

[SPEECH OF REV. JOHN N. LEWIS.]

At the Anti-Slavery meeting of the Free Will Baptist General Conference, the Rev. Mr. Lewis, a member made an able speech, of which we give an extract.]

In our missionary zeal we talk much about the wants of barbarous and heathen nations. This meeting has a feeling of sympathy for Africa. Yet many among us are reduced to barbarism. Suppose that, filled with the missionary spirit, one of us should go to that benighted country. He lands at Cape Verd. 'I come,' says he, 'to bring you good news,' as he falls in with a company of natives. 'From where?'— 'From America.' 'O yes, we remember, some of your folks stole some of ours a while ago!' How would our missionary begin to feel? 'But what have you got in America!' 'Colleges, Seminaries, Churches, &c. &c.' 'How many millions of people?' 'About twenty.' 'How many slaves?' 'Nearly three millions.' 'What book is that under your arm?' 'The Bible. It opens to men the gate of heave, tells them of the abode of bliss beyond the skies; of their duty to God and to their fellow-men—how they may be happy and good.' 'All that? Do the slaves have it?' 'H—h—h—m! —h—e—m!—N—o!—Mr. Jefferson a while ago wrote for us a Declaration of Independence, and if we allow them to read the Bible, they would read that too!

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H-e-m!' Now it would be their turn to speak. And like thunder—they would sound it in his ears. 'GO HOME! YOU HYPOCRITE!' In the eyes, sir, of all the nations, civilized and uncivilized, we are a standing reproach.

Men know that slavery is an evil—an evil to all—to the country—and above all to the SLAVE. It despoils manhood. God never made man to be a slave. Many judge of the soul by the color. Then Daniel Webster cannot be a very great man, for he is but two shades lighter than I am! The colored population has been prescribed as an inferior class. When a youth of nineteen years of age, I wanted to acquire an education. Elias Cornelius, D. D., Secretary of the American Education Society, urged me to become a beneficiary of that Society. I went to New York city, and was examined by Drs. Spring, Patton, and Cornelius, I had certificates from Dr. Putnam of Roxbury, Rev. Baron Stow, of Boston, and various other distinguished ministers of that vicinity. The Society gave me a pledge that I should be supported through all my course. But when application was made, *there was not a College in New England that would receive me!* (Now anti-slavery has pryed open some of their doors.) While I was travelling to New York city to be examined, I had at one time used up all my

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money and tried to beg a meal of victuals. But not a mouthful of food could I get! I sat down by the road side and wept. I thought, what had I done! I crept into a barn and laid me down to sleep. I would not even then have exchanged places with a king. I was just the color that God had made me, [Bro. Lewis is quite black.—REP.] and I would not be otherwise. Thus I drank the cup of oppression even in New England. the colored people inferior?—On what account? *Because there is a proscriptive influence against him.* White men go to the halls of literature; and they are wide open. Others would go' but the doors are shut. The colored man is overwhelmed by an avalanche, and he is a good fellow if he can get out.

If the question respecting privileges of color were to be settled on the democratic principle of the power of the majority, the tables would be turned. Two thirds of all the inhabitants of the earth are colored people. And if the angel Gabriel were to descend from heaven, stand up on Mount Chimborazo, and take a vote of al the people of the earth, we should carry the day. But I would not have it so. I would that we should all stand upon Paul's ground.—The Apostle was a good abolitionist, and gave us a good slice of abolitionism when he uttered that sentence—'God hath made

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of ONE BLOOD all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth.' Whatever may be a man's complexion, he has a SOUL.— But what says slavery—'Slaves shall be deemed, held, taken, reputed, and adjudged in law to be chattels personal in the hands of their owners and possessors, and their executors, administrators and assigns, to ALL INTENTS, CONSTRUCTIONS AND PURPOSES WHATSOEVER.' Men are esteemed and treated as other articles of property. No man can dispute this. In every State the master's power is irresponsible. The slave is deprived of privileges. He must drag along in a wretched condition. But it is urged sometimes that the slave is willing to be so. And now, however contrary to truth, I will for the sake of the argument admit that it is so. When then? Does that make it right for another to hold him as such?— I will illustrate this principle. Bro. N. and I are going along in company. He takes from his pocket a pistol and begs me to shoot him. He is weary of life and is fully determined to die, whether I kill him or not. He really wants me to kill him. So I take the pistol, place its muzzle in his mouth—and bang! goes the pistol, and out go his brains! I am put on trial for killing Bro. N. The verdict is—'Guilty.' Sentence of death to be passed. But before it is done, the judge, according to the forms of law,

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inquires—‘Have you any thing to say why sentence should not be passed upon you?’  
Yes, may it please your honor, I have. I was going in company with Mr. N., and he entreated me to take his life. I declined. But he urged it. He wanted to live no longer. At length I took the pistol with great reluctance, and drew it upon him.— I trembled as I held it, so that I could scarcely take my aim. I never felt so bad in all my life, and did it merely to accommodate him! Would this justify me? The slave willing to be so! That alters not the fact of his rights; and we cannot trample upon man’s rights, without invading God’s rights. Man’s rights are rights, and God’s are no more. In Heaven’s sight the rights of James K. Polk are no more sacred than those of the meanest slave. The slave willing to be so! No man has a right to consent to be a slave!

Slavery is an injury to the master. It is a pecuniary injury. Slave labor is unprofitable. It injures him in other ways. It renders him a despot. Slavery effects all immorally and unjustly. We should, therefore, preach against it, pray against it, talk against it, and VOTE against it. I have no faith in that abolitionism that leads a man to pray against slavery 364 days in the year, and on the 365<sup>th</sup> day go to the Polls and vote his prayers out of Heaven! We

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December 23, 1846  
Lewis, John N.  
*Emancipator*

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