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Declaration of Sentiments
of An Anti Slavery Society



DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS

AND

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

American Anti-Slavery Society.

PHILADELPHIA :

PUBLISHED BY THE PENNSYLVANIA ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

1861.

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DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS

OF THE

AMERICAN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

ADOPTED AT THE FORMATION OF SAID SOCIETY, IN PHILADELPHIA, ON
THE 4TH DAY OF DECEMBER, 1833.

The Convention, assembled in the city of Philadelphia, to organize a National Anti-Slavery Society, promptly seize the opportunity to promulgate the following DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS, as cherished by them, in relation to the enslavement of one sixth portion of the American people.

More than fifty-seven years have elapsed since a band of patriots convened in this place to devise measures for the deliverance of this country from a foreign yoke. The corner-stone upon which they founded the TEMPLE OF FREEDOM was broadly this—"that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that

among these are life, LIBERTY, and the pursuit of happiness." At the sound of their trumpet-call, three millions of people rose up as from the sleep of death, and rushed to the strife of blood; deeming it more glorious to die instantly as freemen, than desirable to live one hour as slaves. They were few in number—poor in resources; but the honest conviction that TRUTH, JUSTICE, and RIGHT were on their side, made them invincible.

We have met together for the achievement of an enterprise without which that of our fathers is incomplete, and which, for its magnitude, solemnity, and probable results upon the destiny of the world, as far transcends theirs as moral truth does physical force.

In purity of motive, in earnestness of zeal, in decision of purpose, in intrepidity of action, in steadfastness of faith, in sincerity of spirit, we would not be inferior to them.

Their principles led them to wage war against their oppressors, and to spill human blood like water, in order to be free. *Ours* forbid the doing of evil that good may come, and lead us to

reject, and to entreat the oppressed to reject, the use of all carnal weapons for deliverance from bondage ; relying solely upon those which are spiritual and mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Their measures were physical resistance—the marshalling in arms—the hostile array—the mortal encounter. *Ours* shall be such only as the opposition of moral purity to moral corruption—the destruction of error by the potency of truth—the overthrow of prejudice by the power of love—and the abolition of slavery by the spirit of repentance.

Their grievances, great as they were, were trifling in comparison with the wrongs and sufferings of those for whom we plead. Our fathers were never slaves—never bought and sold like cattle—never shut out from the light of knowledge and religion—never subjected to the lash of brutal taskmasters.

But those for whose emancipation we are striving—constituting, at the present time, at least one sixth part of our countrymen—are

recognized by the law, and treated by their fellow-beings, as marketable commodities, as goods and chattels, as brute beasts; are plundered daily of the fruits of their toil, without redress—really enjoying no constitutional nor legal protection from licentious and murderous outrages upon their persons; are ruthlessly torn asunder—the tender babe from the arms of its frantic mother—the heart-broken wife from her weeping husband—at the caprice or pleasure of irresponsible tyrants. For the crime of having a dark complexion, they suffer the pangs of hunger, the infliction of stripes, and the ignominy of brutal servitude. They are kept in heathenish darkness by laws expressly enacted to make their instruction a criminal offence.

These are the prominent circumstances in the condition of more than two millions of our people, the proof of which may be found in thousands of indisputable facts, and in the laws of the slaveholding States.

Hence we maintain, that in view of the civil

and religious privileges of this nation, the guilt of its oppression is unequalled by any other on the face of the earth; and, therefore,

That it is bound to repent instantly, to undo the heavy burdens, to break every yoke, and to let the oppressed go free.

We further maintain, that no man has a right to enslave or imbrute his brother—to hold or acknowledge him, for one moment, as a piece of merchandize—to keep back his hire by fraud—or to brutalize his mind by denying him the means of intellectual, social, and moral improvement.

The right to enjoy liberty is inalienable. To invade it is to usurp the prerogative of Jehovah. Every man has a right to his own body—to the products of his own labor—to the protection of law, and to the common advantages of society. It is piracy to buy or steal a native African, and subject him to servitude. Surely the sin is as great to enslave an AMERICAN as an AFRICAN.

Therefore, we believe and affirm, That there

is no difference, *in principle*, between the African slave-trade and American slavery.

That every American citizen who retains a human being in involuntary bondage as his property, is, according to Scripture (Ex. xxi. 16) a MAN-STEALER.

That the slaves ought instantly to be set free, and brought under the protection of law.

That if they lived from the time of Pharaoh down to the present period, and had been entailed through successive generations, their right to be free could never have been alienated, but their claims would have constantly risen in solemnity.

That all those laws which are now in force admitting the right of slavery, are therefore before God utterly null and void; being an audacious usurpation of the Divine prerogative, a daring infringement on the law of nature, a base overthrow of the very foundations of the social compact, a complete extinction of all the relations, endearments, and obligations of mankind, and a presumptuous transgression of all

the holy commandments; and that, therefore, they ought instantly to be abrogated.

We further believe and affirm—That all persons of color who possess the qualifications which are demanded of others, ought to be admitted forthwith to the enjoyment of the same privileges, and the exercise of the same prerogatives, as others; and that the paths of preferment, of wealth, and of intelligence, should be opened as widely to them as to persons of a white complexion.

We maintain that no compensation should be given to the planters emancipating the slaves—

Because it would be a surrender of the great fundamental principle that man cannot hold property in man;

Because SLAVERY IS A CRIME, AND THEREFORE IS NOT AN ARTICLE TO BE SOLD;

Because the holders of slaves are not the just proprietors of what they claim; freeing the slaves is not depriving them of property, but restoring it to its rightful owners; it is not

wronging the master, but righting the slave—restoring him to himself;

Because immediate and general emancipation would only destroy nominal, not real property; it would not amputate a limb or break a bone of the slaves: but, by infusing motives into their breasts, would make them doubly valuable to the masters as free laborers; and

Because, if compensation is to be given at all, it should be given to the outraged and guiltless slaves, and not to those who have plundered and abused them.

We regard as delusive, cruel, and dangerous, any scheme of expatriation which pretends to aid, either directly or indirectly, in the emancipation of the slaves, or to be a substitute for the immediate and total abolition of slavery.

We fully and unanimously recognize the sovereignty of each State to legislate exclusively on the subject of the slavery which is tolerated within its limits; we concede that Congress, *under the present national compact*, has no right to interfere with any of the Slave States in relation to this momentous subject.

But we maintain that Congress has a right, and is solemnly bound, to suppress the domestic slave-trade between the several States, and to abolish slavery in those portions of our territory which the Constitution has placed under its exclusive jurisdiction.

We also maintain that there are, at the present time, the highest obligations resting upon the people of the free States to remove slavery by moral and political action, as prescribed in the Constitution of the United States. They are now living under a pledge of their tremendous physical force, to fasten the galling fetters of tyranny upon the limbs of millions in the Southern States ; they are liable to be called at any moment to suppress a general insurrection of the slaves ; they authorize the slave-owner to vote on three-fifths of his slaves as property, and thus enable him to perpetuate his oppression ; they support a standing army at the South for its protection ; and they seize the slave who has escaped into their territories, and send him back to be tortured by an enraged master or a brutal driver. This relation

to slavery is criminal and full of danger : IT
MUST BE BROKEN UP.

These are our views and principles—these our designs and measures. With entire confidence in the overruling justice of God, we plant ourselves upon the Declaration of our Independence and the truths of Divine Revelation, as upon the Everlasting Rock.

We shall organize Anti-Slavery Societies, if possible, in every city, town, and village in our land.

We shall send forth agents to lift up the voice of remonstrance, of warning, of entreaty, and rebuke.

We shall circulate, unsparingly and extensively, anti-slavery tracts and periodicals.

We shall enlist the pulpit and the press in the cause of the suffering and the dumb.

We shall aim at a purification of the churches from all participation in the guilt of slavery.

We shall encourage the labor of freemen rather than that of slaves, by giving a preference to their productions ; and

We shall spare no exertions nor means to

bring the whole nation to speedy repentance.

Our trust for victory is solely in God. We may be personally defeated, but our principles, never. TRUTH, JUSTICE, REASON, HUMANITY, must and will gloriously triumph. Already a host is coming up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, and the prospect before us is full of encouragement.

Submitting this DECLARATION to the candid examination of the people of this country, and of the friends of liberty throughout the world, we hereby affix our signatures to it ; pledging ourselves that, under the guidance and by the help of Almighty God, we will do all that in us lies, consistently with this Declaration of our principles, to overthrow the most execrable system of slavery that has ever been witnessed upon earth—to deliver our land from its deadliest curse—to wipe out the foulest stain which rests upon our national escutcheon—and to secure to the colored population of the United States all the rights and privileges which belong to them as men and as Ameri-

cans—come what may to our persons, our interests, or our reputation—whether we live to witness the triumph of LIBERTY, JUSTICE, and HUMANITY, or perish untimely as martyrs in this great, benevolent, and holy cause.

Done at Philadelphia, the 6th day of December, A. D. 1833.

Maine.

DAVID THURSTON,
NATHAN WINSLOW,
JOSEPH SOUTHWICK,
JAMES FREDERIC OTIS,
ISAAC WINSLOW.

New Hampshire.

DAVID CAMPBELL.

Vermont.

GRSON S. MURRAY.

Massachusetts.

DANIEL S. SOUTHMAYD,
EFFINGHAM L. CAPRON,
JOSHUA COFFIN,
AMOS A. PHELPS,
JOHN G. WHITTIER,
HORACE P. WAKEFIELD,
JAMES G. BARBADOES,
DAVID T. KIMBALL, JR.,
DANIEL E. JEWETT,
JOHN R. CAMPBELL,
NATHANIEL SOUTHARD,
ARNOLD BUFFUM,
WILLIAM L. GARRISON.

Rhode Island.

JOHN PRENTICE,
GEORGE W. BENSON,
RAY POTTER,

Connecticut.

SAMUEL J. MAY,
ALPHEUS KINGSLEY,
EDWIN A. STILLMAN,
SIMEON S. JOCELYN,
ROBERT B. HALL.

New York.

BERIAH GREEN, JR.
LEWIS TAPPAN,
JOHN RANKIN,
WILLIAM GREEN, JR.
ABRAM L. COX,
WILLIAM GOODELL,
ELIZUR WRIGHT, JR.
CHARLES W. DENISON,
JOHN FROST.

New Jersey.

JONATHAN PARKHURST,
CHALKLEY GILLINGHAM,
JOHN McCULLOUGH,
JAMES WHITE.

Pennsylvania.

EVAN LEWIS,
EDWIN A. ATLEE,
ROBERT PURVIS,
JAS. McCRUMMILL,
THOMAS SHIPLEY,
BARTHW FUSSELL,
DAVID JONES,
ENOCH MACK,
J. M. McKIM,
AARON VICKERS,
JAMES LOUGHEAD,
EDWIN P. ATLEE,
THOMAS WHITSON,
JOHN R. SLEEPER,
JOHN SHARP, JR.
JAMES MOTT,

Ohio.

JOHN M. STERLING,
MILTON SUTLIFF,
LEVI SUTLIFF.

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

American Anti-Slavery Society.

FORMED IN PHILADELPHIA, DECEMBER 4TH, 1833.

WHEREAS the Most High God “hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth,” and hath commanded them to love their neighbors as themselves; and whereas, our National existence is based upon this principle, as recognized in the Declaration of Independence, “that all mankind are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;” and whereas, after the lapse of nearly sixty years, since the faith and honor of the American people were pledged to this avowal.

before Almighty God and the World, nearly one-sixth part of the nation are held in bondage by their fellow-citizens; and whereas, Slavery is contrary to the principles of natural justice, of our republican form of government, and of the Christian religion, and is destructive of the prosperity of the country, while it is endangering the peace, union, and liberties of the States; and whereas, we believe it the duty and interest of the masters immediately to emancipate their slaves, and that no scheme of expatriation, either voluntary or by compulsion, can remove this great and increasing evil; and whereas, we believe that it is practicable, by appeals to the consciences, hearts, and interests of the people, to awaken a public sentiment throughout the nation that will be opposed to the continuance of Slavery in any part of the Republic, and by effecting the speedy abolition of Slavery, prevent a general convulsion; and whereas, we believe we owe it to the oppressed, to our fellow-citizens who hold slaves, to our whole country, to posterity, and

to God, to do all that is lawfully in our power to bring about the extinction of Slavery, we do hereby agree, with a prayerful reliance on the Divine aid, to form ourselves into a Society, to be governed by the following Constitution :—

ARTICLE I.

This Society shall be called the AMERICAN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

ARTICLE II.

The object of this Society is the entire abolition of Slavery in the United States. It shall aim to convince all our fellow citizens, by arguments addressed to their understandings and consciences, that Slaveholding is a heinous crime in the sight of God, and that the duty, safety, and best interests of all concerned, require its *immediate abandonment*, without expatriation. The Society will also endeavor, in a constitutional way, to influence Congress to put an end to the domestic Slave trade, and to abolish Slavery in all those portions of our common country which come under its control,

especially in the District of Columbia,—and likewise to prevent the extension of it to any State that may be hereafter admitted to the Union.

ARTICLE III.

This Society shall aim to elevate the character and condition of the people of color, by encouraging their intellectual, moral, and religious improvement, and by removing public prejudice, that thus they may, according to their intellectual and moral worth, share an equality with the whites, of civil and religious privileges; but this Society will never, in any way, countenance the oppressed in vindicating their rights by resorting to physical force.

ARTICLE IV.

Any person who consents to the principles of this Constitution, who contributes to the funds of this Society, and is not a Slaveholder, may be a member of this Society, and shall be entitled to vote at the meetings.

ARTICLE V.

The officers of this Society shall be a President, Vice-Presidents, a Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretaries, a Treasurer, and an Executive Committee of not less than five nor more than twelve members.

ARTICLE VI.

The Executive Committee shall have power to enact their own by-laws, fill any vacancy in their body and in the offices of Secretary and Treasurer, employ agents, determine what compensation shall be paid to agents, and to the Corresponding Secretaries, direct the Treasurer in the application of all moneys, and call special meetings of the Society. They shall make arrangements for all meetings of the Society, make an annual written report of their doings, the expenditures and funds of the Society, and shall hold stated meetings, and adopt the most energetic measures in their power to advance the objects of the Society. They

may, if they shall see fit, appoint a Board of Assistant Managers, composed of not less than three nor more than seven persons residing in New York City or its vicinity, whose duty it shall be to render such assistance to the Committee in conducting the affairs of the Society as the exigencies of the cause may require. To this Board they may from time to time confide such of their own powers as they may deem necessary to the efficient conduct of the Society's business. The Board shall keep a record of its proceedings, and furnish a copy of the same for the information of the Committee, as often as may be required.

ARTICLE VII.

The President shall preside at all meetings of the Society, or, in his absence, one of the Vice-Presidents, or, in their absence, a President *pro tem*. The Corresponding Secretaries shall conduct the correspondence of the Society. The Recording Secretary shall notify all meetings of the Society, and of the Executive Com-

mittee, and shall keep records of the same in separate books. The Treasurer shall collect the subscriptions, make payments at the direction of the Executive Committee, and present a written and audited account to accompany the annual report.

ARTICLE VIII.

The Annual Meeting of the Society shall be held each year at such time and place as the Executive Committee may direct, when the accounts of the Treasurer shall be presented, the annual report read, appropriate addresses delivered, the officers chosen, and such other business transacted as shall be deemed expedient.

ARTICLE IX.

Any Anti-Slavery Society or Association, founded on the same principles, may become auxiliary to this Society. The officers of each Auxiliary Society shall be *ex officio* members of the Parent Institution, and shall be entitled

to deliberate and vote in the transactions of its concerns.

ARTICLE X.

This Constitution may be amended, at any annual meeting of the Society, by a vote of two-thirds of the members present, provided the amendments proposed have been previously submitted, in writing, to the Executive Committee.





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