty convention of New Jersey throws its objects and its plans upon the support of the enlightened freemen of the State, earnestly praying that Almighty God will incline every one to unite in this great enterprize for the glory of his name and for the salvation of our beloved country.

Adopted in Convention, A. H. FREEMAN, Pres.

W. F. GARDNER, Secretaries.









