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PERKAL, Meyer Leon, 1939-
WILLIAM GOODELL: A LIFE OF REFORM.

The City University of New York, Ph.D., 1972
History, general

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WILLIAM GOODELL: A LIFE OF REFORM

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in History in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University
of New York.

1972

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Professor Edward Pessen, who expended so much time and effort on my behalf. His comments were insightful, his critique incisive, and his thoughtfulness encouraging. He made the writing of a dissertation a surprisingly pleasant adventure.

I would also like to thank Professor Hans Trefousse, without whose guidance and inspiration I would not have reached this point.

I want to express my gratitude to the members of the dissertation committee for devoting their time and effort to the reading of this manuscript.

The following deserve special mention for their gracious technical assistance: Miss Elizabeth Gilbert (Head Librarian, Hutchins Library, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky), Miss Marion E. Kienholz (Head of Special Collections, Hutchins Library, Berea College), Mr. William Bigglestone (Head, Oberlin Archives, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio), Miss Gertrude Jacobs (Librarian, Oberlin Archives), and Mr. Jack T. Ericson (Head, Manuscript Division, Syracuse University Library). They made my stay in Berea, Oberlin and Syracuse a pleasant and rewarding experience.

My typist, Sarann Lindenauer, deserves commendation for a beautiful job done with care and consideration.

To my wife, Malka, I would like to express special appreciation. Without her constant encouragement this dissertation would not have been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
Chapter	
I. GOODELL SEEKS A CAREER.....	7
Early Childhood	
Enters Business	
Becomes Reform Editor	
II. REFORMER.....	30
Religious and Social Atmosphere	
Embraces Numerous Reform Causes	
Antislavery	
Temperance	
Moral Reform	
Eased Out of Temperance Movement	
III. TOWARD BECOMING AN ABOLITIONIST.....	67
Gradual Disillusionment with Colonization	
Consequences of Nat Turner Insurrection	
Influence of Garrison	
The Crandall Case	
Assists in the Formation of the New York	
City Anti-Slavery Society and the American	
Anti-Slavery Society	
IV. ANTISLAVERY CRUSADER.....	90
Anti-Abolitionist Riot in New York City	
Links Abolitionism with Struggle for	
Civil Liberties	
Goodell Before Massachusetts Legislative	
Committee	
Accepts Offer as Editor of <u>Friend of Man</u>	
V. POLITICAL ABOLITIONIST.....	112
Propagandist for Political Action	
Accepts the Inevitability of Third Party	
Breaks with Garrison over Political	
Action	
Formulates Slave Power Thesis	
Writes the Platform of Liberty Party	

VI.	CHRISTIAN ABOLITIONIST.....	150
	Applies Reform to Personal Life	
	Advocates Reform within Church	
	Finds <u>Christian Investigator</u>	
	Advocates Church Secession	
	Becomes Pastor without Ordination	
	Assists in Formation of A. M. A.	
	Carries his Ideas to the West	
VII.	TOWARD BROADENING POLITICAL ABOLITIONISM.....	191
	Address at Port Byron	
	Opposition to Goodell's Ideas	
	Establishes Liberty League	
	Constitutional Argument	
	Goodell's Nomination for President by Splinter Party	
VIII.	THE AMERICAN ABOLITION SOCIETY.....	239
	Steps toward Formation of Society	
	Formulates Principles of Radical Abolitionism	
	Propagates Principles of Society	
	Presidential Campaign of 1856	
	Dred Scott Case	
	Opposes Republican Position in Lecompton Affair	
	Smith's Gubernatorial Campaign of 1858	
	Reasons for Failure of Society	
IX.	RADICAL REFORMER DURING CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION.....	292
	Editor of <u>Principia</u>	
	Breaks with Smith over Religious Orthodoxy	
	Advocates National Abolition During Civil War	
	Two Interviews with Lincoln	
	Advocates Political and Economic Equality for Negro	
	Supports Radical Democratic Ticket in 1864 Elections	
	Returns to Temperance Movement in Late 1860's	
	Dies in Janesville, February 14, 1878	

CONCLUSION.....	337
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	341

INTRODUCTION

The abolitionist movement included a variety of personalities, who contributed to the cause in diverse ways. Historians have recorded the labors of only a few, who were the most conspicuous in the movement, such as William Lloyd Garrison, Gerrit Smith, Theodore Weld, Wendell Phillips. But few biographies have been written about abolitionists in the middle rank of the movement. The lives of such abolitionists sheds new light on little known aspects of the abolitionist movement.

A movement, especially one as broad and significant as abolitionism, could not have relied merely on a few charismatic leaders. It took day-to-day activities of the second rank abolitionists who edited the newspapers, acted as lecturing agents, wrote in various antislavery publications, preached in the pulpit, collected subscriptions for their papers, and helped organize anti-slavery societies.

William Goodell was one of these middle-rank leaders. He devoted a half-century to the reform movement, thirty-five years of which were concerned exclusively with abolitionism. After failing in business in 1827, Goodell embarked on a career of reform. At first advocating moral and temperance reform,

Goodell by 1833 became convinced of the all encompassing importance of abolitionism. In that year he helped organize the American Anti-Slavery Society and became one of the first pioneers of that cause. From that time on he lived for the abolitionist movement. He became one of its major propagandists, editing a variety of antislavery newspapers, writing in many abolitionists publications, assisting in organizing local antislavery societies and writing the numerous resolutions and documents issued by antislavery meetings. In addition, Goodell established himself as the historian of the movement. His Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A History of the Great Struggle in Both Hemispheres, and his American Slave Code in Theory and Practice became sources of reference to abolitionists as well as to historians. Not a spell-binding lecturer, Goodell did comparatively well as a preacher at various local antislavery churches, and indeed was for nine years a pastor without ordination at a village in western New York.

As a propagandist of the abolitionist movement, Goodell formulated many of the ideas and arguments that eventually became part of abolitionist rhetoric. Goodell should be credited with linking abolitionism to the general movement to preserve American civil liberties, thus saving the abolitionist cause from early collapse.

Furthermore, he was one of the first abolitionists who formulated the Slave Power thesis which was to be generally accepted by the North in the 1850's. As editor from 1836 to 1841 of the Friend of Man, the official organ of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, Goodell became one of the leading political abolitionists in the country. He assisted not only in organizing the Liberty party, but also in writing its platform and in formulating the rationale for political abolitionism, to counter the bitter attacks coming from both Garrisonians and anti-abolitionists.

In 1844 Goodell put forward the interpretation that the Constitution gave ample power to the federal government to abolish slavery in the states and to provide for Negro equality. Failing to convince most political abolitionists by his constitutional argument, Goodell by the 1850's became isolated from the mainstream of the antislavery movement. While the overwhelming majority of political abolitionists agreed to participate in a moderate antislavery coalition, Goodell became a leader of a small radical abolitionist movement whose basic principles were national abolition and Negro equality. Goodell's radical abolitionist group was the only independent body that held up the standard of political abolitionism in the 'fifties.

Goodell, however, was not primarily motivated by politics. Rather, religion played a central role in his thinking and actions. His evangelical faith brought him to abolitionism and it was that faith that sustained him in the movement through all manner of difficulties. Indeed, Goodell's life has no meaning if we dismiss his deep religious convictions. The orthodox Congregationalist faith was the basis of his radicalism. His was a living religion, a faith that did not simply call on one to subscribe to the doctrine of Christ, but to live a life modeled after Christ's. His religious beliefs led Goodell to advocate radical changes not only in personal behavior, but also in American society as a whole.

Abolitionism was to Goodell a religious movement not merely to abolish slavery, but to eradicate all other abuses in both northern and southern society. Economic and political equality for all classes and races, he believed, should accompany the abolition of slavery. George Fitzhugh, the proslavery apologist, correctly noted in his well known Cannibals All! or Slaves without Masters, that Goodell's object was "not only to abolish Southern slavery, but to abolish also, or greatly modify.... the institution of private property of all kinds, but especially separate ownership

of lands, and the institution of Christian churches as now existing in America."¹

Goodell is representative of a group of abolitionists who sought to achieve their aims through political and religious institutions. In contrast to Garrison, whose vision of America called for a rejection of religious orthodoxy as well as of the Constitution and the Union, Goodell attempted to achieve his vision of an equalitarian society through the existing political structure. Furthermore, while both Garrison and Goodell called upon abolitionists to secede from their churches, Goodell at the same time insisted on the creation of new churches based on his idea of "pure Christianity." For to Goodell both the Constitution and the Bible were instruments through which he would reform America's political, economic, social and religious institutions.

Thus, Goodell's life highlights the proposition that abolitionism was not an isolated movement to eradicate a specific

¹George Fitzhugh, Cannibals All! or Slaves without Masters, ed. by C. Van Woodward (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960; originally published, 1865), p. 85.

evil, but was part of a long history of Christian radicalism
and of the American revolutionary tradition.

CHAPTER I

GOODELL SEEKS A CAREER

Three years before his death in 1878 William Goodell sat down to write a short sketch of his long life. Religion was said to have been the motivating force that had prompted him to undertake a career of reform at the age of thirty-five. It was Providence, he believed, that had led him to abandon his mercantile career. From Goodell's point of view, it was his evangelical religion that provided the fundamental principles that inspired and guided him throughout his reform labors.¹ One cannot deny that religion was indeed a formative influence in Goodell's reform inclination, but it is also clear that his other childhood experiences play a decidedly important role in shaping that reform career.

Like many other abolitionists, Goodell was of New England stock. Though Goodell himself was born in a pioneering settlement in New York, he traced his ancestry to Robert Goodell who settled in Danvers (then Salem), Massachusetts on his arrival from England in 1634. William Goodell's father, Frederick, was born in Pomfret, Windham County, Connecticut. But Frederick, after serving in the Revolutionary War, sought his fortune, like thousands of other Connecticut young men, in the fertile lands of

¹ [William Goodell], Sketch of William Goodell MSS, Goodell Papers, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky. [Hereinafter referred to as Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea].

central and western New York. It was there that he met and married Rhoda Guernsey, the mother of William Goodell.²

The Guernseys, like the Goodells, were from Connecticut. But the new couple, Rhoda and Frederick, did not return to their ancestral home; rather, like thousands of other Yankees who poured into New York state after the American Revolution,³ they settled in Coventry, Chenango County, where they became the early pioneers of that area. Here they lived a "pioneer life of great privation and hardships,"⁴ and bore four of their five children. Their second child, William Goodell, was born on October 25, 1792.

Apparently, the land was unable to support such a large family. Thus, when Goodell was only five years old, the family was forced to move to Windsor, which was an isolated place, with endless forests in all directions and the nearest settler many miles

² [Maria Goodell Frost], Sketch of William Goodell, Goodell Papers, Berea. [Hereinafter referred to as Maria Frost, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.]; Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea; David M. Ellis, James A. Frost, Harold C. Syrett, and Harry J. Carman, A History of New York State (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), P. 189-190; In Memoriam, William Goodell, Born in Coventry, New York October 25, 1792, Died in Janesville, Wisconsin, February 14, 1878 (Chicago: Guilbert and Winchell, 1849), p. 4 [Hereinafter referred to as In Memoriam].

³ See Stewart Holbrook, The Yankee Exodus An Account of Migration from New England (New York: Macmillan Co., 1950), p. 10-24; Ellis, A History of New York State, p. 3.

⁴ In Memoriam, p. 3-4.

away. The Goodell log house was surrounded by woods, "like an island in the ocean."⁵ Wild animals were a constant danger to crops and men. Goodell was never to forget the scene of settlers, who on the way to their weekly prayer meetings, carried firebrands for protection against wolves and panthers.⁶

Goodell did not enjoy a normal childhood. At an early age, possible at seven or eight, he suffered a severe crippling disease, which incapacitated his legs. He was confined to bed for two or three years, then to a chair, and finally to the use of crutches. At one point doctors despaired of his life, and after passing that critical stage he was given little hope of regaining the use of his legs. Nevertheless, he did recover in a few years, though some lameness apparently did remain many years later.⁷

These years of confinement offered Goodell an opportunity to cultivate what was to become his life-long habit of reading, and it encouraged his penchant for writing. His reading was mainly religious. The Bible, Watts' Psalms and Hymns, Hart's Hymns, Methodist Pocket Hymn Book, Bunyan's Pilgrim Progress, the writings of Elizabeth Rowe, Wesley's Sermons, Fletcher's Appeal, were the principal books to which he had access. Unable to play with other

⁵Diary by William Goodell from December 17, 1824 to January 31, 1825 MSS, Goodell Papers, Berea. [Hereinafter referred to as MSS Diary, Goodell Papers, Berea.]

⁶Maria Frost, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁷Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

children, or to enjoy the adventures of the forest, William found his joy in imitating the hymns of Watts, Wesley, and others, while being "bolstered up" in his arm chair as a swing.⁸

Goodell was raised in the strict Puritan tradition. His father was a Congregationalist and his mother a Baptist. During his years of confinement, his parents provided him with the basis of his religious convictions. When he began to regain the use of his legs, his parents took him to the Methodist bi-monthly preaching circuit near Goodell's homestead where the family joined a Methodist religious "class." "Here in the dense forests," Goodell later wrote, "amid the howling of wolves (where is now heard the steam-car whistle of the New York and Erie Rail Road as it passes Great Bend, Susquehanna, and the high viaduct bridge) were laid in a degree, the moral foundations of whatever has been of value in the life and labors of William Goodell."⁹

Goodell's religious education was interrupted when his mother fell seriously ill; she soon died, at the age of thirty seven. The death of his mother, when he was only eleven years old, left a lasting impression on Goodell's mind. In later years he still recalled the death scene; he with his four brothers and father standing around their mother's bed weeping and watching her die.¹⁰

⁸ Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁹ Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

¹⁰ Letter, William Goodell to Maria Goodell Frost, September 15, 1865, Goodell Papers, Berea.

Goodell had been very close to his mother. During his confinement she had been his constant companion. She had provided him with emotional security and religious conviction, and instilled a love of scholarship in him.¹¹ When he was thirty-three, the memory of his mother was still strong in Goodell's mind,¹² At age seventy-three Goodell confessed to his daughter that he was never able to free himself of the "gloom of the day she died. The memory of it has followed me, and has been sacredly cherished all my life long."¹³

Though Goodell was never able to regain the emotional security provided by his mother, his grandmother was more than able to replace her educative influence. After living for a year with an uncle, Goodell was placed by his father with his widowed grandmother. She was living, together with her unmarried sons and daughters, in Pomfret, Connecticut. Here William lived for the next six years in the old Goodell homestead, where his father had been born and raised.¹⁴

¹¹ Maria Frost, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

¹² MSS Diary, Goodell Papers, Berea.

¹³ Letter, William Goodell to Maria G. Frost, September 15, 1865, Goodell Papers, Berea.

¹⁴ Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter Goodell to Maria G. Frost, September 15, 1865, Goodell Papers, Berea; In Memoriam, p. 10-11.

His grandmother was a major influence in Goodell's life, especially during these formative years. She was described as a "woman of exceptional strength of mind and character....," of "rare intelligence and sound judgment."¹⁵ Goodell called her "one of the strong minded women of her times." She was a convert of George Whitefield, the Methodist evangelist, and had heard the preachings of the great Puritan theologians, Thomas Prince, James Davenport, and Jonathan Edwards. It was she who succeeded in transmitting to her grandson that evangelical Christian faith which later became the foundation of his reform labors. He remained committed to that faith throughout his life. In spite of the new religious movements that were to spring up in his lifetime, Goodell never questioned the fundamental creeds of orthodoxy.¹⁶

Goodell found his grandmother to be a "living and speaking library" of English and colonial history and literature. She entertained him with anecdotes of the Revolution which she had lived through, and with stories of the participants in the struggle with whom she had been personally acquainted. Her narrative brought to life the events of the American Revolution and the principles of

¹⁵ In Memoriam, p. 3-4.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 5-6; William G. Frost, For the Mountains An Autobiography (New York: Fleming H. Revel Co., 1937), p. 24. Goodell's orthodoxy stressed the concept of an all-powerful God, and the depravity of man, as well as a belief in the divine authority of the Scriptures, and of salvation through faith.

the Founding Fathers.¹⁷ These ideals were later to influence Goodell's reform plans for antebellum America.

Goodell supplemented his education by attending the common school and by reading extensively, a habit he had cultivated during his long illness. Two good libraries, including his grandmother's own collection, offered him abundant material for indulging his habit.¹⁸

Though his inclinations pointed toward an academic or professional career, Goodell at age eighteen was forced by circumstances to seek a trade. An orphan at fourteen (his father died in 1806 in a fit of apoplexy),¹⁹ Goodell lacked financial means for a college education. Though an uncle did promise to assist him through college, the plan, for some reason, fell through,²⁰

Although he was deeply disappointed, Goodell continued to nurse the dream of acquiring a college education. In fact, he made plans to enter business and amass sufficient wealth to provide himself with a college education and with leisure time to indulge in reading and writing.²¹ After serving as a clerk in a country store in

¹⁷ Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

¹⁸ Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

¹⁹ Goodell to Maria Frost, September 15, 1865, Goodell Papers, Berea.

²⁰ Maria Frost, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea; In Memoriam p. 12.

²¹ Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

a neighboring town, and as a school teacher in the winter of 1811--1812,²² Goodell decided to seek an education in the mercantile field in Providence, Rhode Island.²³

The town of Providence offered many opportunities to ambitious young men to enter the mercantile trade and make their fortunes. It was a rapidly growing town, which was bidding to replace Newport as the major Rhode Island center of commerce.²⁴ Goodell came to Providence just before the declaration of war against Great Britain in 1812. After working as a clerk for a year, he opened a "commercial business" in partnership with a cousin. But the business failed as a result of a general commercial depression in Rhode Island at the time. Hard luck followed him again when he opened a business a year later with a silent partner. The "Great Gale" of 1815, which hit Providence in September, flooded the store and damaged the goods.²⁵

²²Letter of reference by Walter Lyon, pastor at the Church at Abington, October 30, 1821, Goodell Papers, Berea; Lyon wrote that Goodell was of "good Morals, a good penman, and well verses in Arithmetic and the lower branches of Literature."

²³Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

²⁴Peter J. Coleman, The Transformation of Rhode Island 1790-1860 (Providence: Brown University Press, 1963), p. 22.

²⁵[William Goodell Frost], Sketch of William Goodell MSS, February 1, 1871, Goodell Papers, Berea. [Hereinafter referred to as William Frost, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.]; Deed of William Goodell, March 29, 1811, Goodell Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio; Partnership Agreement, Asaph Goodell and William Goodell, March 18, 1813, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Coleman, Rhode Island, p. 40; Contract, Asaph Goodell, William Goodell, and John F. Turner, March 16, 1814, Goodell Papers, Oberlin.

Goodell was left with no money and little hope of a future in business or commerce. But in the fall of 1816, a great opportunity came his way, when he was unexpectedly offered the job of supercargo on one of the ships owned by Edward Carrington and Company, a well known and prosperous commercial house in Providence. The ship was bound for the Far East and Europe.²⁶

The Far Eastern trade conducted by Rhode Island merchants was a great source of profit. It began after the American Revolution, when American merchants sought to replace the lost pre-war European and West Indian markets. The first American ship to inaugurate this new trade pattern was the famous Empress of China, which was fitted out by New York city merchants in February 1784, Rhode Island entered the Far East trade three years later, when the George Washington set sail from Providence for Canton.²⁷

Providence merchants found the Far Eastern trade a very profitable business, with the profits of a single voyage sometimes exceeding \$100,000 net. More and more ships continued to leave the Providence port for the China and Indian markets. By 1817-1819 as many as six or seven vessels sailed annually from Providence for the Orient. Because these ventures required extensive capital and involved heavy risks, only large mercantile houses

²⁶Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

²⁷Vincent P. Carosso and Lawrence H. Leder, "The Samuel Snow-Sullivan Dorr Correspondence," Rhode Island History, XV (July 1956), 65-66; Coleman, Rhode Island p. 40-44.

could afford to undertake them. In Providence two large firms practically monopolized the Far Eastern trade; Carrington & Company, Goodell's employer, was one of these.²⁸

As a supercargo, Goodell represented the merchant in all things on the ship pertaining to the cargo, except navigation and management of the crew. He had authority to sell and buy merchandise and conduct trade with the many foreign ports that the ship touched.²⁹ The experience, for Goodell, was essentially an apprenticeship as a merchant. As a supercargo he "acquired firsthand understanding of the complex operations involved in international and domestic trade, a capacity for decision making, and qualities of leadership... also learned to strike profitable bargains, often in foreign currencies of fluctuating values, acquired a smattering of other languages, and established valuable contacts with commission houses in ports scattered around the world."³⁰

²⁸ Coleman, Rhode Island, p. 40-44; William Weeden, "Early Oriental Commerce in Providence," Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, 41 (Dec. 1907); 241-277; On Edward Carrington and Co. see Charles Carroll, Rhode Island Three Centuries of Democracy (N. Y.: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1932), III, 196-197; also Antoinette F. Downing, "The Fate of Carrington House," R. I. History, 21 (Jan. 1952), 1-7.

²⁹ Coleman, Rhode Island, p. 20; Howard Corning, "Sullivan Dorr, China Trader," R. I. History, III (July 1944), 75-77; Harold Greene and Alice E. Smith, eds. The Journals of Welcome Arnold Greene The Voyages of the Brigantine Perseverance 1817-1820 (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1956), I, 10.

³⁰ Coleman, Rhode Island, p. 29.

Goodell was a supercargo from January 1817 to May 1819, conducting business at the many ports in the Far East and Europe.³¹ Making contacts with civilizations far different than his own, Goodell had the opportunity to expand the limited environment of his childhood. The voyage provided him with a world view which, together with his wide readings, afforded him material for his later attacks on slavery and racial prejudice.³² Many years afterwards, he described the trip abroad as a substitute for the college education he never had. Though he conceded that he might have missed out intellectually from a lack of a higher education, he did learn other subjects that were not taught in college, such as:

Nautical astronomy, theoretical and practical navigation and seamanship; and in the comptinghouse, finances, exchanges, accountancy by double entry, in itself a science, comparable, for mental training, with most of the demonstrative sciences.³³

The long voyages at sea had afforded him the opportunity to cultivate his reading habits, and seclude himself in meditation, study and writing. All this was more than enough, he felt, to make up for the lack of a college education.³⁴

Goodell could have taken advantage of his position as

³¹ Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

³² See for example Goodell's speech at the Lewis County Convention in 1837 against racial prejudice as recorded in Friend of Man, Jan. 26, 1837; Colored American, March 11, 1837; and Emancipator, February 9, 1837.

³³ Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

³⁴ Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

supercargo, to amass sufficient wealth to start his own business, or to join an established firm. For, as supercargo he had "the right to ship a few tons of trading goods free of charge," and, by using good judgment, he could have saved enough to strike out on his own as a merchant. Many a wealthy merchant had begun his career as a supercargo.³⁵

But, unfortunately, the voyage had not been a complete financial success. Goodell had made use of his cargo privileges, by shipping merchandise and specie worth \$214.40, and china ware of 483 pieces worth \$55.³⁶ But, though he probably earned considerable profit on those items, the money was not sufficient to enable him to start his own business. So, instead, he went to work at the counting house of Cyruse Butler, the Providence merchant.³⁷

³⁵Coleman, Rhode Island, p. 29-30; Greene and Smith, Journals of Welcome Arnold Greene, II, 3; Kenneth W. Porter, ed. The Jacksons and the Lees: Two Generations of Massachusetts Merchants 1765-1844 (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937), I, passim.

³⁶Letter, Goodell to Abner Kingman, June 22, 1818, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to A. Manton, October 16, 1817, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Memo of Compradores Bill, 1818, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Letter A. Manton to Goodell, December 16, 1816, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Order, Joseph Cady, no date, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Invoice for china ware, George G. Clark, no date, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Amasa Manton, October 16, 1817, Goodell Papers, Oberlin.

³⁷Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

In the autumn of 1820 Goodell attempted to expand his business opportunities by becoming a trading agent at Wilmington, North Carolina, for his employer, Cyrus Butler. Wilmington was one of the towns with which Butler's mercantile house conducted trade. Goodell hoped to earn sufficient money to stay there permanently.³⁸ He established himself at Butler's agent in Wilmington, marketed Butler's goods, and kept him informed on trade conditions and rates of exchanges.³⁹

Wilmington was a growing and prosperous town in 1820, the year Goodell arrived to conduct business. But it had not yet recovered from two disasters it suffered in the previous year. In the summer of 1819 yellow fever ravaged the town, taking many lives; and in November 1819 the town was "visited by the most disastrous conflagration recorded in its history." Total property loss was estimated between \$700,000 and a million dollars. In the summer before Goodell's arrival, another yellow fever epidemic hit the city.⁴⁰

³⁸Letter, William Butler to Goodell, Dec. 6, 1820, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Letter, Cyrus Butler to Goodell, Jan. 18, 1821, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Cyrus Butler, March 23, 1821, Goodell Papers, Oberlin.

³⁹William Butler to Goodell, Dec. 6, 1820, Goodell Papers, Oberlin.

⁴⁰James Sprount, Chronicles of the Cape Fear River 1660-1916 (Raleigh; Edwards and Broughton, 1916), p. 139; Guion Griffis Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina A Social History (Chapel Hill; Univ. of N. C. Press, 1937), p. 115; Hugh T. Lefler, et. al., North Carolina (rev. ed. Chapel Hill: Univ. of N. C. Press, 1963), p. 300; Andrew J. Howell, The Book of Wilmington (privately printed by author, n. d.), p. 83-84.

Business success was not to be this man's fate.

In Wilmington Goodell first encountered the institution of slavery. Wilmington's black population in 1820 outnumbered the whites; there were 1,433 slaves, 102 free blacks, and 1,098 whites.⁴¹ These figures indicate that the economy of Wilmington was, "bound up with slave labor." The city "became the nucleus of the state's industrial and commercial structure, creating a wealthy and powerful slaveocracy of merchants and industrialists who dominated the political life of the state until the 1830's."⁴² This rapid commercial and industrial growth of the town created the demand for a large labor force. The lack of skilled white laborers, and the effort to cut down on labor costs, led to the hiring of slave labor.⁴³ Slaves were allowed to hire their own time by paying their owner a stipulated sum of money. Under this arrangement slaves were employed at a wide variety of occupations.⁴⁴

Goodell recorded his observation of this situation more than

⁴¹Sprount, Chronicles, p. 139.

⁴²James H. Brewer, "Legislation Designed to Control Slavery in Wilmington and Fayetteville," North Carolina Historical Review, XXX (April 1953), p. 155.

⁴³Ibid., p. 162.

⁴⁴John S. Bassett, Slavery in the State of North Carolina (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1899), p. 19; Johnson, North Carolina, p. 531; Kenneth Stampp, The Peculiar Institution Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South (N. Y.: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 60-67.

forty years later in 1864, when he argued the great capacity of the slaves on the eve of their emancipation. In Wilmington, he had seen carpenters, blacksmiths, and sailmakers, even some slaves who supervised the work of ten to fifteen workmen. At work he associated with planters who owned slaves. Goodell worked "on their [planters] rafts, or in driving their teams or loading and unloading their freight of produce for market." Many of the owners, according to Goodell, were unable to read, write, or calculate. A shrewd slave brought from the plantation would often perform these rudimentary operations for his owner.⁴⁵ During the Missouri controversy Goodell had already expressed a distaste for the institution of slavery and his direct confrontation with urban slavery could well have strengthened that attitude. Nevertheless, it did not prevent him, more than a year later, from returning to the South.

The Panic of 1819 caused Goodell to fail in business yet again. Thoroughly discouraged, he returned for a short while to Providence.⁴⁶ In the autumn of 1822 he once again went South, to Alexandria (then in the District of Columbia). After entering into a

⁴⁵Principia, Jan. 21, 1864.

⁴⁶For the Panic see Murray N. Rothbard, The Panic of 1819 Reaction and Policies (N.Y.: Columbia Univ. Press, 1962), p. 1-23; Samuel Rezneck, "The Depression of 1819-1822," American Historical Review, 39 (Oct. 1933) 28-47; Letter, Cyrus Butler to Goodell, Jan. 18, 1821, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Letter, Samuel Bufler to Goodell, Ap. 3, 1821, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Samuel Butler, Ap. 14, 1821, Goodell Papers, Oberlin.

partnership with his employer's nephew and prospective heir, William Butler, Goodell opened two flour stores in that city for the purpose of shipping Virginia flour to Providence.⁴⁷ For the first time, Goodell was successful. The business prospered, and he began to live the life of a well-to-do merchant. He felt sufficiently secure financially to contemplate marriage. At the end of June 1823 Goodell returned to Providence to marry Clarissa C. Cady, daughter of Josiah Cady, in whose home he had boarded for a while, when he first came to that city.⁴⁸ Cady was a deacon of the church which Goodell attended in Providence,⁴⁹ and later became one of the early antislavery leaders in Rhode Island. Three months before his thirty-first birthday, on July 4, 1823, Goodell married Clarissa Cady.⁵⁰

Little is known about her. Her later letters reveal that she was a devoted wife who was more than content to leave the work of reform to her husband.⁵¹ Though more conservative than Goodell, Clarissa was deeply convinced of the rightness of his cause, and she came to his defense when he was bitterly attacked by opponents

⁴⁷William Frost, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁴⁸In Memoriam, p. 16; For genealogy of Cady family see Orrin Peer Allen, Descendants of Nicholas Cady of Watertown, Massachusetts, 1645-1919 (Palmer: Press of C. B. Fiske and Co., 1910), p. 274-275, 148, 18.

⁴⁹Letter Josiah Cady to Goodell, March 2, 1821, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Jonah Cady to Goodell, Dec. 1, 1820; Goodell Papers, Oberlin.

⁵⁰William Frost, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

from within and without the movement,⁵² Their marriage was a happy one; both lived to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Clarissa died five years after the anniversary, outliving her husband by a few months.⁵³

Soon after he married, Goodell returned to business in Alexandria. Here he rented a house and made plans to establish his home. The later abolitionist named his first born, Virginia, after the state to which the town of Alexandria originally belonged.⁵⁴

Alexandria, where Goodell lived for two years, had a population of more than 8,000 inhabitants. A part of the Federal District since 1801, situated on the west bank of the Potomac River, six miles from Washington, the city of Alexandria was a pleasant place. It boasted one theater, a few schools and academies, a fire department, a market place and a library. It was a town where the rich planters and their families of the surrounding countryside lived in "fine brick houses set in shady lawns bordered with boxwood."⁵⁵

⁵²Maria G. Frost, "Life of Lavinia Goodell" MSS, Goodell Papers, Berea; as a matter of fact, Goodell's wife was opposed to her younger daughter's choice of a legal career. It was Goodell who, against the wishes of his wife, encouraged Lavinia to become a lawyer, the first woman attorney in Wisconsin.

⁵³Maria G. Frost, "Life of Lavinia Goodell," MSS, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁵⁴William Frost, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁵⁵Clifford Dowdey, Lee (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1965), p. 35.

Commerce was the town's major business activity. Alexandria was one of the few small flourishing ports in the area. The town had become the market for selling flour to Europe and the Indies.⁵⁶

Alexandria, like the rest of the Federal District, was also the headquarters and depot for the slave trade. Prior to 1830, Alexandria was favored as a slave-trading center over Georgetown and Washington, because it was the "best point from which to start both coastwise shipments and overland coffles."⁵⁷ Since the slave population was small in the District, trading in that area was "dependent on supplies brought in from Maryland or Virginia, a fully nine-tenths of it...for distant markets."⁵⁸ The slave trade was a profitable business by the 1820's. Upper slave states like Maryland and Virginia were able to avoid bankruptcy threatened by declining value in lands and crops by selling their surplus slaves, who were in great demand throughout the lower south and southwest. The slave trade in Alexandria was conducted by several resident slave traders who advertised in the local paper. Itinerant slave traders, too, were always active in these towns.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Gay M. Moore, Seaport in Virginia George Washington's Alexandria (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, Inc., 1949), p. 32-34; Mary G. Powell, The History of Old Alexandria, Virginia from July 13, 1749 to May 24, 1861 (Richmond: William Byrd Press, 1928), p. 223-225.

⁵⁷Frederick Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South (N. Y.: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1959, first ed. 1931), p. 49.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 45.

⁵⁹Ibid. p. 69-70.

Goodell could not have helped notice the prevalence of slaves in the streets of Alexandria: "The women with little children were carried in some vehicle," while the "men were handcuffed in pairs, fastened to a chair and followed by boys and girls, walked in double column, and the trader's mounted assistant brought up the rear. Thus like a butcher's drove of hobbled cattle, they shambled into the streets and avenues...."⁶⁰ At other times one could see in the streets of Alexandria gangs of chained slaves from Maryland, on their way to the town jail where they were kept until they were shipped to the Richmond market or the lower South.⁶¹

Such scenes, however, did not prevent Goodell from contemplating the possibility of settling in Alexandria permanently. His reaction to slavery at this time was typical of many northern merchants, whom he would later attack when he became an abolitionist; though opposed to the institution in the abstract, he dealt with it in practice.⁶²

The two years Goodell lived in Alexandria were happy ones. While visiting that town during the Civil War, forty years later, he fondly recalled the days when he was a "young man, living in Alexandria, buying flour, rocking the cradle, going to market, and loading

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 52.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 66.

⁶²Goodell had expressed opposition to slavery during the Missouri Controversy; See Providence Gazette, July 31, 1820.

our vessel at the wharf."⁶³ These happy days, however, did not last long. His first born died at the age of three or four months.⁶⁴ Due to trade fluctuations, the flour trade became unprofitable and Goodell began to lose heavily. In the autumn of 1824 he was compelled to return to Providence with his wife. The partnership was dissolved. William Butler, his partner, retired from business and died young; while Goodell, leaving his wife in Providence, went to look for a job in New York City.⁶⁵

In New York Goodell joined the many young ambitious merchants and would-be merchants who flocked to the city to seek their fortunes. After working for a while as a bookkeeper in a wholesale firm, Goodell joined the prosperous counting house of Phelps and Peck.⁶⁶ Both Phelps and Peck were Connecticut Yankees who in 1818 organized a New York firm to import metals from abroad; they soon became the leading importers in the nation.⁶⁷

Goodell's experience as a bookkeeper in New York, however, finally convinced him that he was not destined for a career in business. Apparently he came to realize that two alternatives were open to him,

⁶³Principia, April 10, 1862.

⁶⁴William Frost, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁶⁵Maria Frost, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁶⁶Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁶⁷Richard Lowitt, A Merchant Prince of the Nineteenth Century William E. Dodge (N. Y.: Columbia Univ. Press, 1964), p. 14-15
Walter Barrett, The Old Merchants of New York City (5 vols., N. Y.: Willington Co., 1885), V, 246-247.

either to remain a bookkeeper for the rest of his life or to strike out in a completely different direction. Goodell's activities in the Mercantile Library Association revealed that he was contemplating other fields of endeavor besides business. The Library's aim was to keep young business leaders of the future from the "flesh pots which might tempt their leisure hours". The Association furnished them with good reading material, as well as a meeting place for social activities, and an opportunity to continue their education through classes, lectures, and forums.⁶⁸ Goodell became a member of the Mercantile Library in 1826 and one year later was chosen one of the Directors of the Association.⁶⁹

Goodell, had shown an interest in reform and writing six years earlier when in July and August, 1820, during the Missouri controversy, he wrote a poem and some articles for the Federalist paper, the Providence Gazette. Here for the first time Goodell expressed his views on slavery and reform. Although he subscribed

⁶⁸Eleanor T. Smith, "Mercantile Library Association of the City of New York, : M.A. thesis, School of Library Service, Columbia, 1952, p.2; First and Third Annual Reports of the Board of Direction of Mercantile Library Association of City of New York, 1821, p. 3; Martha J. Lamb, History of the City of New York Its Origin, Rise and Progress (2 vols.; N.Y.: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1880), II, 704.

⁶⁹Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Direction of Mercantile Library Association of City of New York, p.1.

to the Federalist position on slavery and the Missouri Compromise,⁷⁰ Goodell approached the problem from the vantage point of a reformer. He viewed slavery from a strictly moral position. The peculiar institution, he maintained was a religious evil as well as a violation of natural human rights. Any compromise with such an evil was morally wrong. Those who voted for the Compromise, he charged, "balance[d] Dollar -- Cent -- and Dime -- Against the changeless [sic] Laws of God."⁷¹

It is not surprising that in the spring of 1827, when Goodell concluded that he was not destined to succeed in business, he turned to writing, an interest he had cultivated since childhood. His opportunity came when he was offered the editorial chair of a small reform journal in Providence, the Investigator and General Intelligencer.⁷² In accepting that offer, Goodell -- though he did not realize it at the time -- made an irrevocable decision in favor of a career in reform journalism.

Goodell's disappointment in failing to achieve financial success was not the chief cause of his decision to go into reform

⁷⁰Glover Moore, The Missouri Controversy 1819-1821 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953), p.66-83, 342-343; Providence Gazette, January 31, February 3, 14, March 13, July 20, 27, 31, August 3, 7, 8 and 14, 1820.

⁷¹Providence Gazette, July 31, 1820; Goodell used pseudonym of "Edgar;" see In Memoriam, p. 181; Providence Gazette, August 14, 17 and 24 1820 appeared Goodell's poem and articles.

⁷²Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Paper, Berea.

journalism. Having failed to attain his goal of a college education Goodell had no choice but to accept a job as a clerk in a mercantile house. It was not a choice dictated by conviction. Subsequently, his strict evangelical Christian training and his literary inclinations pointed toward a career other than business. When the opportunity came to enter the field of journalism, Goodell, not surprisingly, accepted the offer. But Goodell did not choose reform journalism in a vacuum. The revivalist movement and the rising tide of reform of his day provided the impetus for his decision in favor of a career in reform journalism.

CHAPTER II

REFORMER

In 1827, when Goodell became editor of the Investigator and General Intelligencer, a great religious ferment swept over the Northeast. Goodell and other reformers in the 1830's were strongly influenced by the revivalist movements that spread throughout the area. Many were convinced that the ultimate reformation of society would only come about through the moral reformation of the individual.

As far back as the turn of the nineteenth century, it seemed evident to a large number of churchmen that the country was in need of a revitalization of religion. In their opinion, widespread "infidelity": and "immorality," especially on the frontier, were leading social and religious chaos. In the East, the clergy had supposedly lost its political and social influence in the community.¹

¹Bernard A. Weisberger, They Gathered at the River The Story of the Great Revivalists and their Impact upon Religion in America (Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1966, original published in 1958), p. 4-10 [hereinafter referred to as Weisberger; Story of Great Revivalists.] ; Perry Miller, The Life of the Mind in America from the Revolution to the Civil War (N. Y.: Harcourt, Brace and World and Co., 1965), p. 3-9 [hereinafter referred to as Miller, Life of Mind.] ; both authors find that clergymen claim of infidelity and anticlericalism exaggerated. My aim is not to judge the correctness of their claim but to summarize the situation as these clergymen saw it.

Revivalism in the judgment of many zealots appeared to be the only answer to this gradual decline of religious influence. Orthodox Calvinism had preached that man could not will himself to salvation. Revivalism, on the other hand, implied that man, by his own moral efforts, could attain the benefits of divine salvation.² Thus revivalism meant a fundamental change in Calvinist theology. For example, Charles Grandison Finney, a major influence in the revivalist movement, and one of the greatest evangelists of his day, had rejected the orthodox doctrine of man's passivity in face of God, and insisted that religion requires constant self improvement: "the new convert must apply his religion to daily life, carrying on where his conversion left off."³

Revivalism in the end, however, meant more than a simple revival of religion, for the new theological approach of revivalism had a direct influence on the emerging moral reform movement. Reformers like Goodell applied the principals of evangelical religion to social action. As Charles Cole points out, "The drive against evils in the form of poverty, delinquency, licentiousness, the campaigns

² Miller, Life of Mind, p. 7-9; Weisberger, Story of Great Revivalists, p. 21-86.

³ Charles C. Cole, The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists 1836-1860 (N.Y.: Columbia Univ. Press, 1954), p. 63-65; [Hereinafter referred to as Cole, Northern Evangelists]; Gilbert H. Barnes, The Anti-Slavery Impulse 1830-1844 (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. 1964), p. 10-11.

for temperance, women's rights, and anti-slavery reflected a new spirit in the minds of men and received their major impulse from those who conducted religious revivals and stirred up the thoughts and emotions of "the nation's devout."⁴ Organized reform societies had been associated with religious groups before 1827, but it was not until about that year that such a close association was established.⁵

The spread of revivalism gave impetus to the organization of benevolent societies for the dissemination of the "word of God." In 1827 there were scores of such interdenominational societies all over the country: the American Bible Society, formed in 1816, to distribute the Bible to every family in America; the American Sunday-School Union, formed in 1824, to teach children to read, write and sing Christian psalms; the American Tract Society, formed in 1825, to encourage piety and religious life by distributing moral and religious tracts; and the American Home Missionary Society, formed in 1826, to propagate the Gospel at home.⁶

⁴Cole, Northern Evangelists, p. 96.

⁵Ibid., p. 96-98

⁶Clifford S. Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865 (New Bruswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1960), P. 23-26 [hereinafter referred to as Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers]. See also list of benevolent societies, their officers, budget, and date established in Journal of Humanity, August 19, 1829; John L. Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865," American Quarterly, XVII (Winter 1965), 657-658, Clifford S. Griffin, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control, 1815-1860," Mississippi Historical Review, XLIV (December 1957), 423.

It was in this religious and social milieu that William Goodell began his life's work of reform in the fall of 1827. His early training in the Calvinist ethic had emphasized the responsibility of every man for the sins of others and the need to reform one's fellow men as well as oneself. Clifford Griffin has aptly termed this doctrine "moral stewardship."⁷ It was Goodell's conviction that the churches had the responsibility to take up the fight against the immorality prevalent in society. As he later explained to his daughter, the social, commercial and political ethics of the Churches were "in ill keeping with their theology, their professions, and even their devotional piety. It seemed monstrous to me....Frauds, speculation, lottery,-- gambling, intemperance, slavery, war -- social evils of all sorts, finding at home in the Churches and therefore encountering no rebukes from the pulpit." Goodell asked himself, "What was to become of Religion? What was to save our 'free institutions'? How were the Kingdoms (Governments) of this world to become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ?"⁸ To him the answer was simple: only religious, fearless, and dedicated laymen could stop this downhill trend of society

⁷Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers, p. 3-22.

⁸William Goodell to Maria G. Frost, September 25, 1865, Goodell Papers, Berea College Library, Berea, Kentucky; See same sentiments expressed in [William Goodell], Sketch of William Goodell MSS, Goodell Papers, Berea, [hereinafter referred to as Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea].

and the church.

Goodell's initial idea was to fight evil on all fronts simultaneously. For six years -- from 1827 to 1833 -- he was to labor in the cause of antislavery, moral reform and temperance. But, by 1833 he would become aware of some harsh realities: first, that it was in fact impossible to function as an effective leader in several different movements at the same time, and secondly, that the reformers themselves held conflicting views about the relative worth of their various reform causes.

When Goodell assumed the editorial chair of the Investigator and General Intelligencer, he vowed to fight not only slavery but all kinds of "evils". He pledged to advocate a return to basic Christian morality, to expose "licentiousness and faction," to oppose "schemes of national aggrandizement," and to "take a deep interest in all judicious measures for the final emancipation of the oppressed and enslaved, wherever they exist."⁹

Goodell was one of the first to edit a paper devoted exclusively to reform, but yet was not completely secular. There were only a handful of such journals in 1827. Most of these were devoted exclusively to antislavery, notably the Genius of Universal Emancipation edited by Benjamin Lundy since 1821, the African Observer which was established in 1826, and the black weekly, Freedom's Journal, that

⁹Investigator and General Intelligencer, October 11, 1827.

started in New York in March, 1827.¹⁰ The only paper that resembled the Investigator in its objective was the National Philanthropist, published by William Collier in Boston since March 4, 1826. The latter organ was also devoted to temperance besides other reforms.¹¹ There were religious papers which advocated certain reforms, but these journals were organs of specific denominations whose intention was confined to propagating its sect's peculiar views.¹² The papers that dominated the fields in the 1820's therefore were the political and mercantile journals, which were controlled by political parties and by business interests.¹³

The Investigator, however, was soon joined by a host of other reform journals in all parts of the country. Financing a newspaper at this time was no great problem: "...a newspaper could be

¹⁰Asa Earl Martin, "Pioneer Anti-Slavery Press," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, II (1915-1916), 519-527; Freedom's Journal, March 16, 1827.

¹¹John Marsh, Temperance Recollections, Labors, Defeats, Triumphs, An Autobiography (N.Y.: Charles Scribner and Co., 1866), p. 20; George F. Clark, History of the Temperance Reform in Massachusetts 1813-1883 (Boston: Clark and Carruth, 188), p. 201-202; [hereinafter referred to as Clark, Temperance Reform].

¹²Bernard Weisberber, The American Newspaperman (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 84-85.

¹³Ibid., p. 70-76. Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism A History of Newspapers in the United States through 260 Yars: 1690 to 1950 (N.Y.: Macmillan and Co., 1950), p. 181-192; Weisberger, American Newspaperman, p. 78-84.

cheaply founded, kept alive by a small readership, and circulated through the mails at a modest cost...."¹⁴ Consequently, anyone with a message to impart was easily encouraged to enter the field of journalism. With the rise of reform journalism, the press finally achieved independence from political and commercial interests. The independent reform editor became an important figure at a time when the newspaper was beginning to wield impressive public power.¹⁵

Goodell built his reputation as a reformer through his position as an independent newspaper editor, advocating a variety of reform causes. Antislavery was one of these causes. At this time, however, his views on that subject were comparatively moderate. He even supported the American Colonization Society, which concerned Southerners had founded in 1816 to solve the problem of the free Negro and slavery. Their solution to the race problem was on the surface simple: rid the country of the free Negro population thereby paving the way for the slaveholders to free their slaves.¹⁶ Presented as a benevolent enterprise, the implications of colonization were not as yet questioned by antislavery reformers. Goodell urged the

¹⁴Weisberger, American Newspaperman, p. 84.

¹⁵Charles Levermore, "The Rise of Metropolitan Journalism, 1800-1840," American Historical Review, VI (April 1901), 452-453.

¹⁶P.J. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement 1816-1865 (N.Y.: Columbia Univ. Press, 1961), passim; and Dwight L. Dumond, Antislavery The Crusade of Freedom in America (N.Y.: W.W. Norton and Co., 1961), p. 126-132 has excellent analysis of colonization movement.

North to assist the South in removing the slaves to Africa, and, since the North had shared in the guilt of slavery, he argued, that it should also provide the financial means for the slaves' removal.¹⁷

In March, 1828 Benjamin Lundy, the pioneer abolitionist, came North to seek new subscribers for his paper, the Genius of Universal Emancipation. He conferred with Goodell in Providence and as a result of these conversations, Goodell began to apply more of his effort in the cause of antislavery, admitting that he saw "sublimity in the very conception of such a noble enterprise."¹⁸

Lundy wrote in his diary that he found Goodell "slow of speech" on the subject of slavery.¹⁹ Goodell, on the other hand, gave a very favorable notice in the Investigator of Lundy's visit. He called Lundy a "noble man" and a tireless laborer for freedom, who sought to "lay the foundation which in time will purge our republic from the guilt and curse of slavery."²⁰ A few weeks later, Goodell bitterly attacked those who criticized Lundy for collecting funds in Providence for his "wild and extravagant" schemes. He considered

¹⁷ Investigator, November 27, 1828; see also January 10 and July 3, 1828.

¹⁸ Investigator, March 13, 1828.

¹⁹ The Life, Travels and Opinions of Benjamin Lundy, Including his Journeys to Texas and Mexico, with a Sketch of Contemporary Events, and a Notice of the Revolution in Hayti (Phila: William D. Parish, 1847), p. 25; [hereinafter referred to as Life... Lundy].

²⁰ Investigator, March 13, 1828.

such opposition to be proof that Lundy was achieving his goal. He called Lundy's critics hypocrites, who though they "weep over the enslaved Africans, are ready to satirize and denounce every attempt to enlighten and disenfranchise any other portion of mankind, or who, on the other hand, profess unbounded compassion for the whites while they manifest none for the blacks."²¹

Goodell was quickly moving in Lundy's direction of anti-slavery reform. In June, 1828 he endorsed Lundy's memorial to Congress, a document advocating gradual abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. It was here that Goodell argued that gradual abolition was a rational approach to the problem, not a plan of "madmen," as many had charged.²² When Lundy shortly after visited Providence for a second time, Goodell was quite willing to assist him in conducting an antislavery campaign in the city.²³

Goodell's views on antislavery crystalized further with the visit to William Lloyd Garrison in April 1829. That meeting took place in Boston, because by then Goodell had merged his paper with

²¹Ibid., April 10, 1828.

²²Ibid., June 5, 1828.

²³Letter, Benjamin Lundy to William Goodell, June 18, 1828, Autograph Collection, Oberlin College Library, Oberlin, Ohio; Merton Dillon, Benjamin Lundy and the Struggle for Negro Freedom (Urbana and London: Univ. of Ill. Press, 1966), p. 134; [hereinafter referred to as Dillon, Benjamin Lundy]; See also Goodell's recollection of Lundy's second visit in Friend of Man, January 16, 1839.

the National Philanthropist and moved to a more cosmopolitan center.²⁴

In the course of several months Garrison and Goodell became close friends. During the day Garrison assisted Goodell with the presswork on his paper. And in the evenings both took long walks in the Boston Common discussing the antislavery work of Lundy and the numerous questions raised by antislavery.²⁵ They not only talked about slavery, but attempted to convince the clergy to take a stand against the institution. They called upon prominent ministers in Boston urging their cooperation in the cause, but to no avail.²⁶

Garrison, only twenty four years old at the time, impressed Goodell with his impetuosity, his youthful exuberance, his self assurance, and his deeply felt convictions regarding reform in general and antislavery in particular; and Goodell, Garrison's senior by thirteen

²⁴Investigator, October 9, 1828, January 1, 1829; Wendell Phillips Garrison and Francis Jackson Garrison, William Lloyd Garrison 1805-1879 The Story of His Life Told by His Children (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1885 and 1889), I, 79-80 and 91 [hereinafter referred to as Garrison, Garrison.]; National Philanthropist and Investigator, January 16, 1829; Garrison came to Boston on his way to Baltimore to join Lundy's paper as co-editor.

²⁵Garrison, Garrison, I 123-124; John L. Thomas, The Liberator William Lloyd Garrison A Biography (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1963), p. 92.

²⁶William Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A History of the Great Struggle in Both Hemispheres; with a View of the Slavery Question in the United States (N.Y.: William Goodell, 1855), p. 40; [hereinafter referred to as Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery.].

years, impressed Garrison with his travel experiences and his wide range reading.²⁷ Their friendship was to continue until the late 1830's, yet even after their friendship ended they still continued to respect each other's work and ideas.

Goodell's close working cooperation with Garrison continued through the summer of 1829. Goodell was present when Garrison delivered the Fourth of July speech before the American Colonization Society at the Park Street Congregational Church. A few days later Goodell published in his paper Garrison's first important antislavery address. Editorially, he praised the speech for its "bold and intrepid manner."²⁸ He termed the address able and eloquent. "The Address embodies," he maintained, "a fearless avowal and exposition of sentiments, which, however, unpopular, are most imperously needed, and that in the precise proportion to their unpopularity."²⁹

The speech reflected Goodell and Garrison's antislavery views. In truth, the address can be considered a product of their joint thinking about the institution of slavery. Though the address still

²⁷ Dillon, Benjamin Lundy, p. 144, Dillon is incorrect in claiming that these conversations resulted in their acceptance of immediate emancipation as a means of abolitionism. Goodell was to continue to support the Colonization Society until Spring 1833 while Garrison was to break with it in 1830.

²⁸ National Philanthropist and Investigator, July 8, 1829.

²⁹ Ibid., July 29, 1829.

showed him to be a colonizationist, in favor of gradual emancipation, Garrison had very harsh words for slavery. He called it an evil that was contrary to the professions that all men are created equal. He dismissed the argument that the existence of slavery could be justified on the basis of the conditions of the blacks, for circumstances, not race, explained their condition. And hence only through education and freedom could the blacks be elevated. He asserted that the blacks possessed the same inalienable rights of citizenship, as the whites, even the right to rebel against their oppressors. But Garrison stopped short of immediate emancipation which at this stage he termed "wildly visionary." Instead, he called for gradual abolition of slavery through religious and secular education which would prepare them for ultimate freedom. He insisted again that the Negroes were not brutes or savages, but were capable of improvement through education. He urged the churches to begin this work of education and eventual emancipation.³⁰

After that address Garrison wholeheartedly joined the anti-slavery movement by accepting the position of co-editor on Lundy's Genius of Universal Emancipation. Goodell was not yet ready to drop all his other causes in favor of antislavery. Temperance was increasingly attracting his attention. Goodell would not at this time sacrifice his readership, whose interest was in general reform and

³⁰Ibid., July 22 and 29, 1829.

particularly in temperance. In October, 1829 he merged his National Philanthropist and Investigator with the Genius of Temperance, which was edited at Gardiner, Maine by Phineas Crandall. With this merger Goodell hoped to increase the number of subscribers by adding the Maine readers to those from Rhode Island and Massachusetts.³¹ In this way Goodell tied himself to the temperance cause, which he was to advocate for the next four years until he was eased out of the movement at the end of 1833.

As with other reform movements of the era, the temperance movement of the 1820's and 1830's was a product of evangelical Protestantism. The revival of religion, as we have seen, had resulted in a desire to reform the individual. A man's habits, customs, and behavior came under close scrutiny by religious zealots, both clergy and laity.

The reformers who sought to change the drinking habits of Americans faced formidable obstacles. Drinking of ardent spirits, as it was called, was one of the major social problems facing Americans at the turn of the nineteenth century. Alcohol was consumed at work, at home, at every occasion, whether happy, sad or indifferent. As John Krout observed, Americans regarded "ardent spirits as a preventive of disease... one could not build a house, cut down a field of grain, hold a husking, log-rolling, quilting,

³¹Ibid., August 26, 1829; National Philanthropist, and Investigator and Genius of Temperance, October 28, 1829; Clark Temperance Reform, p. 203.

christening, wedding or funeral without some assistance from alcohol...."³² Liquor was the regular table beverage in the family, and social life was incomplete without some drinking. It was even believed that hard work could not be done without drinking. Workers were provided with ration of liquors, which they were to drink at specific times during the day. The farmer, too, provided his help with rum or whiskey. Alcohol was not only considered conducive to hard work, but it was held to be a protective against summer's heat and winter's cold.³³

Not only laymen but the clergy, too, shared the habit. Peter Cartwright, evangelist and militant Methodist preacher, testified that many preachers indulged in excessive drinking. It was universal custom for preachers to take a drink on any social or religious occasion. In general, Cartwright concluded, "from my earliest recollections drinking drams, in family and social circles, was considered harmless and allowable socialities [sic]."³⁴ Early organizing efforts of temperance societies had been unsuccessful. These societies approved moderate drinking, but tried to prevent drunkenness.

³² John A. Krout, The Origins of Prohibition (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925), p. 77.

³³ August F. Fehlandt, A Century of Drink Reform in the United States (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1904), p. 19-22; [hereinafter referred to as Fehlandt, Drink Reform].

³⁴ Peter Cartwright, Autobiography of Peter Cartwright (N.Y.: Abinton Press, 1956), p. 145-147; see also p. 67-68, 99, 128.

One such society was organized in a tavern bar where the members, after signing the constitution, took a drink to prove to the world the example of true moderation. But what was moderation to one was excessive drinking to another. The whole effort failed.³⁵

The first distinctive temperance society was organized in 1808 in Moreau, Saratoga County, New York. Here a physician in cooperation with the local Congregational minister took the initiative in abandoning the idea of moderate drinking and instead had the members pledge to abstain entirely from the use of ardent spirits and wine, except in case of sickness, public dinners, and communion. If a person broke the pledge, he was fined twenty five cents, and, if found intoxicated, fifty cents.³⁶

But temperance reform was slow to catch fire until evangelical religion infused it with a new spirit. In the first decade of the last century the churches had begun to take up the question of intemperance. Committees were appointed by the General Conferences of the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Methodists to recommend means to prevent intemperance. Interest in temperance was generated by churchmen. In 1825 Reverend Lyman Beecher gave the move-

³⁵Fehlandt, Drink Reform, p. 23-37.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 27-38; John A. Krout, "The Genesis and Development of the Early Temperance Movement, in New York State," New York State Historical Association Quarterly Journal, IV (April, 1923), p. 81.

ment its greatest impetus in his "Six Sermons of the Nature, Occasion, Signs Evils, and Remedy of Intemperance." In these sermons he called for immediate and entire abstinence. He insisted that temperance would only be successful, if it was regarded as slavery "sinful, impolitic, and dishonorable."³⁷ Beecher presented a formidable task for temperance reform, when he called for a change in the ingrained American habit and attitude that considered the drinking of ardent spirits quite acceptable, sociable and even conducive to good health.

A year later, in 1826, the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance or as it was commonly called American Temperance Society was organized in Boston. Its aim was entire abstinence from ardent spirits. The Society hoped to accomplish its objectives through formation of voluntary associations whose agents and publications would propagate throughout the country the virtues of temperance.³⁸ By 1829, the year Goodell embraced the temperance cause, the Society had one thousand auxiliaries with a total membership of 10,000.³⁹

The Society established its own organ, the Journal of

³⁷ Charles Beecher, ed. Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc. of Lyman Beecher D.D. (N. Y.: American Temperance Union, 1852), II, 320-323.

³⁸ American Temperance Union, Permanent Temperance Documents, Fourth Annual Report (N. Y.: American Temperance Union, 1852), I, 11-13.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

Humanity, in May 1829. Published in Andover, Massachusetts, only twenty miles from Boston,⁴⁰ this weekly presented stiff competition to Goodell's paper, the Genius of Temperance. However, because Goodell's weekly advocated other reforms besides temperance, its broader appeal enabled the journal to hold its own for a while.⁴¹ Its articles, editorials and news items were more interesting and diversified than those in the Journal of Humanity.

But the very independence of Goodell's journal led to financial difficulties. Unlike the Journal of Humanity, it did not have an organization to back it financially.⁴² In April, 1830 Goodell was forced to visit fifty towns in Massachusetts to seek new subscribers.⁴³ He was only moderately successful. In July, compelled to admit that the people of Massachusetts would not support two temperance papers within a twenty mile radius, he decided to remove to New York city.⁴⁴ His friends from many sections of the country, he wrote, had advised him to go to New York, where he could exert some measure of moral influence. What is more, New York was in need of a

⁴⁰Journal of Humanity, May 29, 1829.

⁴¹See National Philanthropist, and Investigator and Genius of Temperance, November 25, December 2, 30, 1829, February 10, 17, and 24, 1830; and March 20, and April 21, 1830.

⁴²Letter, Goodell to Josiah Cady, April 1830 (?), Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁴³National Philanthropist, April, 21, 1830.

⁴⁴Ibid., July 3, 1830.

temperance paper and such a weekly could do much good. Its central location would enable Goodell to gather a great variety of temperance news for his paper.⁴⁵

Privately, Goodell was incensed at being compelled to move from Boston. He blamed the "powers that be" in Massachusetts for not allowing an independent moral or religious publication to exist which was not under their control. Since Garrison and Goodell had been unwilling to become their tools, they were not permitted to publish. "There is something so cold hearted and calculating," he wrote his father-in-law, "in this species of spiritual iniquity in high places, that it outstrips the ordinary exhibitions of human depravity."⁴⁶

A month before Goodell released the first issue of his paper in New York, he presented himself as a true temperance reformer before a New York audience. In June, 1830, he addressed the Temperance Association of the American Bible Society House in the city on the "reasons why distilled spirits should be banished from the land." It was part of an address he had delivered in a number of places in New England. Many of the arguments he used were

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Letter, Goodell to Josiah Cady, April 1831 (?), Goodell Papers, Berea. (The first four pages of the letter are missing and thus the year is unknown, though from internal evidence it appears to have been written about 1831).

not new. The reasons he gave against intemperance must have been quite familiar to his audience. Distilled spirits, he argued, were poisonous, unsafe, and unhealthy both to body and mind, and led to "domestic misery and degradation," immorality, and impiety. They were even dangerous to American liberties.⁴⁷

The address, unsurprising though it may have been, was well received. It was immediately published in a pamphlet. The secretary of the New York City Temperance Society, Joshua Leavitt, convinced his organization of the wisdom of assisting Goodell in the circulation of his paper.⁴⁸ The American Temperance Society was favorably impressed. Its organ, the Journal of Humanity, gave the address a favorable notice, stating that in Goodell's style "there is uncommon energy and point. He takes his position like a strong man who knows what he is about, and is commanded by conscience, as well as reason, to speak plainly."⁴⁹

⁴⁷William Goodell, Reasons why Distilled Spirits should be Banished from the Land, An Address Delivered (June 1830) before the Temperance Association of the American Bible Society House in the City of New York (N. Y.: Daniel Fenshaw, 1830), passim; See also Genius of Temperance, September 29, 1830.

⁴⁸Letter Goodell to Cady, April 1831 (?), Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁴⁹Journal of Humanity, October 7, 1830.

On July 14, 1830 the first issue of the new paper entitled the Genius of Temperance, Philanthropist and People's Advocate appeared in New York under the editorial guidance of Goodell and Phineas Crandall. The editors promised that though the journal would concentrate mainly on temperance, it would endeavor to cover the entire spectrum of reform. But in order to attract a wide readership from the "middling interest," the paper also covered secular news, both foreign and domestic, congressional proceedings and other items not directly related to reform.⁵⁰

In addition, Goodell aimed to take advantage of the rising working men's movement by seeking its support of temperance and moral reform. The working men at this time were organizing all over the country. The creation of the first working men's party in 1828 in Philadelphia led to the establishment of other similar groups. In New York, the newly formed Working Men's Party successfully elected three State Assembly candidates.⁵¹ Goodell thus set aside a separate column entitled "People's Advocate" on the front page of the weekly, consisting of articles copied from working men's newspapers describing and supporting the working men's movement.⁵²

⁵⁰Specimen of Genius of Temperance, June 5, 1830.

⁵¹Edward Pessen, Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics (Homewood: The Dorsey Press, 1969) p. 285-293.

⁵²Genius of Temperance, July 28, 1830.

Though Goodell came out strongly in favor of all the working men's objectives, he cautioned them against sudden revolutionary efforts. For these reforms, he told them, could best be accomplished peacefully.⁵³ Thus though he favored the working men's aim of a "more equal possession of property," he warned them that it must be brought about by "means in perfect accordance with justice, and proper order of things...." To Goodell all of the working men's objectives could be achieved peacefully because he saw the remedy not in drastic economic change but in the moral reformation of the individual. The rich, he wrote, must mend their ways and change the way they transact business, while the poor must abandon their vices of idleness, debauchery, and intemperance, and then apply themselves honestly. Only through "just and equitable laws," he concluded, "mental improvement, and a general prevalence of virtue, which will give to every man an opportunity of accumulating wealth by fair and honorable means....will naturally tend to equalize the possession of property in the community."⁵⁴

Thus Goodell, like most moral and religious reformers, refused to attribute the basic causes of poverty and poor conditions of the working men to the economic and social system. He saw the

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., November 3, 1830.

problem as religious and moral. The moral corruption of the individual led to inequality in property and to poverty. Though he admitted that there were honest poor, whose poverty was not due to viciousness on their part, he insisted that the problem of the suffering poor could be averted only through moral reform, and general education. "So that the work of moral reform," he wrote, "in all its ramifications and connections, would doubtless, if completed, remove a very large proportion of the sufferings now endured."⁵⁵

It was this conviction that led Goodell to join in an effort by a number of benevolent individuals in New York to fight prostitution in New York. He supported wholeheartedly the labors of John Robert McDowall, a deeply pious young Presbyterian minister who was the leading figure in this concerted effort to reform the prostitute and prevent the spread of prostitution.⁵⁶ Goodell made his paper

⁵⁵Ibid., February 2, 1831.

⁵⁶Memoirs, and Select Remains of the Late Rev. John R. McDowall, the Martyr of the Seventh Commandment in the Nineteenth Century (N.Y.: Leavitt, Lord and Co., 1838), p. 194-200 [herein-after referred to as Memoirs...McDowall]; Lewis Tappan, The Life of Arthur Tappan (N.Y.: Hurd and Houghton, 1870), p. 110-120; John R. McDowall, Magdalen Facts (N.Y.: Printed for the author, 1832), p. 47-48; Bertha-Monica Stearns is incorrect in claiming that Goodell first met McDowall at a lecture in New York; See Bertha-Monica Stearns, "Reform Periodicals and Female Reformers, 1830-1860," American Historical Association, XXXVII (July 1932), 681-682; Genius of Temperance, December 22, 1830; December 30, 1830.

available to McDowall against the protests of the New York City Temperance Society.⁵⁷ That organization was angry with Goodell for involving himself and his temperance paper in a controversy over the publication of McDowall's so called lurid descriptions of prostitution.⁵⁸ Unperturbed by the loss of the Society's patronage,⁵⁹ Goodell continued to aid McDowall. He appealed for the support and sympathies of women in that reformer's work through the columns of his new periodical, the Female Advocate.⁶⁰ Besides aiding McDowall, Goodell attended conventions and helped organize societies for the promotion of moral reform. In May 1833 he attended a convention together with delegates from New England and New York state.⁶¹ A year later he helped in the formation of the Society for the Observance of the Seventh Commandment.⁶²

⁵⁷ Memoirs... McDowall, p. 414; Arthur W. Calhoun, A Social History of the American Family (3 vols. N.Y.: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1960, original ed. 1918), II, 149-160.

⁵⁸ McDowall's Defence, I, July 1836.

⁵⁹ Genius of Temperance, January 12, 1831.

⁶⁰ Female Advocate, November 30, 1832; see extract in McDowall's Journal, January 1833; McDowall incorrectly dated Goodell's article as November 30, 1831 instead of 1832.

⁶¹ McDowall's Journal, January, 1833.

⁶² Advocate of Moral Reform, January and February 1835.

Though many temperance leaders were unhappy with Goodell's insistence on advocating and supporting other reforms besides temperance, they could not help from recognizing him as an important laborer for the temperance cause. His weekly received favorable notice from the American Temperance Society. The Society characterized it as "an able and efficient paper, which ... under its successive editors has been a valuable auxiliary to the cause."⁶³ The New York City Temperance Society at first assisted in the circulation of the paper. Joshua Leavitt, the Society's secretary, proposed to make Goodell an agent of the New York State Temperance Society. Under this plan Goodell would receive half pay as traveling lecturer while at the same time he would have an opportunity to increase the subscription list of the Genius of Temperance. The plan fell through when the state society refused to employ more agents.⁶⁴

When Leavitt's proposal did not materialize, Goodell at his own expense took a trip to western New York in the fall of 1830 to solicit subscriptions for his paper as well as to enhance his own reputation in the temperance movement. The tour was a great success. In Rochester Goodell met Charles Grandison Finney, who

⁶³ American Temperance Union, Permanent Temperance Documents, Fourth Annual Report, I, 15.

⁶⁴ Genius of Temperance, July 21, 1830.

was then conducting a revival in the city.⁶⁵ Religion and temperance were the subjects of the revival. The whole city was stirred, and Finney was a sensation. At one revival meeting the crowd was so large that the walls began to give way, and, in the stampede that followed, some were trampled by the crowd, while others jumped out of the windows into the canal.⁶⁶

We have no record of Goodell's personal reaction to Finney. Goodell's only comment on Finney's revival was that he "found many things different from my anticipation in respect to religion as well as moral movements." He was now convinced more than ever that moral reform and religious revival must go hand in hand, as it did in Rochester, in order for both to be effective.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Letter, Goodell to Cady, April 1831 (?) Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁶⁶Robert S. Fletcher, A History of Oberlin College from its Foundation through the Civil War (2 vols. Oberlin: Oberlin College, 1943), I, 19-30; Blake McKelvey, Rochester the Water-Power City 1812-1854 Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1945), p. 187-192; Frank Beardsley, A Mighty Winner of Souls Charles G. Finney A Study in Evangelism (N. Y.: American Tract Society, 1937) p. 90; Charles G. Finney, Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney Written by Himself (N. Y.: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1876), p. 284-285; see also Henry B. Stanton, Random Recollections (N. Y.: Macgowan and Slipper, Printers, 1886), p. 25-26 for a powerful description of Finney and his revival method.

⁶⁷Letter, Goodell to Cady, April 1831 (?), Goodell Papers, Berea.

Here was a lesson he was not to forget in his future reform work. He was convinced that temperance, moral reform and antislavery were sanctioned by the Bible and that any religious revivalist who was opposed or indifferent to these movements was betraying true religion.

From Rochester, Goodell continued to Peterboro, where he formed a "pleasing acquaintance" with Gerrit Smith, already a well known philanthropist and patron of reform causes. Goodell spent several days at Smith's home. Here he laid the basis of a friendship that was to continue for the next thirty years. Goodell was impressed with Smith's great knowledge and his abilities as a writer and speaker. In philanthropy he compared him to a Tappan and in talents to Daniel Webster.⁶⁸

Apparently Smith, for his part, was impressed with Goodell, urging him to make a tour of every town in Madison county. Smith offered Goodell his horse for the purpose. Meanwhile he sent out notices to all towns informing them of Goodell's approach. Visiting nearly every town in the county, Goodell delivered addresses on temperance and general reform, and took subscriptions for his paper. At Peterboro Smith helped out by addressing his townsmen for fifteen minutes with "great effect" on the importance of difusing temperance information through the circulation of the Genius of Temperance.⁶⁹

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

The success of the western tour was greater than Goodell had expected. He had met two of the outstanding personalities of the religious and reform movements. He had established a working relationship with Smith, a relation that later led them to concerted action on behalf of reform. In addition, he had made many temperance friends across the state, enhancing his reputation as a temperance reformer.

Goodell's growing reputation in the temperance movement provided him with an opportunity to become a major leader in the American Temperance Society. But he valued more his independence than the prospects of a leadership position in the movement. He refused to turn his paper into an exclusively temperance organ, although, doing so would have eased his financial difficulties. Instead, he insisted on keeping his paper an independent organ, unconnected with any reform society, in order to be able to take controversial or extreme positions on temperance and other reforms without fearing the loss of patronage.

The question of total versus entire abstinence was one of these issues on which Goodell was able to take an extreme position to the chagrin of the temperance society and its leaders. In this controversy Goodell displayed his tendency -- a tendency which runs throughout his reform career -- of following an idea to its logical

conclusion regardless of the absurd and impractical positions it might force him to assume.

By 1830 Goodell advocated total abstinence from all intoxicating liquors including wine, beer, and cider, and even its use in medicines.⁷⁰ The American Temperance Society, however, had its members pledge to abstain entirely (not totally) from ardent spirits such as whiskey and rum "except for medicines," allowing them to drink freely such intoxicating drinks as wine, beer and cider.⁷¹ Goodell argued that such a policy led to drunkenness. In the case of medicines, he pointed out, liquor was not essential to its medicinal qualities. Constant use of such medicines led to intemperance.⁷² Such arguments had been made in 1827 by Reuben D. Mussey, professor of anatomy and surgery at Dartmouth. In his address before the New Hampshire Medical Society, Mussey maintained that liquor was not "essential to health or indispensable in medicine."⁷³

The cholera epidemic in the summer of 1832 convinced Goodell of the dangers of alcohol in medicines. Goodell remained in the city during the epidemic, printing advice on how to avoid the

⁷⁰Genius of Temperance, February 10, 1830.

⁷¹American Temperance Union, Permanent Temperance Documents, Fourth Annual Report, I, 11-13.

⁷²Genius of Temperance, February 10, 1830.

⁷³Fehlandt, Drink Reform, p. 57-60.

disease. He counseled his readers to abstain from all liquors, use little or no animal food, and no seasoned and rich food, avoid excitement, and "trust in the mercy of Providence." He was incensed at some doctors, who advised the use of liquors or prescribed medicines containing alcohol as a cholera preventative. He was convinced from medical sources and his own observation that, on the contrary, the use of alcohol, in medicines or otherwise, made it more likely that one would become the victim of the epidemic. Such use during the epidemic, he insisted, addicted many to alcohol and made it difficult for them to stop.⁷⁴ It was this conviction, which became more and more fervent in tone, that led him to publish in his paper a long series of correspondence with a Dr. M. Hitchcock regarding the medical use of alcohol.

The correspondence began October 1832 and continued into March 1833, In time it became a one sided affair. Although Goodell's long letters to Dr. Hitchcock, which appeared in almost every issue of the paper, remained unanswered, Goodell continued to hammer away at his opponent without mercy. The correspondence began privately when Dr. Thomas Goodsell of Utica, New York, a "scientific physician" and president of the Oneida County Temperance Society, wrote Goodell in January 1832 of the alcoholic content of a medicine

⁷⁴Genius of Temperance, June 27, 1832.

recently discovered by Dr. Hitchcock, a member of his temperance society. The tragic results of the cholera epidemic provided Goodell with an opportunity to discuss his favorite subject, the use of alcohol in medicines, by publishing his correspondence with Dr. Hitchcock.⁷⁵

Goodell in advocating and practicing total abstinence from all liquors, was in the minority even in the temperance movement. Their arguments in favor of total abstinence were based on a real problem faced by the temperance societies: in spite of the progress of the temperance cause, drunkenness continued, even amongst members of the temperance societies. This was attributed to the fact that those who pedged not to drink whiskey and rum were doing very well with wine, beer and cider. Moreover, many refused to be "converted" to temperance, arguing that they could not afford to drink wine, which was more expensive than rum. Why give up my rum, such potential "converts" insisted, when the temperance people, are drinking wine.⁷⁶

Along with other subjects, these controversies prompted the American Temperance Society to call for a national convention of friends of temperance from all over the country to meet in Philadelphia on May 24, 1833. Four hundred delegates from twenty one states

⁷⁵ Ibid., October 31, 1832, November 28, and December 12, 1832, February 5, 20, March 20, and April 17, 1833.

⁷⁶ Ibid., June 15, 1831, April 24, 1833; Daniel Dorchester, The Liquor Problem in All Ages (N.Y.: Phillips and Hunt, 1884), p. 258-265; Fehlandt, Drink Reform, p. 78-79.

showed up at the Convention. Goodell came as a delegate from New York.⁷⁷ As soon as the Convention was organized and the business committee appointed, Goodell introduced a resolution against the use of alcohol in medicines. At the same time, his friend Sylvester Graham, editor of the Journal of Health, introduced a resolution against the use of wine and other fermented liquors. Both resolutions were voted down.⁷⁸ Instead, an amended resolution was adopted, stating that the "vital interests and complete success of the temperance cause demands that, in all the efforts of its friends against the use of ardent spirits, no substitute except pure water be recommended as a drink." It would take another three years until the national temperance convention of 1836 would adopt a resolution in favor of total abstinence.⁷⁹

But Goodell and his friends did not suffer total defeat. After extended debate, the Convention adopted the resolution that traffic in ardent spirits was morally wrong and ought to be abandoned. Goodell, however, was only partially satisfied, for he had urged the Convention to adopt a resolution that would favor making such traffic illegal as well.⁸⁰ Goodell, in fact, had advocated such a course as

⁷⁷ Temperance Recorder, June 4, 1833, Extra.

⁷⁸ Genius of Temperance, May 29, 1833.

⁷⁹ Dorchester, The Liquor Problem in All Ages, p. 260-263; Genius of Temperance, June 12, 1833.

far back as October 1832, when he wrote a series of articles to prove the efficacy and correctness of legislative action.⁸¹

A resolution by southern delegates, which aimed to disassociate temperance from antislavery, eventually drove Goodell out of the temperance movement. Their intention was obviously to censure such antislavery advocates as Goodell who supported both causes. A heated debate ensued. At first Goodell remained silent, and waited for both sides to present their views. Then, on the second day, he attempted to defend himself and his paper against accusations of combining abolition with temperance. But he was called to order. After some effort, Goodell at last regained the floor. With a Bible in his hand, he addressed the Convention. Quoting from Proverbs he tried to prove that intemperance caused men to disregard the fundamental law that "perverts judgment of two millions of our afflicted inhabitants." When Goodell tried to show that the abolitionists were not responsible for introducing the subject of slavery into the Convention, he was again called out of order. The next afternoon, an amended resolution, which did not mention antislavery, was adopted. It simply stated that the sole object of temperance societies was temperance and that only towards "this object will its [sic] efforts be directed."⁸² Thus, the

⁸¹ Ibid., October 17, 24, 31, November 14 and 28, 1832.

⁸² Ibid., June 5, 1833; Temperance Recorder, June 4, 1833, Extra.

Genius of Temperance was indirectly censured for combining temperance with antislavery and other reforms.

On November 20, 1833 the New York State Temperance Society, in its Convention at Utica struck a fatal blow at the Genius of Temperance. The delegates voted in favor of a resolution that had passed the national convention the previous May, declaring that temperance was the sole aim of temperance societies. The state Convention added to this another resolution stating that temperance reform was "occasionally prejudiced by inattention on the part of the editors of certain temperance journals to the principle declared in the last preceding resolution." Editors were asked to refrain from combining temperance with "extraneous objects." The latter resolution occasioned a lengthy debate between abolitionist and anti-abolitionist factions of the temperance movement. Edward C. Delavan, chairman of the business committee and president of the state temperance society, supported the resolution, contending that its aim was to disassociate temperance "from foreign topics of sectarian or political bearings." Another speaker was more frank, for he admitted that the aim of the resolution was to prevent alienating the South from the temperance movement.

83

⁸³ Genius of Temperance, December 4, 1833; Temperance Recorder, January 7, 1834.

Leavitt spoke against the resolution, calling it censorship of the press and an infringement on the private rights of the individual. Another speaker agreed with Leavitt, adding only that he doubted "if it became the dignity of this Convention to assume the supervisorship of men who are nowise responsible to us." Gerrit Smith feared that the vaguely worded resolution might disrupt the harmony of the Convention. He therefore suggested that the resolution either be recommitted to the business committee, or amended in such a way as to remove the objections that were liable to misinformation, Smith's first alternative was recommitted.⁸⁴

The fact that such a resolution was introduced, and then supported by the most prominent men in the temperance convention, proved fatal to Goodell's weekly. Goodell charged that the real motive behind the effort to suppress his paper, was his support of the ultra-temperance cause, rather than his abolitionism. The true causes behind the Society's action, he charged, were his advocacy of total abstinence, his opposition to voting for intemperance candidates, and his advocacy of temperance reform for the army and navy.⁸⁵ By the end of December Goodell's Genius of Temperance was dead. The publisher of the Moral Lyceum and Genius of Temperance, that suc-

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Genius of Temperance, December 18, 1833.

ceeded it promised not to discuss slavery but instead to devote its columns solely to temperance.⁸⁶

A combination of factors led New York temperance circles to suppress the Genius of Temperance. Goodell in his advocacy of extreme temperance measures had been quite intemperate in language and attitude. When he was convinced of the correctness of his cause, he had assumed the mantle of moral self-righteousness without making any effort to understand the position or views of his opponents. No doubt he created a great reservoir of resentment and hostility. Goodell had ill-disguised contempt for many leaders in the temperance movement. He considered them timid and cautious, more concerned with expediency than with moral principle. He especially resented the clannish nature of the temperance leadership, which tended to the formation of what Goodell termed a "special nobility" in the organization.⁸⁷

Goodell's personality as a reformer, on the other hand, differed markedly from that of the many temperance leaders he so disliked. He was inflexible and self-righteous, always convinced his position was based on the Bible and on universal moral principle. Goodell's personal qualities as a reformer are illustrated from a sketch he wrote of his friend John McDowall, the moral reformer.

⁸⁶ Moral Lyceum and Genius of Temperance, January 1, 1834.

⁸⁷ Letter, Goodell to Cady, April 1831 (?) Goodell Papers, Berea.

Goodell thought that McDowall was unfit for the "rude, rough times upon which he was cast." Instead of "weeping and beseeching," he should have exemplified the greater "spirit of determination of the thundering and self-vindicating Luther." He should have fought his enemies on their ground, he wrote, and employed rough weapons, not compromise, and brought the war into their camp. Unfortunately, Goodell regretted, McDowall was too "mild and tender as a reformer."⁸⁸

Goodell was neither mild nor tender. He was rough with his opponents, refusing to give ground, always on the offensive. Every issue was to him a struggle between right and wrong, between good and evil. And when he took his stand, no one could budge him, for compromise was out of the question. He thought of himself as akin to the prophets of the Old Testament warning men of their sins and the calamitous consequences that were to befall them if they refused to repent.

Though Goodell's rigid personality was no doubt an important role in his alienation from the temperance movement, his antislavery views appear to have been a crucial factor in the suppression of the Genius of Temperance. As will be seen in the next chapter, by early spring 1833 Goodell had denounced the colonization movement and fully embraced the abolitionist cause. In December he went as far as to attend the convention at Philadelphia to form the American Anti-

⁸⁸"Sketch by William Goodell," Memoirs... McDowall, p. 421-422.

Slavery Society. Any association with abolitionists like Goodell, temperance leaders feared, would discredit their movement and make them anathema in respectable circles.

Even before Goodell was eased out of the temperance movement, he had shown a strong interest in the rising abolitionist cause, and begun to doubt his effectiveness as a reformer. By mid 1833 he was convinced that he would be more effective if he were to concentrate all his time, energy, and talents on one single movement. In retrospect, the years from 1827 to 1833 were a time when Goodell was groping toward the reform movement, abolitionism, which involved a drastic change in America's moral, religious and social behavior. Slavery, he later believed encompassed all the "evils" he had been fighting against those six years.

CHAPTER III

TOWARD BECOMING AN ABOLITIONIST

Goodell's views on slavery began to become apparent during the three years between 1830 and 1833. Though he remained a colonizationist until the spring and summer of 1833, Goodell gradually began to question the objectives of the American Colonization Society. His decision to denounce colonization and embrace abolitionism highlights a fundamental conflict between these two movements. To Goodell the crucial issue was not the question of immediate versus gradual emancipation, but whether the two races could live together in America on equal terms. When Goodell finally arrived at an affirmative answer to that question, his choice of abolitionism was obvious.

Many colonizationists saw slavery as an embarrassing, inconvenient, inefficient and uneconomical institution. The abolitionists, on the other hand, deeply influenced by revivalism, approached slavery from the vantage point of religion and morality. They thus opposed the gradualism of the Colonization Society as well as its assertion of Negro inferiority. For the abolitionists applied the revivalists' doctrine of immediate termination of sin to the case of slavery and called for immediate emancipation. Furthermore, just as the Bible did not sanction slavery in their opinion, so too was it

incompatible with the idea of Negro inferiority.¹

Goodell, who was raised in the evangelical faith and who was deeply influenced by the revivalist movements sweeping the country, began gradually to realize a contradiction between his support of colonization and his religious and moral approach to slavery. The Nat Turner Insurrection of 1831 and its consequences made him realize some of the implications of colonization. For the first time Goodell attacked publicly the objectives of the Colonization Society for its failure to denounce a growing movement in Virginia and Maryland to expel their free blacks. It would be "madness," he told his readers, to drive out a "peaceable and quiet" part of the community. Goodell therefore demanded to know the Society's official stand regarding this matter.²

¹ Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 366-389; David B. Davis, "The Emergence of Immediatism in British and American Antislavery Thought," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLIX (September 1962), 227-230; Anne C. Loveland, "Evangelicalism and Immediate Emancipation in American Antislavery Thought," Journal of Southern History, XXXII (May 1966), 172-178; Frank J. Klingberg, The Anti-Slavery Movement in England A Study in English Humanitarianism (N. Y.: Archon Book, 1968; originally published by Yale Univ. Press, 1926), p. 235-272. Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 362-372; Dillon, Benjamin Lundy, p. 15; George Bourne, The Book and Slavery Irreconcilable with Animadversions Upon Dr. Smith's Philosophy (Philadelphia: J. M. Sanderson and Co., 1816), p. 107, and passim.

² Genius of Temperance, September 7, 1831.

Goodell's attack on the Society did not go unnoticed. The Vermont Chronicle accused him of opposing the objectives of that organization. Goodell replied that he had always supported the association's official aims. It was only when the Society refused to denounce plans to expel free blacks that he began to question the true motives of the organization. He expressed the hope that the association that had promised to accomplish so much good for the blacks in Africa would not assist in the persecution of that same race in America.³

Goodell's disillusionment with the Colonization Society, and his drift toward abolitionism, was further encouraged by the publication of Garrison's Thoughts on African Colonization, a major attack on the Society.⁴ A few months after the publication of the pamphlet, Goodell, summarizing Garrison's arguments, recommended the book to his readers. The work "evidences" he wrote, "much labor in research, and ingenuity -- and is written with the author's usual vivacity and spirit."⁵

Garrison's Thoughts on African Colonization was an expose of what he called the false and untenable ideological foundation of the

³Ibid., Ap. 25, 1832; Goodell reprinted the article from the Chronicle.

⁴Garrison, Garrison, I, 299.

⁵Genius of Temperance, July 11, 1832.

Colonization Society. Using the organization's own literature, Garrison attempted to prove that the Society was racist in nature and that it had no intention of interfering with the institution of slavery. The association apologized for slavery and slaveholders, and recognized slaves as property.⁶ In addition, the Society "disparaged" the status of free blacks and thereby helped to strengthen racial prejudice. Furthermore, the policy of colonization was immoral, for this was the blacks' native land, and they had an equal right to live with whites.⁷

Garrison's views inspired Goodell. Until then he had been critical of some of the Society's measures, but he was at least convinced that Garrison's and Benjamin Lundy's work did not conflict with the idea of colonization. When Garrison first expressed objection to the Society, Goodell attributed that "abberation" to the "ardor of youthful feelings" and to the "eccentricity of a powerful and original mind." However, on reading Thoughts on African Colonization two years later Goodell became convinced that "the boldness, the magnitude, and the severity of his Garrison's charges against the Society are truly astounding." To Goodell, this work was

⁶William L. Garrison, Thoughts on African Colonization (N. Y.: Arno Press and the N. Y. Times, 1968; original by Garrison and Knapp, 1832), p. 410-474.

⁷Ibid., p. 124-134 and 111.

"decidedly the ablest production of his Garrison's pen."⁸

Unable to answer all the charges made by Garrison against the Society, Goodell offered to open the columns of his paper to members and officials of the Colonization Society.⁹ In order to entice them into a debate, Goodell privately urged abolitionists to mount a strong campaign against the Society in his paper. In a letter to Elizur Wright, Jr. and Beriah Green, both on the faculty of Western Reserve College in Hudson, Ohio, Goodell affirmed his interest in "free inquiry" and asked them to write articles for his weekly expressing their views opposing colonization.¹⁰

Both Wright and Green were already at that time full-fledged abolitionists and opponents of the Colonization Society, as a result of Garrison's Liberator and Thoughts on African Colonization. They were destined to become important workers in the antislavery cause. Wright, a professor of Mathematics, would later move to New York city to become first secretary of the American Anti -

⁸Genius of Temperance, October 3, 1832.

⁹Ibid., November 14 and 21, 1832.

¹⁰Letter, Elizur Wright, Jr. to Theodore Weld, February 1, 1833 in Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld Angelina Grimke Weld and Sarah Grimke 1822-1844 (2 vols. N.Y.: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1834), I, 104, [hereinafter referred to as Barnes, Weld]; Genius of Temperance, November 14, 1832.

Slavery Society, while Green, an orthodox minister and professor, would move to Whitesboro, New York, to become head of the Oneida Institute, a manual labor school and a training center for reformers.¹¹

Wright, impressed with Goodell's letter, was more than happy to present his views on the Colonization Society in the Genius of Temperance, and he did so on February 12, 1833.¹²

Goodell anxiously awaited a reply from the Colonization Society itself. As expected, Wright's article indeed brought a rejoinder from an anonymous writer, "Vindex," and resulted in an ongoing debate for the next few months.¹³

Meanwhile, the Colonization Society attempted to win over Goodell to its side. R. S. Finley, an important official of the Society in Cincinnati and who was soon to become its New York agent visited Goodell at his office. Finley spent several hours with Goodell attempting to refute Garrison's arguments. But, Goodell, finding him uninformed on the subject, remained unconvinced. What made matters worse was Finley's admission that the Society's aim was

¹¹Oliver Johnson, William Lloyd Garrison and His Times (Boston: B. B. Russell and Co., 1880), p. 141-142.

¹²Genius of Temperance, February 12, 1833.

¹³Letter, Wright to Weld, February 1, 1833, Barnes, Weld, I, 104; The Colonization Society attempted to reply to Garrison's charges in direct response to Goodell's urging but it was not a full-scale refutation. See African Repository, VIII, November 1832; also Liberator, December 8, 1832.

to remove ultimately to Africa the entire black population. Goodell was now convinced that the English abolitionist, Thomas Clarkson, was correct in urging direct efforts for emancipation through anti-slavery organizations that were "explicitely framed for that object," rather than "relying wholly or chiefly on colonization." For it was clear to him now that the majority of the members of the Colonization Society were opposed to general emancipation even by colonization.¹⁴

By the spring and summer of 1833 Goodell was rapidly becoming a full-fledged abolitionist and opponent of the Colonization Society.¹⁵ On March 7, 1833 Goodell joined a group of like-minded New York city antislavery reformers,¹⁶ in addressing a letter of

¹⁴Genius of Temperance, February 27, 1833.

¹⁵In April Wright wrote that the Genius of Temperance was a "glorious sheet -- full of abolitionism;" see Wright to his wife, April 8, 1833, Wright Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁶Gilbert Barnes contends that between 1831 and 1833 an Association of Gentlemen or as it was informally known New York Committee existed of which Goodell and other later prominent abolitionists were members; see his The Anti-Slavery Impulse 1830-1844 (N. Y.: Harcourt, Brace and the World, Inc., 1964), p. 36; however, in reviewing Barnes' sources in support of that contention, I have found little support for such a conclusion; Joshua Leavitt's account of the formation of the American Anti-Slavery Society in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, October 24, 1844, does not at all mention the existence of such a committee prior to the organization of the New York City Anti-Slavery Society in October 1833; neither do Weld's letters support Barnes' contention; I have also gone through carefully the files of the New York Evangelist and have found no mention of such a committee -- Barnes' reference to vol. II p. 304 of that paper regarding call for a meeting of that committee is incorrect; the paper does not make such a call nor does anyone else; the journal only mentions the necessity for a national organization.

inquiry to the secretary of the American Colonization Society, R. R. Gurley. Among the other signers of that letter were such prominent men as Arthur and Lewis Tappan, George Bourne (an early advocate of immediatism and a newspaper editor), Theodore Weld (Finney's most important disciple), Charles G. Finney, Charles W. Dennison (editor of the Emancipator),¹⁷ Joshua Leavitt (editor of the New York Evangelist), and S. P. Hines (co-editor of the Genius of Temperance).¹⁸

The aim of the letter was more to discredit the Society than to elicit information regarding that association's objectives. The major thrust of the inquiry was to clarify the Society's position on the right of former slaves to live as free citizens. Specifically, they questioned whether the aim of the Society was the ultimate extinction of slavery, and whether it considered expatriation to be the only condition for emancipation.¹⁹

The New York abolitionists found Gurley's reply equivocal. Though he denied that expatriation was a condition of emancipation,

¹⁷ Goodell claims that he published the Emancipator in Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 391-392; Letter, Wright to his wife, March 15, 1833, Wright Papers, Library of Congress, also hints that Goodell was publisher of the paper; but I have found no independent evidence to substantiate that conclusion.

¹⁸ Genius of Temperance, June 26, 1833; Liberator, June 13, 1833, reprinted from the Emancipator.

¹⁹ Ibid.

he had little hope that whites and blacks could ever live together in equality because of prejudice and the inherent inferiority of the Negro race. Furthermore, though he asserted that the ultimate aim of the Society was emancipation, he discounted any direct action against slavery, on the ground that the laws of the country supported that institution. The New York abolitionists considered Gurley's statement to be racist and misleading.²⁰

In spite of his close cooperation with the New York abolitionists, Goodell, as late as June 1833, refused to break completely with the Colonization Society, for he continued to read the literature of both sides of the controversy and the columns of his paper remained open for both friends and opponents of the Society. Goodell's refusal to censure the Society and to give unqualified approval to the abolitionist movement may have been due to his fear that by taking such a radical step he would alienate many of his temperance readers. He still felt that the Colonization Society could accomplish some good.²¹

The Crandall case finally convinced Goodell of the hopelessness of the colonization movement. Prudence Crandall was a school teacher who ran a private school for "genteel females" in the village of Canterbury, Connecticut. In January 1833 she admitted

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Genius of Temperance, June 26, 1833.

to her school a black girl, Sarah Harris, a daughter of a respectable local Negro family. Although the other girls did not object, some of the parents demanded her dismissal. Refusing to let the girl go, Crandall decided to turn the seminary into a black school, and on March 2, 1833 she advertised her plan in the Liberator. The town was soon in an uproar. Led by Andrew T. Judson, an ambitious local politician and leading figure in the local colonization society, the people of Canterbury pledged themselves to prevent "at all hazards" the establishment of a black school. When she finally established such a school, Crandall was arrested and convicted under a recently passed law, forbidding the operation of a school for non-residents. Although on appeal the conviction was set aside, Crandall was forced to close down her school because of public harrassment.²²

Goodell took notice on March 20 of the "extraordinary affair" at Canterbury, as he termed it. He saw the situation as a clear case of prejudice against Negroes. What surprised and "appalled" him was not the prejudice against color by the "vulgar,"

²² Samuel J. May, Some Recollections of our Antislavery Conflict (Boston: Fields, Osgood and Co., 1869), p. 39-72 [hereinafter referred to as May, Recollections]; Garrison, Garrison, I, 315-347; Alfred T. Child, Jr., "Prudence Crandell and the Canterbury Experiment," Bulletin of Friends Historical Association, XXII (Spring 1933), 35-55; Every account of the antislavery movement, either primary or secondary, recounts the story of the Crandall affair.

which was not unexpected, but the hostility by intelligent and educated citizens against a school for the education of black children. Calling Crandall a "heroine" and "noble young lady," Goodell denounced the prejudice that had been exposed not only in Canterbury, but all over the country. "Degradation of the men of color," he wrote, "is a deep blot on our country's fair fame." "Unless the American people," he warned, "can learn a different lesson of duty towards our colored population our national chastisement is as certain as the existence of a just and merciful Ruler of nations."²³

Goodell blamed the Colonization Society for the whole "disgraceful" affair in Canterbury and for the "incredible" law that had been passed. He singled out Andrew Judson for special criticism, for Judson had led the opposition to Crandall, and labored for the passage of the law against the school. The Society's opposition to the education of the Negro, Goodell pointed out, was well illustrated by that association's opposition to an abolitionist resolution which stated that the objectives of the Society would only be attained through the improvement of the Negro's condition.²⁴

²³ Genius of Temperance, March 20, 1833.

²⁴ Ibid., April 10, May 15, July 24, August 21, September 4, and 18, 1833; Female Advocate, July 27, 1833; Letter, Goodell to Garrison, November 14, 1833, Garrison Papers, Boston Public Library; see the same letter reprinted in Garrison, Garrison, I, 392, footnote.

The Crandall case forced Goodell to confront the deep-seated prejudices against Negroes among all elements in the population. The affair demonstrated to him the fact that the Colonization Society not only failed to combat prejudice, but appeared to encourage racial antagonism. He therefore decided to investigate for himself the true condition of blacks in America. During the National Temperance Convention, in May 1833, Goodell visited some of the "colored brethren" in Newtown, Pennsylvania, accompanied by Arnold Buffum, an abolitionist who had defended Crandall. Goodell was encouraged by the visit. He found "comfort, prosperity, intelligence, and public spirit among the blacks," and he was impressed with their spirit of forbearance in the face of degrading conditions.²⁵ On his return to New York in June, Goodell visited the African Free Schools at the Chatham Street Chapel, and he was quite impressed with their program of reading, spelling, arithmetic, grammar and geography.²⁶

The Crandall case, as well as his first hand observation of the condition of the northern Negro, finally convinced Goodell that the Colonization Society would have to be discredited as an antislavery organization. He decided to join with other abolitionists in a deliberate effort against the Colonization Society. They published pamphlets,

²⁵ Genius of Temperance, May 29, 1833.

²⁶ Ibid., June 12, 1833.

books, tracts and newspapers explaining the abolitionist view on slavery and the Negro. Furthermore, the New York abolitionists made plans to form their own antislavery organization.²⁷

These plans progressed satisfactorily despite bitter opposition from the Colonization Society.²⁸ In June, 1833 Arthur Tappan consulted with Goodell on the feasibility of forming a New York city antislavery society. Separate conferences followed, with Joshua Leavitt, Elizur Wright, Charles Dennison, George Bourne, and the three black ministers, Peter Williams, Theodore S. Wright, and Samuel Cornish. But the impetus toward forming such an organization came when news of British emancipation in the West Indies reached America.²⁹ The abolitionists now made up their mind. On the morning of October 2nd, the New York papers carried an announcement, addressed to the friends of immediate abolition of slavery in the United States, calling for a meeting at Clinton Hall that evening, for

²⁷ Letter, Wright to Weld, September 5, 1833, in Barnes, Weld, I, 114-117; Standenraus, African Colonization Movement, p. 206-210, 214.

²⁸ Emancipator, August 6, 1834 has an account of the struggle against the Colonization Society in spring and summer of 1833; Lewis Tappan, Life of Arthur Tappan (N.Y.: Hurd and Houghton, 1870), p. 167.

²⁹ Betram Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery (Cleveland: The Press of the Case Western Reserve Univ., 1969), p. 104 [hereinafter referred to as Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan].

the purpose of forming a local antislavery society. The announcement was signed by a committee consisting of Leavitt, Lewis Tappan, Goodell, and the two New York merchants, William Green, Jr., and John Rankin.³⁰

Their opponents were not to be outwitted. On reading the announcement, officials of the Colonization Society met to plan their strategy in the office of James Watson Webb, editor of the Courier and Enquirer and bitter opponent of the abolitionists. They decided to post placards (signed "many southerners") all over the city, calling for southerners and other friends to meet at the same time and place as the abolitionists themselves had planned to assemble.³¹ In addition, the Courier and Enquirer lashed out at the prospective meeting as a "mad scheme of Garrison and his fanatics" that would revive sectional jealousies. The Courier called upon the people of New York to "crush" this "many headed hydra in the bud, expose the weakness as well as the folly, madness and mischief, of these bold and dangerous men."³²

³⁰Courier and Enquirer, October 2, 1833; New York Commercial Advertiser, October 2, 1833; Genius of Temperance, October 2, 1833.

³¹Leonard Richards, "Gentlemen of Property and Standing" Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 27; hereinafter referred to as Richards, Anti-Abolition Mobs; Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, p. 105.

³²Courier and Enquirer, October 2, 1833.

This created a volatile situation. A head-on collision between the colonizationists and the abolitionists as only prevented by the trustees of the Clinton Hall who at the last moment refused to allow the abolitionists to meet in their lecture hall. By word of mouth the abolitionists were informed of the change and were told to meet instead at the Chatham Street Chapel.³³ The colonizationists and their friends, unaware of the decision of the trustees of Clinton Hall, assembled near the gates of the Hall. Finding it locked, the crowd went to Tammany Hall. Here they passed resolutions denouncing it "improper and inexpedient" to agitate the antislavery question since it "is pregnant with peril and difficulty," and pledged themselves to resist any attempt to interfere with slavery.³⁴

Meanwhile, the abolitionists had quickly assembled at Chatham Street Chapel. Expecting the mob at any moment, they hurriedly went through the process of organizing the New York City Anti-Slavery Society. A constitution was quickly adopted. Arthur Tappan was made president and Wright and Dennison, corresponding and recording secretaries, respectively. Goodell was placed on the board of

³³Henry Wilson, History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America (3 vols. Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1872), I, 231-232 [hereinafter referred to as Wilson, Slave Power].

³⁴Courier and Enquirer, October 3, 1833.

managers of the Society, together with Leavitt, Lewis Tappan, Isaac T. Hopper, an old Quaker, and Abraham L. Cox, a Presbyterian minister. Then they rapidly adjourned.³⁵

Informed that the abolitionists were meeting at Chatham Street Chapel, the crowd at Tammany Hall had meanwhile streamed into the Chapel screaming for Garrison and Tappan. Goodell and his friends were just then leaving from the back door. The abolitionists who still remained in the hall found refuge in a meeting of Sunday school teachers in the upper room of an adjoining chapel. Within the hour the police rescued the abolitionists, and the mob, finding the chapel empty, seized a Negro, named him Arthur Tappan and forced him to make a speech. After passing a few mock resolutions, the mob dispersed.³⁶

Not surprisingly, the constitution of the newly formed New York City Anti-Slavery Society reflected the abolitionists approach to slavery, denouncing the institution as contrary to both religious and moral principles. The organization pledged it would

³⁵Genius of Temperance, October 9, 1833; Tappan, Life of Arthur Tappan, p. 168-170; Liberator, October 12, 1833; Wilson, Slave Power, I, 232.

³⁶Genius of Temperance, October 9, 1833; Wilson, Slave Power, I, 232-233; New York Commercial Advertiser, October 3, 1833; Tappan, Life of Arthur Tappan, p. 168; New York Evangelist, October 5, 1833.

use only moral religious means to achieve the "total and immediate abolition" of slavery. Furthermore, the Society vowed to help elevate the "character and condition" on free Negroes as well as encourage their intellectual, moral and religious improvement within a framework of civil and religious equality.³⁷

Thus, both the New England Anti-Slavery Society, which had been organized in 1832, and the New York society were firmly established on the basis of immediate abolition of slavery and the elevation of the free Negro. Both organizations promised to achieve their objectives through a change in public opinion regarding the institution of slavery and the Negro in general. They disclaimed violent methods and pledged to use lawful and religious means.³⁸ In their objectives and in their means they stood in direct opposition to the Colonization Society.

The abolitionists, however, now needed a national organization similar to that of the Colonization Society in order to combat

³⁷Genius of Temperance, October 9, 1833; New York Evangelist, October 5, 1833; also prints the Constitution of the New York City Anti-Slavery Society.

³⁸Johnson, William Lloyd Garrison and His Times, p. 82-89. Garrison, Garrison, I, 277-280; The Constitution of the New England Anti-Slavery Society with an Address to the Public (Boston: Harrison and Knapp, 1832), passim.

that organization and to propagate their views. Such a national society would combine the resources of scattered abolitionist groups all over the country. Garrison had urged such an organization ever since the inception of the New England society. At the first anniversary meeting of that Society Garrison proposed a resolution, which was immediately adopted, to the effect that the formation of a national antislavery organization was "essential to the complete regeneration of public sentiment on the subject of slavery, and the speedy overthrow of that iniquitous system...."³⁹ During the spring of 1833, Garrison continued to urge the organization of such a society.⁴⁰ Before sailing for England, in May, Garrison addressed a farewell letter to Goodell in which he reiterated his belief that the "great object now to be aimed at is the formation of a National Anti-Slavery Society...."⁴¹

By the fall of 1833 the pleas of Garrison were acted on. Abolitionists in Boston, Providence, New York, and Philadelphia agreed to summon a convention in Philadelphia on December 4, 1833

³⁹First Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the New England Anti-Slavery Society January 9, 1833 (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1833), p. 3.

⁴⁰May, Recollections, p. 80.

⁴¹Garrison, Garrison, I, 345-346.

for the purpose of organizing a national antislavery society.⁴²

Goodell came to the Convention as a delegate from New York. At the Convention, a committee was appointed to draft a declaration of sentiments and purpose for the American Anti-Slavery Society.

Goodell, Garrison, Reverend S. S. Jocelyn, Wright, John G. Whittier, William Green, Samuel J. May and three others were chosen members of that committee.⁴³

The Declaration of Sentiments was an expression of the abolitionists' moral and religious approach to the problem of slavery. It called for the "overthrow of prejudice by the power of love -- and the abolition of slavery by the spirit of repentance," But though the aim of the Society was the immediate abolition of slavery, the Declaration hastened to point out that abolitionists "fully and unanimously recognize the sovereignty of each state, to legislate on the subject of slavery which is tolerated within its limits." Congress, the abolitionists conceded, had no right to interfere with slavery,

⁴²Letter, Wright to Weld, October 29, 1833, Barnes, Weld, I, 117-118.

⁴³Garrison, Garrison, I, 396-399; May, Recollections, p. 84-85; Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 396; John G. Whittier, Works of John G. Whittier, Vols. I-VII, Prose Work, "The Anti-Slavery Convention of 1833," (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin and Co., 1874), VII, 171-186; Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Organization of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia 1884 (Phila.: Thomas S. Dand and Co., 1884), passim.

except in the case of the domestic slave trade and in those territories under jurisdiction of the federal government.⁴⁴

By making this important concession, the Society, in effect, had neutralized its own pledge of political action against slavery. The Society promised to bring freedom to the overwhelming majority of slaves in the southern states through a combination of moral and religious action, radical change of public opinion, and ostracism of the slaveholder. The Declaration urged the formation of antislavery societies in every city, town and village, the employment of agents to propogate the Society's views, the extensive circulation of antislavery literature, the use of the pulpit and press for the cause, and the boycott of slave labor products.⁴⁵

Significantly, the national society from the outset, following the precedent set by the New England and New York city antislavery

⁴⁴May, Recollections, p. 85-89; see also May's reminiscing about the adoption of the Declaration of Sentiments in Proceedings of the American Anti-Slavery Society at its Second Decade Held at the City of Philadelphia December 3rd, 4th, 5th 1853 (N.Y.: A.A.S.S., 1854), p. 7-10; Garrison, Garrison, I, 4-8-412, reprints entire text of the Declaration; see also Emancipator, December 14, 1833.

⁴⁵Liberator, December 14, 1833.

societies, linked the pledge to work for the abolition of slavery with the aim of "elevating the character and condition" of the Negro and the promise to fight for the removal of prejudice against color. As a matter of fact, the national society's constitution copies this article verbatim from the constitution of the New York City Anti-Slavery Society.⁴⁶

This commitment to the eradication of race prejudice is indicative of the abolitionists' fundamental attitude toward the Negro. The coexistence of a black minority within a predominately white society constituted a major social problem. It was in fact this issue, as much as the controversy of gradual versus immediate emancipation, that brought about the deep-seated antagonism between the colonization and abolition movements. The colonizationists who approached the problem from the point of view of the white majority concluded a priori that both races could not live together on equal terms, and that the black race had to be expatriated. The abolitionists, on the other hand, saw a solution based upon their religious and moral ideals and therefore accepted the possibility of blacks and whites living together in America.

⁴⁶ Compare New York City Anti-Slavery Society constitution reprinted in Genius of Temperance, October 9, 1833 with the national society constitution in Garrison, Garrison, I, 414.

The Convention completed the organization of the American Anti-Slavery Society by electing officers for the new association. Arthur Tappan, though he was absent from the Convention, was chosen president, and Wright was given the post of secretary of domestic correspondence. Garrison, whose name was already notorious throughout the country, was given the insignificant office of Secretary of Foreign Correspondence. Goodell was placed on the Executive Committee of the Society, which was to be located in New York city. But most importantly, the Emancipator was adopted as the organ of the national organization with Goodell as editor.⁴⁷ This appointment came at an opportune moment for Goodell, for due to pressure from the New York State Temperance Society his Genius of Temperance was slowly dying, and had to cease publication in December, 1833.

The work of the Convention was now completed. A national organization had been established and its objectives had been articulated. Goodell had played an important part both in the formation of the Society and in the enunciation of its principles. His talents as an editor, writer and reformer were now recognized by his

⁴⁷ Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 396; Garrison, Garrison, I, 414-415; Johnson, William Lloyd Garrison and His Times, p. 155-156.

fellow laborers in the cause.⁴⁸ As editor of the Society's organ, Goodell assumed a highly responsible position, for the organization regarded the press as a major element in the drive to change public opinion.

⁴⁸Emancipator, January 14, 1834.

CHAPTER IV

ANTISLAVERY CRUSADER

During the next two and a half years, as editor of the Emancipator and lecturing agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society, Goodell built his reputation as an abolitionist propagandist, developing arguments that became part of an abolitionist rhetoric. He was one of the first abolitionists to link the antislavery movement with the struggle for civil liberties. He argued that abolitionism was concerned not only with the rights of the Negro, but with the rights of all whites as well, a contention that became an integral part of the abolitionist argument by 1838. The argument was so effective that by 1840 Northern public opinion began to accept the abolitionists as the vanguard in the battle for American civil liberties. Moreover, it was this argument, more than any other factor, that saved the abolitionist movement from extinction during its worst crisis between 1834 and 1837. As an influential editor and writer during this period, Goodell provided a rationale for the existence of the abolitionist movement, and helped redefine freedom of the press as the right to espouse unpopular minority causes.¹

¹Excellent discussion of this theme in Russel Nye, Fettered Freedom Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860, (Mich: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1963), passim, see especially p. 94-139.

The three year period after the organization of the American Anti-Slavery Society brought the abolitionist movement face to face with its most dangerous crisis. Legislatures, both state and federal, and even a President, endeavored to suppress the movement. Violence by mobs became a common occurrence. Almost every active abolitionist was mobbed at least once during these years.²

The worst anti-abolitionist riot took place in New York city, in July, 1834. Mobs roamed the city for a few days. Abolitionist meetings were disrupted, and mobs attacked the homes of Dr. Samuel Cox, Henry C. Ludlow, and Lewis Tappan, who had been accused of favoring church integration and interracial marriages. The Negro pastor of St. Phillips African Episcopal Church, who was accused of the same charges, suffered a worse fate. His church

² Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 400-407; Richards, Abolition Mobs, passim. Richards has exaggerated the fear of amalgamation, and the dangers the abolitionist direct appeal posed to the interests of the elites. The battle cry of immediate emancipation played an important role in arousing various fears regarding slavery and the Negro. The abolitionists were not the first reform group that had applied the more modern direct methods of appeal to the public; see especially Charles I. Foster, An Errand of Mercy The Evangelical United Front 1790-1837 (Chapel Hill: The Univ. of N. C. Press, 1960), for a description of such methods used by the religious benevolent organizations and the American Temperance Society in the 1820's, years before the formation of the abolitionist party.

and home were demolished by the mob. The rioters then continued to roam through the Negro quarter destroying Negro homes and attacking blacks.³

During these riots Goodell was not in the city. Receiving a message at midnight from the mayor of Brooklyn that he and his family would not be safe in the city, Goodell left town.⁴ He took no notice of the riots in the Emancipator, until July 15, when he copied accounts of the disturbances from the Journal of Commerce. He advised fellow abolitionists to follow the watchword of Christ that, "if a man smite thee on the one cheek turn him the other also." "Brute force," he added, would never silence the abolitionists. Only reasoned arguments would influence them. And therefore whenever their opponents "see fit to reason with us, we are ready for them. But as for clubs and clamor, bullying and blows, brick bats and stones, we don't understand such arguments. Wickedness and folly alone know how to wield them. We will be no students in such a school of ethics." He advised abolitionists again to "keep cool,"

³ Alan Nevins, ed., The Diary of Philip Hone 1828-1851 (N. Y.: Dodd, Mead and Co., p936), p. 135 [hereinafter referred to as Hone, Diary]; Commercial Advertiser, July 12, 1834; Richards, Anti-Abolition Mobs, p. 120-121; Letter, Tappan to Weld, July 11, 1834, in Barnes, Weld, I, 155.

⁴ See Goodell's recollection of the riots of 1834 in Principia, August 4, 1860; In Memoriam, p. 25.

as he put it. "Dog days," he assured them, "will be over by and by; and reason and common sense will come in fashion again."⁵

Goodell was convinced that the public hysteria would pass, and he saw in the riots an opportunity to strengthen the fledgling abolitionist movement and make it an important force in America. His goal was to turn anti-abolitionism to the advantage of abolitionism by linking the antislavery cause to the more popular struggle for civil liberties. Thus, a few weeks after the New York riot, Goodell, instead of answering the charges made against the abolitionists, lectured the city and the nation on the rights of minorities to freedom of speech and press. These rights, he explained, were meant for both majorities and minorities, for a minority may one day become a majority. How could the public be enlightened, he asked, when a minority is suppressed?⁶ Goodell came directly to the point when he asserted that the crucial question before the nation was whether the "white freedmen of the North are to be made slaves -- whether they are to be deprived of the liberty of speaking and publishing their opinions on a question of Christian duty and public interest."⁷

⁵ Emancipator, July 15, 1834.

⁶ Ibid., July 22, 1834.

⁷ Ibid., August 6, 1834.

Goodell elaborated on these points in "An Appeal to the American Public" which was printed by the American Anti-Slavery Society.⁸ Goodell's name quickly became associated with the argument linking the cause of abolitionism and civil liberties. Fifteen thousand copies of the "Appeal" appeared in the first edition, and, according to Joshua Leavitt, within twelve hours it became clear that another edition would be necessary. Another thirteen thousand copies were printed, and the type was ordered kept standing in case of a third edition.⁹ Goodell's efforts assured that the abolitionists would eventually get a hearing in the North. They were to bear fruit in the 1840's, and especially in the 1850's, when the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act led many northerners to agree with Goodell's argument.¹⁰

Goodell found another opportunity to spread his views when he agreed to become a traveling agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society. In September, 1834, and for three months thereafter, Goodell travelled in upstate New York, as far west as Buffalo, lecturing and soliciting donations and subscriptions for the Society

⁸Ibid., July 29, 1834; same "Appeal" appeared in August 19, and 26, 1834 issues of the Emancipator; New York Evangelist, August 23, 1834 carried the "Appeal."

⁹New York Evangelist, August 26, 1834.

¹⁰Nye, Fettered Freedom, p. 202-205.

and the paper.¹¹ The trip was similar to the one he made in 1830 for the temperance cause, and it was just as successful. Goodell delivered twenty public lectures on slavery and collected \$1900. He held a dozen special conferences with friends of abolitionism, conversed with prominent non-abolitionists laymen and clergymen, and listened to a great variety of opinions. Claiming he had made every effort to learn the "course and progress of public sentiment," regarding slavery and abolitionism, Goodell concluded that antislavery principles were slowly gaining favor with the public. Public opinion, he found, was in a "forming state -- a state of deliberating inquiry -- of slow but sure transition." More importantly, he was now more than ever convinced that the riots against the abolitionists benefitted the cause. The riots publicized the movement, and alarmed many citizens about the spread of mobs and the danger of the persecution of abolitionists.¹²

Although the trip was a great success, Goodell lost his job as editor of the Emancipator within seven months. The executive committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society forced Goodell's resignation when he insisted on publishing Gerrit Smith's letters

¹¹Second Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society, May 12, 1835, (N. Y.: A. A. S. S., 1835), p. 47.

¹²Emancipator, December 23, 1835.

attacking the abolitionist organization. Smith, who was still at the time a colonizationist, agreed to allow Goodell to publish his letters together with Goodell's point-by-point reply to that philanthropist's objections. When Goodell published these letters on the ground that an antislavery weekly must remain a "medium of radical and thorough discussion -- an engine for ferreting out and exposing the deceptive windings of error," the committee decided in June 1835 to ask for Goodell's resignation.¹³

Goodell, however, did not leave the antislavery movement. Until June 1836, when he became editor of the Friend of Man, he continued to write for the American Anti-Slavery Society's publications and to work as its lecturing agent. Goodell continued to link the abolitionist cause with the issue of civil liberty, but his effort was hampered by the argument that the natural rights philosophy did not apply to blacks. Commencing with the July issue of the Emancipator, Goodell wrote eight articles on

¹³Letter, Tappan to Goodell, June 18, 1835, Goodell Papers, Berea; Emancipator, June 30, 1835; Wright to Weld, June 10, 1835, Barnes, Weld, I, 226; Tappan at first warned Goodell against publishing Smith's letters in the Emancipator; see letter, Tappan to Goodell, December 29, 1834, Goodell Papers, Berea; Goodell, however, went along and published these letters and his point-by-point reply in the Emancipator, February 3 to May 13, 1835. According to Ralph Harlow, Goodell's convincing replies to Smith's objections were one of the causes that led Smith to join the abolitionist movement in October 1835; see Ralph Harlow, Gerrit Smith Philanthropist and Reformer (N. Y.: Henry Holt & Co., 1939), p. 120.

"Human Rights" in an attempt to prove that slavery violated the inalienable right of all men to liberty and the pursuit of happiness. He contended that man's natural rights were derived from God. Quoting extensively from the Bible, Goodell endeavored to show that God granted every man inalienable rights, any infringement of which was rebellion against God himself.¹⁴

These articles represented one of Goodell's most important contributions to the abolitionist argument. For by showing how the abolitionist movement was rooted in the natural rights philosophy, Goodell assured Negroes the same rights guaranteed whites in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. He was one of the first abolitionists to elaborate on the natural right philosophy, which became the common ground on which all abolitionists of whatever persuasion were able to agree.¹⁵ Even the moderate antislavery reformer, William Ellery Channing, employed the same argument in his influential book, Slavery, published in November 1835, at the same time

¹⁴Emancipator, October 1835 (monthly), October 10, November, and December 1835; February and March 1836.

¹⁵Dwight L. Dumond, Antislavery The Crusade for Freedom in America (N. Y.: W. W. Norton and Co., 1966), p. 228-233.

that Goodell's articles were appearing in the Emancipator.¹⁶

In fact, Goodell privately accused Channing of incorporating some of his ideas in the book. Garrison thought so too, though on Goodell's insistence, he did not accuse Channing of plagiarism when Garrison reviewed the book in the Liberator.¹⁷ Goodell explained to Garrison that, because it was difficult to prove whether one borrowed or not, it was better not to make an issue of it. The most important thing, he concluded, was that both of them were right in their arguments.¹⁸ In reality, Channing probably came to the same conclusions on his own. The book was written during the summer of 1835 when Channing was vacationing in Newport. Goodell's first article on "Human Rights" appeared in July.¹⁹

¹⁶William E. Channing, Slavery (Boston: James Monroe and Co., 1835), p. 30-53. Oberlin College Library has the original copy of Channing's book owned by Goodell. It contains annotations by Goodell indicating where he thought his arguments coincided with Channing's.

¹⁷Liberator, February 27, 1836.

¹⁸Letter, Goodell to Garrison, February 25, 1836, Garrison Papers, Boston Public Library; letter, Garrison to Goodell, February 26, 1836, Garrison Papers, Boston.

¹⁹Madelein H. Rice, Federal Street Pastor The Life of William Ellery Channing (N.Y.: Bookman Associates, 1961), p. 221-222.

Goodell soon found an opportunity to incorporate the natural rights argument in the Declaration of Sentiments of a new state antislavery society. In January, 1836 Goodell was sent by the American Anti-Slavery Society to help Henry B. Stanton, Amos A. Phelps and others to organize the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society. On February 2, the organization was founded on the basis of a declaration of principles written by Goodell. Following his own line of thinking, Goodell committed the Society to the principle of the inalienability of human rights. He argued that slavery destroyed both the freedom of whites in the South, by infringing upon their rights of speech and press, and the freedom of white laborers in the North, threatening them with enslavement. If we could justify enslaving the black race, he wrote, who were once the builders of the civilization of Egypt and Ethiopia and the educators of the Greek and Roman world, then "on the score of ancestry, the white men of this country, whose forefathers were naked barbarians for centuries after the Greeks and Romans imported literature from Africa and most of whom were held in feudal bondage until within a few centuries, must be among the last to file in their claim of freedom!"²⁰

²⁰ American Anti-Slavery Society, Reports of the 1st to 6th Meetings of the A. A. S. S. 1833-1839 MSS, Boston Public Library; Friend of Man, June 23 and 30, 1836.

Goodell's arguments about the anti-abolitionist threat to white liberties were based in part on the events of 1835. In that year the American Anti-Slavery Society decided to launch an all-out propaganda campaign in the South by mailing thousands of copies of their publications, the Emancipator, the Anti-Slavery Recorder, Slave's Friend, Human Rights. Though the literature was not addressed to the slaves or even to the free Negroes, the South became alarmed. On the night of July 29, a mob invaded the Charleston Post Office and burned the abolitionist papers. A general anti-abolition mania in the South was set off. Anti-abolition meetings, torchlight parades, and rioting spread throughout the section. Demands were made everywhere to stop by law the circulation of these "incendiary" materials. Rewards were posted for the capture of Garrison, Tappan, and other abolitionists. Northern governors were requested to deliver to the South such abolitionists as R. G. Williams, publisher of the Emancipator.²¹

²¹ Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 408-416; John Bach McMaster, A History of the People of the United States From the Revolution to the Civil War (7 vols. N.Y.: D. Appleton and Co., 1906) VI, 271-280.

The Jackson administration encouraged such activities. Amos Kendall, the Postmaster General, in reply to the Charleston postmaster, advised him that, though he had no legal authority to permit the exclusion of certain materials from the mails, he would not order him to deliver the abolition papers. He appealed to a higher law for his action. "We owe an obligation to the laws," Kendall wrote, "but a higher one to the communities in which we live, and if the former be permitted to destroy the latter, it is patriotism to disregard them." President Jackson went beyond Kendall's letter of advice. In a message to Congress in December, 1835 he recommended the passage of a law prohibiting the circulation through the mails of "incendiary publications, intended to instigate the slaves to insurrection."²²

In the North mobs were active in suppressing anti-slavery meetings and in mobbing abolitionists. In Boston Garrison was led through the streets of the city with a rope around his body. At first the mob was determined to prevent George Thompson, the English abolitionist, from addressing a meeting of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society. When Thompson did not appear, the cry arose for Garrison. He was found hiding in a carpenter's

²²Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 416-417.

shop, dragged out and carried through the streets of Boston, until the mayor rescued him and put him into a cell for his own protection.²³ On the same day in October, a mob at Utica disrupted the abolitionist meeting which had met to organize the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. The abolitionists were forced to meet at Gerrit Smith's home in Peterboro in order to complete the work of organization.²⁴

In the state legislatures efforts were initiated to suppress the abolitionists. In the winter of 1835 and 1836 the legislatures of Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia passed resolutions requesting the non-slaveholding states to suppress all abolition societies and to make it "highly penal to print, publish, and distribute newspapers, pamphlets, tracts, and pictorial representation calculated or having a tendency to excite the slaves of the Southern States to insurrection and revolt." In New York and Rhode Island bills were introduced for that purpose, though they failed to pass. In Massachusetts,

²³Garrison, *Garrison, II*, 1-72; Wilson, Slave Power I, 280-286.

²⁴William Thomas, The Enemies of the Constitution Discovered (N.Y.: Leavitt, Lord and Co., 1835), passim; Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Society Convention Held at Utica October 21 and at Peterboro October 22, 1835 (Utica: Standard and Democrat Office, 1835), p. 8-11.

Governor Edward Everett, in his annual message to the legislature, recommended resolutions to censure the abolitionists. He felt that no penal laws were necessary, since the common law could well serve that purpose. As a result, a joint committee of five was appointed to consider both Everett's recommendation and the requests of Southern states for penal laws.²⁵

The abolitionists were alarmed. In Massachusetts the corresponding secretary of the state antislavery society, Samuel J. May, requested the chairman of the joint committee, George Lunt, to grant the abolitionists hearing. On March 4, 1836, the request being granted May and a number of abolitionists, including Goodell, appeared before the committee. Goodell played an important part in these proceedings.²⁶

Goodell came to Boston on the request of the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society which asked him to aid the Massachusetts abolitionists.²⁷ Goodell joined a group of distinguished men, all

²⁵ Samuel J. May, Recollections, p. 185-188. Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 414-416; Wilson, Slave Power, I, 324-330; McMaster, History of People of United States, VI, 286-288.

²⁶ May, Recollections, p. 187-188; Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 418-419.

²⁷ Letter, Goodell to Garrison, February 16, 1836, Liberator, February 20, 1836; Letter, Garrison to his wife, March 5, 1836, Garrison Papers, Boston; Garrison, Garrison, II, 95-96.

members of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, who May selected to address the committee. Among them were Ellis Gray Loring, and Samuel E. Sewall, both distinguished Boston lawyers, Garrison, and Charles Follen, a German scholar who fled persecution in his native land to become professor of German at Harvard University. Each one was to speak on different aspects of the problem. Goodell was asked to speak on the danger posed to northern liberties by the proposed suppression of abolitionists.²⁸

Goodell addressed the committee on March 4. He questioned the right and propriety of the legislature to pass any resolutions condemning the abolitionists. Such action was more dangerous than penal laws since in the latter case at least one was offered a fair trial. Condemnatory resolutions, however, were extra-judicial, branding abolitionists a dangerous group of men without giving them an opportunity to defend themselves. When Goodell, warming up to the subject, accused the legislature of trying to usurp the authority of a judicial body, the chairman of the committee, Lunt, immediately asked him to stop, admonishing him for attempting to "instruct us as to the duties of the Legislature."

²⁸Ibid.

Goodell, however, was permitted to complete his remarks.²⁹

When Follen started to address the committee, Lunt interrupted his remarks and would not allow him to complete his statement. Goodell indignant at Lunt's intransigence, remarked that "we came here as freemen and we mean to go away as freemen." They were here, he continued, as a matter of right, not as a result of a special favor by the committee. But Lunt did not relent.³⁰

The legislature presently granted the abolitionists another hearing. Follen, who was now permitted to continue his remarks, was once more interrupted when he started to make allusions to mob actions. After some discussion between members of the committee and May, Follen was allowed to complete his address. Goodell, quite indignant at the arbitrary decisions of Lunt and at the effort to suppress the abolitionists, accused the legislatures of the South and North of attempting to infringe upon inalienable rights of men. The abolitionists' pronouncements against slavery were not more severe than those of the Founding Fathers. He accused

²⁹William Goodell, An Account of the Interview which took place on the Fourth and Eighth of March between a Committee of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, and the Committee of the Legislature (Boston: Mass. Anti-Slavery Society, 1836), p. 1-10; [Hereinafter referred to as Goodell, An Account]; May, Recollections p. 188-192.

³⁰Goodell, An Account, p. 10-12; May, Recollections, p. 191-194. Garrison to wife, March 5, 1836, Garrison Papers, Boston.

the South of attempting to destroy Northern liberties and the "independence of the laboring classes." When he went as far as to charge the South with a "foul conspiracy against the liberties of the laboring people of the North," Goodell was interrupted by Lunt with a warning not to show disrespect to other states and to their official documents. Apologizing, Goodell continued in the same vein. He quoted Governor George McDuffie of South Carolina as stating that the laborers of the North were incapable of enjoying freedom and that liberty could exist only with slavery. Lunt again interrupted; this time Goodell was asked to sit down and not to continue.³¹

Goodell's business with the Massachusetts legislature, however, was not yet finished. Writing day and night for the next three days, Goodell published a thirty-two page pamphlet explaining the stand of the abolitionists regarding efforts to suppress them. Adopted by the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, it was promptly sent to each member of the legislature and to the Governor and

³¹ Goodell, An Account, p. 12-22; Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 419-420; May, Recollections, p. 194-200.

circulated throughout the state.³²

The efforts of Goodell and his friends were not in vain. The Lunt committee delayed the presentation of its report for several weeks. When the committee did report, no specific recommendations for action by the legislature were made. The legislature, in turn, let the matter rest.³³ The role of the abolitionists in this decision is difficult to determine. It is possible that the members of the legislature realized that censure of the abolitionists might raise more problems than it could solve and be construed as a clear-cut submission to southern demands.

Goodell's appearance before the legislative committee was praised by Massachusetts abolitionists.³⁴ Garrison found his

³²Letter, Garrison to George Benson, March 15, 1836, Garrison Papers, Boston; Garrison, Garrison, II, 102; Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 420; In Memoriam, p. 26; William Goodell, Full Statement of the Reasons which were in part offered to the Committee of the Legislature of Massachusetts (Boston: Mass. Anti-Slavery Society, 1836); passim; Oberlin College Library has copy of the pamphlet owned by Goodell; his name written in his own handwriting is added in pencil identifying Goodell as the author.

³³Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 420; McMaster, History of People of United States, VI, 338.

³⁴Even outside Massachusetts Goodell's labors before the committee were appreciated. In June 1836 the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society asked Goodell to "take part in the defense of abolitionism before the Legislative Committee" of Rhode Island; Goodell, however, declined; see letter, Goodell to William Chaw, June 17, 1836, Garrison Papers, Boston.

visit "very opportune and high serviceable to the cause of human rights." He especially admired Goodell's presentation. In the interview with the committee, Garrison wrote to his father-in-law, Goodell "spoke exceedingly well, better than any body else and was for that very reason more insolently treated by the chairman of the Committee than any of our number, not excepting even Professor Follen." Goodell's pamphlet, Garrison added, "was a very able defense of the principles and measures of the abolitionists...."³⁵

Goodell, however, needed the newspaper medium through which he could further propagate and elaborate his position on natural rights and his contention that abolitionism was part of the struggle for civil liberties. He had not been very successful as a propagandist on the speaking platform. As Dwight Dumond puts it, "he was too dull, factual, perhaps one might say scholarly," as a lecturer.³⁶ He had been a newspaper editor and writer for the previous eight years and it was in this capacity that he excelled. The opportunity to return to the editorial chair came when the executive committee of the newly formed New York State Anti-Slavery Society was searching for an editor of its prospective

³⁵Garrison to George Benson, March 15, 1836, Garrison Papers, Boston; Garrison, Garrison, II, 102.

³⁶Dumond, Antislavery, p. 182.

organ to be published at Utica. At first they offered the job to James G. Birney, who, as a recent highly important convert to abolitionism, was at that time seeking such a position. Beriah Green, corresponding secretary of the state society, tried to make the offer as attractive as possible. He promised Birney that the executive committee would not interfere with his editorial duties, though it would offer encouragement and financial assistance. Furthermore, such connection with the New York State Society would advance his position in the movement and would afford him the opportunity to work closely with two important fellow abolitionists-- Theodore Weld, who was to become an agent of the Society, and Gerrit Smith, who was situated a short distance from Utica.³⁷

When Birney declined the offer, and became instead editor of the Ohio State Anti-Slavery Society's organ, the Philanthropist,³⁸ the New York society approached Goodell. Alvan Stewart, Beriah Green, and Weld urged him to accept the offer.³⁹ Goodell, hesitated, cautious about assuming the editorial chair of another official organ. His wounded feelings, resulting from his dispute with the

³⁷Letter, Beriah Green to Birney, December 30, 1835, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

³⁸Betty Fladeland, James Gillespie Birney: Slaveholder to Abolitionist (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1955), p. 126-129.

³⁹Letter, Weld to Lewis Tappan, February 22, 1836, Barnes, Weld, I, 263; In Memoriam, p. 26.

executive committee of the national society over the conduct of the Emancipator, were not yet healed. Furthermore, the American Anti-Slavery Society had offered him a position as lecturing agent in Connecticut; and he had hopes of continuing his antislavery work in Rhode Island. Goodell, therefore, sought the advice of his friend, Garrison.⁴⁰ The latter unhesitatingly replied that it would be best for him to go to Utica. "I would rather see you in charge of an abolition paper or any other moral reform paper," Garrison wrote him, "than any other man in the range of my acquaintance." Though he admitted that Goodell could be of great benefit to the cause as a correspondent of the Emancipator and as lecturing agent in Connecticut, Garrison advised him "never to vacate the editorial chair as long as you have strength to fill it."⁴¹

Goodell, accepted the offer, to the delight of the abolitionists in New York. Elizur Wright, corresponding secretary of the national society, wrote Weld that "Goodell is a precious and safe man -- altogether the thing for an editor," though he admitted that he had some reservations about Goodell's "interminable 'House that Jack built' style." He was certain, Wright added, that

⁴⁰ Letter, Goodell to Garrison, February 25, 1836, Garrison Papers, Boston.

⁴¹ Letter, Garrison to Goodell, February 26, 1836, Garrison Papers, Boston.

the national society in their continuous search for a suitable editor of the Emancipator "should look in vain to find one better than Goodell."⁴²

As editor of the Emancipator, Goodell had become a leading propagandist of the abolitionist cause. In assuming the editorship of the Friend of Man, he furthered that position by espousing the increasingly popular idea of political abolitionism. And as a prominent member of the state executive committee, he was able to exert concrete influence in that direction.

⁴² Letter, Wright to Weld, March 3, 1836, Barnes, Weld, I, 270; letter, Henry B. Stanton to Garrison, March 2, 1836, Liberator, March 12, 1836.

CHAPTER V
POLITICAL ABOLITIONIST

Goodell sought to make abolitionism a moral and religious crusade against the institution of slavery. The main thrust of the movement was to be moral suasion, i. e., an appeal to the moral and religious conscience of Americans. The political process could then be brought in to play in response to public concern. As Goodell put it, abolitionists must first "agitate, nay instruct and guide, before they could reach the government."¹ From the start, then, abolitionists had no political designs, except to exercise their own rights of petition and suffrage.

Goodell accepted the inevitability of political action against slavery, yet he did not abandon moral suasion as a method of abolishing the institution.² He never relinquished his basic conviction that abolitionism was a religious duty. Goodell believed that politics should be conducted according to Christian principles, and so he endeavored to make the political abolitionist movement conform to his religious ideas. Garrison's nonresistance views repudiated the authority of the government and the church, whereas

¹Letter, William Goodell to Mrs. Nicholson, July 30, 1846, Anne W. Weston Papers, Boston Public Library.

²Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 451-452.

Goodell's faith fostered an abiding trust in political and religious institutions. For to Goodell both the government and the church were divinely ordained; they were subject to reform, not dissolution.

By the year 1837 most leading abolitionists had accepted a form of political action that was expressed by Goodell in a resolution of the New England Anti-Slavery Convention. He had argued that despite the abolitionist pledge not to identify with any political party, his colleagues were nevertheless bound by principle to withhold their votes from any candidate who declined to act in favor of human rights.³ Goodell helped convince the New York State Anti-Slavery Society Convention to adopt the interrogation method.⁴ Candidates for office on the national and state level from either of the two major parties would be interrogated regarding their position on slavery. In time almost all state antislavery organizations accepted this form of political action.⁵

Goodell worked to persuade the rank and file of the wisdom of political action. Together with other members of the

³Friend of Man, June 14, 1837.

⁴Ibid., September 27, and October 11, 1837; Fifth Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society, May 2, 1838, p. 99-101.

⁵Fifth Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society, May 8, 1838, p. 14.

Executive Committee of the New York State Society he made an all-out effort to convince his colleagues to adopt the interrogation method in their auxiliary societies and to vote for antislavery candidates in the election of 1838. Goodell attended numerous local antislavery conventions, spoke in favor of political action, and was sometimes appointed to business committees in order to assure the adoption of such resolution.⁶

Goodell used his journal the Friend of Man to win support for political action. That topic was fast replacing all other subjects in popularity, as a variety of correspondents filled the weekly with numerous articles arguing in favor of voting for anti-slavery candidates. Goodell himself started a series of articles on "Political Action" which continued until the very day of the elections. He assured his readers that abolitionists had no intentions of organizing an independent political party, but rather wished to act as a balance of power between the two major parties. Goodell argued that voting was a religious duty. While he denied that he favored mixing religion with politics, he insisted that political affairs be conducted according to religious principles.⁷

⁶Friend of Man, March 14, 1838, July 11, August 1 and 15, 1838.

⁷Ibid., August 1, 15, 22, 29, September 5, 12, October 3, 10, 24, 31, and November 7, 1838.

Goodell's articles were circulated widely in antislavery journals, including the Liberator. Garrison termed them a "series of sound and valuable articles." The arguments of the author, he added, "appear to us not only conclusive but irresistible."⁸ The articles became the basis of the twenty-two resolutions on political action that were adopted at the annual meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Convention that met in September, 1838.⁹ A month later, Goodell (with the help of Henry Stanton, Amos Phelps, Beriah Green and Wendell Phillips) successfully convinced the Young Men's Anti-Slavery Convention at Worcester that they should adopt nineteen resolutions on political action that were essentially verbatim copies of the New York state resolutions.¹⁰

The abolitionists had the opportunity to test the effectiveness of their form of political action in the 1838 elections. Antislavery reformers, as well as non-abolitionists, therefore, watched intently the results of the interrogation method. Special

⁸Liberator, August 31, 1838; see also articles reprinted from Friend of Man in September 14, 21, and 28, 1838 issues; Garrison, Garrison, II, 245.

⁹Friend of Man, September 26, 1838; Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 469-470.

¹⁰Friend of Man, October 10 and 24, 1838; proceedings copied from the Liberator; Garrison, Garrison, II, 245; Seventh Annual Report of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1836), p. 30-37.

attention was directed at New York state where the two major parties were about evenly balanced and where the abolitionists held the balance of power.¹¹ Goodell told Phelps as early as spring 1837, that New York state would be the "great battlefield" of the 1838 political contest.¹² Apparently, many abolitionists saw the contest there as a test for the presidential elections two years hence.

The New York antislavery convention appointed Gerrit Smith and William Jay to question the candidates for governor and lieutenant governor. The executive committee found William Seward, the Whig candidate for governor, and William Marcy and John Tracy, Democratic candidates for governor and lieutenant governor to be unsatisfactory. The only candidate considered satisfactory was Luther Bradish who was running as lieutenant governor with

¹¹Letter, James G. Birney, Henry Stanton, Elizur Wright to Gerrit Smith, July (?), 1838, Smith Papers, Syracuse University Library; letter, William L. Chaplin to Smith, March 21, 1838, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

¹²Letter, Goodell to Amos Phelps, April 13, 1837, Phelps Papers, Boston Public Library.

Seward.¹³ Goodell and his colleagues on the executive committee, therefore, urged abolitionists to vote only for Bradish and refrain completely from voting for governor.¹⁴

There was indeed dissension among abolitionists regarding certain congressional candidates. For example, in the seventeenth Congressional district which comprised the counties of Oswego and Oneida - the antislavery ranks were divided on the antislavery position of Charles P. Kirkland, mayor of Utica and Whig candidate for Congress. Whig abolitionists interpreted Kirkland's interrogatorist replies as favoring their cause and supported his candidacy. Democratic abolitionists and some independents opposed the endorse-

¹³Friend of Man, September 26, October 24, 31, 1838; An Examination of Mr. Bradish's Answer to the Interrogatories Presented to him by a Committee of the State Anti-Slavery Society October 1, 1838 (Albany: Hoffman and White, 1838), p. 3-4 [hereinafter referred to as An Examination]; Letter, Gerrit Smith and William Jay to Luther Bradish, October 1, 1838, Luther Bradish Papers, New York Historical Society; Friend of Man, October 31, 1838; Letter, Smith to Bradish, November 9, 1838, Smith Papers, N. Y. Historical Society; Glyndon Van Deusen, William Henry Seward (N. Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 51.

¹⁴Friend of Man, October 31, and November 7, 1838.

ment of Kirkland by the executive committee of their local antislavery society.¹⁵

Goodell, who belonged to neither major party, was dissatisfied with Kirkland's replies and was instrumental in convincing the Utica Anti-Slavery Society not to endorse his candidacy. He worked tirelessly until the very day of the elections, distributing handbills and extras of the Friend of Man, and urging abolitionist sympathizers not to vote either for Kirkland or his rival.¹⁶

Goodell's opposition to the Whig candidates, aroused the Whig press against him. The Whigs had expected to receive abolitionist support because many reformers were themselves Whigs. Furthermore, the Whig party was more moderate than the Democrats on the slavery issue. It was disappointing to find that a man like Goodell would place abolitionism above political interest. After

¹⁵ Ibid., November 7 and 29, 1838. Kirkland was at first undecided how to reply to the abolitionist questions regarding the slave trade, slavery in the District, and the admission of Florida as a slave state. He therefore sought the advice of John Q. Adams who replied that he favored the abolition of the interstate slave trade but not the end of slavery in the District and territory of Florida since it was impractical; see Samuel Flagg Bemis, John Quincy Adams and the Union (N. Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 374-375; see also Charles F. Adams, ed. Memoirs of John Quincy Adams (12 vols. Phila.: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1876), X, 39-40.

¹⁶ Friend of Man, October 24, 31, and November 7, 1838.

the depression of 1837 the Whigs were in good position to win the governorship of 1838 and were thus quite dismayed to have the abolitionists arrayed against them.¹⁷

The Whigs accused Goodell of being a Van Buren man and an "avowed Locofoco," who worked tirelessly to defeat Whig candidates. Moreover, they charged that the Friend of Man had been sold to the Democratic party.¹⁸ Even some abolitionists accused Goodell of being a Van Buren man.¹⁹ Goodell countered these charges by claiming that he had never belonged to any political part and never voted along political lines. As regards Van Buren, Goodell disclosed that he had in fact convinced the Worcester Convention to pass a resolution denouncing Van Buren.²⁰

The results of the elections were discouraging to abolitionists. Seward won by 10,000 votes, though in Oneida county Bradish did run ahead of Seward by 390 votes. John G. Floyd, the Democratic candidate, won over Kirkland in the seventeenth

¹⁷DeAlva Stanwood Alexander, A Political History of the State of New York (N. Y.: Henry Holt and Co., 1906), II, 18-25.

¹⁸Goodell reprinted the charges in Friend of Man, October 31 and November 21, 1838.

¹⁹Letter, T. R. Bigelow to Smith, October 30, 1838, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

²⁰Friend of Man, October 31 and November 7, 1838.

Congressional district. Goodell estimated that in New York state, only 5,000 persons voted for the abolitionist-approved candidates, while 30,000 cast their ballots for major party candidates. Most of the abolitionist votes came from Oneida, Oswego and Madison counties, areas where Goodell and his Friend of Man and Gerrit Smith exerted their greatest influence.²¹

Goodell's and Smith's efforts did not go unnoticed. The Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society expressed disgust over the "humiliating spectacle in central New York," but at the same time praised the "Fireproof coadjutor, WILLIAM GOODELL!! and that eminent philanthropist, Gerrit Smith of Peterboro," for their "zeal and devotion, their clear sightedness and loyalty..."²²

Gerrit Smith, however, was thoroughly discouraged with the interrogation method. In a letter to Goodell, he vowed not to go through another such election campaign, where he and Goodell had to convince so-called ardent abolitionists not to vote in favor of slavery. He therefore suggested a new plan, the organization of an antislavery society with a constitution explicitly

²¹ Ibid., December 12, 1838; Van Deasen, Seward, p. 51-52; Franklin B. Hough, The New York Civil List (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1858), p. 31.

²² Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, January 24, 1839, p. 22-24.

committing its members not to vote for proslavery candidates.²³

Goodell, however, professed to be encouraged at the results of the elections. They ostensibly proved that there was a sizable number of abolitionists who were willing to act according to principle in a new experiment. He pleaded for patience, on the ground that the abolitionists had just recently entered the field of politics, and required some guidance in the technique of political action,²⁴

In 1839 Goodell published the Anti-Slavery Lecturer, a series of monthly lectures on slavery and abolitionism, a step in that direction. The executive committee of the New York society had approved the plan of such a monthly paper in September, 1838 at the annual meeting, and proposed to solicit a subscription list of 20,000.²⁵ When that number was reached by the end of the year, the committee decided to print 25,000 copies of the monthly beginning with January.²⁶

In the Anti-Slavery Lecturer Goodell argued that slavery was both a political and religious problem: "Being a great question

²³ Letter, Smith to Goodell, November 7, 1838, Friend of Man, November 14, 1838.

²⁴ Ibid., November 14, December 5, 1838.

²⁵ Ibid., September 26, 1838.

²⁶ Ibid., November 29, 1838.

of public morality, it is religious because it is political, and it is political because it is religious," and hence slavery should be fought on both these fronts. It was one's Christian duty first to condemn slaveholding as a sin, and then preach, pray, write, and bear testimony against the institution. Secondly, since slavery was established by law, it could be abolished by law: hence political action was imperative.²⁷ Political and religious weapons had to be employed to remove prejudice against color, the basis of slavery. It was prejudice, he emphasized, that kept blacks out of schools, places of worship, and suitable jobs. Christianity stood against prejudice and must be enlisted to fight against it. Since prejudice was also politically supported, the constitutional and legal distinctions based on color should be destroyed. "In a word," Goodell concluded, "the colored man must be regarded as God regards him, and treated as a brother and as an equal."²⁸

The disappointment of the abolitionists' first effort at political action was compounded by John Quincy Adams' condemnation of their movement. Adams had endeared himself to abolitionists since 1836, when he fearlessly and almost singlehandedly

²⁷ Anti-Slavery Lecturer, January to October 1839. Lectures reprinted in the Liberator, April 5 to December 27, 1839.

²⁸ Ibid., December 1839.

fought for their right to petition Congress. Goodell had personally visited Adams in June, 1837 to express abolitionist gratitude for his efforts.²⁹ Antislavery reformers, however, failed to understand that Adams' battle for the right of petition was a matter of principle, an attempt to protect an essential American constitutional guarantee, rather than an endorsement of the content of those petitions. Privately, Adams had expressed his opposition to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, though he favored the prohibition of the interstate slave trade.³⁰ In 1839 he made that view public. In a speech in Congress he condemned immediate abolition and in its stead proposed a program of gradual abolition of slavery by a constitutional amendment.³¹

A few months later in a letter addressed to those who had sent their petitions to him, Adams renounced efforts to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia as "utterly impracticable." It was, he maintained, opposed by the overwhelming majority of the nation, and, secondly it was undemocratic since the people of the

²⁹Garrison, Garrison, II, 196; Goodell's recollection of visit in Principia, February 18, 1860.

³⁰Bemis, Adams, p. 374-375; Bemis mentions the confidential letter of Adams to Kirkland regarding Adams' position.

³¹Friend of Man, January 30, and February 5, 1839; Bemis, Adams, p. 381-382.

District were not represented in Congress. Abolition of slavery there would in reality mean the destruction of that institution against the will of the people of the District. Adams went even further and attacked abolitionists for having retarded the movement against slavery, while making the word abolition a derogatory term in both North and South.³²

Abolitionists were shocked by Adams' attack, Garrison and others attempted to reply.³³ But it was Goodell's public letter to Adams, described later by Wendell Phillips as a document "of most able and acute logic, and of masterly ability,"³⁴ that most effectively challenged Adams' arguments and contentions. Goodell argued that abolition in the District was not impractical, only "unpracticed." For there was strong hope that the abolitionists in the future would be a majority. Secondly, it was not true that abolition in the District would not effect the petitioners outside the area; such action in the nation's capital would have incalculable influence on other slave states.³⁵

³²Friend of Man, June 19, 1839.

³³Henry Wilson, Slave Power, I, 435-436.

³⁴Twenty-first Annual Report of Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, January 26, 1853, p. 112-113.

³⁵Friend of Man, June 26, 1839; Wilson, Slave Power, I, 436-437.

However, Goodell's major argument against Adams dealt with Adams' contention that, since the majority of the District opposed emancipation, such action would be undemocratic. The extent of opinion against slavery, Goodell argued, could not be determined, since freedom of speech was restricted in the District. In any case, Adams' contention that slavery should not be abolished without the concurrence of the majority in effect implied that the majority had the power to decide on the most fundamental and inalienable principle, the right to one's person.³⁶

Meanwhile, abolitionists were in a quandary. Though they were convinced that the disaster of the 1838 elections had to be avoided, they could not decide on an effective method for avoiding such a disaster. Some argued in favor of a separate abolitionist party, while others feared such a party would corrupt the movement, by changing it from a moral enterprise into a political organization.³⁷ At the annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, in May, Goodell was appointed to a committee that arranged for a national convention to study the problem.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Friend of Man, February 20, 1839.

³⁸ Sixth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society, May 7, 1839, p. 47.

The convention, consisting of delegates from twelve states, met in Albany, on July 31, 1839.

At the Convention diverse opinions were expressed regarding political action. Though the overwhelming majority agreed that abolitionists should vote for antislavery candidates, there was disagreement regarding the most effective means of enlisting support. A considerable number advocated formation of a separate political party, but others claimed that the time was not yet ripe for such action. Still others urged abolitionists to stand firm and demand antislavery nominations from the major parties. Unable to agree on a plan of action, the delegates fell back to the interrogation method, though the Convention permitted localities to nominate their own candidates if they were dissatisfied with the replies of the nominees of the major political parties.³⁹

The New York State Anti-Slavery Society went a step further. At the annual convention in September the Society amended its constitution, committing the members to vote only for antislavery candidates.⁴⁰ In its annual Report, which Goodell wrote, the

³⁹ Friend of Man, August 7, 1839.

⁴⁰ Ibid., September 25, 1839.

delegates again expressed satisfaction with the interrogation and its opposition to the formation of an independent party.⁴¹

Goodell, however, was not unalterably opposed to the formation of a separate political party.⁴² Since he felt the question did not involve a matter of principle -- the issue being whether such a course was expedient -- he recognized the merits of both sides of the argument. As a religious reformer he was attracted to the position that abolitionists must avoid contaminating their religious and moral movement by directly entering into politics. His orthodox Congregational teachings had taught him that civil government was ordained by God and that slave laws, which supported the institution of slavery, had to be repealed by civil authority in order to return the government to God's original purpose, the protection of human rights. To effect such a change required involvement in politics, which Goodell accepted as inevitable, so long as he could stay out of party politics and only endorse or reject party nominees on the basis of their position on slavery. But when some abolitionists began to advocate independent nominations, Goodell's original fears and mistrust of politics in general,

⁴²Liberator, August 16, 1839; Friend of Man, August 21 and 28, 1839; Margaret L. Plunkett, "A History of the Liberty Party with Emphasis upon its Activities in the Northeastern States," (unpublished Ph.D., dissertation, Cornell Univ., 1930), p. 77; Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 470.

and of political parties in particular, surfaced.⁴³ He conjured up the specter of abolitionists, who stood on the high ground of religion and morality, "dabbling in the dirty waters" of politics. But as a practical abolitionist he was aware of the problems of the interrogation method and the inevitability of independent nominations.

This indecisiveness regarding independent nominations was reflected in eight articles Goodell wrote on the subject in the Friend of Man.⁴⁴ He began the series with an attempt to explain the reasons abolitionists should avoid organizing their own political organizations. Yet as Goodell continued to write, he began to change his mind. Finally, bowing to the inevitable, he expressed his position in favor of independent nominations, though he was still doubtful about a separate political party. Goodell however, understood that no independent nomination could be effective without

⁴³Goodell claimed that he never belonged to a political party. But he found the Federalist party "more honest and patriotic" than any other party, though he admitted that it followed a "defective theory" -- "a less reprehensible error than that of its opponent, the holding of a better theory in abeyance; for the sake of pro-slavery support and the spoils of office." See Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 128-129, footnote.

⁴⁴Garrison commented on the vagueness and caution and lack of clarity of Goodell's articles; see Liberator, March 20, 1840.

the backing of some political organization. He therefore proposed the formation of an association -- he refused to use the work party since to him it was synonymous with corruption -- whose aim would be to reform the system. The new organization, which would be a "union of all honest and independent freemen against party and against slavery," should apply the principles of human rights to every area of life, not only to slavery and the Negro. But that association, he insisted, should not make nominations to public office. Instead, Goodell preferred the method of nominations practiced in the early national period, prior to the introduction of the caucus and nominating convention. Individual abolitionists or group of abolitionists, newspaper editors and correspondents, and others, Goodell proposed, should have the right to nominate candidates for office.⁴⁵ Such outmoded ideas in the political atmosphere of the Jacksonian period, however, were not taken seriously by abolitionists.

The movement toward the formation of a third party kept gaining momentum and Goodell, realizing the wide support it

⁴⁵Friend of Man, February 19 and 26, March 4, 11, 18, 25, and April 1, 1840.

was gaining, soon joined the bandwagon. In April, 1839, he attended at Albany the national nominating convention called by his friends who supported a third party: Gerrit Smith, Myron Holley, Leavitt, and Alvan Stewart. Six states were represented though the overwhelming majority of delegates came from New York state (one hundred and four out of one hundred and twenty one). The division among abolitionists regarding independent nominations was well illustrated by the vote of forty four in favor of such nominations to thirty three opposed. James G. Birney was nominated as the abolitionist candidate for president and Thomas Earle, a prominent abolitionist Quaker from Philadelphia, for vice president.⁴⁶

Goodell voted in favor of the nominations and together with Stewart and Smith was appointed to a corresponding committee to promote the election of these candidates. But he continued to delude himself in believing that such nominations would not necessarily lead to the formation of a third party. He argued at the Convention against organizing a separate party on "present

⁴⁶Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 470-471; Wilson, Slave Power, I, 548; letter, Smith to Goodell, February 8, 1840, Friend of Man, February 19, 1840; John R. Hendricks, "The Liberty Party in New York State, 1838-1848," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham Univ., 1959), p. 60-61.

usages" which made the parties despotic and corrupt. Reiterating the arguments he had elaborated in his articles in the Friend of Man, he succeeded in convincing the Convention to adopt two resolutions which embodied his views on the subject. They first held that it was the duty of abolitionists to apply the principles of the Declaration of Independence at the ballot box and to make use of lawful, religious and moral and constitutional influence against slavery. The second conceded that though distinct nominations might appear to create a separate party, the delegates remained opposed to the evils inherent in parties: party management, monopoly by caucus, and the proscription of members who decline out of conscientious scruples to vote for their party's nominees.⁴⁷

Goodell's endorsement of independent nominations was opposed by the majority of the executive committee of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, which disavowed any connection with the Albany Convention. In order not to alienate many abolitionists who were not yet committed to independent nominations, the committee announced that Goodell's articles in the Friend of Man

⁴⁷ Friend of Man, April 8, 1840, and proceedings copied from Emancipator, April 22, 1840 issue; Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 471; Wilson, Slave Power, I, 548-550.

represented only the views of the editor and that were not the official stand of the state society.⁴⁸

The question of politics was also the major issue dividing abolitionists on the national level. Garrison, who had in 1837 endorsed political action against slavery and had since then favored the interrogation method, was bitterly opposed to the movement to establish a third party, on the ground that it would make abolitionism a political issue. In addition, his conviction that civil government was an evil and voting was a sin led him personally to reject all political activities. Although Garrison insisted that his aim was not to impose his nonresistance views on the antislavery movement, many abolitionists were convinced this radical position created dangers for political abolitionism.⁴⁹

In 1839 the first split in the movement took place, when Henry Stanton, Amos Phelps, Elizur Wright, Charles T. Torrey, Orange Scott, and others bolted Garrison's society and formed their own Massachusetts Abolition Society. The seceders objected strenu-

⁴⁸ Friend of Man, April 15, 1840.

⁴⁹ Aileen Krador, Means and Ends in American Abolitionism Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850 (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1967, 1969), p. 78-108, 119-136 hereinafter referred to as Krador, Means and Ends; James G. Birney, A Letter on the Political Obligations of Abolitionists with a reply by William Lloyd Garrison (Boston: Dow and Jackson, 1839), passim; letter, Henry Stanton to Goodell, April 8, 1839, in William Birney, James G. Birney and His Times (N.Y.: Appleton and Co., 1890), p. 301-302.

ously to Garrison's insistence on introducing woman's rights into the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Convention and in criticizing political action. When Garrison succeeded in passing a resolution at that meeting admitting women to equal voting privilege and to holding office in the Society, a split became inevitable.⁵⁰ The test of strength of the two forces was to await the next anniversary meeting of the national antislavery society in May, 1840.

Goodell, though he was convinced of Garrison's dangerous position, was opposed to attempts by abolitionists to break up the existing abolitionist organizations. When the split within the Massachusetts society was imminent in 1839, Stanton attempted to enlist Goodell's support.⁵¹ But Goodell advised Stanton and his supporters to remain in the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and form a nucleus from which they could work against Garrison's new ideas.⁵²

⁵⁰ Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 457-462.

⁵¹ Letter, Henry Stanton to Goodell, February 18, 1839, Birney, James G. Birney, p. 301; letter, Stanton, to Goodell, April 8, 1839, Birney, James G. Birney, p. 301-302.

⁵² Letter, Goodell to Stanton, February 5, 1839, Phelps Papers, Boston; part of this letter quoted in Garrison, Garrison, II, 277. Stanton and his friends used this letter to rally opposition to Garrison; see letter, Goodell to Stanton, February 23, 1839, Phelps Papers, Boston.

Goodell assumed the same position in 1840 when many abolitionists planned to form a separate national antislavery society in case Garrison was successful in taking over the American Anti-Slavery Society. He counseled abolitionists not to oppose the dissolution of the national society or even its takeover by Garrisonians. For though he agreed that nonresistance posed a threat to abolitionism, Goodell considered the question of woman's rights to be an insufficient cause for dissolving the national organization.⁵³ In any case he was convinced that Garrison's nonresistance views could best be fought in state, county, and local societies. No new national society was necessary, he insisted, to carry on the work of abolition.⁵⁴

Goodell was aware of the potential danger of Garrison's position. In fact, Goodell was convinced that Garrison's views on civil government not only hindered abolitionists' political action but challenged Goodell's basic religious orthodox convictions. To Goodell abolitionism was a religious duty based on his orthodox Congregationalist teachings. The doctrine of nonresistance questioned the fundamental orthodox creed that had led Goodell to embrace abolitionism as a religious and political movement. In challenging the

⁵³Friend of Man, April 29 and July 1, 1840.

⁵⁴Ibid., April 29, 1840.

underlying orthodox assumptions that civil government was divinely ordained, Garrison as a nonresister was in fact questioning Goodell's religious belief in the imperative necessity of abolitionists' involvement in politics. To a strict Congregationalist like Goodell, therefore, nonresistance posed a threat to the very existence of the abolitionist movement.⁵⁵

Religion had also been the source of Goodell's first clash with Garrison in 1837, two years before the open break within the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. At that time Garrison had embraced the perfectionist philosophy of John Humphrey Noyes and had begun to denounce vigorously as proslavery the orthodox ministry and its doctrines. Although Goodell on many occasions had also attacked the orthodox clergy and their churches, he had done so from the vantage point of an insider who had hopes of convincing the orthodox to return to the true principles of their faith. Goodell tried to show the orthodox that their proslavery views were the result of a distortion of true orthodoxy, whereas Garrison blamed such aberrations on the very doctrines themselves. Goodell, accused Garrison of judging New England orthodoxy by the rhetoric of proslavery ministers.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Letter, Goodell to Stanton, February 5, 1839, Phelps Papers, Boston.

⁵⁶Goodell to Phelps, November 12, 1837, Phelps Papers, Boston; Friend of Man, November 15 and December 13, 1837; letter issue contains article by Garrison from the Liberator.

Garrison and his nonresistance supporters however, were convinced that Goodell's bitter opposition to them was not motivated by religion, but by politics. After an interview with Goodell, Henry C. Wright, close friend of Garrison and leader of the small Non-Resistance Society, reported to Garrison that Goodell was determined to lay all opposition to a third party at the feet of nonresistance. Wright, who was exasperated at Goodell's constant criticism of his Society, concluded that "politics have [sic] made him mad."⁵⁷ In a public letter to Garrison, Wright accused Goodell of inconsistency. Until a year before, Wright maintained, no abolitionist had been "more strenuous in advocating the principle on which the Non-Resistance Society is based than William Goodell." It was Goodell who had argued most persuasively that the war making power was wrong, and that "all human systems, based upon that power, are a virtual abrogation of the law and government of God." Goodell, more than any ~~one~~ else, Wright continued, had helped to identify nonresistance with abolition. Yet, now Goodell had reversed himself, considering nonresistance the "deadliest enemy of abolition." Wright attributed this reversal to the "political tempest that is now sweeping like a deadly sirocco over the abolition ranks...."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Letter, Henry C. Wright to Garrison, May 6, 1840, Garrison Papers, Boston; also quoted in Garrison, Garrison, II, 343.

⁵⁸ Letter, Henry Wright to Garrison, May 2, 1840, Liberator, May 15, 1840.

As Goodell himself pointed out, Wright did not really understand Goodell's position on peace.⁵⁹ It was true that Goodell from the outset of his reform labors had been an ardent advocate of peace. In fact, when Elijah Lovejoy was murdered in Alton, Illinois, while he was defending his press and his life, Goodell joined Garrison in condemning Lovejoy's resort to force. Though he called Lovejoy the first martyr of abolitionism, Goodell regretted that he had not exhibited the "same nonresisting spirit and policy which abolitionists have commonly practiced, and confided solely in the same protecting arm by which their brethren had been an hundred times shielded." He hoped that abolitionists would learn from this tragedy that a man of God should put away arms and refrain from using force even for defense.⁶⁰

Yet, Goodell's reaction to the Alton tragedy indicated an important difference between his and Garrison's peace principles. The murder of Lovejoy prompted Goodell to initiate a discussion in his paper on the morality and practicality of nonviolent methods for the abolition of slavery, and thereby demonstrate by implication how his peace principles differed with Garrison's nonresistance

⁵⁹Letter, Goodell to Garrison, June 2, 1840, Liberator, June 12, 1840; letter Goodell to Henry Wright, June 2, 1840, Ibid., June 26, 1840.

⁶⁰Friend of Man, November 22 and 29, 1837.

views.⁶¹ Goodell wrote a series of six articles on "Peace Principles" in which he argued against the use of military power by civil governments, though he favored civil force for the purpose of executing the laws of the state. In contrast to Garrison who was opposed to civil government because it was necessarily coercive, Goodell, made a distinction between military and civil power. The former, he contended, was in effect the killing of innocent people without affording them an opportunity of trial, while the latter was the legitimate use of government's coercive power to penalize those citizens found guilty of breaking the laws. In a war the soldier in effect became both the judge and executioner.⁶²

By 1840 Goodell had broken completely with Garrison. The split between the two was based on basic philosophical differences, but at times it deteriorated to the level of personality. Goodell assured a complete break with his friend when, in an editorial entitled "How to Make a Pope," he accused Garrison of attempting to establish himself the infallible leader of the abolitionists. With heavy sarcasm Goodell described the prescription for making of

⁶¹ Letter, Lewis Tappan to Goodell, February 1838 (?), Goodell Papers, Berea College Library; Tappan endorsed Goodell's advocacy of peace.

⁶² Friend of Man, January 24, February 6, 21 and 28, March 7 and 28, 1838.

such a leader:

Take an ardent and strong-minded leader in a good but hated cause. Place him in the fires of persecution, and surround him with devoted and generous friends. Just in proportion to the frequency of his proving himself in the right, when almost every body said he was wrong, will the conviction fasten upon his admirers that he is infallible. They will act, and perhaps speak in conformity with their impressions. Almost of necessity, the same idea will insinuate itself imperceptibly, yet firmly, into his own bosom. He soon shows that he expects to be implicitly followed, and his expectations are realized. Thus it was with the early bishops of Rome, and hence the rise of their exorbitant power, Vide 'National History of Spiritual Despotism.'⁶³

In many ways the same criticism could be applied to Goodell.

For he too was inflexible and self-righteous and brooked no opposition. It may have been envy of Garrison's leadership qualities, which Goodell lacked, that prompted Goodell to such a bitter attack on his former friend.

Goodell made use of his opposition to Garrison's non-resistance views to advance the cause of political abolitionism in the 1840 campaign. He took advantage of Garrison's offer to open the columns of the Liberator for a presentation of Goodell's views

⁶³Ibid., April 8, 1840.

against nonresistance.⁶⁴ From July until after the elections Goodell continued to exchange views with Wright and Garrison regarding the subject.⁶⁵

In addition, Goodell turned the Friend of Man into a campaign sheet for the abolitionist candidates. When on July 21 the executive committee of the New York state society endorsed Goodell's advocacy in the Friend of Man of the independent nominations of Birney and Earle, Goodell began an all-out campaign in the weekly in favor of the abolitionist candidates.⁶⁶ From then until after the elections, the name of the Liberty or Freeman's party ticket was prominently displaced on the editorial page.

Goodell also involved himself directly in the campaign, especially on the state and local level. In Oneida county, Goodell,

⁶⁴ Letter, Goodell to Phelps, May 27, 1840, Phelps Papers, Boston; letter, Goodell to Editor, July 25, 1840, Liberator, August 21, 1840.

⁶⁵ Letter, Goodell to Editor, August 31, 1840, Liberator, September 18, 1840; letter, Goodell to Editor, October 3, 1840, Liberator, October 23, 1840; Letter, Henry Wright to Goodell, September 10, 1840, Liberator, September 18, 1840; letter, Wright to Goodell, September 11, 1840, Liberator, December 4, 1840; Goodell to Wright, December 19, 1840, Liberator, January 1, 1841.

⁶⁶ Friend of Man, July 29, 1840.

as a member of the central corresponding committee, helped to coordinate the campaign in that area.⁶⁷ It was Goodell who was responsible for convincing his friend Gerrit Smith to run for governor of New York.⁶⁸ But it was at the fifth annual meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society that Goodell exerted his greatest influence. As chairman of the business committee of the Convention, Goodell succeeded against some opposition in convincing the delegates to adopt the draft of twenty resolutions, most of which dealt with the principle of independent political action against slavery. More importantly, Goodell convinced the Convention to adopt four of his resolutions which embodied his Slave Power theses.⁶⁹

Goodell was one of the first abolitionists to formulate the Slave Power thesis which, by the end of the 1840's, would become part of northern rhetoric. The four resolutions dated back to Goodell's decision two weeks prior to the Convention to write a series of three articles on the "Hard Times..." As an astute political observer, Goodell undoubtedly realized that one of the

⁶⁷ Ibid., April 8, 1840.

⁶⁸ Letter, Henry Wright to Garrison, September 8, 1840, Garrison Papers, Boston; Friend of Man, August 12, 1840, and Extra, August 13, 1840.

⁶⁹ Friend of Man, September 30, 1840.

major reasons for the disastrous failure of the antislavery candidates during the 1838 elections was the depression of 1837 which led many abolitionists to vote on the basis of the economic issue rather than on the question of slavery. With the depression continuing into 1840 Goodell feared the same problem in this election. In order to avoid that difficulty, Goodell proposed to prove that there was no use in clinging to the major parties for the solution of the economic distress since slavery was the root cause of the hard times.⁷⁰

Goodell argued that as long as slavery continued, Slave Power would dominate the national government. And, because the interests of Slave Power and the free states were politically and economically incompatible, the federal government's actions had been and would continue to be deleterious to the prosperity of the free states. The hard times, Goodell contended, were the result of Slave Power's control over federal policy; only the abolition of

⁷⁰David Brion Davis, The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style (Baton Rouge: La. State Univ. Press, 1969), p. 18; Julian P. Bretz, "The Economic Background of the Liberty Party," American Historical Review, XXXIV (January 1929), 250-254. Bretz mentions Leavitt's "Financial Power of Slavery," an address delivered in 1840, but published in Emancipator at the end of that year, and in the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter in July 1841. Goodell probably wrote the articles a few months before Leavitt.

slavery would bring about economic stability to the country.

Goodell tried to prove the existence of the Slave Power by pointing to the disproportionate share of southern power in Congress -- 100 representatives where the correct quota should have been 75 -- thus resulting in 126 electoral votes for president instead of 101. In addition, except for the two Adamses, in the last fifty years the presidency had been dominated either by slaveholders or by those pledged openly to slave interest.⁷¹

In the speech before the Convention in favor of his four resolutions Goodell explained the results of slaveholders' ascendancy over the national government. Goodell went through the history of the last forty years to prove his contention that the Slave Power had aimed throughout American history to destroy the commercial and financial prosperity of the North for their own economic purposes. He therefore concluded that free and slave labor were at war with each other and that it would only end in the annihilation of one or the other labor system. An abolitionist administration would not only destroy that institution, but it would as a result remove the causes of the economic distress.⁷² The Slave Power thesis was a

⁷¹Friend of Man, September 2 and 9, 1840, Extra, September 10, 1840.

⁷²Ibid., September 30, 1840.

major contribution to the abolitionist argument. When by 1845 Goodell and his friends added to it the contention that there was a Southern conspiracy to destroy not only the economic prosperity of the North but its constitutional liberties as well, the abolitionists forged a powerful instrument for capturing Northern public opinion.⁷³

Despite the untiring work of Goodell and other abolitionists during the election, the majority of abolitionists, deeply concerned about the hard times and caught up in the Harrison's log cabin campaign, voted with the Whigs. Birney received only 7,100 votes. In New York state he received 2,799 votes, while Gerrit Smith, who ran for governor, received 2,662. Again, as in the 1838 elections, Oneida, Madison and Oswego counties gave New York abolitionists their largest vote -- two sevenths of all votes cast in the state. These were the counties in which the Friend of Man had its widest circulation, and where Goodell had concentrated most of his efforts.⁷⁴

Goodell counseled abolitionists not to be disillusioned with independent nominations. The method provided abolitionists with the opportunity, he contended, to teach voters of the influence of slavery on the political and economic life of the country and not to be diverted by such insignificant issues as the subtreasury and

⁷³Nye, Fettered Freedom, p. 292-299.

⁷⁴Friend of Man, December 8, 1840.

national banks. He therefore called for a national convention to nominate a presidential candidate for the 1844 elections. Such an early nomination would provide the abolitionists enough time to enlighten the public about their principles and measures.⁷⁵

Following Goodell's advice, the national correspondence committee of the Liberty party, of which Goodell was a member called upon abolitionists to elect delegates for a national nominating convention to meet in New York city on May, 1841. The committee also recommended changes in the antislavery societies' constitutions which would require members to vote for abolitionists only.⁷⁶

Meanwhile, Goodell prepared the ground for the national nominating convention. He prominently displayed on the editorial page his nomination of Birney and Earle for president and vice president for the 1844 campaign.⁷⁷ On February 18 Goodell went on an extensive tour of western New York where he lectured on the duty of political and ecclesiastical action against slavery, and on the connection between that institution and the hard times. At Albany he attended the state Liberty party nominating convention

⁷⁵ Ibid., November 11, 1840.

⁷⁶ Ibid., December 1 and 3, 1840, Extra.

⁷⁷ Ibid., December 8, 1840, and January 12, 1841.

where Goodell helped select delegates for the national convention in May.⁷⁸

As a delegate from Whitesboro, Goodell attended the national nominating convention in New York city. As the first real national Liberty party convention, delegates from all the free states except Michigan and Illinois attended. Goodell played a prominent part in the proceedings. He was appointed to the business committee of five which reported an address to the people of the United States, and a plan of organization of the now officially designated Liberty party. The plan called for the formation throughout the country of local corresponding committees on the district, ward, city, township, county and state level which would be responsible to the central corresponding committee of the national party. Goodell together with Stewart, Beriah Green, Leavitt, and E. W. Goodwin were to constitute this central corresponding committee, whose function was to implement the plan and to advance the cause of the party. Birney and Thomas Morris of Ohio were nominated for president and vice president. The choice of the latter in place of Earle indicated the delegates' aim to broaden the Party's support both geographically and politically, since Morris was from the West

⁷⁸
Ibid., September 23, 1841 on the Albany Convention, and on the trip, see March 9, 16, and 23, 1841.

and a former Democrat.⁷⁹

The Convention's Address to the Citizens of the United States, written by Goodell, completed the definite establishment of the Party, by enunciating for the first time its principles and position on the issues of the day. In essence the Address could be considered the platform of the Liberty party. Goodell reiterated his Slave Power thesis, that the slaveholders dominated both the economic and political life of the country. Thus all other issues would be resolved as soon as slavery was abolished by a national government pledged to achieve this distinct goal.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, Goodell committed the Party for the first time to a definite position on the major issues. Fearing that such a change of policy by the Liberty party would be misconstrued as a departure from its original sole purpose of immediate abolition of slavery, Goodell stated the Party's positions in negative terms. The Liberty Party pledged not to tax the free laborer and exempt the planter; not to "make artificial equalization" between free North and "spendthrift, dependent, poverty-stricken South,"

⁷⁹Theodore Clarke Smith, Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest (N. Y.: Longmans, Green and Co., 1897), p. 53-54; Friend of Man, April 23, 1841; Fladeland, James Gissespie Birney, p. 211.

⁸⁰Friend of Man, May 25, 1841.

through the subtreasury or national bank; not to legislate under the assumption that wealth was the sole object of legislation while sacrificing the social, intellectual, and moral interests of the individual; to avoid inequality in the distribution of public lands which discourage the settlement of free laborers in place of slaveholders; to avoid all needless wars; not to burden the people with unnecessary government expenditures; not to invade human rights; and to oppose all unjust monopolies which make the rich, richer, and the poor, poorer. In addition, the Party promised to consider the possibility of eliminating the Electoral College by amending the Constitution in favor of direct election of president and vice president; and to seek to extend education to everyone, regardless of color.⁸¹

The Address was well received by political abolitionists and was widely circulated. Speaking for many abolitionists, Leavitt saw the Address as an "interesting epitome of our sentiments, and as vindicating the justice and necessity of organizing ourselves into a political party, to secure the liberty of the colored man, and in fact the freedom of the white...."⁸²

⁸¹
Ibid.

⁸²Ibid., May 25, 1841, reprinted from Emanipator; see also other favorable comments by William L. Chaplin and Gemalial Bailey, editor of the Cincinnati Philanthropist in Friend of Man, June 29, 1841.

Thus, by 1841 Goodell had established himself as a major political abolitionist, and was recognized as the formulator of the principles of the Liberty party. Since Goodell's convictions about political action were derived from his orthodox religious faith, he was especially interested in enlisting the church in the battle against slavery. For he considered politics as but one of the two major means for the abolition of slavery. Now that the national Liberty party was organized and a platform formulated, Goodell felt free to turn more and more his attention in the direction of the church and to consider ways to enlist that institution in the struggle to free the slave. Therefore in April, 1841 Goodell resigned as editor of the Friend of Man in order to devote full time to the editing and the publishing of his journal, the Christian Investigator. This monthly, which had been published since January, was run solely by Goodell for the express purpose of formulating a program of church reform which would spearhead the drive toward the abolition of slavery. For the next ten years, Goodell, though by no means abandoning completely the political field, would devote his efforts toward that task.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIAN ABOLITIONIST

Goodell's almost total involvement from 1837 to 1841 in abolitionist political activities did not mean that he abandoned his basic conviction that religion had to play a major role in the abolition of slavery. On the contrary, he was convinced that political action alone could not accomplish this task without strong assistance from the church. In fact, he expected the church to lead the movement to abolish slavery and prejudice in America. In contrast to Garrison who sought to achieve that goal outside institutional Christianity, Goodell aimed to mobilize the church in the holy work of abolitionism by remodeling the religious institutions according to his concept of Christianity and within the framework of religious orthodoxy. Goodell's views on the need to combine both the religious and political institutions in a war against slavery and racial prejudice contradicts the commonly accepted assumption about the anti-institutional bias of the entire abolitionist movement.¹

Furthermore, Goodell was convinced that abolitionism encompassed the basic religious faith of a true Christian. To him abolitionism was not just a movement to abolish slavery; it embodied

¹See especially Stanley Elkins, Slavery a Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life (N. Y.: Grosset and Dunlap, 1963), p. 140-206.

all the values and ideals both of Christianity and democracy.

His total devotion to the cause was that of a religious convert.

No extraneous concerns were allowed to impinge on his work.

His livelihood was derived solely from his labors in the movement as editor, writer and occasional lecturer, a way of life that often forced him to live a hand-to-mouth existence.

Goodell regimented his family life, too. An early convert of Sylvester Graham, Goodell established his home on the basis of the health and dietary rules recommended by Graham,² modified by "some exceptions suggested by constitutional needs, as learned by careful experience, and strong common sense."³ Meat,

²In Memoriam, p. 24; see Genius of Temperance, May 11, 25 1831 and November 16, 1831 where Goodell encouraged Graham in his lecture tour of New York city; Goodell was one of a number of reformers who frequently met at Graham boarding house in New York city and over a "convival cup of cold water" discussed their various reform activities; see Thomas Le Duc, "Grahamites and Garrisonians," New York History, XX (April 1939), 189-191 who quotes a letter written by a boarder in that house who saw Goodell together with such "flaming abolitionists" as Arthur Tappan and Charles Dennison; for a description of the health movement see Richard H. Shyrock, "Sylvester Graham and the Popular Health Movement, 1830-1870," Mississippi History Review XVIII (September 1931), 172-183; also Robert S. Fletcher, A History of Oberlin College from its Formation through the Civil War (2 vols. Oberlin: Oberlin College, 1943), I, 321-322.

³In Memoriam, p. 24.

except for unusual circumstances, tea and coffee, and of course any kind of intoxicants were prohibited in the Goodell household. Goodell, further following Graham's teachings, set stated hours for rising and retiring.⁴

Goodell went beyond Graham in religiously regimenting family life. He frowned upon all lighthearted discussion; the subjects of food and clothing "were discussed only in reference to health and economy, and all material wants held a subordinate place." Religion dominated all household activities. Breakfast was followed by morning worship, an hour of which was employed in Bible and study and devotion. "Religious exercises," his daughter recalled many years afterward, "were full of life and earnestness, never degenerating into a mere form, and always constituted an important feature in daily life." Even the religious practice of the domestic was strictly supervised. Discovering that she know more about fashions and local gossip than about the pastor's Sabbath sermon, Goodell insisted on a summary of the sermon after her return from Sabbath service.⁵

His daughters, one fourteen and the other one year old, were brought up from infancy in the religious beliefs of their father.

⁴ Maria G. Frost, "Life of Lavinia Goodell," MSS, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁵ Ibid.

Since Goodell considered abolitionism and religious faith inseparable, he spared no pain or expense to teach his children the principles of equal rights. "The kneeling slave," Lavinia, his youngest daughter recalled, "was pictured on our work bags, needle books, and pin cushion with the words, Am I not a man and a brother? or sometimes Am I not a woman and a sister?" Even the dinnerware was used to teach them a lesson in abolitionist principles. Dinner was served in plates inscribed with the self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence and the first amendment to the Constitution, and on the side a quotation from the Bible, "Of one blood are all nations of men." "When I sat down to dinner every day," Lavinia recollected, "I read my plate, till I had learned it all by heart -- learned it so well I never forgot it. And thus literally with my child's bowl of bread and milk I drank in also the question of equal rights -- the foundation principles of civil government...."⁶ Goodell's rigid personality was thus reflected in the rigidity of his family life.

Goodell tried to live according to the precepts of Christ. His house at Utica was constantly open to "a large proportion of

⁶ Ibid., Goodell purchased the dinnerware in New York city in 1838; see his excerpt from the Emancipator describing the dinnerware in Friend of Man, October 17, 1838.

the poor and defenceless." "The stranger and the wayfarer without distinction of color or sex," his daughter recalled, "came often to share the fire, the frugal meal, the nightly repose, the family altar of this devoted man." Many fugitive slaves came to his home for a rest and a change of clothes on their way to the next stop at Gerrit Smith's home in Peterboro. Such care for the black fugitives induced Goodell's proslavery neighbors to amuse themselves at his expense by sending all "vagabonds to his home with the sneer, "They keep niggers, see what they will do for the white ragamuffins."⁷

Goodell believed that, by applying the principles of reform in his own personal life, he was imitating the character of Christ.⁸ A true Christian, he believed, must be a reformer, for Jesus personified the reformer of all ages. Goodell rejected the common argument that as long as one is good at heart "it compensates for the profligacy of the outward act, by the supposed piety of the inward act." Real conversion should lead not only to the abandonment of ones "inward temper," but of the "outward act" as well.⁹

⁷ Maria G. Frost, "Life of Lavinia Goodell," MSS, Goodell Papers, Berea; In Memoriam, p. 26.

⁸ Sermon, "A Christian Spirit," MSS, August 10, 1846, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁹ Christian Investigator, January 1, 1841.

Goodell severely attacked those revivalists who attempted to divorce revivals from reforms. It was wrong to assume, he insisted, that conversion led to the abandonment of one's particular sins. The most fatal error among revivalists was the belief that "souls are truly converted, and made partakers of the divine holiness, while they are carefully left undisturbed in the indulgence of their favorite sins." The true task of revivalists was to convert man both inwardly and outwardly so that he would not only feel the spirit of Christ, but would act according to that spirit. No one could be considered converted, Goodell emphasized, who insisted on despising his brother because of his poverty or the color of his skin.¹⁰ Goodell was obviously referring to such revivalists as Charles G. Finney and his disciples who refused to link directly revivalists to the reform movements of the day.

In reality Goodell was arguing against efforts to isolate religious life by making it only one aspect of life. To him, religion was a constant obligation, to be applied to both private and public acts. Goodell was looking forward to the time when "men will be taught that religion is an every day business, and has something to do with everything with which they themselves have any thing

¹⁰Ibid., April, 1841.

to do."¹¹

To Goodell northern responses to slavery were an excellent example of this duality in religious behavior. Though many churchmen agreed that slaveholding was an evil and even a sin, they refused to denounce the institution as a violation of the very principles of Christ and to deny fellowship in their churches to slaveholders and their apologists. Abolitionists like Garrison blamed this anomalous position of the church on religious orthodoxy, which they denounced severely. Goodell, who was to remain a strict orthodox Congregationalist throughout his life, placed the responsibility on the orthodox clergy and churches which according to him perverted the basic principles of orthodoxy. "The hated doctrines of 'modern abolitionism,'" he insisted, "are not more nor less than the commonly received doctrines of orthodox Christianity brought to bear upon the specific sin of slaveholding." To reject orthodox Christianity, therefore, was to reject the principles of abolitionism and to reject abolitionism was to reject orthodox Christianity.¹² In contrast to Garrison who denied the validity of institutional Christianity, Goodell considered his task, therefore, to try to purify the church from within, and, if unsuccessful, to secede and form true churches based on the real principles of

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., June, 1841.

orthodoxy. This position was taken by the National Anti-Slavery Convention that met on July 31, 1839.¹³

From the outset of the formation of the national society abolitionists had been convinced that the churches exerted enormous influence on American society. They therefore tried to bring over the church to their position. Although individual churchmen joined the abolitionist movement, the churches remained either indifferent or hostile toward abolitionism.¹⁴ By 1840, after the organization of the Liberty party, many political abolitionists, the overwhelming majority of whom were orthodox church members, were faced with the question regarding their relation to the church; should they still remain in the church and continue to work for its reformation, or should they separate, as they did from the major political parties, and form independent antislavery churches?¹⁵

In order to resolve that question, abolitionists convened numerous Christian antislavery conventions, most of which met in western and central New York state. Goodell was the first abolitionist

¹³ Friend of Man, August 14, 1839.

¹⁴ Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 487-489; William W. Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (N.Y.: Harper and Bros. 1930), p. 295-309.

¹⁵ Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 488.

to call for such a meeting immediately after the election of 1840.¹⁶ Accordingly a convention was held at Penn Yan, New York, on January 13 and 14, 1841, in which prominent organizers of the Liberty attended. Goodell was appointed to the business committee of seven which included among others James G. Birney, and Beriah Green. Goodell helped write the resolution, which was adopted by the Convention, calling upon abolitionists to work from within for the reformation of the existing churches. However, the delegates agreed to discuss further the problem at another convention. Goodell, Birney, Green and four others were appointed to a committee of seven to call such a meeting.¹⁷

Since the Penn Yan Convention consisted of delegates from only two denominations, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, the committee called for a more representative convention to meet at Auburn on June 23. As soon as the Convention met, Goodell made an attempt to force the delegates into a more radical stand on the church question. He presented a paper consisting of seven questions, which clarified the major problems facing religious abolitionists

¹⁶Friend of Man, November 4, 1840.

¹⁷Letter, Beriah Green to Gerrit Smith, January 1, 1841, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Green to Smith, January 6, 1841, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Friend of Man, January 19 and 26, 1841.

in their relation to the existing churches: 1. was slavery to be considered a test question in the churches? 2. were abolitionists to withhold church membership and Christian fellowship from slaveholders and those who approve of slavery? 3. were they to withhold support from those ministers who did not advocate immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery and bear testimony against prejudice and caste? 4. were abolitionists to withdraw from those churches which did not support abolitionism and who tolerate caste in the church especially in seating arrangement according to color? 5. were they to withhold contributions and support from Missionary and other benevolent associations which receive contributions from slaveholders? 6. were they to separate entirely from those ministers who do not advocate rights of the slave? and 7. should they form their own churches or should they simply leave these organizations without establishing any new religious associations? Because the Convention was not yet ready to take such radical positions, the questions were laid aside and not voted upon, except for the first two, which the delegates approved.¹⁸ It would take another ten years before a substantial number of Christian abolitionists would be ready to answer in the affirmative all of the questions and urge the formation of independent antislavery churches.

¹⁸Friend of Man, June 29, 1841.

The Penn Yan Convention had urged abolitionists to withhold membership from slaveholders; the Auburn Convention went even further, by urging that the same penalty be applied to the apologists for slavery. The adoption of the Auburn resolution created a division among religious abolitionists. Goodell was severely attacked because he had been instrumental in introducing the resolution. The Reverend Asa Rand of Pompey argued that apologists for slavery had not violated the "gospel rule of discipline," for their silence came merely from a mistaken sense of duty, rather than from evil or sinful intentions. In addition, the editor of the Evangelist accused Goodell of advocating secession from established churches because of the questions he had introduced at the Convention.¹⁹

In a reply to both of these criticisms Goodell clarified his position on the church question. He maintained that apology for slavery was a sin and should be disciplined by the church. In regard to the questions, Goodell insisted that it had been his intention merely to encourage a free discussion of the issues, rather than to press the Convention for its adoption, Goodell did not mollify his

¹⁹ Letter, Asa Rand to Goodell, July 30, 1841, Ibid., August 10, 1841; letter, Rand to Editor, August 12, 1841, Ibid., August 24, 1841.

critics when he advised them of his latest position: those who held slaves, or apologized for slavery, or pleaded for gradual emancipation though admitting slavery sinful, were not Christians and they should be excluded from membership in the church. It was the duty of abolitionists, he held, to reform the church and to secede only when unsuccessful.²⁰ Goodell's position at Auburn was vindicated when the New York State Anti-Slavery Society adopted a resolution at its annual meeting in September, 1841 which termed it a duty to withdraw all fellowship from those who continue to practice or apologize for the sin of slavery.²¹

Goodell was not content with merely lecturing on the church question and organizing Christian antislavery conventions. On January 1, 1841 he began to publish and edit a small monthly sheet, the Christian Investigator for the purpose of advancing his ideas on church reform and the relationship of abolitionists to the church.²² He had proposed to publish such a paper as far back

²⁰ Letter, Goodell to Asa Rand, August 24, 1841; Ibid., August 31, 1841; letter, Goodell to Reverend N. E. Johnson, July 21, 1841, Ibid., September 7, 1841.

²¹ Friend of Man, September 21, 1841.

²² Whitney Cross, The Burned-Over District (N. Y.: Harper and Row, 1965, original 1950), p. 280 has incorrectly noted that Goodell left the editorial chair of the Friend of Man in 1843 and had started the Christian Investigator in the same year. The Friend of Man was already dead by June, 1842 and Goodell had left that paper in April 1841. The Investigator was started in January, 1841 at Whitesboro, not Honeoye; he removed the paper to the latter village two years later.

as June, 1839.²³ His favorable experience with the Anti-Slavery Lecturer which, in contrast to the Friend of Man, had reached a mass audience, encouraged him to believe in the feasibility of a monthly which, similar to a tract, dealt exclusively with one subject and which left out all commonplace news, "stale selections... long documents and diffuse communication that comes [sic] along."²⁴ But since he intended to publish the paper on his own account without the assistance of an antislavery organization, financial difficulties forced him to delay publication for a year and a half.²⁵

The paper did not have the circulation Goodell expected; the largest number of copies issued at one time was only 4,500.²⁶ But the monthly was widely circulated in western New York, and, according to Goodell, in all the free states and even in some slave states.²⁷

²³Friend of Man, June 18, 1839.

²⁴Letter, Goodell to Amos Phelps, September 12, 1839, Phelps Papers, Boston.

²⁵Christian Investigator, January, 1841.

²⁶Ibid., June 1841.

²⁷Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 489.

The Oberlin Evangelist testified that some of its Ohio readers were subscribing to Goodell's reform periodical.²⁸ Nevertheless, the paper suffered constantly from financial difficulties, since it depended solely on subscriptions.

The Christian Investigator was hailed by many abolitionists interested in church reform and in abolitionizing the church. Beriah Green called the monthly "admirable" and expressed the hope that "Brother Goodell will be cheered and sustained in his holy enterprise."²⁹ The Oberlin Evangelist immediately gave the periodical its wholehearted endorsement and support. The editor pointed out that Goodell was eminently fitted to discuss church reform and expressed the wish that every Christian would read the paper. It contained material, he further wrote, that was of greatest value to friends of Christian reform; Goodell therefore deserved careful attention. In almost every issue the editor of the Evangelist called on his readers to provide financial and moral support to Goodell's monthly.³⁰ Even Garrison, with whom Goodell had broken in 1840, found the monthly "valuable" and "highly serviceable reforma-

²⁸ Oberlin Evangelist, April 28, 1841.

²⁹ Letter, Green to Smith, January 7, 1841, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

³⁰ Oberlin Evangelist, February 3, April 28, June 8, 1841; see also June 8, 1842 and April 12, 1843.

tory journal;" and he copied in the Liberator lengthy articles from the paper.³¹

Goodell's control of an independent journal enabled him to espouse his position on the relation of abolitionism to the church. By 1842 most abolitionists were convinced that abolitionism must be the test question of one's church membership. The crucial question that still agitated abolitionists was whether to continue to work from within or to secede and endeavor instead to reform the established churches from without by creating new religious associations. Goodell, who was impatient about the effectiveness of church reform from within, began to waver in favor of church secession.³²

In 1842 he published a plan of organization for Christian abolitionists which would in effect make them a pressure group for the purpose of exerting influence on their churches. He proposed the creation of new associations in every town, village or city where Christian abolitionists lived with a constitution pledged to temperance, moral reform, and human rights. The new organization's aim would be to propagandize its view of reform. If with this plan the church still remained unreformed, then Goodell vowed to urge secession.³³

³¹ Liberator, April 16, 1841, and June 30, 1843.

³² Christian Investigator, December, 1841.

³³ Ibid.

The plan was unanimously adopted by the Christian antislavery convention that met at Clinton on January 26, 1842. Goodell even carried his ideas into New England where at a State Liberty party Convention in Boston Goodell initiated a discussion on the church question.³⁴

The plan was apparently a delaying tactic, for a year later Goodell took a radical step and urged unconditional secession from the existing churches and the creation of new organizations based on antislavery principles. During 1843 and the first two months of the following year Goodell published twelve "Lectures on Church Reform" in which he justified secession and elaborated on his views regarding the type of religious organization that should replace the existing church.

Goodell declared that religious institutions that continued to be neutral regarding slavery were anti-Christian. "Churches that wilfully and perseveringly neglect to plead earnestly and practically, the cause of the oppressed and enslaved, give fearful evidence that they are not true churches of Christ," he wrote. Goodell justified secession by individual abolitionists on the ground that a church was merely an assembly of faithful men. According to the argument each individual member was responsible for the sins committed

³⁴
Ibid., February, 1842.

by his organization. Goodell rejected the contrary conservative argument that a church was a perpetual organic body whose members were not necessarily responsible for the sins committed by their organization.³⁵

In contrast to Garrison who had three years earlier urged abolitionists to "come out" of their churches, Goodell went a step further. Organization of new churches based on true principles of Christ, he insisted, must accompany secession. Garrison and his followers like Nathaniel Rogers, the militant New Hampshire editor of the Herald of Freedom, Stephen Foster and Parker Pillsbury, had favored secession as a means of rejecting the institution of church and clergy.³⁶ Such a philosophy had led them earlier to the denunciation of civil government and voting, and in 1844 to the repudiation of the Constitution and the Union. Goodell, who believed that civil government was divinely ordained and that voting was a religious duty, was convinced of the importance of institutions, whether secular or religious. In contrast to Garrison, Goodell believed that the institutions of government and church were essential to the goals of abolitionism. However,

³⁵ Ibid., February and March, 1843; William Goodell, Come-Outerism, the Duty of Secession from a Corrupt Church (Boston: American Anti-slavery Society, 1845) is a reprint of his lectures published in the Investigator.

³⁶ John L. Thomas, The Liberator, p. 318-320.

though he felt he could accomplish his political objectives through the existing political processes, he believed the existing churches would have to be replaced by new religious organizations. This position was quite consistent with Goodell's orthodox belief that the basis of society and its political structure was religious, and that a thorough reformation of the church would obviate the necessity of revolutionary changes in government. Goodell insisted that the church should be the spearhead of reform; without that institution no reformation could take place.³⁷

It was this view that led Goodell to formulate his own conception of church organization and discipline. In accord with his Congregationalist training, he favored the organization of independent local churches, free of hierarchical authority. He insisted that the church relate directly to the spirit and object of Christianity: the protection and elevation of the poor and oppressed, the recognition of the equal rights of all, and the protection of the inalienable rights of man. Invoking the arguments made by the early Protestant leaders, Goodell denounced the idea of an ordained priesthood which he believed had led to the establishment of a caste in the church.³⁸

³⁷Christian Investigator, June, 1843.

³⁸Ibid., April, May, and June, 1843.

The new church organization that Goodell envisioned was to be completely nonsectarian. He advocated church union on the "common platform of a pure Christianity." Church unity, he hastened to point out, was not to mean subjection to ecclesiastical authority; it was to involve only a "union of views in respect to the fundamentals of Christianity -- the object of worship -- the essential duties to be performed -- the principal ends to be pursued." Ritual and ceremony were to be sacrificed, in favor of a non-demoninational fundamental religion of Christ.³⁹

The idea of church unity was not new to readers of Goodell's paper, especially to those who lived in the so-called burned-over district of western and central New York. Luther Myrick, a revivalist in the area, had advocated union since 1835 through the Central Evangelical Association and since a year later in his Union Herald at Cazenovia. Goodell, Gerritt Smith, Beriah Green, and other antislavery leaders from various denominations were members of the association. In addition, the Penn Yan and Auburn conventions had been inspired by union principles.⁴⁰

Goodell failed to realize that such a radical organization

³⁹ Ibid., August, 1843.

⁴⁰ Cross, Burned-over District, p. 278-280.

of the church within the framework of orthodox theology would be an almost impossible task to achieve. For Garrison was correct, when he contended that orthodoxy itself was responsible for tying many to the existing churches, keeping them from seeking reform within or without these religious organizations. It was not long before Goodell would realize that few of his abolitionist colleagues shared his unique ability to combine orthodoxy with a demand for radical reform in church organization and discipline.

In the winter of 1843 Goodell had an opportunity to put into practice his ideas of church reform, organization and union when a delegation from the village of Honeoye in Ontario county, New York, invited him to found and head a church based on his principles. Goodell's dream of becoming a preacher was now realized. Without undergoing ordination he became pastor of the new church which he founded entitled simply the "Church of God at Honeoye." It was composed mainly of Methodists and Presbyterians who had left their organizations in protest against their churches' stand on slavery.⁴¹

In the "statement of the covenant, faith and constitution of the church of God at Honeoye," the members agreed on the

⁴¹In Memoriam, p. 27-28, letter, D. Green to William G. Frost, February 8, 1900, Goodell Papers, Berea; Maria G. Frost, "Life of Lavinia Goodell," MSS, Goodell Papers, Berea.

fundamental principles of orthodox Christianity. The statement embodied Goodell's ideas of a reformed church. Christian character only was to be the basis of qualification for membership in the church, and all members were to have equal voice in church matters. Church affairs would be decided by the entire body "assembled together in open church meeting." The members were to follow the example set by Christ, by pledging to regenerate sinners; reform public and private morals; plead the cause of the oppressed; "shelter the outcasts, execute judgment for the spoiled, and labor to realize and give expression to the leading idea of the gospel of Christ -- to wit, the elevation of the poor."⁴²

Goodell tried to achieve an almost impossible task, the union of Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and others in one church. Yet, his church did survive under his care for nine years until he left it in 1852. During this time Goodell worked hard to teach the parishioners his ideas of church reform and his interpretation of the basic principles of Christ. His aim, his daughter wrote, was to cultivate among these Honeoye farmers "a high type of piety, and an enlarged benevolence."⁴³

⁴²Christian Investigator, November 1843.

⁴³In Memoriam, p. 27.

Goodell's discourses, according to one of the parishioners writing many years later, "consist [ed]... of live topics handled in a masterly manner;" it had a "great attraction for thinking people whether they entirely agreed with him or not."⁴⁴ The sermons were on such subjects as the "Eternity of God," "Prejudice," "Mutual Self-Flattery," "The Duty of Choosing Just Rulers," "A Christian Spirit," "Conformity to the World," "Philosophy of Prayer," "The Relief of the Poor."⁴⁵

After each morning sermon Goodell devoted the afternoon to a free discussion of his discourse in which every variety of "honest conviction" was allowed free expression. Such sessions provided the church members with an opportunity to interpret Goodell's sermon according to their particular doctrine. Heated discussions ensued on the relevance of such doctrine to Christian faith. In this way Goodell was able to hold together, though at times precariously, the different sects that constituted his union church.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Letter, D. Greene to William G. Frost, February 8, 1900, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁴⁵Some of the texts of the sermons that survived, written in Goodell's hand, are found both at Berea College Library and in Goodell Papers at Oberlin College Library.

⁴⁶Maria G. Frost, "Life of Lavinia Goodell," MSS, Goodell Papers, Berea; In Memoriam, p. 27.

By the end of 1843 Goodell had shown the practicality of establishing a secessionist union church. However, his views on the subject were not yet endorsed by a Christian antislavery convention. He therefore looked forward to the Syracuse Convention in December, 1843 which he hoped would also place the Christian Investigator on a tract basis thus alleviating some of his financial troubles.⁴⁷ However, when the Christian antislavery convention met on December 20 and 21, the paper was not turned into a tract, though subscriptions amounting to \$173.50 were pledged, and the Convention agreed to raise in the coming year \$600 for the paper. Goodell, however, did succeed in convincing the delegates to endorse secession and church union. In the declaration, which he wrote, Goodell reiterated the reasons for secession and the importance of church union.⁴⁸

The abolitionist community was slow to accept the Convention's endorsement of secession and church union. Except for the small Garrison group, the antislavery reformers were more wedded to their particular churches than to their political parties.

⁴⁷ Letter, Beriah Green to Smith, December 1, 1843, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Christian Investigator, December, 1844.

⁴⁸ Christian Investigator, December 30, 1843.

Lewis Tappan, though he agreed in principle to the right of secession and to the idea of church union, was doubtful whether it could be effectively implemented. Tappan was convinced that a union church would lead to controversy over the true doctrine, and would thus result in further division. "There is not religion enough in the great body of Christian abolitionists," Tappan admitted, "to continue to act as a church harmoniously and vigorously."⁴⁹ As late as 1849 Tappan argued with Goodell against secession and church union. Although Tappan admitted to the principle of secession, he believed that reform could be more effective from within than without the church.⁵⁰

Goodell was more successful in convincing abolitionists to leave the two missionary associations, the Home Missionary Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and to form their own organization. Though both missionary societies were criticized by abolitionists for their failure to denounce slavery, the American Board was especially singled

⁴⁹ Letter, Lewis Tappan to Goodell, October 30, 1843, Tappan Papers, Library of Congress.

⁵⁰ Letter, Tappan to Goodell, December 12, 1849, Goodell Papers, Berea; letter, Goodell to Tappan, December 17, 1849, Goodell Papers, Berea; letter, Tappan to Goodell, December 29, 1849, Goodell Papers, Berea; letter, Goodell to Tappan, January 5, 1850, Goodell Papers, Berea.

out. It was the oldest, most influential and wealthiest of all voluntary organizations. In the beginning efforts were made by abolitionists to reform these associations from within.⁵¹ By the mid 1840's, however, events led them to form a separate missionary organization, the American Missionary Association.

Up to 1845 the American Board refused to take a definite position regarding slavery. In that year, however, after some prodding from antislavery reformers, the Board finally took a stand. The association declared in its Report that slaveholding was not an absolute sin, as was murder, but an "organic" sin. In such a case, therefore, slaveholders were not to be excluded from the Board, since it was society as a whole rather than they as individuals who were the sinners.⁵² Such a position was not unusual, because many religious conservative abolitionists, such as Edward Beecher and others who voted for the Liberty party and belonged to the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, held to that view.⁵³ Goodell, however, who attended the meeting of the Board in Brooklyn, concluded that

⁵¹ Clifton H. Johnson, "The American Missionary Association 1846-1861: A Study of Christian Abolitionism," (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Univ. of N. C., 1958), p. 44-51.

⁵² Letter, Goodell to Curtiss, September 10, 1845. Christian Investigator, September 1845; Robert Meredith, The Politics of the Universe Edward Beecher, Abolition and Orthodoxy (Nashville: Vanderbilt Univ. Press, 1963), p. 106-107 [Hereinafter referred to as Meredith, Edward Beecher].

⁵³ Meredith, Edward Beecher, p. 114-115.

the adoption of the Report proved that the anti-abolition character of the American Board was "definitely, unanimously, and permanently settled."⁵⁴

To Goodell the doctrine of organic sin posed a threat to the abolitionist effort in appealing to the conscience of the individual slaveholder. Goodell's reaction to the idea of organic sin sheds light on his position regarding social institutions. Since according to him society was merely the sum total of the individuals who composed it, it was misleading to claim that while society could be guilty of sin, the individual was not. Like most reformers of the day, his major effort was directed toward regenerating the individual, not the society. Society would change as soon as the individual was reformed.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, Goodell refused to take the extreme position of Garrison and his "come-outerism" friends who rejected all institutions of society and instead sought perfection in the individual. Goodell admitted that man was a social being with a moral nature socially defined, with social relations binding him in every direction, with social responsibilities intertwined with every fibre of his being...." Social institutions, he further maintained, should be

⁵⁴ Letter, Goodell to Curtiss, September 10, 1845, Investigator, September, 1845.

⁵⁵ Christian Investigator, December 1845 and June and July, 1846.

regenerated, but only after the individual was first reformed.⁵⁶

The refusal of the American Board to declare slaveholding a sin and to exclude slaveholders from the association and its missions, prompted Goodell to urge the formation of a permanent missionary society. Steps in that direction had already been taken four years prior to 1845 when the Negro Congressional minister from Hartford, Connecticut, J. W. C. Pennington, founded the Union Missionary Society. In addition to providing assistance to the Mendi Africans who were just freed by the Supreme Court in the Amistad case, the Society tried to establish antislavery missions at home and abroad. In September, 1842 Lewis Tappan, Simeon Jocelyn and LeRoy Sunderland merged their Amistad Committee, (which after the departure of the Mendi Africans had served its purpose) with the Union Missionary Society.⁵⁷ Although Goodell supported this new organization, he tried to convince the leadership to establish that body on the basis of his concept of

⁵⁶ Ibid., June, 1848.

⁵⁷ Letter, Tappan to Goodell, January 26, 1842, Goodell Papers, Berea; letter, Tappan to Goodell, January 27, 1842, Goodell Papers, Berea; letter, Tappan to Goodell, April 2, 1842, Goodell Papers, Berea; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, p. 292-293. Johnson, "American Missionary Association," p. 58-74.

"pure Christianity."⁵⁸

Goodell, however, was interested in a complete break by the Union Missionary Society from the American Board, and in the formation of a new independent missionary association.⁵⁹ Goodell thus eagerly attended the abolitionist convention that met in Syracuse on February, 1846. The purpose of the meeting was to consider "Bible methods of propagating the gospel," and to protest the slaveholding "practices of the Board."⁶⁰

Amos Phelps, the secretary of the Union Missionary Society, addressed the delegates in a radical vein, reminiscent of Goodell's own zealous style. Phelps called the Board and its foreign mission churches un-Christian, because they accepted the sinful practices of slavery, oppression, caste and polygamy. Goodell, on the other hand, insisted that the real issue was not the proslavery nature of the Board, but the "proper elements of the Christian Church." He urged the delegates to accept the principle that it was wrong to permit membership to slaveholders in mission churches abroad, as

⁵⁸Letter, Goodell to Amos Phelps, August 19, 1845, Phelps Papers, Boston.

⁵⁹Letter, Goodell to Phelps, November 25, 1845, Phelps Papers, Boston.

⁶⁰Christian Investigator, December, 1845; Oberlin Evangelist, February 4, 1846; Johnson, "American Missionary Association," p. 81.

well as at home. And not only slaveholders but northern apologists for slavery should be excluded from the churches. The delegates were not yet ready to go that far, but they did adopt Phelps' address and resolved that the Board was a "close corporation," self-perpetuating, and "irresponsible either to the churches, to its contributors or either constituency." Lewis Tappan, in a letter to the delegates agreed to the formation of a new association, but the assembly failed to reach any definite conclusion. Instead, the Convention appointed a committee consisting of Goodell, Smith, Phelps, Tappan and Marshall S. Scudder whose responsibility would be to call a general missionary convention later that year.⁶¹

Meanwhile, before the second convention met, Goodell endeavored to convince Christian abolitionists to accept his organizational plan for a prospective missionary association. The Board, he maintained, should be replaced by missions that were based on Christian principles, and performed Christian work. But he was

61

Letter, Goodell to Phelps, February 2, 1846, Phelps Papers, Boston; Christian Investigator, March, 1846; Johnson, "American Missionary Association," p. 83-86; Proceedings of the Convention for Bible Missions, held in Syracuse, February 18th and 19th, 1846 (Syracuse: Kinney, Marsh and Barnes, 1846), p. 17-18.

opposed to replacing the Board by another centralized missionary society. He preferred the establishment of local missions to be run by each local church. But his second choice was for a decentralized missionary society. The national body should function only as a "medium of communication;" the executive committee should have no authority over the missionaries, except to recommend the field of labor. The national society's control over its finances, Goodell suggested, should involve only the distribution of its funds to the local missions.

62

When the second Convention for Bible Missions met in Albany in September, Goodell was gratified at the delegates' adoption of his "Address to the Christian Public" which embodied most of his ideas expressed in the above article. The Address became in essence the platform of the newly formed American Missionary Association. Goodell now succeeded in committing an influential group of Christian abolitionists to his long time contention that "Christianity wages an uncompromising warfare against all forms of sin, public as well as private; -- social, political and organic, as well as individual," and that one could not propagate these

⁶² Christian Investigator, May 1846; Letter, Goodell to Phelps, July 7, 1846, Phelps Papers, Boston; Letter, Goodell to Phelps, May 8, 1846, Phelps Papers, Boston.

principles abroad and yet fail to follow them at home. The Constitution of the new association provided for more centralized control than Goodell had expected. But the delegates allowed much greater independence to the local missions and to the member churches than the Board did.⁶³

Goodell's address prompted debates in Christian antislavery circles. At Oberlin a local missionary convention spent most of the time discussing Goodell's document presented at Albany. Maria, Goodell's oldest daughter who was attending Oberlin College at the time, reported to her father that some abolitionists accused him of advancing his Congregational views in the Address; one even charged him with equating Congregationalism with the Bible. Charles Finney, who was professor of theology at the college, expressed the fear that the Address would exclude all denominations except Presbyterian and Congregationalist from the missionary field.

⁶³Proceedings of the Second Convention for Bible Missions, Held in Albany September Second and Third, MDCCCXLVI, with the Address of the Executive Committee of the American Missionary Association (N. Y.: J. H. Tobitt, 1846), p. 1-15; Christian Investigator, September 1846; Oberlin Evangelist, September 16 and November 11, 1846; American Missionary, October, 1846; Letter Tappan to John Scoble, November 30, 1846, Annie H. Abel and Frank J. Klingberg, A Sidelight on Anglo-American Relations 1839-1858 (N. Y.: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970, original 1927), p. 397.

President Asa Mahan of Oberlin among others, however, came to Goodell's defense. In spite of the disagreement, the Convention decided to cooperate with the new missionary organization.⁶⁴

Although he was one of the prominent founders of the American Missionary Association, Goodell never became an active member of that body, and was never appointed to any official position. This may have been due to Goodell's radical views regarding church secession and union. Goodell himself recognized this problem. Writing to Phelps a few months after the Albany Convention Goodell declined to address the upcoming Syracuse missionary meeting lest his "ultra" views would prejudice the case for antislavery missions.⁶⁵ At the annual Convention in 1850 the Association made an effort to disassociate itself from Goodell's radical views. The organization decided to reject Goodell as alternate for preaching the annual sermon on the ground that it was best for the society not to "recognize him as a minister of the gospel."⁶⁶

In addition, Goodell may have been quite displeased with the missionary association's tendency toward unorthodoxy in the

⁶⁴Letter, Maria Goodell to father, November 4, 1846, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁶⁵Letter, Goodell to Phelps, January 7, 1847, Phelps Papers, Boston.

⁶⁶Johnson, "American Missionary Association," p. 170-171.

1850's when that body accepted the principles of Christian perfectionism, the "heresy" at Oberlin College and Charles Finney.⁶⁷

In fact, Goodell felt compelled to take his daughter Maria out of Oberlin on the ground that the college was moving away from orthodoxy.⁶⁸

Goodell's failure to become an active member of the American Missionary Association could also have been due to his wariness in participating in the affairs of an organization that would restrict his independence and freedom to express his views. Ever since the breakup of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Goodell had refused to join either the old or new antislavery organization. Apart from his association with the Liberty party in the 1840's, Goodell preferred to influence the Christian antislavery movement from the outside. Although Goodell believed in the importance of institutions, he himself refused to join.

One of the means through which Goodell continued to influence Christian action against slavery was through his attendance at conventions where he was invariably appointed to the highly important business committee. In 1850 and 1852 Goodell undertook an important trip to the West where he made an effort to introduce

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 174-175, and 203.

⁶⁸ Letter, Maria Goodell to Josiah Cady, September (?), 1847, Goodell Papers, Berea.

his ideas. In April he attended a Christian Anti-Slavery Convention in Cincinnati which was called for the purpose of considering the connection of the church with the sin of slaveholding. The most important issue before the delegates was whether God held responsible members of an organization for the sins practiced or sanctioned by that body. Goodell, who was on the resolutions committee, succeeded with the help of John G. Fee in convincing the Convention to reply in the affirmative to that question. For the first time a Christian antislavery convention outside of the burned-over district of western New York accepted Goodell's view of the right and duty of secession from proslavery churches and missionary organizations. The Convention recognized Goodell's contribution to Christian action against slavery by appointing him to a committee of twelve which was to assist state and local areas to hold similar conventions, and to call a general Christian antislavery convention at some future date.⁶⁹

On July 3, 1851, as a result of a call by the committee to Christians of all denominations, such a general convention met

⁶⁹The Minutes of the Christian Anti-Slavery Convention Assembled April 17th - 20th, 1850 Cincinnati, Ohio (N. Y. : Ben Franklin Book and Job's Rooms, 1850), passim; Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 492; Oberlin Evangelist, May 8, 1850; Letter, Goodell to father-in-law, September 11, 1850, Goodell Papers, Berea.

in Chicago. Three hundred and six delegates from thirteen states attended, plus two members from abroad. Though Goodell did not succeed in having all his views on church reform and organization adopted by the Convention, the meeting could be considered his crowning victory. Ever since 1841 Goodell had tirelessly worked to convince abolitionists of the crucial importance of the churches in the slavery question. As a consequence, small but numerous Christian antislavery conventions had met usually in western New York, to consider that subject. Now he succeeded together with a few kindred Christian reformers in assembling a truly national interdenominational Christian antislavery convention for the purpose of discussing the whole subject of the sin of slaveholding and its connection with the church.⁷⁰

Goodell, not unexpectedly, was appointed to a special committee of three to report on the connection of the church with slavery. The resulting report, which was adopted by the Convention,

⁷⁰Minutes of the Christian Anti-Slavery Convention, . Held July 3rd, 4th, and 5th, 1851 at Chicago, Illinois (Chicago: Western Citizen, 1851), p. 1-3; Oberlin Evangelist, July 16, 1851; Letter, Goodell to Smith, June 8, 1851, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

took the position Goodell had advocated since 1843, that the church was corrupt as a result of its connection with the sin of slavery. Goodell argued that the responsibility for the corruption of the church rested with each member of the church, and not only with its officers. In order to avoid being an accessory to sin, he urged all Christians to secede from such churches. Goodell thus dismissed the prevailing argument of such conservative abolitionists as William Jay that the responsibility of the actions of a church rested upon the church acting in its official capacity; the individual conscience of its private members could not be held responsible for the sins of the church.⁷¹

Goodell's western trip was a success. In addition to shaping the conventions, Goodell had made numerous acquaintances with western abolitionists. One of them was especially important. It was at the Cincinnati Convention that Goodell met John G. Fee, an unusual abolitionist minister from Kentucky who worked then as a missionary for the American Missionary Association. Fee's parents were slaveholders in that state, but he became an abolitionist while attending Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati.

⁷¹Minutes of Christian Anti-Slavery Convention... 1851 at Chicago, p. 30-42; Oberlin Evangelist, July 16, and 30, August 13, 1851; Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 492.

Goodell and Fee were of like mind. Fee, too, was antisectarian, favoring secession from proslavery churches and the formation of antislavery union churches. Fee as a consequence had seceded from the Presbyterian Church and had founded his own independent church at Cabin Creek, Lewis County, Kentucky, similar to Goodell's church at Honeoye.⁷² It is therefore not surprising that Goodell and Fee immediately became close friends. Goodell visited the parents of both Fee and his wife, and at the latter place he preached on the duty of secession from proslavery churches. But sickness prevented Goodell from accepting Fee's invitation to preach at his church.⁷³ This new friendship was of significance since Fee was an important pioneering abolitionist in Kentucky who would establish the second integrated school in the country, Berea College, and would become one of the leading figures in the West

⁷²John G. Fee, Autobiography (Chicago: National Christian Association, 1891), p. 2-57; Letter, Goodell to father-in-law, September 11, 1850, Goodell Papers, Berea; Johnson, "American Missionary Association," p. 130.

⁷³Letter, Goodell to father-in-law, September 11, 1850, Goodell Papers, Berea; Fee in his Autobiography, p. 57 incorrectly dates Goodell's visit at 1848.

who favored Goodell's constitutional view on slavery.⁷⁴

Goodell so well impressed Fee and Kentucky abolitionists that he was invited to form and become the pastor of an independent antislavery church in Covington. Though he was ready to leave Honeoye and was seeking a new position either as a pastor or some other work in the abolitionist movement, Goodell turned down the offer. Apparently, he was not ready to leave New York state, where he had made his reputation as an abolitionist, to start new at his age (he was close to sixty) in a comparatively obscure place like Covington.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Letter, Goodell to Fee, January 23, 1856, American Abolition Society Letterbook, Oberlin College Library; hereinafter referred to as A.A.S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Fee, April (?), 1856, A.A.S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter Goodell to Fee, March 31, 1856, A.A.S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter Goodell to Fee, May 1, 1856, A.A.S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Fee, May 20, 1856, A.A.S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Fee, August 13, 1856, A.A.S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Fee, March 7, 1857, A.A.S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Fee, June 14, 1858, A.A.S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

⁷⁵Letter, Fee to Goodell, May 29, 1850, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Fee to Goodell, July 23, 1850, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Goodell to father-in-law, September 11, 1850, Goodell Papers, Berea.

Although by 1851 Goodell succeeded in convincing Christian antislavery conventions in the West of the wisdom of establishing secession churches, few such independent religious organizations were formed. In spite of the brave resolutions passed by these numerous conventions, most orthodox abolitionists were unable to establish radical reformed churches within the framework of their religious orthodoxy. For few abolitionists shared Goodell's unique ability to combine a zeal for radical church reform with a strong attachment to orthodoxy. Either their goal for church reform or their orthodoxy would have to be sacrificed. Garrison and some of his followers resolved that problem by abandoning orthodoxy and adopting instead a radical religious philosophy. Gerrit Smith would do the same in 1858 when he embraced the religion of reason in place of his long time attachment to orthodoxy. By 1851 Goodell finally realized that his effort to combine orthodoxy with a demand for radical church reform was doomed to failure.

Nevertheless, Goodell's labors in the 1840's in the Christian antislavery field were not completely in vain. Goodell had shown, contrary to a common historical assumption, that the entire abolitionist movement was not anti-institutional. On the contrary, Goodell and many of his followers,- even those who refused to form a

secession church-- were strongly in favor of the church and made every effort to mobilize that institution for the achievement of their goal of abolitionism. Secondly, even though Goodell failed in his goal of church reform and union, his constant pressure on the churches in the 1840's enabled them in the next decade to rethink their religious stand on slavery. By the 1850's, therefore, many churchmen among whom were such prominent ministers as Albert Barnes, George B. Cheever, Henry Ward Beecher, and Theodore Parker, who had been silent regarding slavery in the 1840's, became vocal a decade later. What Bertram Wyatt-Brown had said of the subject of his biography, can easily be applied to Goodell; that it was Lewis Tappan who "prepared the way for these new religious leaders."⁷⁶

By 1851 Goodell's interest in Christian antislavery work began to wane. Disillusioned with his failure to achieve concrete results in that area in the 1840's and encouraged by the rising popularity of the political antislavery movement in the next decade, Goodell now saw the opportunity of eradicating slavery mainly

⁷⁶Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, p. 312-313; Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America (N. Y.: Abington Press, 1957), p. 202-215.

through political institutions. But the groundwork for his political activities in 1850's was laid in the 1840's when he made an effort, simultaneous with his Christian abolitionist work, to broaden the political platform of the Liberty party.

CHAPTER VII

TOWARD BROADENING POLITICAL ABOLITIONISM

The period between 1844 and 1852 was crucial for political abolitionism. In the election of 1844 the Liberty party polled 61,999 votes -- ten times more than it received four years earlier. However, a subsequent division within the party splintered the political abolitionist movement and destroyed the Liberty party. The Texas issue and the resulting Mexican War turned many Whigs against slavery, and caused many leading Liberty men to be absorbed into a moderate antislavery coalition. In short, the major question facing political abolitionists during this period was whether to merge the Liberty party with an antislavery coalition or turn it into a permanent political organization that could express the political and economic interests of its members in addition to abolition.

Goodell was a central figure in this fight to broaden the role of the Liberty party. His failure to achieve that goal doomed political abolitionism. By refusing to join the Free Soil coalition Goodell severed himself from the mainstream of the antislavery movement of the 1850's. Instead, he led a small radical abolitionist group, the only remaining political

organization that was advocating direct abolition of slavery and the guarantee of equal rights to the Negro through a new interpretation of the Constitution.

The election of 1844 proved to Goodell that the survival of the Liberty party required that it pledge itself to the reform of American society. But the type of party Goodell had in mind alienated many would-be adherents and destroyed his hope of making it a major force in American politics. In fact, Goodell hoped to reform the political process in accord with his concept of "pure Christianity," and create what would essentially be a Christian democratic party. This plan he described in a two-volume work, The Democracy of Christianity, published in 1849 and 1852.¹

Goodell first called for transforming the Liberty party into a reform organization in June, 1845 in his address to the New York State Liberty Convention at Port Byron. He advocated a long list of political reforms such as the election of governmental heads of departments, the direct election of President and Vice

¹William Goodell, The Democracy of Christianity or An Analysis of the Bible and its Doctrines in their Relation to the Principle of Democracy (2 vols. N.Y.: Cady and Burgess, 1849), I and II, passim; see also vol. II, 17-52, 69-91, 135-210, 460-518; volume I deals with the Old Testament and volume II with New Testament.

President, reform in the judiciary, and public nomination of candidates in place of nominating conventions.²

Goodell further advocated that the party adopt a number of radical plans. First, he sought to attract the support of large number of working whites and blacks by calling for the free distribution of public land. Secondly, he called for a weak central government whose major aim would be only the protection of the rights of all men. Finally, he asked that the party declare the Constitution to be opposed unequivocally to slavery.³

The delegates at the Convention were stunned by Goodell's radical plans and his long list of reforms. It was obvious that though such a transformation of the Liberty party would surely broaden their platform, it would at the same time narrow their base of support. In addition to the antagonistic interests of whites and blacks, the peculiar constitutional argument and the numerous specific reforms would tear apart the party. It is therefore not surprising that at first some of the delegates attempted to convince the Convention to lay aside the Address without discussion. But

²Address Read at the New York State Liberty Convention held at Port Byron, on Wednesday and Thursday June 25 and 26, 1845 (n. p., n. d.), p. 1-3; [Hereinafter referred to as Address at Port Byron]; address also reprinted in Albany Patriot, July 23, 1845.

³Ibid.

the Goodell forces succeeded in defeating the motion and a discussion about the object of the Liberty party ensued.⁴

Lewis Tappan feared that the adoption of the Address would cause a division among the ranks of Liberty men. The party, he insisted, must stand on one idea, the abolition of slavery. Others argued that the source of all financial and economic trouble was slavery and that the abolition of the institution would virtually resolve these problems. James C. Jackson, editor of the Albany Patriot, came strongly to the defense of the Address. He explained that the party could not long survive with the sole purpose of anti-slavery, but must rather broaden its base by fighting all forms of oppression both of blacks and whites. He insisted that the northern aristocracy was a natural ally of the slaveocracy, and that the laboring masses were the natural opponents of both aristocracies.⁵

The Convention postponed adopting Goodell's Address,⁶ but there was much debate about the Address after the Convention adjourned. Tappan in a letter to the Albany Patriot contended that Goodell was advocating the diversified principles of the Democratic party..., "and it was "impolitic to engraft so many political doctrines upon the creed of the Liberty party, even if they were all sound

⁴ Albany Patriot, July 9, 1845.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., August 6 and 13, 1845.

doctrines."⁷ Privately, Tappan was even more incensed at the "mad projects of Goodell, Chaplin, and Jackson." "If the Liberty party proceed thus," he wrote Gerrit Smith, "they will shipwreck themselves if not run the cause aground."⁸

Smith, though he was not alarmed as Tappan, continued to insist that the Liberty party was a temporary organization and that it should disband as soon as the Whigs or Democrats adopted the antislavery principles of the abolitionist party. He did, however, agree with Goodell's contention that the party should apply the first principles of equal rights to all political and economic issues. Nevertheless, he felt it was premature at this time to broaden the platform since many Liberty men were not sufficiently informed of the principles of the party and how to apply them to the issues. Smith therefore favored free and open discussion of Goodell's views prior to their adoption.⁹

Salmon P. Chase found Goodell's Address an obstacle to his efforts to bring abolitionists together into a single party. He

⁷Ibid., August 6, 1845.

⁸Letter, Lewis Tappan to Gerrit Smith, July 29, 1845, Gerrit Smith Papers, Syracuse.

⁹Letter, Goodell to James C. Jackson, November 27, 1845, Albany Patriot, December 10, 1845; "To the Liberty Party," Speeches and Letters of Gerrit Smith 1843-1873 (n. p., n. d.), Oberlin College Library; same letter in Albany Patriot, June 10, 1846.

admitted that he was not "insensible to the force of the arguments urged by Mr. Goodell and others in favor of giving our party a more distinctly democratic character," but he believed that this did not necessitate burdening the Liberty party "with the issues made by the so called democratic party." Chase felt instead that it was best for the Liberty party to show that its principles were truly democratic by pledging itself to apply those principles to all the economic and political issues of the day. The question of slavery, however, should be the only test question for membership in the party. All other issues should be subordinated to that paramount question. In essence, Chase hoped to convince the country that the Liberty party sought to "accomplish the proper aims of Christianized Democracy" without specifying, as Goodell, did the elements that constituted such a body.¹⁰

The differences between Goodell and Chase highlight the two divergent groups within the party which were to separate in 1848. The politically ambitious Chase, although sincerely opposed to slavery, planned to create a broad antislavery party which would attract as many diverse segments of the voting population as possible. To him Goodell's plan of creating a political organization composed

¹⁰ Letter, Salmon P. Chase to Smith, July 31, 1845, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

of poor and middle class whites and blacks from both the North and South was not only unrealistic but a political dead end.

Goodell, who was primarily a reformer with no political ambition, sought to create a political organization not so much for the purpose of winning elections as of reforming American society. The divergent goals of these two groups became irreconcilable when the Free Soil coalition emerged in 1848.

Tappan and Joshua Leavitt represented a third group of political abolitionists. Though they harbored no personal political ambition, they eagerly sought to take advantage of any opportunity to advance politically the antislavery movement even at the cost of compromising its original principles. The Liberty party to them was a vehicle not for the reformation of American society but only for the removal of the institution of slavery. Now, as a result of the Texas question, the slavery issue had been injected into the political arena. This group thus hoped to keep its options open and join, whenever necessary, any major political party or a broad antislavery coalition.

Goodell, on the other hand, had always considered abolitionism a means toward the radical reformation of race relations and of the political, economic and social institutions in America. He had hopes of creating a political organization that would pledge

itself to the establishment of his ideal of Christian democracy, a body that would serve equally the interests of both blacks and whites. Believing firmly that the destinies of the two races were intertwined and that a denial of the basic rights to one race would eventually lead to the destruction of the liberties of both, Goodell looked forward toward an American democracy that would serve equally the interests of both racial groups. Absorption of the Liberty party into either major party or into a broad but moderate antislavery coalition was to Goodell, out of the question, for it would mean a denial of his basic convictions about Christianity, and democracy,

Most of those who supported Goodell's views were Liberty men from New York state such as James C. Jackson, editor of the Albany Patriot, William L. Chaplin, a members of the Executive Committee of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, and Beriah Green, President of Oneida Institute. There was nevertheless a significant minority in the West that also accepted Goodell's arguments. James G. Birney, who as presidential candidate in 1844 had learned from personal experience the importance of broadening the platform of the Liberty party, endorsed most of Goodell's views in a letter addressed to the president of the Michigan Anti-Slavery Society.¹¹ Guy Beckley and Theodore Foster, editors of the

¹¹Letter, Goodell to Curtiss, April 20, 1846, Albany Patriot, May 20, 1846; see also April 29, 1846; Betty Fladeland, James Gillespie Birney, p. 257-258.

Signal of Liberty, agreed wholeheartedly with Birney's position.

In a letter to Liberty party editors throughout the country they repudiated the "one idea" policy and instead proposed an almost verbatim version of the platform suggested in Goodell's Address except for the national abolition of slavery in the states.¹²

Goodell and his associates, however, were not successful in convincing the main body of the Liberty party to repudiate one ideaism and to prevent defection to the old parties. When they realized the impossibility of achieving their objectives through the Liberty party, Goodell's group made plans to form their own organization on the basis of Goodell's Address. The first step in that direction was made in June, 1846 at a Liberty Convention in Farmington. The delegates accepted Goodell's address which recommended the formation of a Liberty League. A constitution for the League was written which declared that its aim was to "investigate, and discuss the nature, ends, and uses of civil government and political economy...." The delegates accepted Goodell's view that the destruction of the Slave Power could not be accomplished without at the same time destroying the "aristocracy" of the North. Both forms of oppression, he wrote, were united in a "common war against

¹² Letter, Guy Beckley and Theodore Forster to Liberty party editors, February 24, 1846, Albany Patriot, March 11, 1846; same letter reprinted in Liberty Press, March 21, 1846.

the liberties of the masses, white and black, forming a conspiracy -- an alliance -- that must stand or fall together...." In this and in the Port Byron Address, Goodell repudiated an article of faith among abolitionists, which he himself had helped formulate in the 1830's, that the overthrow of the Slave Power would resolve all the problems facing the nation.¹³

The formation of the League did not mean that Goodell's group bolted the Liberty party. On the contrary, its aim was to pressure the Liberty party into returning to what Goodell considered its original principles. They did not nominate their own state ticket, but instead attended the state nominating convention of the Liberty party in September. Goodell was appointed to the business committee which reported a resolution, subsequently adopted by the convention, to the effect that the Liberty party was permanent and that it advocated objectives other than antislavery. Goodell's name was even placed in nomination for governor, but he received only six votes. His friend Chaplin, however, was nominated as lieutenant governor.¹⁴

In the course of the next year a strong effort was made

¹³Albany Patriot, June 24, and July 1, 1846; Ralph Harlow, Gerrit Smith, p. 178; Harlow is incorrect in claiming that the Farmington Convention nominated Smith for president.

¹⁴Albany Patriot, September 23, 1846.

by regular Liberty men to convince Goodell and his League not to break with the Liberty party or nominate presidential candidates. Tappan wrote Goodell that it was unwise to "load the antislavery car with so much freight," some of which was mere "wood, hay and stubble, mixed with gold." "As abolitionists," he pointed out, "we have undertaken with Divine help, to rid this land of slavery, but it does not follow, I think, that we are bound to settle the question between landlord and tenant, about Banks, Tariffs, Free Trade, Corn Laws, etc."¹⁵

Wesley Bailey, the editor of the Liberty Press at Utica, tried to convince Gerrit Smith, who was wavering on his one idea principle, not to allow himself to be nominated by Goodell's group. Bailey confessed that the "cause of Goodell and others has caused me much pain, and sleepless hours..." The Liberty party, he told Smith, should not allow factions to dominate and determine its nominations. Bailey went as far as to accuse Goodell and his friends of ulterior motives, "I dispise [sic] the craven spirit of that man," he wrote, "who will not vote the fetters of the slave off unless he can at the same time 'vote himself a farm!'"¹⁶

¹⁵Letter, Lewis Tappan to Goodell, March 26, 1847, Goodell Papers, Berea.

¹⁶Letter, Wesley Bailey to Smith, June 5, 1847, (marked "private"), Smith Papers, Syracuse.

Goodell, nevertheless, proceeded to call for a nominating convention to be held at Macedon Lock, New York, in early June, 1847. He reiterated his Port Byron views on the political and economic issues, and civil government, and tried to justify a break with the Liberty party. Only by creating a party that is committed "upon all the great political questions of the day," he maintained, could abolitionists avoid merger with either major party and subsequent compromise of its principles. He predicted that the Liberty party as it was then constituted could not "in the nature of the case, escape absorption in one of the other political parties, to the shipwreck of all the objects for which it was originally organized, including, signally, the defeat for the present generation of the antislavery enterprise, so far as political action is concerned." He called upon the entire Liberty party to attend the Convention and thereby lay the "foundation of a course of political action which shall secure the rights of all the inhabitants of this country, irrespective of condition or color."¹⁷

¹⁷"Call for a National Nominating Convention" (n. p., n. d.), Oberlin Anti-Slavery Collection; copy also included in a letter by Goodell to Birney, April 1, 1847, Dwight L. Dumond, ed. Letters of James Gillespie G. Birney 1831-1857 (2 vols. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1966), II, 1047-1067; [hereinafter referred to as Dumond, Birney]; Albany Patriot, April 28, 1847.

In the few months prior to the Convention Goodell and his associates tried to enlist the support of Birney and other Liberty party figures. Goodell sent a draft of his Call to Birney requesting his signature, while Jackson asked Birney not to decline the nomination that Goodell's supporters contemplated for the convention. Birney agreed to sign the Call, adding that he found no objections to it though he declined the offer of nomination on account of illness. He did, however, agree to support any candidate to be nominated by that convention.¹⁸ Birney, had suffered a severe paralytic stroke in the summer of 1845 as a result of a fall from his horse, He was never to recover completely from that accident.¹⁹

With Birney's refusal to accept the presidential nomination, the Convention agreed to give the nomination to another nationally known Liberty man, Gerrit Smith, who had just been converted from one ideaism. Elihu Burritt, one of the leaders in

¹⁸Letter, Goodell to Birney, April 1, 1847, Dumond, Birney, II, 1047-1067; Letter James C. Jackson to Birney, April 23, 1847, ibid., II, 1067-1070; Letter Birney to Goodell, April 26, 1847, ibid., II, 1071-1072; Letter, Birney to Jackson, May 17, 1847, ibid., II, 1073-1074.

¹⁹Fladeland, James Gillespie Birney, p. 255-256.

20

the peace movement, was nominated for vice-president. In addition, the Convention separated itself from the Liberty party, calling itself the Liberty League, a name agreed upon at the Farmington Convention of the previous year.²¹

The Address of the Macedon Convention, which was written by Goodell, became the platform of the new radical reform party. Goodell reiterated the major planks; constitutional abolition slavery in the states by the federal government; protection and justice to the Indians; repeal of all tariffs; government revenue based on direct taxation only; retrenchment of government expenditures;

²⁰ For biography of and sources on Burrirt see Merle Curti, The Learned Blacksmith The Letters and Journals of Elihu Burrirt (N. Y.: Wilson Erickson, 1937); also W. Freeman Galpin, Pioneering for Peace A Study of American Peace Efforts to 1846 (Syracuse: The Bardeen Press, 1933); Burrirt declined the nomination and in his place Charles Foote was nominated; see Curti, Learned Blacksmith, p. 47; and Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 475.

²¹ Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 475; Theodore C. Smith, The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest (N. Y.: Longmans, Green & Co., 1897), p. 101-102; Wilson, Slave Power, II, 109-110; Albany Patriot, June 23, 1847; National Era, June 27, 1847; probably for the first time in American history a woman was placed in nomination for president at a convention. Women were allowed to vote at the Convention and as a result Lucretia Mott, and Lydia M. Child received one vote each.

abolition of the naval and military establishments; prompt abandonment of the "wicked war with Mexico and the restoration to her of her conquered territories including Texas and compensation for the wrongs inflicted on that weak nation;" restoration in the extent of individual, corporative or governmental holdings in land; and free distribution of all public lands.²²

Goodell explained that all of these reforms were interrelated. Repudiating his own contention of the 1830's that the abolition of slavery would constitute a major step for the solution of the many problems facing the nation, Goodell now insisted that the goals of abolitionism could not be achieved without simultaneous reform in the nation's political, economic and social system. In defense of his position, he pointed to the failure of the British emancipation policy in the West Indies.²³

The abolition of slavery in the West Indies, Goodell maintained, did not solve all the social and political problems in Britain itself and in the colonies. Slavery was only practiced in a different manner when the British starved the people of Ireland, oppressed

²²William Goodell, Address of the Macedon Convention and Letters of Gerrit Smith (Albany: S. W. Green, 1847), p. 3-6; address also reprinted in Albany Patriot, June 23, 1847.

²³Ibid., p. 5-6.

the workers at Birmingham, forced dissenters to pay church tithes, excluded many Englishmen from the ballot, and imported East Indian coolies to compete with the newly freed Negroes. Such a situation was the consequence of British abolitionists' efforts to concentrate solely on the abolition of slavery while ignoring all other forms of oppression in British society. The refusal of British abolitionists to fight land monopoly and high tariffs in Britain and in the colonies made inevitable the virtual reenslavement of the West Indian blacks after emancipation. Land monopoly which prevented the freedom from owning land thus making them economically dependent, and the subsequent passage of vagrant laws made a mockery of the freedom so bitterly fought for by the abolitionists in Britain.²⁴

The aims of the League, Goodell pointed out, were to avoid the disastrous example of Britain. Its object was to look beyond the abolition of slavery and to provide the Negro a "nobler freedom than exchange of chattel slavery for the least eligible form of serfdom." Land monopoly and tariffs would destroy the economic independence of the Negro, and vagrant laws would make a mockery of this right to freedom. The only way to avoid such a situation was to fight all forms of oppression at the same time.²⁵

²⁴Ibid., p. 7-13.

²⁵Ibid.

Goodell was therefore one of the few abolitionists who clearly foresaw the tragic results of Reconstruction. He had come to believe that the abolition of slavery would not solve all the social, economic and political problems facing both white and black America. Other radical changes in American society had to be carried through in order to make it possible for the Negro to be integrated on an equal basis in the American system. He predicted (accurately as it later turned out) the economic and political subjugation of the Southern Negro in the absence of any real effort to transform the abolitionist movement into a radical reform of American society. Historians who were concerned about the deplorable conditions of the Negro after emancipation and decried the failure during Reconstruction to provide economic independence to the Negro, were later to echo Goodell's program, formulated twenty years before the Civil War.

Liberty men on the whole, however, refused to accept Goodell's arguments. The League was denounced in Liberty party papers as tending toward the breakup of the party. Goodell, as a major organizer of the movement, was especially singled out for criticism.²⁶ Reverend A. Weilley, a political abolitionist from

²⁶ Letter, Goodell to father-in-law, June 28, 1847, Goodell Papers, Berea; National Era, June 24, 1847.

Maine, expressed surprise at Goodell's course of action and accused him of trying to destroy the Liberty party. He begged Smith not to accept the nomination of the League. It was within the power of Smith, he entreated him, to prevent an irreconcilable split in the party.²⁷

Some political abolitionists, however, though agreeing to Smith's nomination and to the ideas of the League, were convinced that adding other issues besides antislavery would retard the movement to abolish the peculiar institution. "It would thrill my whole soul with joy," a correspondent of Smith wrote, "would I see, with Goodell... that the quickest way of getting the slaves emancipated, would be, to go, for all the objects aimed by the League." But the past had taught him that only one "good shall be won at a time."²⁸

In order to counteract the activities of the League, a national nominating convention of the Liberty party was called to meet in October at Buffalo. Meanwhile, efforts were made to convince Smith to withdraw his support from the new group and prevent Goodell and others from introducing their ideas into the upcoming convention. Lewis Tappan tried to convince Smith to unite behind

²⁷ Letter, Reverend A. Weilley to Smith, July 7, 1847, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

²⁸ Letter, George Bradburn to Smith, October 8, 1847, Smith Papers, Berea.

the party, and assured him that most Liberty men were opposed to the League's ideas and nomination. He requested that Smith and Goodell not introduce their ideas at Buffalo, for it would cause dissension at the convention and a breakup of the Liberty party.²⁹

It should be noted that Tappan's actions were in fact biased by his prior commitment to the nomination of another candidate, John P. Hale, the independent Democratic Senator from New Hampshire.³⁰

Despite Tappan's pleas, Smith and Goodell did endorse their own candidates at the Convention and pressed for the adoption of their own platform. The greatest fight was over the platform. A bitter struggle ensued over Smith and Goodell's attempt to have the meeting adopt their resolution calling for the federal abolition of slavery in the states. When that effort was defeated by a vote of 195 to 137, they attempted to convince the delegates to declare

²⁹Letter, Lewis Tappan to Smith, July 23, 1847, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Tappan to Smith, July 30, 1847, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Tappan to Smith, August 9, 1847, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Tappan to Smith, September 10, 1847, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

³⁰Richard H. Sewell, "John P. Hale and the Liberty Party 1847-1848," New England Quarterly, XXXVII (June, 1964), 207.

the Liberty party permanent. But that resolution failed by an even greater margin -- 103 to 26. With the defeat of the radical faction, the nomination of Hale over Smith was then assured.³¹

Hale's nomination confirmed Goodell's fear that the Liberty party was moving toward a more conservative position regarding slavery. For the first time the party went outside its ranks for a candidate, one who had never identified himself or acted with the Liberty party. Hale did not agree with all the measures of the political abolitionists; for example, he did not believe in the constitutional power of Congress to abolish the domestic slave trade.³² But many political abolitionists like Tappan, Leavitt, Stanton, and Gemalial Bailey of the National Era were convinced that only by nominating Hale could they take advantage of the rising antislavery sentiment in the North.³³

³¹National Era, November 11, 1847; Sewell, "John P. Hale," 207-209; Letter, W. R. Smith to Gerrit Smith, November 6, 1847, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Tappan to John Scoble, November 14, 1847, Abel-Henderson, Heloise, and Klingberg, A Sidelight on Anglo-American Relations, p. 413-418.

³²Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 477-478; Wilson, Slave Power, II, 110-111.

³³Wilson, Slave Power, II, 111-112; Letter, Smith to James Appelon, January 6, 1848, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

Goodell warned that any effort to compromise principles would result in absorption into either a major political party or a coalition antislavery group. This warning came true less than a year after the Convention had nominated Hale. In August, 1848, many of the Liberty men who agreed to the Hale nomination met at Buffalo in order to form the Free Soil party. This meeting, which constituted a coalition with Barnburner Democrats and Conscience Whigs, resulted in the nomination of Martin Van Buren for president. The coalition arose as a result of agitation over the Wilmot Proviso (which proposed to exclude slavery from the territories acquired from Mexico) and the anger of the New York Barnburner Democrats over the rejection of Van Buren by their party. Because of the variety of antislavery men and motives that brought about the Free Soil Convention, the platform called for non-extension of slavery into the territories and the divorce of the federal government from that institution. But the delegates also resolved in favor of many measures adopted the previous year by the Liberty League: cheap postage, abolition of unnecessary offices, more offices elected by the people, free grant of public lands, retrenchment in government expenditures, payment of the public debt.³⁴

³⁴ Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 478-482; Smith, Liberty and Free Soil Parties, p. 140-141; Oliver Dyer, Phonographic Report of the Proceedings of the National Free Soil Convention at Buffalo, N. Y. August 9th and 10th, 1848 (Buffalo: G. H. Derby and Co., n. d.), passim.

The major division therefore between the radical abolitionists' Liberty League and the Free Soil party was not over Goodell's effort to include numerous reforms in his platform, but rather over their divergent approach to slavery and the Negro. As Eric Foner has noted, the Free Soil party was the first antislavery group to "avoid the question of Negro rights in its national platform."³⁵ The party was deliberately designed to serve the white men's interest, to assure the settlement of the West by white settlers only without the encumbrance of either the institution of slavery or of the black man.³⁶ Goodell and the League, on the other hand, aimed to create in the West a free landholding white and black population whose economic independence would spell political freedom for both races.³⁷

Furthermore, conservative abolitionists agreed to accept the milder Free Soil position of nonextension of slavery to the territories, leaving slavery for the moment untouched in the South. Goodell and the radicals, however, took a more advanced step toward

³⁵Eric Foner, "Politics and Prejudice: The Free Soil Party and the Negro, 1849-1852," Journal of Negro History, 50 (October 1965), 239.

³⁶Chaplain W. Morrison, Democratic Politics and Sectionalism The Wilmot Proviso Controversy (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 70-75.

³⁷See Goodell, Address at Macedon Convention, p. 7-13.

national abolition in the states and the guarantee of the political and economic rights of the Negro. Goodell contended that the Constitution not only authorized the abolition of slavery in the states, but also provided for Negro equality. It was this unique interpretation of the Constitution that became the bone of contention between the radicals and the Free Soil abolitionists, and which made the break between these two groups permanent in the 1850's.

Goodell's constitutional argument was not new to political abolitionists. It had been widely discussed in abolitionist circles since 1836. Samuel J. May, a Garrisonian, was the first one to argue that the Constitution was an antislavery document.³⁸ In January, 1837 Nathaniel P. Rogers, another Garrisonian, and editor from New Hampshire, went even further and argued that not only was the Constitution committed to freedom, but that the institution itself was unconstitutional.³⁹

Alvan Stewart, a close friend of Goodell and a major leader in the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, went a step further. Basing his argument almost exclusively on the due process clause of the fifth amendment, Stewart urged the doctrine that the federal government had the constitutional power to abolish slavery

³⁸ Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 476.

³⁹ N. P. Rogers, "The Constitution," Quarterly Anti-Slavery Magazine, II (January, 1837), 145-153; Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 476.

in the states. In September, 1837 he presented this argument before the New York State Anti-Slavery Convention. Though the Convention laid his paper aside, the delegates did agree to refer the argument to the parent society at the next anniversary meeting in May.⁴⁰ When Stewart attempted at the American Anti-Slavery Convention to amend that organization's constitution in order to strike out the clause which conceded to the states the right to legislate in regard to slavery, a heated debate ensued. Although the majority voted in favor of his amendment, it failed to receive the required two thirds vote.⁴¹

Goodell, probably influenced by his friend Stewart, accepted the Constitutional argument in the early 1840's. In a pamphlet he published in 1844 entitled Views of the American Constitutional Law, in its bearing upon American Slavery Goodell elaborated on Stewart's argument. Aside from the fifth amendment, Goodell found numerous provisions in the Constitution which outlawed slavery in the states.

⁴⁰ Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 476. Friend of Man, September 27 and October 18, 1837; Luther R. Marsh, ed. Writings and Speeches of Alvan Stewart on Slavery (New York: A. B. Burdick, 1860), p. 27-28; sketch of Stewart written by Goodell, p. 26-33.

⁴¹ Fifth Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society, May 8, 1838, p. 9.

The preamble, he maintained, spoke against slavery. For the framers held that the aim of the document was to "establish justice... promote general welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty...." In addition, in the commerce clause the Constitution gave the right to Congress to determine what was property and then to prohibit such trade among the states. The Constitution further provided for the abolition of slavery in the states by its guarantee to every state of a republican form of government. Since to Goodell slavery was inconsistent with a republican government, the federal government was empowered by the Constitution to prohibit slavery in the states.⁴²

Goodell also argued that the spirit of the Constitution was one "of human equality, directly and specifically hostile to spirit of caste, especially to a caste founded on the circumstances of color, of blood, of race, or of descent." The fact the Constitution did not qualify its provisions with the word "white" was proof to Goodell that the document did not recognize the existence of a caste. In fact, the Constitution showed its opposition to slavery through the Bill of Rights which guaranteed to everyone regardless of color certain basic rights.⁴³

⁴² William Goodell, Views of American Constitutional Law In Its Bearing upon American Slavery (Utica: Jackson and Chaplin, 1844), p. 3-80.

⁴³Ibid., p. 81-127.

Goodell further argued that slavery was not legal in the states even prior to the ratification of the Constitution. He claimed that that the decision of Lord Mansfield in 1772 in the Somerset Case which declared slavery illegal in England applied to the American colonies. Furthermore, the Declaration of Independence, which Goodell considered at part of the nation's constitutional law, outlawed slavery through its equality clause. Thus according to Goodell slavery was illegal on a number of grounds and it was incumbent on the federal government to rid the country of that unlawful institution.⁴⁴

Goodell's constitutional argument was strengthened by the appearance in 1845 of The Unconstitutionality of Slavery written by a Boston lawyer, Lysander Spooner, who was unconnected with the Liberty party.⁴⁵ In contrast to Goodell, Spooner's work was well-founded in legal dialectic. Spooner agreed that slavery was unconstitutional and that the federal government had the authority to abolish the institution in the states. Unlike Goodell, however, he based his interpretation of the Constitution on three legal rules: that only words that were consistent with justice and

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 3-5, 134-156.

⁴⁵ Spooner became an avowed anarchist after the Civil War; see Corrine Jacker, The Black Flag of Anarchy Antistatistism in the United States (N.Y.: Charles Scribner Sons, 1968) p. 81-83.

natural right shall be attributed to the provisions in the document; that if there were provisions that were opposed to natural right, it must be stated clearly and positively -- it cannot be implied; and that no historical or extraneous evidence could be admitted to fix an unjust or immoral meaning. Examining three so called proslavery clauses in the Constitution, Spooner found that none of them mentioned the word "slave" -- in fact, the document talks of "persons." He therefore concluded that since one must strain the meaning of these clauses for the purpose of favoring slavery and hence violate the principles of liberty and justice, such proslavery interpretation did not meet the above legal rule of interpretation. Like Goodell, he found numerous clauses in the Constitution which positively supported liberty and were definitely opposed to the basis of the institution of slavery.⁴⁶

The question that should be asked about Goodell's and Spooner's constitutional argument is not, as some historians have claimed, whether it is legally and historically valid. For most legal authorities agree that few Supreme Court decisions were made on the basis of that criteria. Instead, personal, social and political

⁴⁶ Lysander Spooner, The Unconstitutionality of Slavery (Boston: Bella Marsh, 1845), passim.

factors played a major role in the decision of the judges.⁴⁷

⁴⁷The idea that the decisions of the Supreme Court justices have been influenced since the beginning of the Court by the political, economic and social atmosphere of the times has been commonly accepted by a great majority of legal authorities. The best exposition of that view covering the period under discussion is the two volume work by Charles Grove Haines, The Role of the Supreme Court in American Government and Politics 1789-1835 (N. Y.: Russell and Russell, 1960; original published in 1944), and with Foster H. Sherwood, The Role of the Supreme Court in American Government and Politics, 1835-1864 (1957). Haines in the first volume correctly points out that historians of the Supreme Court have failed to place the decisions of the justices within the political context of the times; the two volumes represent an effort to correct that failure. He sees the Constitution as a political document, not a mere "lawyer's document," which has been interpreted by all branches of government, including the judiciary, in a political manner; see vol. 1, p. 9-49. That same view was well expressed in the writings of the great scholar on the Court, Edward S. Corwin. He was among the first, in the words of Alpheus T. Mason and Gerald Garvey, to "demonstrate that the myth of judicial aloofness screened the fact of judicial power;" see a collection of the best of Corwin's essays in Alpheus T. Mason and Gerald Garvey, ed. American Constitutional History Essays by Edward S. Corwin (N. Y.: Harper Torchbooks, 1964); even in the controversy between judicial activism and judicial restraint there is an implicit agreement that justices' decisions were not based merely on legal, logical and historical criteria. See an important selection of essays and court decisions which illuminate the basic differences between these two school of thought in Wallace Mendelson, ed. The Supreme Court: Law and Discretion (Indinapolis: The Bobb-Merrill Co., Inc., 1967); Leonard W. Levy in discussing judicial review also touches on this problem; see his Judicial Review and the Supreme Court Selected Essays (N. Y.: Harper Torchbooks, 1967), especially the introduction p. 1-42. The rest of the book consists of a selection of essays by eminent legal historians and scholars. A short study of the Supreme Court during the period of Marshall and Taney was done by R. Kent Newmyer, The Supreme Court: under Marshall and Taney (N. Y.: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1968),

A better question is whether Goodell's constitutional argument provided at the time adequate rationale for the federal government to take direct action against slavery in the states. What was unreasonable about Goodell's argument was not its interpretation of the Constitution, but his conviction that the federal government and the American people were ready in the two decades prior to the Civil War to take such a radical step short of violence toward national abolition of slavery and the establishment of a truly equalitarian society.

Few abolitionists were ready to accept Goodell's constitutional argument. They continued to cling to the position taken by the American Anti-Slavery Society in the 1830's that though the Constitution was an antislavery document, it did not give authority to the federal government to interfere with slavery in the states. But since slavery was a creature of local law, it could be outlawed by the federal government outside the states. Hence the advocacy by abolitionists of federal abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and in the territories, and the abolition of the domestic slave trade.⁴⁸ Political abolitionists did not depart from that

⁴⁸ Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 74-75; Friend of Man, August 8, 1838; Anti-Slavery Lecturer, October, 1839.

position in 1840 when the Liberty party was founded. They accepted the interpretation of Birney and Chase that the Constitution was committed to freedom though the document permitted the existence of slavery in the states. But slavery outside that jurisdiction had no legal existence and could be abolished by the federal government. The federal government should therefore divorce itself completely from slavery and from control of the Slave Power. Slavery in the states, according to this argument, would eventually be abolished through a government policy of containing and isolating the institution. Eventually this Liberty party position was adopted by the Republican party.⁴⁹

To Goodell, such arguments were absurd. The Constitution, he maintained, either was for liberty or for slavery. It could not both sanction slavery in the states while standing for liberty outside that jurisdiction. The federal government could not be neutral. It must either permit or forbid the recapture of fugitive slaves, to pledge either to support or suppress slave insurrection, either to include or exclude slaves in apportionment or representation in Congress, to admit or exclude black testimony in federal

⁴⁹ Letter, Salmon P. Chase to Smith, May 14, 1842, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Foner, Free Soil Free Labor, Free Men, p. 75-83.

courts, to permit or forbid free or bond blacks to serve in office. The Constitution, he insisted, guaranteed the rights of all its citizens, whether they resided in the states or in the territories or in the District of Columbia.⁵⁰

Goodell further argued that eventual abolition of slavery would be hindered by admitting the existence of a Constitutional compromise with slavery in the states. He agreed that some local victories could be gained by this Constitutional argument but only at the cost of the primary objective - abolition. In any case, such a view of the Constitution left to the slave states "the right to maintain slavery as long as they please, and yet remaining in the Union, with the right, under modification, of making the free states their hunting-ground for fugitives." Such a position was to Goodell both immoral and impractical.⁵¹

Goodell's pamphlet in 1844 on the unconstitutionality of slavery, therefore, meant a complete break with the accepted interpretation of the Constitution by the Liberty party. In contrast to

⁵⁰ Goodell, Views of American Constitutional Law, p. 18; Letter, Goodell to Tappan, January 5, 1850, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁵¹ Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 579-581, 567-569.

the constitutional arguments of Rogers and Stewart, (who never bothered to publish their ideas in a pamphlet form) Goodell's work was widely circulated.⁵² It prompted widespread discussion and debates and created dissension in the Liberty party. As we have seen, Goodell first tried to introduce his constitutional view into the Liberty party at the Port Byron Convention. His Address further elicited debate about the constitutionality of slavery in the states.⁵³ The Liberty League was created primarily as a result of the Liberty party's refusal to adopt Goodell's constitutional argument.⁵⁴

In 1848 when most Liberty men were absorbed within the Free Soil party, Goodell's League and the Garrisonians were the only remaining radical abolitionist groups. But the Garrisonians bitterly opposed Goodell's constitutional argument. In fact, the Garrisonians agreed with the South that the Constitution was a

⁵²Ibid., p. 476-477; Two editions of Goodell's pamphlet on the Constitution were published and 13,000 copies distributed; see Letter, Goodell to Lysander Spooner, December 28, 1853, Spooner Papers, New York Historical Society; Wilson, Slave Power, I, 555.

⁵³Address at Port Byron, p. 5; Letter, Smith to Judge Grideley, December 3, 1845, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Russell Erett to Amos Phelps, May 18, 1845, Phelps Papers, Boston.

⁵⁴Goodell, Address at Macedon Convention p. 3-6.

proslavery document. Since they were convinced that slavery could not be abolished by constitutional means, they advocated disunion so that the North would not be an accessory to the sin of the South. ⁵⁵

To Goodell, however, disunion was immoral since it would allow slavery to exist in the South, and it would not eliminate white prejudice. But he agreed with Garrison that the Union was not sacrosanct. "I only cling to the Union," he told Garrison, "as a means of abolishing slavery." If the Union were ever to become a hindrance to emancipation, then he too was ready to advocate secession. ⁵⁶ "If the States, or the Nation can abolish slavery," he wrote Lewis Tappan, "let it be done, and let the Union continue. If the States will not and the Nation cannot, then let the Union (or or the Confederation) be severed."⁵⁷

⁵⁵John L. Thomas, The Liberator, p. 318-337; Disunion Address of the American Anti-Slavery Society and F. Jackson's Letter on the Pro-Slavery Character of the Constitution (N. Y.: A. A. S. S., 1845), passim; this pamphlet was in part a reply to Goodell's work on the Constitution.

⁵⁶Letter, Goodell to Garrison, March 1, 1847, Liberator, March 19, 1847.

⁵⁷Letter, Goodell to Tappan, January 5, 1850, Goodell Papers, Berea.

By refusing to be absorbed within the Free Soil party, Goodell isolated himself from the mainstream of the antislavery movement. Even his small Liberty League did not long survive. For by the end of 1849 it was absorbed by the remnant Liberty party, a small group of abolitionists who had refused to join the League and Free Soil.⁵⁸ Goodell was not too happy with that development. Unwilling to compromise his principles and always intent on applying them literally to all situations, Goodell doubted whether the remnant Liberty party embodied all the ideas of the League. "It [the Liberty party] is whatever Gerrit Smith happens to be for at the time being," he wrote his father-in-law; it would be as elusive as to "run after a rainbow as to attempt keeping company with him."⁵⁹

⁵⁸Letter, Asa B. Smith to Gerrit Smith, March 27, 1849, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, A. B. Smith to Smith, May 22, 1848, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, S. W. Green to Smith, January 11, 1849, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Liberty Leaguer, March 1 and May, 1849; Letter, Goodell to father-in-law, October 4, 1849, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁵⁹Letter, Goodell to father-in-law, October 4, 1849, Goodell Papers, Berea; Model Worker, September 15 and October 6, and November 10, 1848; see also Goodell, "To the members of the Liberty League," October 7, 1848, ibid., October 13, 1848; Goodell's controversy with the remnant Liberty party continued for a number of months and was dutifully followed by the Model Worker, the organ of the Liberty party; see Letter, L. C. Hough to B. Breen, November 14, 1848, ibid., November 24, 1848; Letter Goodell to Editor, no date, ibid., December 8, 1848 and January 5, 1849; Letter D. Plumb to Editor, January 1, 1849, ibid., January 12, 1849.

Alienated from most of the Liberty men and with no real following, Goodell by the end of 1849 was discouraged. "I find myself almost alone, even in this region Honeoye," he wrote, "I should expect no one, to stand with me."⁶⁰ Despite his discouragement, the five years up to 1854 were his most productive. He continued to write for antislavery publications, especially for Tappan and his American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.⁶¹ In addition, during this time he published two volumes of the Democracy of Christianity, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, and The American Slave Code. Though Democracy of Christianity did not sell well and was largely ignored in antislavery circles, the latter two became works of reference to contemporaries and since

⁶⁰ Letter, Goodell to father-in-law, October 4, 1849, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁶¹ Letter, Goodell to father-in-law, July 13, 1849, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Tappan to Goodell, August 31, 1849, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Tappan to Goodell, September 11, 1849, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Goodell to Josiah Cady, July 13, 1852, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter Mrs. Goodell to Cady, October 20, 1853, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Mrs. Goodell to Goodell, February 21, 1853, Goodell Papers; Letter, Oberlin.

then to modern historians.⁶²

Goodell's discouragement about his own success in leading the radical political abolitionists was short-lived. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 revived his hope of uniting abolitionists on the basis of the constitutional abolition of slavery. That Act, he predicted, would lead to a breakup of the Whig and Democratic parties and its realignment on the slavery issue. "The present movements," he told his father-in-law, "seem like the death struggle of American slavery; and the new fugitive slave law appears to be one of the last acts of the drama."⁶³ Goodell

62

Frank Tannenbaum, Slave and Citizen, The Negro in the Americas (N. Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), uses Goodell's Slave Code as a major source to prove his contention - a contention Goodell had made throughout his antislavery career - that American slavery was the harshest in world history; Stanley Elkins, too, following Tannenbaum, makes use of Goodell's work; see Elkins, Slavery, p. 55-62; Tappan tried to circulate the Slave Code in England; see Letter, Tappan to (?) (name of correspondent is unknown), February 15, 1853, Abel-Henderson, Heloise, Klingberg, A Sidelight on Anglo-American Relations, p. 506-511; Letter, Tappan to Peter Bolton, February 15, 1853, ibid., p. 511-512; Letter, Tappan to Bolton, February 22, 1853, ibid., p. 512-514; Letter, Tappan to L.A. Chamerovzov, June 16, 1853, ibid., p. 518-519.

63

Goodell to father-in-law (date unclear since the letter is incomplete, but from internal evidence it was probably written in 1850), Goodell Papers, Berea.

was convinced that the North and especially New York would refuse to enforce the Act.⁶⁴

The uproar over the Fugitive Act led some antislavery reformers to attempt to revive political abolitionism that was shattered by the defeat of 1848. In 1851 therefore Joshua Giddings, the antislavery Congressman from Ohio, called a meeting at Cleveland for the purpose of creating a party that less compromised with principle than Free Soil. He invited all "friends of freedom" and especially such radical leaders as Goodell, Smith, Chaplin and Francis J. LeMoyne of Pennsylvania. Goodell and Smith did not attend, but representatives of the radical group were present. The Convention, however, refused to adopt the idea of the unconstitutionality of slavery. The delegates delayed until the coming year the nomination of president and vice president.⁶⁵

The radicals, were further disappointed when the call for a National Free Soil nominating Convention to meet at Pittsburgh on August 11, 1852 invited only those who supported the party's

⁶⁴Nineteenth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, January 22, 1851 (Boston: Andrews and Prentiss, 1851), p. 80-82.

⁶⁵James B. Stewart, Joshua B. Giddings and the Tactics of Radical Politics (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve Univ., 1969), p. 203-204; Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, p. 331; National Era, October 2 and 9, 1851.

platform of 1848. Nevertheless, it did not prevent Smith, Tappan, LeMoyne and Frderick Douglass from attending and from attempting to convince the Convention to adopt their views regarding the Constitution and the illegality of slavery. The presence of Douglass was especially significant. In contrast to the Free Soil Convention of 1848, the 1852 meeting welcomed blacks and especially Douglass and accorded them equal treatment. Douglass, who had broken with Garrison in 1848, was convinced, through Goodell and Smith's arguments, of the unconstitutionality of slavery. His weekly, the Frederick Douglass Paper, which since 1851 had been marged with the Liberty Party Paper, advocated strongly that position.⁶⁶

⁶⁶Oberlin Evangelist, July 7, and August 4, 1852; Frederick Douglass Paper, August 30, 1852; Philip Foner, The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass (3 vols. N.Y.: International Pub., 1950), I, 88, 52-53; Letter, Douglass to Smith, January 21, 1851, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Douglass to Smith, May 1, 1851; Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Douglass to Smith, May 21, 1851, Smith Papers, Syracuse; There may have been a connection between Douglass' change of views regarding the Constitution and the merging of his weekly with the Liberty Party Paper which was financed by Smith. When that merger was contemplated, Douglass in the same letter agreed to the merger and also revealed to Smith his change of view regarding the Constitution, a veiew about which he had doubts less than five months earlier. As a matter of fact, Douglass expected that accusation to be made against him when he was to announce his change of views; and he thus asked Smith to assist him in defending his new position. See Letter, Douglass to Smith, May 1 and 21, 1851, Smith Papers, Syracuse. Of course it is not intimated that Douglass changed his views regarding the Constitution primarily in expectation of financial aid from Smith. For there are indications that he was moving in that direction many months before that merger was planned, but it may have hastened his decision.

The radicals were now determined to convince the Convention to adopt their view of the Constitution. When the majority report conceded the legality of slavery in the states and called only for the separation of the federal government from slavery, Smith presented the minority report. The document urged the delegates to create a democratic League based on a radical platform of equal political rights to all regardless of race or sex, the illegality of slavery in the states, and land reform.⁶⁷

Realizing that the report had little chance of being adopted, Tappan, who had only recently accepted Goodell's and Smith's views on the Constitution, moved to amend the resolution of the majority making slavery illegal in the states. A heated debate ensued. Surprisingly, many delegates, anxious to conciliate the radicals and gain their support, spoke in favor of Tappan's resolution. Charles Francis Adams, the vice presidential candidate on the Free Soil ticket in 1848, told the delegates frankly that it was important to gain Smith's support in the coming campaign and therefore urged the Convention to adopt the amendment. When the vote was taken, 134 voted in favor of Tappan's resolution to 79 against.

⁶⁷Frederick Douglass Paper, August 20, 1852; National Era, August 26, 1852; Letter, Smith to Liberty Party of Madison County, August 13, 1852, National Anti-Slavery Standard, September 2, 1852.

But on a motion by another delegate, the Convention voted to further amend that resolution which in effect killed the intent of Tappan's amendment. The Convention finally adopted an ambiguous resolution which called slavery a sin and a crime which "no law nor usage can sanction or mitigate..." Rejecting the minority report, the delegates adopted a platform based on nonextension of slavery, divorce of federal government from that institution, and the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act. Hale and George W. Julian of Indiana, later the son-in-law of Giddings, were then nominated for president and vice president on what the delegates called the Free Democratic ticket.⁶⁸

The radicals were divided over whether to endorse the platform and candidates of the Free Democratic party. Goodell interpreted the nomination of Hale in place of Smith, and the vague plank in the platform regarding the illegality of slavery, as indication of the Convention's rejection of the radicals' construction of the Constitution.⁶⁹ Douglass, on the other hand, endorsed Hale

⁶⁸ Frederick Douglass Paper, August 20, 1852; National Era, August 26, 1852; Letter, Tappan to Smith, September 2, 1852, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

⁶⁹ C. A. Hammond to editor, no date, Frederick Douglass Paper, August 27, 1852; Hammond was a close friend of Goodell and both agreed on the issues; see Letter, Hammond to Smith June 16, 1851, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

and Julian's candidacy. Though he admitted that the platform was not perfect, he considered it a step in the right direction and he urged the Liberty party to endorse the ticket.⁷⁰ Smith, though he did not go as far as to make an all-out endorsement of the Free Democratic ticket, did leave the door open for such an endorsement. Apparently, Smith was expecting some concessions from the Free Democrats before accepting their platform and candidates.⁷¹ In spite of these differences, the radicals did agree that the remnant Liberty party should be sustained and not absorbed within the Free Democratic party. In any case, at the upcoming convention in September the radicals expected to agree on a position regarding the Free Democratic party.

A call for a nominating convention of the Liberty party had been made in April.⁷² A month later the radical leaders of the party, Birney, Smith, and Goodell addressed a letter to the public urging all shades of the political spectrum, Whigs, Democrats and Free Soilers to attend the convention. Their party, they insisted, was the only radical group in the country that had taken

⁷⁰Frederick Douglass Paper, August 20, 1852.

⁷¹Letter, Smith to Liberty Party of Madison County, August 13, 1852, National Anti-Slavery Standard, September 2, 1852.

⁷²Frederick Douglass Paper, April 19, 1852.

a right position on the issues of the day, including temperance, land reform, and antislavery.⁷³

On September 1st Goodell, Smith and a small number of radicals mostly from New York state met at the Liberty Convention in Canastota, New York.⁷⁴ Both Goodell and Smith were placed on the business committee. As a result of the ensuing struggle, two reports emerged from the committee. Goodell's majority report refused to endorse the Free Democratic party on the ground that its platform failed to recognize the illegality of slavery, to provide equal political rights to all regardless of color or sex, and to call for the abolition of all monopolies and class legislation. The report thus recommended independent nominations by the Liberty party. Smith in his minority report on the other hand, favored the endorsement of the Free Democratic presidential candidates. However, the report made clear that the endorsement was based on the condition that the Free Democratic platform had in fact denied the legality of slavery, and had asserted

⁷³ Birney, Smith, and Goodell, "To the Public," May 12, 1852, ibid., July 9, 1852; Harlan, Gerrit Smith, p. 190 is mistaken in noting that this notice was not made public.

⁷⁴ Originally the Call was for a meeting in Buffalo, but a cholera epidemic in that city forced the Convention to meet at Canastota.

the equality of all regardless of sex or color.⁷⁵

A heated discussion followed the reading of the two reports. Although Goodell's was the majority report, it was rejected by the Convention, 55 to 41 votes and in its place Smith's report was adopted. The Convention appointed a committee with Smith as chairman to confer with Hale and Julian regarding their views on the legality of slavery. The delegates agreed to meet October 1st again to consider whether the Free Democratic candidates' position warranted Liberty endorsement.⁷⁶

Goodell and his followers, however, refused to accept the decision of the Convention. Instead, on the next day they convened as a separate group and voted to adopt Goodell's report. They then nominated Goodell and Charles C. Foote of Massachusetts for president and vice president. A national committee was organized two of whose members were women, Antoinette L. Brown of Monroe County and Rachel Ball of Madison County, both New York.⁷⁷

The further division in the Liberty party, which was already small in numbers and wielded little influence as a group, almost destroyed the entire organization. Garrison found the

⁷⁵Frederick Douglass Papers, September 10, 1852;
National Era, September 9, 1852.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

secession and the nomination of Goodell ludicrous. Goodell's nomination for the presidency 'by less than a baker's dozen, . . . ' he wrote May, 'is one of the most comical incidents of the age -- a 'farce in one act,' unequalled for its simplicity and folly.' "Pray, where is Goodell's common sense?" he asked, "where is his self-respect? where is his respect for the popular intelligence."⁷⁸

Judged strictly from the point of view of politics, Goodell's actions were indeed impractical and even ridiculous. But Goodell was not a politician. From Goodell's point of view, his actions were quite logical and consistent with his principles. Motivated primarily by his strict religious and moral convictions, in which politics played a subordinate role, Goodell believed that consistency both in word and deed were a true test of a person's honesty and integrity. Compromise and expediency were two pejorative terms in his vocabulary. It was sinful to indulge in such luxury at the expense of principle. To him political parties were not to be judged by the number of voters they attracted, but "by the purity of their intentions, the nobility of their objects, the soundness of their principles, the comprehensiveness yet discrimination of their views, the deliberate wisdom and righteousness of their measurers, the in-

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Letter, Garrison to Samuel J. May, September 16, 1852, Garrison Papers, Boston.

flexibility of their purpose, and the integrity of their action."⁷⁹

It is no wonder that Goodell was unable to attract a large following to his radical abolitionist standard.

It was on this ground that Goodell defended his action at the last Convention. He admonished Smith's faction for speaking one way and voting another. Furthermore, the entire stand of the Free Democratic party was immoral and unworkable. By leaving slavery to the states abolitionists were "surrendering politically as a nation the whole question of slavery."⁸⁰ They were in effect leaving the fate of the slaves to the slaveholders. How, he asked rhetorically, could one tell a shrieking slave mother that slavery was sectional and freedom national.⁸⁰

Goodell, however, did win in the end. When the committee appointed by the Liberty convention to inquire regarding Hale's views did not receive a reply, another meeting was called for September 30.⁸¹ At the subsequent Convention at Syracuse, in which some members of Goodell's faction attended, Goodell was nominated for president even though he himself did not attend. S. M. Bell of Virginia was chosen for vice president. Smith defended the decision of the Convention on the ground that the

⁷⁹ Goodell, Address of the Macedon Convention, p. 13.

⁸⁰ Frederick Douglass Paper, September 17 and 24, and October 1, 1852.

⁸¹ Ibid., September 17, 1852.

Liberty party's aim was to preserve the party of its principles while awaiting the day when the Free Democratic party platform could coincide with that of the Liberty party. In the meantime, Smith contended, the delegates nominated a man who clearly represented the views of their party. "In him," Smith said of Goodell, "is a present, as well as unambiguous and full representation of its great and ultimately triumphant principles."⁸²

In spite of the reunion of the Liberty party, the vote for Goodell was negligible, for it was nowhere recorded. The only pleasant surprise to radical abolitionists was the election of Gerrit Smith to Congress. Smith was not nominated by the Liberty party, but by an independent ticket, which included antislavery Whigs, Democrats, Free Democrats, and political abolitionists. Smith's election meant that for the first and only time the radical abolitionist views of Goodell and his group would be represented in Congress. It would be a platform from which Smith advocated the idea of the unconstitutionality of slavery and its abolition in the states.⁸³

Though the Free Democratic party received 157,000 votes

⁸²Ibid., October 15, 1852; "National Liberty Convention, "Speeches and Letters of Gerrit Smith, 1843-1873," no pages.

⁸³Harlow, Gerrit Smith, p. 312-313; Stewart, Joshua B. Giddings, p. 222.

or 150,000 less than the Free Soilers of 1848, the hope for a powerful third party was quite strong. It was especially reinforced by the apparent disintegration of the Whig party.⁸⁴ But the events of 1844 to 1852 indicated that it would not be the kind of radical abolition party that Goodell was struggling to create during those eight years. For his failure to convince the majority of political abolitionists to form a radical reform political organization based on his constitutional argument destined Goodell to an isolated position within the antislavery movement in the 1850's. The ideology of the Republican party, a body which included all of the antislavery reforms and most of the political abolitionists, was far removed from abolitionist principles of the 1830's and 1840's and of Goodell's now radical approach to slavery, the Negro and American society in general.

Goodell, however, was not disillusioned by the disastrous defeat of the Liberty party. He still had hope of convincing political abolitionists to recreate that party on the basis of his constitutional argument. The defeat only indicated to him the need to enlighten public opinion of the idea that the federal government could effect the peaceful abolition of slavery through the exercise of its own

⁸⁴Smith, Liberty and Free Soil Parties, p. 257-260.

constitutional powers. He refused to realize that the election proved that his goals had little chance of success. Unalterably convinced of the eventual triumph of his ideas, Goodell disregarded the political realities of the times.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AMERICAN ABOLITION SOCIETY

The American Abolition Society that Goodell formed in 1855 was organized for the purpose of educating the public regarding the radical abolitionist method for abolishing slavery in the states. Goodell hoped to make radical abolitionism a viable alternative to the antislavery ideology of the Republican party. In contrast to what he called the Republican appeasement policy of nonextension of slavery in the territories, Goodell advanced his idea of national abolition as the most peaceful method for eradicating the peculiar institution. Goodell sought through the Society to create a radical political abolitionist party or at least to convince the Republican party to accept some part of the radical program.

The formation of the American Abolition Society refuted the commonly accepted belief that political abolitionism had died with the demise of the Liberty party. In truth, the abolition society was the sole organization to hold up the standard of political radicalism within the abolitionist movement. Furthermore, contrary to claims of some historians that the Garrisonians were the only radical abolitionist group of the 1850's, Goodell's American Abolition Society had also steadfastly refused to merge into a moderate antislavery coalition.

The American Abolition Society was organized at a time when the entire antislavery movement was in a stage of transition. Antislavery men were leaving the Whig and Democratic parties in large numbers. Though the vast majority of them eventually found their home in the rapidly emerging Republican party, radical abolitionists hoped to attract those of abolitionist persuasion to their organization.¹ This hope was not realized. The expectation was not completely unrealistic, however, for the radical abolitionist program appeared to be more logical, consistent, and straightforward than either the Republican or the Garrisonian position. The truth or falsity of their detractors' argument that the radical abolitionist program would lead to civil war was never proven by history; but certainly the policies of the Republican party did not prevent the coming of the war.

In the early 1850s the abolitionist movement was in disarray. The only organized group of abolitionists were the Garrisonians. Their number, however, was quite small and their utopian, non-political approach to antislavery offered to practical program for immediate abolition short of dissolving the Union and leaving the slaves to their fate in the South. Most of the political abolitionists,

¹Letter, Goodell to Maria Frost, April 17, 1855, Goodell Papers, Berea.

had been absorbed first in to the Free Soil party and later into the Republican party. Others simply left the movement entirely. Even the skeletal abolitionist organization, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, which in 1840 had broken with the American Anti-Slavery Society, had been disbanded in 1855.

Thus there was no abolitionist party or organization presenting an alternative to the program of the Republican party. Goodell was determined not to let the abolitionist movement merge with an organization whose antislavery ideology represented the abolitionist position of the 1830's, not that of the 1850's. He hoped to persuade abolitionists to support the direct abolition of slavery, a position they had not dared to take in the 1830's. Through the American Abolition Society, the abolitionist cause would again act as a radical influence on the antislavery movement.²

The first steps toward the formation of such an organization were taken in 1853 when Goodell disseminated nationally the constitutional argument. He wrote for the National Era, a widely circulated political abolitionist weekly edited by Gamaliel Bailey

² Radical Abolitionist, December, 1855.

in Washington, D. C.³ In the course of the next two years Goodell published thirty-nine articles in that journal on the "Legal Tenure of Slavery," trying to disprove the argument accepted even by abolitionists that slavery was a domestic institution sanctioned by local law.⁴

In March, 1854 Goodell took another step toward the formation of an abolition organization based on his constitutional views. He founded the American Jubilee, a New York monthly, in order to "unfold, explain, vindicate, and propagate, these sentiments [the unconstitutionality of slavery] calling on the people to maintain them at the ballot-box, thus providing for a federal legislature, a federal judiciary, and a federal executive, that shall give them a national expression and force."⁵

³John Scoble wrote his Committee in Britain that the National Era had a circulation of 28,000 monthly; See Letter, John Scoble to the Committee of British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, February 14, 1853, Abel-Henderson, Heloise, and Klingberg, A Side-Light on Anglo-American Relations, p. 500-506. Goodell claimed that the paper had a circulation of 50,000; see Goodell to Lysander Spooner, December 28, 1853, Spooner Papers, New York Historical Society. But the figure of 27,000 is probably correct; see Frederick Douglass Paper, January 14, 1854.

⁴Goodell's articles appeared in the National Era for two years, from November 26, 1853 to November 1, 1855.

⁵"Prospectus," American Jubilee, March 1854.

The political situation in early 1854 provided Goodell a further opportunity to advance his idea of national abolition.⁶ The country was in an uproar over the Kansas-Nebraska Bill that Stephen A. Douglas had introduced into the Senate in January. The bill, which repealed the Missouri Compromise and left the question of establishing slavery in the territories to the decision of the settlers, alarmed and angered many in the North. A growing number began to accept the abolitionist argument that the bill was in reality a conspiracy by the slaveholding aristocracy to extend slavery into all the western territories.⁷

Taking advantage of the situation, Goodell convinced Lewis Tappan to convene a meeting of the executive committee of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. As a result, Tappan persuaded the committee to accept the unconstitutionality of slavery as the subject of discussion for the coming May anniversary meeting of the Society. Goodell and Gerrit Smith were invited to present their arguments. Goodell came to the meeting well prepared. He delivered a long address on the illegality of slavery, calling for national abolition of the institution. Though the Society did not endorse entirely Goodell's view, he was

⁶ Letter, Mrs. Goodell to Maria G. Frost, February 28, 1854, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁷ Louis Filler, Crusade Against Slavery 1830-1860 (N.Y.: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), p. 228-230.

encouraged to continue the monthly.⁸

By March, 1855 sufficient members of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society had been converted to enable Goodell and Tappan to call an abolitionist meeting for the purpose of forming a new organization. This New York City Abolition Society was based upon the principles of immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery in the states. The officers of the new society included Tappan as president, James McCune Smith (a prominent black New York city physician), vice president, William E. Whiting (a member of the executive committee of the American Missionary Association), treasurer, and Goodell, secretary.⁹

As soon as the New York City Abolition Society was organized, Goodell introduced a call, (subsequently endorsed by Gerrit Smith and Frederick Douglass) for a national convention of radical

⁸ Letter, Lewis Tappan to Gerrit Smith, March 15, 1854, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Lewis Tappan to Gerrit Smith, March 21, 1854, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Sketch of that meeting found in Frederick Douglass Paper, May 19, 1854 and in N. Y. Tribune, May 11, 1854.

⁹ Letter, Tappan to L. A. Chamerovzov, April 13, 1855, Abel-Henderson, Heloise, and Kingberg, A Sidelight on Anglo-American Relations, p. 544-545. "Preliminary Meeting," March 15, 1855, MSS Records and Letters of American Abolition Society, Oberlin, [hereinafter referred to as Records of the A. A. S., Oberlin]; American Jubilee, April 1855.

abolitionists to meet at Syracuse in June. Hoping the radical abolitionists would endorse his monthly as their official organ, Goodell suspended publication to await the decision of the upcoming convention.¹⁰

As chairman of the business committee, Goodell dominated the proceedings of the Syracuse Convention. He came to the meeting well prepared, with an "Address" to the people of the United States, a Declaration of Sentiments, "An Exposition of the Constitutional Duty of the United States to Abolish Slavery in the States," and a series of resolutions, all of which were adopted by the delegates. But the Convention did not organize a national society. Instead, a Central Abolition Board was created which was empowered to call another convention for the purpose of organizing a national society. Goodell together with the two Tappan brothers, Arthur and Lewis, J. M. Smith, Simeon S. Jocelyn Whiting, E. V. Clarke, George Whipple, and Samuel Wilde were appointed to the Board.¹¹

Although no national society was organized at Syracuse, the Convention established the principles of radical abolitionism that became the basis of the American Abolition Society. The

¹⁰ American Jubilee, April, 1855; Letter, Goodell to daughter, April 27, 1855, Goodell Papers, Berea.

¹¹ Proceedings of the Convention of Radical Political Abolitionists, held at Syracuse, N. Y.: June 26th, 27th and 28th, 1855 (N. Y.: Central Abolition Board, 1855), p. 57-65; [hereinafter referred to as Proceedings of Convention at Syracuse]; Frederick Douglass Paper, July 6, 1855.

delegates first had to deal with the divisive issue of whether violent means should be used to abolish slavery. In contrast to Goodell, who favored a peaceful means for the removal of the peculiar institution, some abolitionists, effected by the war spirit of the 1850's, were ready to resort to violence. John Brown's address at the Convention, appealing for arms to "defend freedom" in Kansas, led to a heated debate over the question of violence. Some delegates, notably Smith and Douglass, spoke in support of Brown.¹² But peace men like Tappan and Goodell objected strenuously to the attempt to make the "war spirit as an auxiliary to the cause of abolition." The resolutions which were written by Goodell and adopted by the Convention indicated that the abolitionists favored peaceful means "at the ballot box, to preserve and regain liberty...." Though the delegates expressed sympathy

¹²Frederick Douglass Paper, July 6, 1855. Letter, John Brown to his wife and children, July 28, 1855, in F. B. Sanborn, ed. The Life and Letters of John Brown, Liberator of Kansas, and Martyr of Virginia (Boston: Roberts Bros., 1891), p. 193. Stephen B. Oates, To Purge this Land with Blood A Biography of John Brown (N. Y.: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 90-91. Proceedings of Convention at Syracuse, p. 62; Smith contributed \$20 toward Brown's fund.

for the antislavery forces in Kansas, they called not for arms, but for contributions to aid "in an accession to their antislavery settlers numbers, and to the means whereby they may be permanently established in their new home."¹³

Besides repudiating violence, the radical abolitionists pledged themselves to fight for racial equality, a cause which many abolitionists had abandoned when they moved toward Free Soil.¹⁴ The radicals' dedication to equal rights was reflected in their appointment of James McCune Smith, a black, to the presidency of the Convention, an unprecedented act even among abolitionists. Smith was also made a member of the Central Abolition Board.¹⁵

The "Declaration," "Exposition," and the "Address," which were written by Goodell and adopted by the Convention, represented the radical abolitionist principles that were later adopted by the American Abolition Society. In these papers Goodell attacked the nonextension policy of the Republican party, and the

¹³Proceedings of Convention, at Syracuse, p. 62-63, and 52-56; Letter, John Brown to wife and children, June 28, 1855, ibid., p. 193.

¹⁴Radical Abolitionist, August, 1855.

¹⁵Proceedings of Convention at Syracuse, p. 59, 61, and 64-65.

Garrisonian disunionist position. Goodell challenged them both on moralistic and progmatic grounds. Nonextension, according to Goodell, could not possibly be a remedy for slavery, because it was immoral to fight slavery in one part of the nation while permitting its existence elsewhere. It was impractical to expect to suppress a crime in one part of the nation while admitting its legality in other areas.¹⁶

Nor would Garrison's policy of "non union with slaveholders" lead to the abolition of slavery in the South. It would be immoral to secede from the South and leave the slaves in their present condition. The remedy, Goodell insisted, was revolutionary. For while the Constitution made no provision for the dissolution of the Union, it provided amply for the abolition of slavery everywhere. But Goodell would countenance revolution or dissolution if, after studying the Constitution, the people decided that the document protected slavery in the states.¹⁷ This admission by Goodell is revealing. His "peace principles" were not dogma to him. Later he would advocate force to prevent disunion during the secession crisis.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 35-39.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 42-44 and 49.

The Convention showed its interest in national abolition by contributing \$4,000 to finance the work of the Central Abolition Board (although \$3,000 of the amount was pledged by Gerrit Smith).¹⁸ Smith and Tappan were especially enthusiastic about national abolition. In fact, immediately after the Convention, Tappan suggested to Smith that they both contribute \$30,000 annually for the next five years to help publicize Goodell's constitutional argument.¹⁹ Although Smith turned down the plan, he did contribute in the course of four years more than \$8,000 to the American Abolition Society. It was his large scale contributions that kept the Society from the brink of financial disaster.²⁰

As expected, the Convention adopted Goodell's monthly as the official organ of the radical political abolitionists, changing the name to Radical Abolitionist.²¹ In August, 1855 Goodell resumed

¹⁸Ibid., p. 58, and 66-67; Frederick Douglass Paper, July 6, 1855.

¹⁹Letter, Tappan to Smith, July 4, 1855, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Tappan to Smith, July 12, 1855, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

²⁰Letter, Goodell to Smith, April 22, 1857, American Abolition Society Letterbook, Oberlin. Goodell estimated that Smith contributed two thirds of the Society's budget. In the first two years he contributed \$250 monthly, and in 1857 to 1859 about \$100 monthly.

²¹Proceedings of Convention at Syracuse p. 63-67; "First Meeting of Central Abolition Board," July 11, 1855, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin.

the publication of the journal under the auspices of the Central Abolition Board.²²

Goodell, would not rest until he could form a national radical abolitionist society to place his work on a firmer basis. In August, at the request of the Central Abolition Committee, Goodell and James M. Smith called for a national convention to meet in Boston in the end of October. That Convention, which was attended by 300 to 400 delegates from a number of states, organized the American Abolition Society. The Society's constitution was taken verbatim from the New York City Abolition Society. The Convention also adopted Goodell's articles on the "Legal Tenure of Slavery." In the resolutions the delegates rejected Garrisonian and Republican policies for the abolition of slavery. They also denounced in strong terms the Know Nothing party for its racism, nativism, and secrecy. Gerrit Smith was elected president of the new society with Lewis Tappan, Samuel McFarland of Pennsylvania, A. B. Burdick of Rhode Island, J. W. North of Minnesota, vice presidents. Goodell was made corresponding secretary, and Arthur Tappan, treasurer.²³

²² Monthly Meeting, August 1, 1855, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin.

²³ Radical Abolitionist, December, 1855; Frederick Douglass Paper, November 9 and 23, 1855; Letter, Goodell to Maria Frost, October 21 and 26, 1855, Goodell Papers, Berea.

The composition of the leadership of the American Abolition Society indicated that the organization was a logical out-growth of the abolitionist movement of the 1830's and 1840's. The most conspicuous and most active leaders of the Society, Goodell, Tappan, Smith, and Jocelyn were old line abolitionists. The American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society had been completely absorbed by the radical abolitionists.²⁴ The president of the old Society, Arthur Tappan, became treasurer of the radical organization, and the corresponding and recording secretaries of the former, Lewis Tappan and James M. Smith, became vice presidents with William Whiting, its treasurer, as member of the executive committee of the new Society.

In addition, the major source of leadership of the Society came from the American Missionary Association, which had been organized in 1846. Its officers in turn came from the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. As Johnson has pointed out, six of the eight signers of the call for a radical abolition convention at Syracuse were members of the A. M. A., four of whom were officers (Tappan, Jocelyn, Whiting, and Whipple) and two contributing members (Goodell and Gerrit Smith).²⁵ When the Society was formed in

²⁴ Letter, Tappan to L. A. Chamerovzov, April 13, 1855, Abel-Henderson, Heloise and Klingberg, A Side-Light on Anglo-American Relations, p. 359-360.

²⁵ Clifton Johnson, "The American Missionary Association," p. 208.

Boston, four out of seven of the most active members of the new executive committee of that organization were officers of the A. M. A.: Lewis Tappan, and William Whiting were on the executive committee of that missionary association; Jocelyn was corresponding secretary and chief editor of the American Missionary. In addition to Goodell, who was a member of the association, these men participated in almost all of the executive committee meetings and were responsible for the running of the radical abolition society. It is therefore not surprising that at the 1857 annual meeting of the A. M. A. the organization endorsed the radicals' basic contention that slavery was unconstitutional.²⁶

As soon as the Society was organized Goodell mobilized an effort to convince the public and Congress of his constitutional argument. Lysander Spooner prepared a petition requesting a Congressional investigation of the constitutional question relating to slavery.²⁷ In addition, copies of Spooner's Unconstitutionality

²⁶Ibid., p. 97-110, and 210.

²⁷Meeting of Executive Committee, December 5, 1855, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Lysander Spooner, December 11, 1855, Spooner Papers, New York Historical Society; Letter, Goodell to Spooner, December 18, 1855, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

of Slavery were sent out to each member of Congress.²⁸ Lecturers were appointed to spread radical views throughout the country, but due to lack of means the number of lecturers had to be limited.²⁹ Though the Radical Abolitionist had only 3,000 paying subscribers, the committee sent out free of charge 20,000 of the first issue and 10,000 copies of the second issue of the monthly.³⁰ In January, 1856 Goodell in the name of the executive committee addressed a letter to the executive committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society inviting them to a public discussion regarding the Constitution and slavery.³¹

²⁸Meeting of Executive Committee, December 5, 1855 and January 4, 1856, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Spooner, December 20, 1855, A. A. S., Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Spooner, January 5, 1856, A. A. S., Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Spooner, January 7, 1856, ibid., A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

²⁹Letter, Goodell to Cowles, December 19, 1855, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to W. B. Davis, December 19, 1855, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Andrew J. R. Johnson, December 20, 1855, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to A. B. Burdick, December 20, 1855, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

³⁰Meeting of Executive Committee, December 8, 1855, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Smith, February 13, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; also same copy in Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Goodell to Henry Catlin, December 14, 1855, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

³¹Letter, Tappan, Goodell, Jocelyn and J. M. Smith on behalf to Executive Committee of A. A. S. to Executive Committee of American Anti-Slavery Society, January 16, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

Goodell found the response to his efforts very encouraging.³² Letters from all over the country congratulating him for the new society confirmed his optimism. Some of the correspondents informed him that similar societies were being organized in their localities.³³ Goodell was especially gratified at the public letters of endorsement from Charles G. Finney, and his friend John G. Fee, the Kentucky missionary and abolitionist.³⁴

The greatest boost to the radical cause came in April, 1856 when the Republican Congressman from Syracuse, Amos P.

³² Letter, Goodell to John Smith of Glasgow New Association for the Abolition of Slavery, February 29, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

³³ Radical Abolitionist, December, 1855 and January, 1856; Smith, too, received favorable letters from all over the country; see Letter, L. L. Rice to Smith, October 19, 1855, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, H. C. Taylor to Smith, November 22, 1855, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter James Catlin to Smith, January 17, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter Thomas Egbert to Smith, March 19, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter John Brown, Jr., to Smith, April 6, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, George Hall to Smith, May 2, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Benjamin Price to Smith, May 5, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

³⁴ Letter, Charles G. Finney to Goodell, November 27, 1855, Radical Abolitionist, January 1856; Letter, John G. Fee to Goodell, January 10, 1856, ibid., March 1856.

Granger, on Goodell's prodding,³⁵ propounded on the floor of Congress the unconstitutionality of slavery.³⁶ Except for Gerrit Smith's 1854 Congressional speech on the Nebraska bill,³⁷ no one before had introduced into Congress that novel constitutional interpretation. Granger's speech was widely circulated; it was published in the New York Tribune and in other papers, and was made into a tract.³⁸ Horace Greeley, the editor of the Tribune, commented favorably on Granger's speech, but expressed the opinion that the intent of the Constitution was incompatible with Granger's view.³⁹

The nomination of its own presidential candidate was another means through which the American Abolition Society sought to educate the public and to pressure the Republican party. Goodell

³⁵ Letter, Goodell to Amos A. Granger, January 2, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

³⁶ Abolition Documents, no. 2 (N. Y.: n. p., 1856?), p. 1-7.

³⁷ See Smith's entire Nebraska speech in National Era, May 11, 1854.

³⁸ Meeting of Executive Committee, June 6, 1856, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to John Smith, April 17, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

³⁹ Radical Abolitionist, June 1856 reprinted from New York Tribune.

expected that an independent nomination would persuade the Republicans at their coming convention to take a more radical stand on slavery and the Negro. He did not expect the Republicans to endorse radical principles on the Constitution, but he hoped the nomination might at least force them to adopt the Free Soil platform. This platform included a pledge against the admission of any more slave states, a demand for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act, and the promise to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.⁴⁰

The "Call" for a nominating convention was written by Goodell in March right after the Republicans met at Pittsburgh. There they perfected their national political machine based on a platform of nonextension of slavery into the territories.⁴¹ Goodell claimed that none of the present political parties was abolitionist. The Republican party, he wrote, though antislavery, fell far short of abolitionism by the party's refusal to demand abolition of the interstate slave trade, the coastwise trade, slavery in the District of Columbia, and the Fugitive Slave Act.⁴²

⁴⁰Letter, Goodell to Henry Cattlin, April 25, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

⁴¹Meeting of Executive Committee, March 7, 1856, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Smith March 19, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

⁴²Radical Abolitionist, April 1856.

The effort by the American Abolition Society to educate the public through independent nomination was, however, hampered by internal division over the issue of violence. This issue became especially relevant after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 which opened up the territories to settlement under the principle of popular sovereignty. The new policy inevitably intensified the struggle between the proslavery and antislavery forces. By early 1856 the northern press was filled with lurid descriptions of the armed struggle between these forces in Kansas.⁴³ The events in Kansas aroused the war spirit in the North, especially in antislavery circles. The question of the use of violent or non-violent means for the abolition of slavery became a pressing topic of discussion among abolitionists. Though the underlying aim of radical abolitionism was the peaceful abolition of slavery in the states, a number of radicals, deeply affected by the struggle in Kansas, began to question the principle of nonviolence. Gerrit Smith was the foremost of these.

By early 1856 Smith began to contribute money to the New England Emigrant Aid Company not only for settlement of antislavery men in Kansas but also for the shipment of rifles to

⁴³ J. G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1961), p. 97-100.

the territory. "Much as I abhor war," he wrote the treasurer of the organization, Amos Lawrence, "I nevertheless believe, that there were instances which the shedding of blood is unavoidable."⁴⁴ By May Smith was actively involved in the movement to aid the free soilers in Kansas to defend themselves "from the unjustifiable invasions and lawless incursions and attacks of the Missouri Borderers upon their lives and liberty."⁴⁵

Though he was aware of the dilemma the Kansas situation posed for many peace men,⁴⁶ Goodell was determined to oppose the drift toward violence by many abolitionists. Goodell had practical as well as principled reasons for opposing violence in Kansas. He was determined to prove that the American Abolition Society had found a peaceful means for the eradication of slavery throughout the country. Goodell sought to show that the organization's goal of national abolition was not a veiled call to violence, as many claimed, but was the only way to eradicate slavery short of war. Goodell was especially concerned about Smith's position in favor of violence since Smith was the president of the Society and soon to be its presidential candidate.

⁴⁴Ralph Harlow, Gerrit Smith, p. 345.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 345-349.

⁴⁶Letter, Goodell to Smith, April 29, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

Goodell tried to convince Smith of the immorality and impracticality of his position. The free soilers in Kansas, he told Smith, should make proper use of the ballot box instead of invoking the "aid of the cartridge box." "A little Bible abolitionism," he wrote, "would be worth more to them than tons of Sharp's rifles." He observed that those who were willing to take up arms against slavery extension were the farthest removed from abolitionism and from sympathy with the Negro. He admitted that his peace principles had "undergone a sore trial" as a result of events in Kansas, but "calm reflection convince [d] [him] that the cause of the slave is not to be promoted by the cultivation of the war spirit, Henry Ward Beecher and Horace Greeley to the contrary notwithstanding."⁴⁷

Tappan, too, urged Smith to reexamine his position on violence, and to avoid the tendency of "our age to use physical force to defend rights and overthrow wrongs." "Moral suasion," he lectured him, "is the chief force to be relied on."⁴⁸

Despite the efforts of Goodell and Tappan, the question of violence divided the delegates at the radical nominating convention which met in Syracuse on May 28. A spirited debate ensued between

⁴⁷Letter, Goodell to Smith, April 23, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

⁴⁸Letter, Tappan to Smith, May 22, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

those who supported the use of force in Kansas -- namely, Abraham Pryne of Ohio, Frederick Douglass and Smith -- and those who clung to nonviolence -- namely, Goodell and Tappan. Especially bitter was the discussion over Pryne's proposed amendment of the Address to the abolitionists of the United States. He wanted the report to assert unequivocally that the Convention was pledged to sustain the freemen in Kansas by force of arms against the assaults of Slave Power. Goodell argued that this amendment went against the object of the Convention, whose aim was to gain control of the ballot box for the purpose of suppressing slavery throughout the country. A division was avoided when Smith moved to lay the amendment on the table.⁴⁹

The nomination for president and vice president also created disharmony at the Convention. Some members argued in favor of the nomination of Charles Sumner, who had been severely caned on the floor of Congress only six days prior to the Convention. Those who favored Sumner hoped to anticipate the Republican party which they thought would now give the honor to the Massachusetts Senator. Others argued in favor of Smith on the ground that he was the candidate who truly embodied the radical abolitionist principles. In any case, they argued, there was no chance that the

⁴⁹Radical Abolitionist, June 2, 1856, Extra.

Republicans would nominate Sumner instead of Fremont. "The Republican party," Pryne put it bluntly, "is not going to nominate a man because his head has been pounded." As expected, Smith was easily nominated for president and Samuel McFarland of Pennsylvania for vice president. A national committee was appointed with Goodell as chairman to advance Smith's candidacy.⁵⁰

The Convention, however, had no success in healing the division created among radical abolitionists by the violence in Kansas. Smith continued to insist on the efficacy of violence in winning the antislavery battle in Kansas, while Goodell sought again to persuade the presidential candidate of his party of the immorality and impracticality of that method. Goodell told Smith that military defense of Kansas against proslavery forces was "imprudent." Such action meant war against the federal government and few abolitionists would be willing to support so revolutionary a step. The deep-seated belief even among Republicans that slavery was legal and that the "ruffian legislation" in Kansas was law until repealed, would prevent a majority of abolitionists and antislavery

⁵⁰ Ibid., June 2, Extra, and July 1856.

advocates from arming themselves.⁵¹

Goodell also made an effort to dissuade other antislavery friends of Kansas from the use of violence in Kansas. On June 9, he attended a Kansas meeting at the Broadway Tabernacle in New York which was called for the purpose of making "plans for a more comprehensive and more effective organization in behalf of Kansas aid."⁵² Goodell was bitterly disappointed at the tone of the meeting; most of the delegates were ready for war to protest the rights of the whites but showed no sympathy for the slave. He complained that the speakers repeatedly assured the audience, who responded with wild applause, that "it is not a nigger question!... We will defend the liberties of the whites."⁵³

Goodell had an opportunity to present his views on violence in Kansas at a Convention at Buffalo held on July 9 by the militant friends of Kansas. The meeting, in which fifty six delegates from twelve states attended, was called for the purpose of establishing a National Kansas Committee. Goodell and Smith were among the

⁵¹Letter, Goodell to Smith, June 6, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Goodell to Smith June 20, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse; copy of this letter also found in A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Smith, June 16, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

⁵²Harlow, Gerrit Smith, p. 350.

⁵³Letter, Goodell to Smith, June 10, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse, and in A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

eighteen delegates sent by New York. Smith, unaffected by Goodell's arguments against violence, submitted a series of resolutions calling for armed resistance in Kansas. In defending his resolutions Smith showed how far he had departed from his earlier peace professions. He called upon the delegates to give up the ballot and instead be ready to send armed men into Kansas to fight the border ruffians as well as the federal government.⁵⁴

Goodell attempted to show the untenability of Smith's position. He presented the Convention with twenty questions covering the entire subject of Kansas and the use of violence to defeat slavery. He tried to show the delegates the dire implications of Smith's call for armed defense of Kansas. Such action, he contended, would lead to civil war. In order to be successful, the antislavery forces would be forced to fight federal troops in the territory and to go on the offensive by carrying war into Missouri and other invading states. Moreover, effective military strategy as well as conscience and ethics dictated that such a war would be conducted for both the "liberation of the oppressed as well as the security of the free." "What moral right have we," he asked, "in defending, by force of arms, the liberation of our white brothers, to decline seeking the aid of our colored brothers, lest

⁵⁴Harlow, Gerrit Smith, p. 351-352. Radical Abolitionist, August, 1856.

they, too, should become partakers of the sweets of freedom?"⁵⁵ Here was an example of Goodell's tendency to carry an argument to its logical conclusion.

Goodell questioned the assumptions inherent in the arguments calling for the use of force in Kansas. To him the advocacy of violence meant that the abolitionists had abandoned political action as a means of achieving their objectives. Though Goodell admitted that revolutionary action might have to be resorted to in the future, he believed in first exhausting every political means for the abolition of slavery. Otherwise, the abolitionists would array the whole country against themselves and make both political and revolutionary action ineffective. Goodell concluded with an appeal on behalf of the "millions of my colored countrymen who for centuries have been weltering under the same iron heel that now tramples upon Kansas." Speaking against those who were ready to engage in a revolution in order to secure the liberties of the whites while refusing to do the same to free the slaves in the South, Goodell said that "I should blush to detect myself bristling up with surmounted bayonet to redress the wrongs of white men, after having so long and so patiently endured the sight of far greater wrongs inflicted upon colored men. In the stillness of my own heart I should expect to hear the voice of upbraiding at the narrowness

⁵⁵Ibid.

of my humanity and the partiality of my justice."⁵⁶

Opposition to Smith's extreme position was expressed by many delegates at the Convention. Though most of them did not accept entirely Goodell's criticism of the resolutions, they deprecated the extreme measures recommended by Smith. Compromise resolutions were therefore adopted which did not directly call for the sending of armed men into Kansas. Instead, the Convention declared that the attempt to force slavery on Kansas had to be defeated at "whatever cost."⁵⁷

The division among radical abolitionists regarding violence further weakened Smith's already faltering candidacy. The American Abolition Society was placed in an anomalous position because its own standard bearer, Smith, was advocating violence as a remedy for slavery, while the Society's program called for the constitutional removal of the popular institution, as an alternative to revolution and disunion. Smith, however, was not bothered by this problem and therefore in a public letter to Goodell on August 15 he predicted again the violent end of slavery. Bondage, he insisted, "must go out in blood," for it was too late to abolish slavery through the ballot box.⁵⁸ Such frank statements by Smith during the campaign

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.; Harlow, Gerrit Smith, p. 352-353.

⁵⁸Printed letter, Smith to Goodell, August 15, 1856, Smith Papers, New York Public Library; see also Harlow, Gerrit Smith, p. 464.

reflected the philanthropist's refusal to take his candidacy seriously. Although he finally announced publically -- after constant pressure from Goodell⁵⁹ -- that he would not vote for Frémont, he made clear at the same time that he preferred the Republican candidate to Millard Fillmore and James Buchanan.⁶⁰ According to Ralph Harlow, Smith's biographer, Smith went as far as to contribute five hundred dollars to Frémont's campaign.⁶¹

Smith's indecisiveness about his own candidacy was not unusual. The decision of Frederick Douglass in August to support Frémont reflected the radical abolitionists' dilemma. Though everyone admitted that the Republican party was not an abolitionist organization, it was antislavery and had a real chance of winning the election. Some therefore agreed with Douglass's argument that

⁵⁹Letter, Goodell to Smith, August 7, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

⁶⁰Printed letter, Smith to Goodell, August 15, 1856, Smith Papers, N. Y. P. L.

⁶¹Harlow, Gerrit Smith, p. 364.

it was better to have a half a loaf than no loaf at all.⁶² To Goodell, however, half way measures led to no measures at all. "The best and most successful efforts," he wrote, "are those that are most direct, and that demand the whole reformation at once"⁶³

The defeat of Frémont led Goodell to believe, contrary to the actual situation, that a new party based on higher ground could be organized in place of the Republican party. Disregarding the great success of the Republicans in winning in their first national effort one hundred and fourteen electoral votes and amassing large

⁶²Letter, Frederick Douglass to Smith, August 31, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse. The Republicans may have promised Douglass financial support for his paper in return for an endorsement of Fremont's candidacy. In April Douglass assured Smith that he would support the radical abolitionist candidate at the risk of his paper. In May he complained to Smith of the imminent collapse of his paper unless some help was forthcoming in the form of money or in a merger with the Radical Abolitionist. At a meeting of the executive committee of the A. A. S. on July 17, the latter suggestion was laid aside and no action was taken. In August Douglass announced his support of Fremont; see Letter, Douglass to Smith, April 12, 1856, Smith papers, Syracuse; Letter, Douglass to Smith April 16, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Douglass to Smith, May 23, '56, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Douglass to Smith, August 31, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, James Redpath to Smith, October 26, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter J. Van Vechter to Smith, October 2, 1856, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Meeting of Executive Committee, July 17, 1856, Records of A. A. S. Oberlin.

⁶³Radical Abolitionist, October 1856; Letter, Goodell to L. Cox, July 24, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

popular majorities in the North, Goodell expected the party to disband as soon as the Kansas question was settled. He reasoned, as did other politicians at the time that since Kansas created the Republican party, the resolution of that problem would mean the end of the organization.⁶⁴

It was this conviction that prompted Goodell to publish a pamphlet on the Kansas situation and on the last presidential contest. He attempted to show that the question of slavery extension was a false issue on which no permanent party could be organized. Goodell attributed the defeat of the Republican party to its failure to adopt a clear-cut platform, distinct from that of the Democratic party. He was convinced that only this kind of a platform could enable the Republicans to draw support in the North and from the many southern non-slaveholders. He therefore called for the formation of a national abolition party based on a program of eradication of slavery in the South and the protection of the liberties of all citizens regardless of their color.⁶⁵ Goodell failed to

⁶⁴ Letter, Goodell to Smith, November 8, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Smith, December 2, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; copy of letter also found in Smith Papers, Syracuse.

⁶⁵ William Goodell, The Kansas Struggle, of 1856, In Congress, and in the Presidential Campaign; with Suggestions for the Future (N. Y.: American Abolition Society, 1857), passim.

realize that in the tense atmosphere of the 1850's such a radical program would have further polarized the antislavery and proslavery forces. Political blindness prevented him from realizing that few Americans shared his dream of an equalitarian society and that no popular party could be built on that basis.

Convinced that the time was ripe for the formation of such a radical party, Goodell and his friends mailed two thousand copies of the pamphlet to every governor and member of the legislatures of the free states.⁶⁶ In addition, plans were made for an antislavery convention of all shades of opinion to discuss the possibility of a nomination based on a radical platform.⁶⁷ But the plan failed. First, the response to his feelers convinced Goodell that nonradicals would not attend the prospective convention.⁶⁸ Even radicals expressed reluctance to attend such a gathering. After

⁶⁶ Meeting of Executive Committee, February 6, 1857, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin; Radical Abolitionist, February, 1857.

⁶⁷ Letter, Goodell to Smith, November 8, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter Goodell to Smith, November 14, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin, and Smith Papers, Syracuse.

⁶⁸ Letter, Goodell to Smith December 2, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook and in Smith Papers, Syracuse; Executive Committee Meeting, December 19, 1856, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin.

failing to collect five hundred radical signatures to the Call, Goodell and the executive committee decided to drop the whole project.⁶⁹

The failure of the nominating convention plan forced a change in the program of the radical abolitionists. Goodell and Smith were convinced -- at least for the time being -- of the impossibility of organizing a separate radical political party opposed to the Republicans. They instead agreed that the best policy now was to return to their original aim of converting the Republicans to a radical position on slavery and the Negro.⁷⁰

Goodell expected that the Supreme Court decision in March, 1857 in the Dred Scott case would assist the radicals in converting the Republican party to their cause.⁷¹ For according to him the decision would benefit rather than hinder radical abolitionism. In the first place, Chief Justice Taney had decided that

⁶⁹Letter, Goodell to Thomas H. Talbot, February 7, 1857, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to McFarland, April 9, 1857, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Radical Abolitionist, May, 1857.

⁷⁰Letter, Goodell to Smith, April 22, 1857, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

⁷¹Letter, Goodell to Smith, March 17 and April 3, 1857, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

Congress had no right to prohibit slavery in the territories, and that the Negro was not a citizen within the meaning of the Constitution. To Goodell this lent firm support to the radical argument that the right of whites and blacks were interrelated. The Republican party could no longer declare itself against slavery in the territories while claiming to be a white man's party.⁷² Secondly, the Court had implicitly decided that slavery was not, as the Republican party had claimed, a local institution from which the federal government could constitutionally divorce itself. Instead, the Court accepted the radical argument of federal jurisdiction over slavery, and decided that the government must protect the institution everywhere and allow slaveholders the right to take slaves into the territories as well as the free states. The Court had demonstrated, according to Goodell, the truth always emphasized by the radicals, namely that the government was either compelled to maintain slavery and crush freedom or maintain freedom and crush slavery. In this way the Court had undermined the basis of the Republican ideology of nonextension, leaving the country with but two alternatives -- national abolition or the extension of slavery

⁷²Letter, Goodell to John Smith, April 20, 1857, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

everywhere.⁷³

Despite Goodell's interpretation, however, the Dred Scott decision did not in fact hurt the Republican party. On the contrary, the decision might well be considered to have been an obstacle in the American Abolition Society's effort to educate the public regarding its position on the constitutionality of slavery. For the majority and dissenting opinions had both implicitly rejected the radical interpretation of the Constitution that was held by the Society. The majority decision went as far as to disclaim the very basis of Goodell's argument that the Constitution was "color blind." According to Taney, the Constitution did not recognize Negro citizenship and thus the document was meant to apply to whites only. Furthermore, whereas Goodell considered the due process clause a provision for the emancipation of the slaves, Taney declared that restricting the right to move slave property was in essence a deprivation of property without due process of law.⁷⁴

The greatest threat to the Society, was, however, posed not by the majority opinion, but rather by the dissent of Justices John McLean and Benjamin R. Curtis. It was easy to dismiss the

⁷³ Radical Abolitionist, April and October, 1857; Letter, Goodell to Smith, April 22, 1857, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

⁷⁴ Vincent C. Hopkins, Dred Scott's Case (N. Y.: Atheneum, 1967, original 1951), p. 61-78, 96-118.

majority opinion, as the Republicans did, on the ground that it was a politically motivated decision, heavily biased in favor of the Slave Power. But the dissents of these two northern justices was difficult to explain away. Though the Republicans found their stand on slavery perfectly explained in the dissenting opinions of McClean and Curtis, the radical abolitionists could find in none of the opinions of the nine justices support of their constitutional argument. Although they affirmed Negro citizenship under the Constitution, the dissenting justices accepted the legality of slavery within the southern states. In order to counter Taney's argument that the slaveholder had a right to take his slave property anywhere in the Union, McClean and Curtis had to make the assumption that slavery was a domestic institution; supported by municipal law and having no force outside the jurisdiction of the slave states. Congress therefore had a right to restrict slavery in the territories as it did in the Missouri Compromise.⁷⁵ Such an argument completely undermined Goodell's basic contention that slavery was illegal in the states and could be constitutionally destroyed by the federal government.

Goodell did not concede the Dred Scott decision as a setback for the American Abolition Society. He hoped instead to advance

⁷⁵ Ibid., P. 78-96.

the radical cause by exposing the inconsistent position of the Republican party in Congress regarding the Lecompton Constitution. It was at this time that the Senate began the debate over the admission of Kansas into the Union on the basis of the fraudulent proslavery Lecompton Constitution. The Republican vote in the House in combination with the Douglas Democrats in support of the Crittenden-Montgomery amendment proved to Goodell the bankruptcy of the nonextension policy. In accepting that amendment, which provided for the resubmission in its entirety of the Lecompton Constitution to the voters, the Republicans abandoned their earlier principle of opposition to slavery in the territories, accepting instead Douglas's idea of popular sovereignty.

Goodell now had strong ammunition to use against the Republican position on slavery. Taking advantage of the situation, he launched a letter writing campaign to Republican Senators and Representatives urging them to advocate national abolition and abandon the non-extension policy of the Republican party which had only encouraged further aggression by the Slave Power. The only way to put the South on the defensive and at the same time arouse the North was national

76

abolition, he concluded. In September, Goodell incorporated these arguments in a thirty-one page pamphlet, insisting that the Republican vote in favor of the amendment was a betrayal of even their limited policy of preventing the spread of slavery through the action of Congress.⁷⁷

The Republican position in the Lecompton affair revived Goodell's hope of creating a political movement to which abolitionists, disillusioned with the supposedly bankrupt Republican position on slavery, could rally. The effort to combine liquor prohibition with

⁷⁶ Executive Committee Meeting, April 2, 1858, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to William H. Seward, March 17, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Henry Wilson, March 7, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to William Fessenden, March 15, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Charles Sumner, March 7, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to John P. Hale, March 7, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Printed letter to Members of Congress, May 10, 1858, Office of A. A. S., American Missionary Association Archives, Amistad Research Center, Dillard Univ., New Orleans; Executive Committee Meeting, May 7, 1858, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin.

⁷⁷ William Goodell, Slavery-Limitation Abandoned in Theory and Practice by the Defenders of the Crittenden-Lecompton Compromise, Annual Report of the American Abolition Society, September 1858 (N. Y.: A. A. S., 1858), passim.

radical abolitionism in the prospective 1858 gubernatorial campaign of Gerrit Smith afforded Goodell an opportunity to create such a movement. Smith was nominated by a fusion Convention of three hundred temperance men and abolitionists who met in Syracuse in August. The resulting People's State ticket called for the prohibition of the liquor traffic and affirmed the illegality of slavery.⁷⁸ In September Smith's candidacy was endorsed by the American Abolition Society at the annual meeting in Syracuse.⁷⁹

Smith took his gubernatorial candidacy seriously. He travelled all over the state, covering four thousand miles. For the first time a candidate made use of the question and answer method in his appearances throughout the state. Instead of addressing the audience Smith entertained questions on a variety of subjects which sometimes led to a discussion between Smith and the questioners.⁸⁰ Campaign sheets, which were entirely financed by Smith, were established in three major cities in the state: the Hour and the Man in Albany, State Leaguer in Syracuse, and the Gerrit

⁷⁸Letter, Goodell to Smith, June 22, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Smith, June 30, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Smith, July 7, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Smith, July 10, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Smith, July 14, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Radical Abolitionist, July and August 1858; N. Y. Tribune, September 8, 9, 11, 17 and 18, 1858.

⁷⁹Radical Abolitionist, October, 1858.

⁸⁰Radical Abolitionist, October and December, 1858; Letter J. M. Wietting to Smith, August 10, 1858, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

Smith Banner in New York city.⁸¹

Goodell became completely involved in Smith's campaign. He edited the Gerrit Smith Banner, which became the most important campaign sheet advocating Smith's candidacy. He even turned the Radical Abolitionist into a Smith's organ. Although both Goodell and Smith admitted privately that Smith had little chance of winning, they hoped to advance the radical cause in the presidential contest by attracting to their banner, 50,000 votes.⁸² They saw the campaign as a stepping stone for that important presidential year.

Goodell based his expectations on his conviction that by favoring the Crittenden-Montgomery amendment, the Republicans had abandoned the antislavery basis of their party -- nonextension. Having lost all claim to being an antislavery party, the Republicans would have to give way to a true abolitionist political organization. He believed that the new movement of radical abolitionism and liquor prohibition could be the nucleus of such a party, not only the state level but also nationwide.⁸³

⁸¹Radical Abolitionist, September, 1858.

⁸²Printed "Letter from Gerrit Smith to the men who put me in nomination," November 5, 1858, Smith Papers, N. Y. P. L.; Letter, Goodell to John Smith, October 30, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

⁸³Letter, Goodell to William B. Palmer, October 26, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook Oberlin.

Goodell's analysis of the political situation in 1858 became the basis of Smith's campaign for governor. Goodell tried to convince New York voters that the Republican party was on the verge of disintegration and that his radical movement was the wave of the future. He insisted that basically there were no differences between the Democratic and Republican candidates, Amos J. Parker and Edwin D. Morgan. Both agreed on the issues of slavery and liquor prohibition. The Democratic party, he pointed out, could be defeated only by a real democratic political organization which was pledged to carry out in practice what that party was professing to stand for in theory. The Republican party, he insisted throughout the campaign, was a sham body and had to be destroyed in order that a real radical abolition party could be organized to defeat the Democrats. He was convinced that Morgan had no chance of winning and that the real contest was between Smith and Parker. Smith went as far as to tell New York voters that Morgan would take away enough votes from him to make possible the election of Parker.⁸⁴

⁸⁴Radical Abolitionist, September and December 1858; Gerrit Smith Banner, October 16, 18 and 22, 1858; Letter, Smith to "Friends of temperance and freedom in state of New York," October 10, 1858, ibid., October 16, 1858.

The latter possibility was one of the major reasons that Goodell made a special effort to attract to Smith's banner the 11,500 black voters in New York state. He told them that the Republican party had disappointed the Negro in regard to equal suffrage in New York and protection from the Fugitive Act. As a matter of fact, the Republicans prided themselves as being the white man's party. Goodell promised Negroes equal suffrage and equal civil and political rights under a Smith administration.⁸⁵

Goodell's conclusion about the imminent demise of the antislavery Republican party in New York and the nation was not completely unfounded. Due mostly to the panic of 1857 and to the waning of public interest in the Kansas issue, the Republicans in New York suffered severe defeat in the fall elections of that year. The Democrats won the offices of Secretary of State, Comptroller, Treasurer, Attorney General and State Engineer. In the state legislature the Republicans were in control by a very narrow margin with the American Party holding the balance of power.⁸⁶ As a new party such a defeat could mean disaster for

⁸⁵ Radical Abolitionist, September and October, 1858; Goodell estimated that there were 9,330 black voters in N. Y. state, but the accepted figure is 11,500; see Benjamin Quarles, Frederick Douglass (Toronto: Associated Publishers, 1948), p.164.

⁸⁶ DeAlva S. Alexander, A Political History of the State of New York (4 vols. N. Y.: Henry Holt and Co., 1906), II, 245; James A. Rawley, Edwin D. Morgan 1811-1833 Merchant in Politics (N. Y.: Columbia Univ. Press, 1955), p. 73.

the organization.

Nationally, such Republicans as Horace Greeley, Nathaniel P. Banks, and Schuyler Colfax were ready in the 1858 elections to abandon nonextension in favor of popular sovereignty and fusion with the northern Democrats. If that were not possible, they were prepared to help Douglas win reelection in Illinois as an antiadministration Democrat.⁸⁷ Greeley in the Tribune editorially attacked Smith and his platform out of fear that Smith's candidacy would prevent Morgan's election.⁸⁸ Even Greeley admitted that Smith might poll about 25,000 votes.⁸⁹

The apprehension in Republican circles that Smith could draw away many votes from Morgan was probably the motive force behind William Seward's famous radical speech at Rochester. It was a week before the gubernatorial election that Seward told a very large political gathering in that city⁹⁰ that the nation was on the verge of "an irrepressible conflict between opposing and

⁸⁷ George H. Mayer, The Republican Party 1854-1964 (N. Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), p. 54.

⁸⁸ New York Tribune, October 4, 8 and 9, 1858.

⁸⁹ Letter, Alfred Ely to Edwin D. Morgan, October 27, 1858, Morgan Papers, N. Y. State Library, Albany.

enduring forces, and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slaveholding nation or entirely a free labor nation."⁹¹ This position was the basis of Goodell's radical abolitionist argument against nonextension and in favor of national abolition of slavery. Seward, who was at the time the major contender for the Republican presidential nomination in 1860, could not afford to lose his state to the Democrats. The Rochester speech could have been calculated to counter Goodell's and Smith's arguments that the Republican party had betrayed its antislavery principles. In this way Seward may have hoped to prevent Republican defections to Smith's side.⁹²

In any case, Goodell after the election was convinced that Seward's radical speech accounted for the mere 5,470 votes Smith amassed in contrast to Morgan's 247,953. Goodell contended

⁹¹N. Y. Tribune, October 28, 1858.

⁹²Van Deusen, however, contends that Seward said nothing new in that speech and that it had no effect on the election of 1858. It should, however, be noted that Seward spoke now in an election year and at a large political gathering where it was aimed to command wide attention. Seward was aware of Smith's and Goodell's radical position regarding slavery as their correspondence with Seward could testify; see Glyndon Van Deusen, William Henry Seward (N. Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 193.

that the address was intended to "cheat" Smith of 20,000 to 30,000 votes.⁹³ Nevertheless, Goodell said he was encouraged by the results of the election. He still expected that the Republican party would disappear. The Seward speech at Rochester, he told Smith, would so embarrass the Republicans that they would be forced to abandon Seward in favor of absorption into the Douglas wing of the Democratic party. Such a situation would leave the entire antislavery field to the radical abolitionists. The Smith movement, he pointed out, though it had gained few votes, had succeeded in publicizing their views throughout the state. (He estimated that 50,000 to 80,000 voters had heard Smith speak.) Further, it forced Seward to espouse radical abolitionist doctrine. The situation was similar, he wrote, to the case of the Liberty party of 1840 which at first received only 7,000 votes but then amassed ten times that number four years later.⁹⁴

Goodell failed to point out that the Liberty party did not survive the election of 1844, and was instead absorbed into the

⁹³ Letter, Goodell to Smith, November 3, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to Smith, November 6, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Radical Abolitionist, December 1858.

⁹⁴ Letter, Goodell to Smith, November 10, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Radical Abolitionist, December 1858.

Free Soil party. He did not realize that 1858 was not 1840, and that the Republican party had a much greater claim to popular support than did his organization. The Republicans appealed more successfully to the prejudices of the times, for their moderate anti-slavery position and ambiguous approach to the Negro fit well into the climate of opinion in the North of the 1850's. Goodell's religious conviction that only his position was right and that any compromise was sin, blinded him to the political realities of that decade.

Goodell's expectation that the Republican party would disappear was unrealistic. On the contrary, the elections of 1858 proved to be a great triumph for the Republican party. Except for Illinois, the Party won every state election.⁹⁵ It appeared that the people approved the Republican stand in the Lecompton struggle. It was not the Republican party but the American Abolition Society that was forced to close doors within a year. In December Tappan and Whipple tendered their resignation from the executive committee and in February, 1859 the Society made plans to disband.⁹⁶ In December, 1858 the Radical Abolitionist was suspended permanently. A year passed before

⁹⁵ Mayer, Republican Party, p. 58.

⁹⁶ Executive Committee Meeting, December 3, 1858, and February 4, 1859, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin.

Goodell resumed the editorial chair. This time (November, 1859) he became editor of a weekly, The Principia, a private publication which had no connection with any society.⁹⁷

Goodell and his American Abolition Society had failed to convince the nation of their constitutional views regarding slavery and the Negro. And historians, taking the cue from contemporaries have largely ignored the radical abolitionist movement. But at times we can learn as much from failure as from success. We should keep in mind that Goodell's views were rejected not so much because his arguments were constitutionally untenable, but because few were ready to make such a radical use of the Constitution. Goodell would have used the Constitution as a tool for the advancement of human rights, whereas the Supreme Court was at that time employing the Constitution primarily as a means of resolving problems in nation-state relations. Only recently as public sentiment came to correspond with Goodell's position did the Court's concern shift to an emphasis upon civil rights.⁹⁸

Goodell's interpretation was not a novel one. Historically it can be traced back to the Missouri Controversy of 1819-1820.

⁹⁷ Letter, Goodell to Smith, January 13, 1859, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Principia, November 19, 1859.

⁹⁸ See footnote #47 in Chapter VII; see especially Levy, Judicial Review, p. 1-42; see also excellent short history of the Court by Robert G. McCloskey, The American Supreme Court (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

During the debates in Congress over the admission of Missouri into the Union, similar arguments were advanced. The major point of contention at the time was whether the Constitution gave Congress the right to place conditions on the admission of new states into the Union. Those who argued in the affirmative maintained that the clause in the Constitution which guaranteed to every state a republican form of government made it imperative on Congress to prohibit slavery in the new state. Slavery, they insisted, was incompatible with republican institutions. Although those who made this argument hastened to point out that they did not advocate the abolition of slavery in the South, they implied that sometimes in the future such a line of reasoning might be used to abolish slavery everywhere. As a matter of fact, some southern Congressmen expressed alarm that such an interpretation of republicanism tended toward national abolition of slavery.⁹⁹

During the Missouri debates not all of Goodell's arguments in favor of national abolition were discussed, But the debates did indicate that had the times been ripe such a constitutional interpretation could have been easily accepted as one means for the

⁹⁹ William S. Jenkins, Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1960, original 1935), p. 175-178; Glover Moore, The Missouri Controversy, p. 41-47; Congressional Globe, 15th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 1,170 and 1,179; Congressional Globe, 16th Cong., 1st Sess., P. 279, 1,190.

peaceful removal of the peculiar institution. In fact, when the times were ready for such an interpretation (during the Civil War and Reconstruction) the republican clause in the Constitution was used by Congress to reconstruct the South by the abolition of slavery in that section. By 1867 Radical Republicans were interpreting that clause even to include universal manhood suffrage.¹⁰⁰

Thus, the failure of the American Abolition Society was actually due to Goodell's refusal to recognize that his constitutional argument challenged the basic convictions and prejudices of the times. It was an article of faith among the overwhelming majority of the people in all sections of the country that the Constitution represented a compact between North and South to guarantee the existence of slavery in the southern states. Few accepted Goodell's contention that the Constitution should be interpreted literally,

¹⁰⁰Herman Belz, Reconstructing the Union, Theory and Policy during the Civil War (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1969), p. 201-203, 295; Charles O. Lerche, Jr., "Congressional Interpretations of the Guarantee of a Republican Form of Government during Reconstruction," Journal of Southern History, XV, (May 1949), 192-211.

101

regardless of any intention of its framers.

More importantly, Goodell's interpretation would have had incalculable implications for race relations in both the North and South. The acceptance of his arguments would have revolutionized America's racial attitudes and assumptions by eradicating, at least on the political level, all distinctions based on color. In essence Goodell was advocating the nationalizing of the Bill of Rights, an interpretation destined to be accepted by the Supreme Court in the 1930's and thereafter when the justices made use of the due process clause of the fourteenth amendment for that purpose.¹⁰²

Not only would Goodell's argument have had far reaching implications in race relations, but also in nation-state relations. Goodell denied that national abolition and the guarantee of racial equality would mean radical extension of federal power, but many

¹⁰¹ Actually the linguistic or literal method of interpreting the Constitution is one of three methods used by justices in the process of legal interpretation. The other two are the logical or systematic, and the historical. Goodell sometimes made use of the logical method in interpreting the Constitution but rejected the historical method on the ground that the aims or intent of the framers were irrelevant; see a description of these three methods in Charles G. Haines, The Role of the Supreme Court in American Government and Politics 1789-1835, p. 26-41.

¹⁰² Jenkins, Pro-Slavery Thoughts, p. 190 footnote #105; Zechariah Chafee, Jr., Free Speech in the United States (N. Y.: Atheneum, 1969, p. 387-388.

contemporaries, ever fearful of what they called "consolidation," foresaw correctly that eventuality if Goodell's constitutional interpretation was followed. States' rights were not only cherished in the South, but also in the North. Many northerners, though they agreed wholeheartedly with Goodell that slavery was a moral, religious and political evil, considered federal intervention in state affairs to protect Negro rights an even greater evil.¹⁰³

The greatest fear expressed about Goodell's national abolition was, however, that it might lead to civil war. Many feared that if the Republican nonextension program which expressly disclaimed any interference with slavery in the South aroused talk of secession, national abolition would surely cause bitter resistance by this section. To Goodell, only compromise and half-way measures would lead to civil war. Appeasement only encouraged further aggression by the South, making such a clash inevitable. A radical program for the eradication of slavery everywhere, he maintained, would prevent war by disarming the slaveholders while uniting the North. He even expected (quite erroneously as later events were to prove) that such a policy would unite the interests of the slave and nonslaveholding South against the few

¹⁰³ Radical Abolitionist, April 1857; Letter, Goodell to Otis B. Wattles, July 24, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

104

hundred thousand slaveholders.

Nevertheless, Goodell's program for the national abolition of slavery was not as impractical as contemporaries and historians had claimed. Going against his own religious conviction that a sinner should not be rewarded for his sins, Goodell cautiously encouraged the idea of compensation to slaveholders for the loss of their slaves through general emancipation. Though he was wary of the word "compensation," which he thought implied an admission of the right of property in slaves, he did agree to a plan which in essence amounted to the same thing: an "arrangement' to equalize any pecuniary losses consequent on abolition...."¹⁰⁵

But his religious scruples prevented him from elaborating on the plan and publicizing it as part of his overall program of national abolition. When Smith invited Goodell to accompany him to a compensation convention at Cleveland, Goodell refused to go on the ground that no emancipation plan should be worked out which would explicitly include compensation to the slaveholders. Believing strongly in the moral power of abolitionism, Goodell feared that

¹⁰⁴ Radical Abolitionist, October, 1856; Letter, Goodell to G. B. Wright, August 7, 1857, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to F. Spinner, April 7, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

¹⁰⁵ Letter, Goodell to Smith, February 13, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin and Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Goodell to Smith, February 18, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to O. C. Clemens, December 26, 1856, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

talk of compensation would relax the conscience of the slaveholders, and it would weaken the abolitionists' moral position by their recognition of the right of property in man.¹⁰⁶ But he did imply on a number of private occasions that compensation was part of his plan for national abolition.¹⁰⁷ Had he included compensation as part of his overall emancipation plan, the plan might have attracted more adherents and been more acceptable to the North and the Republican party.

Though Goodell failed to convince the country of the correctness of his constitutional views regarding slavery and the Negro, he played an important role in the antislavery movement of the 1850's. As staunch abolitionists, he and his fellow radicals were able to exert some moral influence upon the Republican party, perhaps preventing further compromise with abolitionist ideals. Goodell saw himself as a missionary to the Republicans, trying to convert them to his radical views, and, failing that, to prod them toward more advanced positions (or at least keep them from abandoning their principles altogether). As Goodell told one of his correspondents, "it has been my aim, and that of our Society,

106

Letter, Goodell to Smith, August 20, 1857, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

107

Letter, Goodell to T. B. McCormick, September 3, 1857, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin; Letter, Goodell to W. W. Chapman, September 17, 1857, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

to do all that can be done to bring the Republican party up to a position in which it can be of some practical benefit, and deserve -- not the hesitant support of abolitionists, but their confiding and hopeful exertions."¹⁰⁸ During the Civil War he found the opportunity to continue in that effort.

¹⁰⁸Letter, Goodell to John Mann, May 21, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

CHAPTER IX

RADICAL REFORMER DURING CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

Goodell's weekly, the Principia, came to replace the American Abolition Society as a focal point for his radical abolitionist effort. Through the paper Goodell was able to press his radical views on the Republican party and on the Lincoln administration. Unlike most other abolitionists who either embraced the principles of the Republican party or entirely abandoned the abolitionist movement, Goodell saw the Civil War as an opportunity finally to realize the radical reform goals he had been struggling to achieve since the 1840's. Considering the war between the states to be the realization of his long-time prediction of God's wrath, Goodell expected the struggle to result in a radical change in Negro-white relations. He urged Lincoln and the Republican party to take advantage of the revolutionary nature of the Civil War by placing the Negro within the mainstream of American life. Goodell was one the few abolitionists who realized that the abolition of slavery was the beginning rather than the end of the effort to solve racial problems. He called for radical political, economic and social reform for the purpose of integrating the Negro within American society.

Goodell's effectiveness in propagating these ideas was,

however, hindered by his self-righteousness and his insistence on the absolute sanctity of principle. Likening himself to an Old Testament prophet whose object was to warn the people of impending doom if they did not listen to God's word, he was willing to work alone if necessary. As he once confessed to his friend, Gerrit Smith, "I have so long worked on, in solitude, that it would be strange for me to find myself surrounded with numbers. I should hardly know how to behave myself!"¹ Convinced that his truth would eventually be accepted, Goodell did not fear controversy with his fellow radical abolitionists. It is therefore no surprise that Goodell did not hesitate in 1859 to break with his close friend and patron, Gerrit Smith, over the unorthodox religious views Smith adopted in 1858. Goodell was angered at Smith for embracing the religion of reason, in which reason, not the Bible, was the guiding force of his religion.²

Goodell considered Smith's religion of reason a rejection of both orthodox Christianity and radical reform, for Goodell considered both of these interconnected. As he put it, "nothing short of Orthodox Theology can warrant radical reforms, or lay a foundation for them.... a man's professed orthodoxy is a sham, if

¹Goodell to Gerrit Smith, November 1, 1858, A. A. S. Letterbook, Oberlin.

²Ralph Harlow, Gerrit Smith, p. 382-388; Gerrit Smith, Three Discourses on the Religion of Reason (N. Y.: Ross and Tousey, 1859), p. 9-18, 34, 48-52, 55-56, 63-78.

it does not make a radical reformer of him."³ Smith's "lax theology," he pointed out, encouraged conservatism, for it refused to recognize the essential evil and wickedness of man, being satisfied with the world as it is. Orthodox theology, on the other hand, by setting up rigid standards of "rectitude, so rigid as to be popularly repulsive, stern and impracticable, in its requisitions...that it draws the darkest picture of human corruption, depravity and wickedness" would "instinctively demand the most radical reform." Such a theology did not, like the "lax theology," allow moral compromise, but instead was like the Puritans "unbending, unequivocal, direct."⁴

It was this conviction that Smith had deviated from the true path of radical reform that led Goodell to refuse to support the philanthropist's presidential candidacy in the 1860 election. Smith was nominated in August by about one hundred radical abolitionists who assembled in Syracuse to choose a radical candidate for president in that crucial campaign. Goodell, who was ill, did not attend. Although a "very considerable minority" preferred Goodell as radical candidate for president, Smith was easily

³Letter, Goodell to Lewis Frost, May 17, 1859, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Goodell to Smith, September 27/28, 1859; Smith Papers, Syracuse; New York Tribune, August 9, 1859

⁴Principia, November 19 and 26, December 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31, 1859; January 7, 14, and 21, 1860.

nominated. Goodell was chosen instead again as candidate for governor.⁵ In expressing publicly his displeasure with Smith's candidacy, Goodell pointed to Smith's acceptance letter in which the latter admitted the futility of his candidacy and had urged radical abolitionists to work for the advancement of his religion of reason.⁶

Goodell not only broke with Smith, but he quarreled with other radical abolitionists. Concerned more with preserving the purity of radical abolitionism than about the unity of an already languishing movement, Goodell accused the delegates at the nominating Convention of mixing politics with religion by this apparent denunciation of the orthodox faith. He found proof for this charge in a vague resolution on religion which he considered to be a veiled attack on Christian orthodoxy, and an endorsement of Smith's religion of reason. Furthermore, Goodell was unhappy at the Convention's failure to adopt a resolution opposing the dissolution of the Union, and to distinguish more clearly radical abolitionism from other abolitionist groups.⁷

In breaking with Smith, Goodell destroyed a working

⁵Principia, September 8 and 15, 1860.

⁶Ibid., September 15, 1860.

⁷Ibid.

relationship that had lasted for a quarter century. It was Smith who during most of this period underwrote Goodell's career in reform. As patron, Smith provided the money for a number of projects undertaken by Goodell, notably the Liberty League in the 1840's and the American Abolition Society a decade later. Without Smith's large contributions to the latter association and his financial support of Goodell's editorial work, Goodell could not have launched his drive to convince the public of the wisdom of national abolition. Smith provided not only money, but also his moral support and his name to many of Goodell's ideas and efforts. To Smith, Goodell was the great reservoir of ideas and arguments, both logical and historical, for much of Smith's reform labors. And with his access to the public ear Smith made possible a wider circulation of Goodell's ideas. The cooperation of these two reformers enabled the radical abolitionist cause to survive in the 1840's and 1850's.

Now the break between the two major radical leaders brought the already weak radical abolitionist movement into disarray. Despite efforts by friends to reconcile Smith and Goodell,⁸

⁸ Letter, C. A. Hammond to Goodell, no date, ibid., October 13, 1860; Letter, Hammond to Goodell, October 16, 1860, ibid., November 3, 1860; Douglass' Monthly, October and November, 1860; Letter, Henry Cheever to Goodell, September 23, 1860, Principia, November 3, 1860.

Goodell chose to stand alone and exert his influence through the Principia. Goodell adamantly refused to support Smith's candidacy for president, and stood aloof from the 1860 campaign.⁹

Moreover, Goodell was completely disappointed with Lincoln's candidacy. "The Republicans, he wrote, nominated the "most available, because the least known, the least prominent, the least distinguished or distinguishable among those to be selected from."¹⁰ Lincoln, he insisted, was neither an abolitionist nor a free soiler. In his debates with Stephen Douglas in 1858, Goodell pointed out, Lincoln had refused to oppose slavery in the states, the domestic slave trade, or the extension of slavery, and merely affirmed his belief in the duty of Congress to abolish slavery in the territories. Furthermore, Lincoln in those debates had expressed his opposition to Negro equality. Such a record, Goodell

⁹Letter, Smith to Goodell, September 15, 1860, Principia, September 29, 1860; Letter, Goodell to Smith, no date, ibid.; Letter, Goodell to Smith, no date, ibid., October 6, 1860; Letter, Smith to Goodell, October 1, 1860, ibid., October 13, 1860; Letter, Smith to Goodell, October 16, 1860, ibid., October 27, 1860; copy also found in Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Smith to Goodell, October 1, 1860, ibid., October 13, 1860; Letter, Goodell to Smith, no date, ibid., September 29, 1860; see also editorial in ibid., August 18, 1860.

¹⁰Principia, May 26, 1860.

concluded, did not warrant support either from the Negro or from abolitionists and free soilers.¹¹

The election of Lincoln and the subsequent secession crisis in the winter of 1860-1861 were as always interpreted by Goodell in religious and moral terms. The warning of the prophet, of impending doom if the nation did not repent, was being fulfilled. The nonextension policy of the Republican party, he argued, did not reach the conscience of the slaveholders nor did it inspire them with fear. Nonextension made them only more arrogant to demand further concessions from the North. An election of an abolitionist president would have settled the whole question without secession or threat of secession. For the Republican appeasement policy had invited further aggression and demands from the South, thus encouraging threats of secession and disunion.¹²

The secession crisis found Goodell challenging the overwhelming abolitionist opinion which favored peaceable secession.¹³

¹¹Ibid., June 2, and 9, 1860.

¹²Ibid., January 5, 1861.

¹³James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), p. 38; George M. Fredrickson, The Inner Civil War Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union (N. Y.: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 56-60.

Goodell instead urged the preservation of the Union even at the risk of war. Consistent with his earlier argument against Garrisonian disunionist position, Goodell opposed secession not because he loved the Union for its own sake, but because he felt that the North had a religious and moral obligation not to allow the South to "kidnap" the slaves from the Union.¹⁴

By favoring the use of force to prevent secession, Goodell departed from his peace principles. The secession crisis and later the Civil War confronted Goodell with a moral dilemma. He was convinced that it was morally wrong and sinful for the North to allow the South to leave the Union with the slaves in the hands of the slaveholders, yet he was also convinced that war was immoral and a sin. Goodell, who had always admonished others for choosing the lesser of two evils, was now forced to sacrifice his peace principles in favor of abolition. But it should also be noted that Goodell was not a pacifist nor was his attachment to nonviolence absolute. In contrast to Garrison, he had always favored the use of the coercive power of the civil government. He feared neither revolutionary action nor war, if the latter was necessary as a last resort.

Goodell's reaction to the John Brown raid at Harper's

¹⁴Principia, December 8, 15, and 22, 1860.

Ferry illustrates his position regarding nonviolence. Though he compared Brown to George Washington for his valiant effort to free the slaves, Goodell criticized Brown for using violence, for Goodell still believed that slavery could be ended peacefully.¹⁵

When he addressed a black audience that met at Shiloh Church in New York to honor Brown on Martyr's Day, he disagreed strongly with the previous black speakers who endorsed Brown's use of force. He argued, according to Benjamin Quarles, that the "weapons of the abolitionists were moral and religious rather than carnal."¹⁶

Thus, when the Civil War broke out, Goodell could find justification for such a "terrible calamity" only if that war was used to eradicate slavery. To him the mere preservation of the Union, the Constitution and the existing government were not justifiable reasons for such a conflict. Immediately after the firing on Fort Sumter Goodell called upon the Lincoln administration to turn the war into a "struggle for freedom against slavery."¹⁷

But instead of urging that the federal government abolish slavery through its regular constitutional powers, Goodell revived

¹⁵ Ibid., November 19, and December 3, 1859.

¹⁶ Benjamin Quarles, Black Abolitionists (N. Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 242-243.

¹⁷ Principia, April 13 and 20, 1861.

the suggestion once espoused by John Quincy Adams that the war power clause of the Constitution be used for this purpose. During the Civil War, Radical Republicans would invoke the war power clause in the cause of national abolition. But Goodell was the first one to urge this course of action during the secession crisis itself. At first few accepted Goodell's idea; the Church Anti-Slavery Society was the only body to endorse the suggestion.¹⁸ That organization, which Goodell helped to form in 1859 in Worcester, was mostly dominated by orthodox Congregationalists and leaned toward radical abolitionism.¹⁹

As the War continued, Goodell did not relax his efforts to achieve what he considered to be the justification for the conflict -- the national abolition of slavery. He did not write even one weekly editorial without making a plea for national abolition. In November 6, 1861 Goodell together with J. W. Alden (who was soon to become the publisher of the Principia) helped organize the National Emancipation Association as a clearing house for petitions sent to Congress and the President in favor of national abolition.²⁰ A

¹⁸Ibid., January 26, 1861.

¹⁹Letter, Henry Cheever to Smith, March 11, 1859, Smith Papers, Syracuse; Letter, Henry Cheever to Smith, March 22, 1859, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

²⁰McPherson, Struggle for Equality, p. 80; Principia, November 9, 1861.

few weeks later Goodell even acquiesced in his own election as one of the vice presidents of the Young Men's Republican Union of New York. The other vice presidents elected at a meeting of the organization at Cooper Union were George Cheever, Oliver Johnson, Henry Stanton, and Hamilton Fish. Goodell fearing a misunderstanding on the part of his readers that he had "backslidden from...Radical Abolition faith," explained that it was not he who had changed, but the Republicans in New York, for they endorsed the abolitionist aim of national emancipation as a moral and military necessity. At the Republican meeting Senator Charles Sumner spoke in favor of ending slavery through the use of the war power clause in the Constitution.

21

The abolition of slavery, however, was not the only justification Goodell saw in continuing the Civil War. He also considered that struggle as an opportunity of turning it into what he called a "Second American Revolution" for the purpose of achieving the objectives that the nation was reluctant to work for in peace. To Goodell these objectives were, in addition to the abolition of slavery, political and economic equality for the newly freed slaves. He was the first abolitionist to call for the confiscation of southern plantations for the purpose of dividing the land among the freedmen.

²¹ Principia, December 7, 1861.

"whose hire for two centuries, has been kept by fraud, and to whom, in the sight of God, the soil equitably belongs, to-day."²²

The War, he now hoped, would achieve the radical aims of the Liberty League platform of 1847.

Meanwhile, before the Emancipation Proclamation of September, 1863 Goodell concentrated his greatest energy toward convincing Lincoln of the absolute necessity of national abolition. In March, 1862 with the "energy of a young man," (as his wife put it) Goodell went on a trip to Washington in order to persuade Congress and the President of the wisdom of taking advantage of the War to abolish slavery everywhere.²³

Goodell stayed in Washington for two weeks. He was "cordially received" by members of Congress including Speaker of the House Galusha Grew, Senator Sumner, and Representatives James M. Ashley of Ohio, Owen Lovejoy of Illinois, George W. Julian of Indiana, Albert G. Riddle of Ohio (the close friend of Benjamin F. Wade). He breakfasted with Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase. The height of his visit, however, was a "cordial reception" by the President.²⁴ According to Goodell, on being

²²Ibid., May 4, 1861.

²³Letter, Mrs. Goodell to Maria Frost, March 12, 1862, Goodell Papers, Berea.

²⁴Letter, Goodell to his wife, March 17, 1862, Goodell Papers, Berea.

introduced by a member of Congress, Lincoln immediately recognized Goodell as the editor of the Principia and the compiler of Our National Charters, a small book which the President claimed to have used as a "convenient manual for reference."²⁵ That book, which was originally published by the American Abolition Society in 1857, contained the texts of the Articles of Association of 1774, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution together with explanatory notes by Goodell regarding the antislavery nature of each of these documents.²⁶ Lincoln probably received that work in April, 1861 when Goodell sent every member of the cabinet a copy of his book.²⁷

Goodell was impressed with the personal interview accorded him by the President. Although Lincoln admitted that he could not agree with all of Goodell's views, he did commend favorably on the latter's unsurpassed "clearness and force" in expressing his positions. Goodell found the President willing to listen seriously to his views and "sincerely desirous of doing what was best for the country, if he could find out, to his own satisfaction, what it was, how it could be done, and whether he could do it."

²⁵Principia, April 10, 1862.

²⁶Executive Committee Meeting, July 3, 1857, Records of A. A. S., Oberlin.

²⁷Letter, Goodell to William H. Seward, April 5, 1861, Seward Papers, Rush Rhees Library, Univ. of Rochester.

He left Lincoln's office with optimistic hope for the country "as well as encouragement for Christian faithfulness and prayer."²⁸

After visiting with members of Congress and the President, Goodell was invited to deliver a lecture at the Smithsonian Institute by the Washington Lecture Association, an organization which sponsored a series of lectures by some of the nation's foremost abolitionists and Republicans.²⁹ Goodell spoke for an hour and a half on the "Constitution for Emancipation -- Emancipation for the Constitution and the Union." He reiterated his arguments regarding the unconstitutionality and illegality of slavery and the equalitarian nature of the Constitution. Reminding the audience that in 1820 he predicted the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the coming of war, Goodell remarked that "my words were unheeded then, because I was so young. They may be unheeded now, because I am so old."³⁰

When Lincoln decided to issue a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, Goodell unlike many abolitionists, was dissatisfied. The document freed the slaves only in those states that were still in rebellion on January 1, 1863, thus implying

²⁸ Principia, April 10, 1862; see also recollection of the interview in Janesville Gazette, June 15, 1874, in Goodell Papers, Berea.

²⁹ McPherson, Struggle for Equality, p. 80-81.

³⁰ Principia, April 10 and 24, 1862.

a guarantee of slavery in the states that were to withdraw from the War. Goodell found the Proclamation to be not a step toward general emancipation, but essentially a three-month "armistice" between opposing proslavery and abolitionist forces. Lincoln's promise to recommend in the next session of Congress a plan for gradual abolition in the loyal slave states, which would include compensation and colonization, confirmed to Goodell his own contention that the document was simply a compromise between the demands of conservatives and radicals. The Proclamation, he told his daughter, was in reality two sided, permitting "one class of persons... to try to make use of it for the perpetuation of slavery -- the other for its overthrow."³¹

Despite his disparagement of the preliminary Proclamation, Goodell waited anxiously for January 1st when, as promised by Lincoln, the Proclamation would become effective.³² Moreover, Goodell used the Principia to try to put pressure on the administration. Finally, on December 22 he and his coeditor, George C. Cheever (the fiery minister of the Church of the Puritans in New York) organized a meeting of ministers from New York and Brooklyn.

³¹Ibid., September 23, 1862, Extra; also October 30, and November 6, 1862; Letter, Goodell to Maria Frost, September 24, 1862, Goodell Papers, Berea.

³²McPherson, Struggle for Equality, p. 119.

That meeting, which met in Cheever's church, drew up a memorial addressed to the President and Congress in favor of national abolition of slavery through the Constitution. A committee was appointed consisting of Cheever, Goodell and Reverend Nathan Brown, editor of the American Baptist, to present the memorial personally to the President.³³

On the evening of December 31 Goodell and the other two members of the Committee had a fifty minute interview with Lincoln. Cheever read the President the entire memorial, after which Lincoln's objections to certain points in the memorial were discussed by the Committee. They tried especially to convince the President through appropriate quotations from the Scriptures that "justice", and not merely military necessity, should characterize his forthcoming Proclamation, and that God had commanded such a course. Goodell was impressed, as in his first interview, with Lincoln's "frankness and earnestness" and his readiness "to allow and to appreciate frankness and earnestness in others." As the Committee was leaving, Lincoln with tongue in cheek remarked that "this is the first time I ever had the honor of receiving a delegation from the Almighty." Goodell, however, had the last word. "President Lincoln" he replied, "believest thou in the

³³Principia, December 25, 1862, January 1 and 8 1863; Letter, Goodell to Charles Sumner, December 24, 1862, Sumner Papers, Harvard Univ.

prophets? I know that thou believest!"³⁴

Although the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1st was substantially the same as the preliminary document of September 22, Goodell was elated over the new Proclamation. "...The hour has arrive," he wrote in a moment of enthusiasm, "the dock has struck, the edict of liberation for the more than three millions of native born Americans -- American citizens, as Jefferson styled them -- had been sent forth, in the name of the people of the United States, and by the Executive of their National Government." Although he admitted defects in the declaration, he found it an improvement over the Proclamation of September 22. While the latter made emancipation conditional, he pointed out, the new document declared unconditional, immediate, and complete emancipation without mentioning apprenticeship, gradualism, compensation or colonization. Departing from his argument of September that the proclamation affected only a part of the slave population, Goodell now felt that it was a step in the right direction. "The authority that has declared three fourths of the slaves free," he pointed out, "is competent to proclaim

³⁴ Principia, January 8, 1863; Maria Goodell, "Sketch of Rev. William Goodell," MSS, Goodell Papers, Berea; see also recollection of interview in Janesville Gazette, June 15, 1874, Goodell Papers, Berea.

freedom to the remaining one fourth, if it pleases."³⁵ By agreeing to partial emancipation as a step toward general emancipation, Goodell found himself in agreement with Northern opinion for the first time.

Goodell did not consider his work done. Unlike many veteran abolitionists who abandoned the movement after announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation and ratification of the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution, Goodell argued that freedmen as well as the poor and ignorant whites of the South would need guidance and assistance after the War to elevate themselves and improve their condition. Abolitionists would be needed to protect the just and legal rights of the freedmen, to work against prejudice, to restore family relations, to establish free schools, to build churches and to found colleges.³⁶

Three weeks after Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, Goodell confidently announced that "radicalism will survive slavery." "Radicalism that destroys slavery," he vowed, "is not to die in the grave with it." Goodell saw great work ahead for the radical movement: to "elevate the victims of slavery from degradation,"

³⁵ Principia, January 8, 1863.

³⁶ Ibid., October 23, 1863.

to assure "the blessings of liberty not for the black man alone, but also for the red man, the brown man, the white man, 'the poor white trash' of the South..." to work for the protection of the laborers in their right to work and to the fruits of their labor.³⁷

Goodell thereafter began more and more to turn his attention toward achieving the second most important part of his radical program, the political and economic elevation of the Negro, especially the freedmen. As we have seen, Goodell was the first one to come out immediately after the firing on Fort Sumter in favor of confiscation of southern land and its distribution among the freedmen. In November, 1862 Goodell demanded that blacks be included in the Homestead Act that provided each settler forty acres of land and one hundred dollars.³⁸ Goodell had advocated the idea of free land to both whites and blacks since 1845. He expressed interest in events at Port Royal and the South Carolina sea islands, where the government and philanthropic organizations were assisting freedmen in attaining economic independence.³⁹ He was especially enthusiastic about governmental policy of selling land to freedmen at one dollar per

³⁷ Ibid., January 22, 1863.

³⁸ Ibid., November 28, 1862.

³⁹ On the Port Royal experiment see Willie Lee Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction The Port Royal Experiment (Indianapolis: Bobb-Merrill Co., Inc., 1964).

acre. "Here, -- it strikes us --," he exclaimed, "is a model plan of pacification, reconstruction, and Union, already in successful progress, worth more than all the schemes of compensation, colonization, and mystification, that have yet been devised."⁴⁰

In all likelihood, it was the Port Royal experiment that convinced Goodell that land allocation was not the solution to the economic problem of the freedmen. Proper implements and technical assistance had to be provided as well. Without equal and just laws, without land or any tools, without shelter, food, clothing, and fuel to subsist between seed planting and harvesting, the Negro could not enter equally into the economic life of the country. "Not even Yankee enterprise, thrift, ingenuity, perseverance, and resolution," he wrote, "have even been found equal to tasks like these." But give the blacks the same advantages now enjoyed by whites, and they would prove themselves as capable as the latter.⁴¹ Goodell, like many other abolitionists, understood very well the degrading effects of slavery on the Negro. Yet, he expected that freedmen, given the same advantages and rights enjoyed by the whites, could achieve in a very short time similar economic and political success as the whites.

⁴⁰ Principia, November 5, 1863.

⁴¹ Ibid., January 21, 1864.

Besides economic reform, Goodell continued to urge the Administration and Congress to provide blacks with the equal rights guaranteed in the Constitution including the right to vote and hold office.⁴² He enthusiastically received Attorney General Edward Bates' decision to affirm citizenship for blacks. Goodell took immediate advantage of the decision by asserting the unconstitutionality of colonization: if all the blacks were citizens, he argued, they could not be legally colonized.⁴³ Goodell continued to urge the federal courts to declare all black laws in the non-slaveholding states unconstitutional on the basis that the federal government had the authority to guarantee to every state a republican form of government.⁴⁴

Goodell, however, was not content merely to urge the whites to elevate the Negro to a position of equality with themselves. He called upon the blacks to take the initiative in that work, not merely to help themselves but the white man as well. "The colored race, in America today," he told his black readers, "hold the destinies of America in their own hands. As they determine to do, so the issue of the contest and the fate of the nation is to be settled." He urged the black man not only to

⁴²Ibid., January 14, 1864 and June 25, 1863.

⁴³Ibid., December 25, 1862.

⁴⁴Ibid., April 23, 1863.

enlist and fight in the War for the purpose of delivering themselves and the whites from the scourge of slavery, but also to help in renovating the South by becoming teachers to the "white trash" of that section.⁴⁵

Goodell's dream of an equalitarian society was for the moment shattered by the bloody draft riots in New York city of July 1863. Angered by the enforcement of the draft, a mob of immigrants and lower class whites rampaged through the city for four days attacking not only soldiers and government officials but also Negroes and their homes, as well as abolitionists and Republicans.⁴⁶ Goodell, as in the cholera epidemic of 1832 and the proslavery riots two years later, remained in the office long enough to get out the weekly. But as his daughter Lavinia (who was with him and assisted in the editorial work) frankly told her sister, "comparative obscurity" was partially responsible for their escape. Nevertheless, on the second day of the riots Goodell took greater precautions. He did not go to the office and took the name plate off the front door of his residence in Williamsburgh. At night, fearing the mob, Goodell and his

⁴⁵ Ibid., January 1, 1863.

⁴⁶ McPherson, Struggle for Equality, p. 231; see also James McCague, The Second Rebellion, the Story of the New York Draft Riots of 1863, (N. Y.: The Dial Press, Inc. 1968), passim.

family stayed with a friend.⁴⁷

Goodell and the family escaped the wrath of the mob, but the weekly suffered materially from the riots. The paper was circulated outside the city and even had some subscribers in England,⁴⁸ but the largest number of subscriptions came from blacks within New York and vicinity. With the riots driving many blacks from the city and demoralizing many others, the subscription list dwindled to such an extent that the Principia was on the verge of bankruptcy.⁴⁹ The publisher, Alden, therefore, appealed to the public for help.⁵⁰ When that was not forthcoming, Cheever, the coeditor, wrote to Chase requesting some financial aid from the government. Though Chase was unable to provide help from that source, he did convince his friend the banker Jay

⁴⁷Letter, Lavinia Goodell to Maria Frost, July 17, 1863, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁴⁸Letter, Lavinia Goodell to Maria Frost, April 16 and 17, 1863, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, George Robson to George Cheever, Cheever Family Papers, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester.

⁴⁹Letter, George Cheever to Elizabeth Washburn, August 5, 1863, Cheever Papers, Amer. Antiq. Soc.

⁵⁰Principia, July 23, 1863.

Cooke, whose company was the "sole subscription agent for the distribution of the bonds of the United States,"⁵¹ to save the Principia.⁵² Ironically, Goodell was saved by a member of the northern aristocracy, a class that he had for many years accused for conspiring with southern slaveholders to maintain slavery and oppress poor whites and blacks.⁵³

Further aid for the Principia came from the Colored Convention that met at Poughkeepsie on July 16 with Dr. J. W. C. Pennington as president. That meeting was called for the purpose of encouraging blacks to enlist in the army and to "facilitate the introduction of colored troops into the service of the United States." Recognizing that the Principia was fighting the cause of the Negro, the delegates resolved to make that weekly and the Anglo-African,

⁵¹J. G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1961), p. 344.

⁵²Letter, George Cheever to Elizabeth Washburn, August 5, 1863, Cheever Papers, Amer. Antiq. Soc; Letter, Salmon Chase to Edward Gilbert, October 17, 1863, Chase Papers, Library of Congress, cited in Robert York, George B. Cheever, Religious and Social Reformer 1807-1890 (Orono: Univ. Press, 1955), p. 197.

⁵³See Goodell's Address at Port Byron, and Goodell, Address of the Macedon Convention.

edited by Robert Hamilton (the former black recording secretary of the American Abolition Society) as the official organs of the black people in the state of New York.⁵⁴

The riots not only hurt Goodell's paper, but also interfered with his attempt to convince the blacks that they should take advantage of the wartime situation to try to enter the mainstream of American life. Soon after the riots Goodell called upon the blacks not to be "disheartened," and expressed sympathy with their "afflictions and distresses." "Some of you," he wrote, "have been hunted like wild beasts in the streets of your native city, by rebels and foreigners, and without protection. Your houses have been entered, and some of them destroyed by ruffians, plunderers and murderers. Not a few of you are bereaved of husbands, fathers, brothers, who have been murdered with barbarities that would have disgraced savages. All this because you are black, and because you are loyal." But he asked them not to be discouraged. As a reformer, Goodell reminded them, who had worked for the black cause for the last thirty years, and had borne "with you, the reproach of them, deeming in the reproach

⁵⁴ Principia, July 30, 1863; Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War (N. Y.: Russell and Russell, 1968, orig. 1953), p. 189.

of Christ, who preached deliverance to the captives....," he was convinced that the "day of deliverance" was near. For God, the Constitution and public sentiment were all on their side.⁵⁵

Besides encouragement and sympathy, Goodell helped provide material aid to the stricken black population of the city. He joined with other abolitionists, in urging contributions and assistance to the victims of the riots.⁵⁶ In addition, taking advantage of a sympathetic public opinion, Goodell joined with the two other abolitionist papers in the city, the Independent and the Anti-Slavery Standard, to work for the removal of Jim Crow on all New York's street railroads. The point of issue was the Fourth and Eighth Avenue Railroad companies which excluded blacks from their cars and the Sixth Avenue company which segregated them. Goodell argued that any distinction based on color practiced either by the state, city or a corporation were violations of the Constitution and should thus be judged by the courts as null and void. The railroads were common carriers and under common law, and they had no legal right to exclude anyone. After some public pressure especially from the New York Tribune, the three companies surrendered by January, 1864 and opened their

⁵⁵ Principia, July 23, 1863.

⁵⁶ Ibid., July 23 and 30, 1863.

cars equally to all their passengers.⁵⁷

Goodell in urging the nation to place the Negro within the mainstream of American life hoped that the Administration would provide the cooperation and assistance in achieving that objective. But as the election of 1864 was approaching Goodell showed disenchantment with Lincoln's ability and willingness to work toward that end. By March Goodell was ready to oppose the reelection of Lincoln and instead was convinced that John C. Frémont could best undertake the job of reconstruction.

At first Goodell was mild in his criticism of Lincoln. Since his second interview with the President in December, 1862, Goodell refrained from bitter attacks on his policies. As a matter of fact, he found occasion to praise Lincoln for his "practical, democratic, and honest" qualities which "will greatly strengthen him, with the masses of the people."⁵⁸ Even Lincoln's reconstruction policy of December, 1863, a program which had little to say about the Negro, Goodell at first found generally satisfactory. He did not criticize Lincoln's ten percent plan, which would have admitted any confederate state back into the Union when ten

⁵⁷Ibid., August 13, 1863; Letter, George Cheever to Elizabeth Washburn, August 5, 1863, Cheever Papers, Amer. Antiq. Soc.; McPherson, Struggle for Equality, p.232-233.

⁵⁸Principia, September 10, 1863.

percent of its 1860 voters established a state government with a constitution pledged to the abolition of slavery. That plan obviously went against Goodell's principles. Unlike Wendell Phillips, who criticized bitterly Lincoln's reconstruction policy,⁵⁹ Goodell praised the program for its adoption of two radical abolitionist principles, that the Constitution required the federal government to assist the states to establish republican form of governments, and that such authority rested with the President.⁶⁰ Goodell, however, did not go as far as to urge Lincoln's reelection. He admitted that there was strong opposition to the President and that he would not easily receive all the antislavery votes.⁶¹

On March 3, 1864 Goodell took a step toward all-out opposition to Lincoln's reelection. In an editorial entitled "Wanted-- A Leader," Goodell, without naming Lincoln, attacked the President for following public opinion, instead of leading it. Leaders, he wrote, were "elected to consider, deliberate, decide and act, according to their best judgment -- not to play the farce of being weather-cocks upon the tops of the steeples." Three weeks later Goodell announced his opposition to Lincoln's reelection.

⁵⁹McPherson, Struggle for Equality, p. 260-261.

⁶⁰Principia, December 17, 1863.

⁶¹Ibid., February 18, 1864.

tion and instead endorsed Frémont for president. He explained that he had always had high appreciation of Lincoln's good qualities, but he had been disappointed with the President's failure to carry out the Emancipation Proclamation and with his wide ranging amnesty proclamation. In addition, Goodell was critical of the President's lack of policy for the equal protection of the rights of the Negro.⁶²

Goodell was not alone among the abolitionists in his opposition to Lincoln's reelection. By the end of 1863 some abolitionists and Radical Republicans were also disenchanted with Lincoln's leadership and were ready to support Chase or any other candidate for president. When Chase's candidacy collapsed in March, many of those who were disappointed with Lincoln looked to Frémont. Frémont had been the hero of the abolitionists since 1861 when he issued an emancipation edict in Missouri. In May the Frémont Club of New York sent out a Call for a convention to meet on May 31 at Cleveland for the purpose of "consultation and concert of action" regarding the next presidential election.⁶³

Goodell, Cheever, Alden, and Simon S. Jocelyn imme-

⁶² Ibid., March 3 and 24, April 21, 1864.

⁶³ Ruhl J. Bartlett, John C. Frémont and the Republican Party (N. Y.: De Capo Press, 1970, orig. 1930), p. 84-101; Principia, May 5, 1864.

diately endorsed the Call. They called upon other radical abolitionists to meet with them at Cleveland in order to nominate Frémont on a platform of opposition to Lincoln's reconstruction policy, and in favor of absolute equality of all men before the law regardless of color or race, and a plan of reconstruction for the confiscation of rebel property.⁶⁴

Goodell played a prominent part at the Cleveland Convention. About four hundred delegates from many parts of the country attended, many of whom were German-American radicals,⁶⁵ abolitionists, and disaffected War Democrats. Goodell was placed on a committee on permanent organization together with such former Garrisonians as Stephen Foster and Parker Pillsbury. The Convention nominated Frémont and John Cochrane, a nephew of Gerrit Smith and a former Democrat, for president and vice president on the Radical Democratic ticket.⁶⁶

The platform reflected the attempt by the Convention to reconcile the differences between the War Democrats and abolitionists. Goodell's radical platform was rejected and in its place more

⁶⁴Principia, May 12, 1864.

⁶⁵Letter, A. Henry Biedfeld to Smith, March 28, 1864, Smith Papers, Syracuse. He told Smith that German radicals favored Frémont.

⁶⁶National Anti-Slavery Standard, June 4, 1864.

ambiguous planks were adopted. Goodell's attempt to amend the fifth plank, which stated that the rebellion had destroyed slavery and that the Federal Constitution should be amended to prohibit the reestablishment of that institution, elicited a heated debate, but failed to pass. Goodell urged that slavery was not dead as long as the rebellion existed, and that there was no need for an amendment since slavery was unconstitutional. The abolitionists did get a vague plank which called for an amendment to the Constitution so as to "secure to all men absolute equality before the law." In regard to reconstruction policy, the delegates announced in favor of legislative rather than executive authority, and in addition called for confiscation of rebel land to be distributed among the soldiers and actual settlers. As a concession to the War Democrats, the Convention admonished the President for violating the rights of speech, press and habeas corpus, a major criticism of the Administration by the party.⁶⁷

At other times Goodell would have found many reasons for refusing to support such a Party. The platform and the candidates obviously did not measure up to Goodell's radical views

⁶⁷Ibid.; Principia, June 9, 1864; William Frank Zornow, "The Cleveland Convention, 1864, The Radical Democrats," Mid-America, 36 (Jan. 1954), 39-53.

regarding the Constitution and the Negro. The Convention rejected Goodell's argument that slavery was unconstitutional and that the rights of the Negro were already guaranteed in the Constitution. Instead, the delegates called for amendments to the Constitution, thus admitting the constitutionality of slavery and Negro inequality. Nothing was said directly about Goodell's idea of placing the Negro within the mainstream of American life.

The candidates too were far from being radicals. Goodell had refused to support Frémont in 1856 on the ground that he did not favor radical measures. Now Frémont showed his antiradical views, when in the acceptance letter, he refused to endorse the plank of the Cleveland platform calling for land confiscation as a measure of reconstruction. Cochrane was even further removed from radicalism. He was favored by the Democrats and had voted before the War for Pierce, Buchanan, and Breckinridge.⁶⁸ It is therefore not surprising that most Negroes refused to support the new party.⁶⁹

Yet in his zeal to defeat Lincoln, Goodell expressed general satisfaction with the results of the Cleveland Convention. Forgetting the uncompromising position he had taken since 1840, that only a pure radical party would receive his support, Goodell, though admit-

⁶⁸Principia, June 9, 1864; Bartlett, Fremont, p. 104.

⁶⁹Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War, p. 249-250.

ting disagreement with certain planks in the platform and with the choice of Cochrane as vice presidential candidate, found that Party far ahead of the Free Soil or Republican parties of prior years. Goodell interpreted the controversial plank in the platform which stated that slavery was dead as meaning that the institution was legally invalid. Goodell's and other radical abolitionists' support of the Cleveland Convention can be interpreted as the death of radical abolitionism.⁷⁰

It was now the turn of Goodell's critics to accuse him of being inconsistent and untrue to his radical principles. The National Anti-Slavery Standard accused Goodell of joining the Democratic party against Lincoln, for the Cleveland platform was intended to invite coalition with the party. The journal expressed surprise at radical abolitionists' and especially at Goodell's support of such a platform.⁷¹ Oliver Johnson, the editor of the weekly, in a private letter to Henry Cheever, was at loss to explain the "delusion" that "has fallen upon such men as Goodell, your brother George Cheever and yourself, that you can lend your support to such a movement."⁷²

⁷⁰ Principia, June 9, 1864; Anti-Slavery Standard, June 18, 1864.

⁷¹ Anti-Slavery Standard, June 18, 1864.

⁷² Letter, Oliver Johnson to Henry Cheever, June 16, 1864, Cheever Papers, Amer. Antiq. Soc.

The Independent lamented that the Cleveland Convention led "good men into a snare," and brought discredit on the good name of the Liberty, Free Soil and Liberty League parties which were of "conscience, always reputable before God and the world." The editor especially singled out Goodell for his inconsistency in supporting a party whose intention was to make an alliance with the Copperhead Democrats. It went against all the positions taken by Goodell in the Principia.⁷³

Goodell denied any inconsistency in supporting the Cleveland Convention. Instead, he claimed that the Convention and candidates had virtually adopted the radical abolition doctrine of national emancipation. It was wrong, he argued, not to differentiate between the War Democrats and proslavery peace Democrats. The former took part at the Convention in Cleveland and agreed to accept the radical platform while the latter refused. Frémont, he pointed out, had virtually accepted radical abolitionism by his early proclamation of liberty in Missouri, and his repudiation of states' rights doctrine in favor of national abolition. The platform too was more radical than the Republican. In contrast to the latter, the Cleveland platform asserted in favor of equality of all men before the law which Goodell interpreted as referring to the

⁷³ The Independent, June 23, 1864.

rights of blacks to civil and political equality. The Republicans, on the other hand, declared merely the duty of the government to protect all men in the army, regardless of color. Goodell went as far as to claim Phillips' letter to the Convention as part of the platform. Phillips called for a reconstruction policy that provided the black man both with land and the ballot.⁷⁴

But in fact Goodell was placed in an inconsistent position. He who had always warned others against compromise, himself accepted compromise by supporting the Radical Democratic Party's ambiguous platform and its lack of expressed commitment to Negro equality. In his zeal to defeat Lincoln, Goodell failed to realize that the Radical Democratic party had no real interest in furthering radical abolitionism but was in fact attempting to embarrass Lincoln.⁷⁵

Goodell's public support of Frémont through the Principia, however, was short lived. By the end of August the paper was suspended due to financial difficulties. Although no direct evidence is available, the suspension of the weekly may have been the result of pressure from the Republican party. It may be recalled that it was due to financial assistance from Jay Cooke, the Republican

⁷⁴ Principia, June 30 and July 7, 21, 28, 1864.

⁷⁵ Zornow, "The Cleveland Convention, 1864" p. 50.

friend of Chase, that the Principia was revived in July, 1863 when the paper was on the verge of bankruptcy. Goodell probably hinted of such pressure when he wrote his daughter two months after the suspension of the Principia that "I have never yet known a Presidential election that did not sweep away all the land marks of moral principle that had been set up and fortified for the few years previous." But he told her he was resigned to the situation. "Considering the diseased state of the body politic as well as my own, it is perhaps as well it should be so."⁷⁶

In spite of his advancing age and feeble health, Goodell did not remain idle during the suspension of the paper. Though he withdrew from the Frémont campaign, Goodell continued to write constantly on theology and politics. Moving from Williamsburgh, Brooklyn to Goshen, Connecticut⁷⁷ Goodell continued to follow closely the national scene, especially the end of the War and the reconstruction policies of the new President, Andrew Johnson.

76

Letter, Goodell to Maria Frost, October 28, 1864, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁷⁷ Letter, Lavinia Goodell to Maria Frost, April 28, 1865, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Goodell to Maria Frost, May 27, 1865, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Goodell to daughter, June 3, 1865, Goodell Papers, Berea; Goodell lived in Williamsburgh, Brooklyn for ten years up to 1865 when he and his wife moved to Connecticut.

When the Principia was resumed in June, 1865,⁷⁸ Goodell came out squarely in favor of Negro suffrage as part of the reconstruction program. He criticized bitterly Johnson's policy of excluding blacks from the suffrage in the election of delegates to the southern state conventions. Denial of the vote to the Negro, he insisted, violated the Constitution and left the southern states vulnerable to take over by secession leaders. These former rebels, he feared, would combine with northern sympathizers to gain control of the government and oppress the blacks with or without chattel slavery.⁷⁹

In a private letter to his daughter Goodell again stressed the importance of granting the ballot to the Negro as part of the program of reconstructing the South. He argued against the con-

⁷⁸Principia and National Era, June 19, 1865; New York Principia, January 11 and February 8 and June 14, 1866. Letter, Goodell to Lavinia Goodell, February 18, 1866, Goodell Papers, Berea; Anti-Slavery Standard, November 17, 1866, announcing the death of the Principia; Principia resumed publication on June 29, 1865 after merging with the National Era, but it lasted for a few weeks. In June, 1866 it was revived for the last time as the New York Principia and it lasted for six months. Goodell was no more editor but only a columnist.

⁷⁹Principia, July 6, 1865; Sermon, "The Right of Suffrage and Duty of Voting," (no date) MSS, Goodell Papers, Oberlin.

tention that Negro suffrage was a matter of time. That argument, he pointed out, was similar to the one used by the Founding Fathers at the end of the Revolution in regard to slavery. It took ninety years to abolish that institution. "God's time to do justice," he told his daughter, "is the present time -- the only 'accepted time'...."⁸⁰

Goodell's strong support of Negro suffrage indicates that he did not abandon the radical cause, but his interest in the Negro question began to wane by the end of the 1860's. In company with other veteran abolitionists, Goodell apparently felt that with the abolition of slavery and with a Radical Republican reconstruction program underway the goal of the old abolitionist movement had been largely achieved. Now Goodell felt free to turn to temperance, a movement he had abandoned in 1833 when he embraced abolitionism. Thus, except for some correspondence with Charles Sumner whom he encouraged in his work in favor of radical reconstruction,⁸¹ Goodell at age seventy-seven resigned from the struggle to aid the blacks and returned to temperance, a cause to which he would devote the last years of his life.

⁸⁰ Letter, Goodell to Maria Frost, June 22, 1865, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁸¹ Letter, Goodell to Charles Sumner, September 25, 1865, Sumner Papers, Harvard; Letter, Goodell to Sumner, March 16, 1866, Sumner Papers, Harvard; Letter, Goodell to Sumner, April 5, 1866, Sumner Papers, Harvard; Letter, Goodell to Sumner July 13, 1867, Sumner Papers, Harvard; Letter, Mrs. Goodell to Lavinia Goodell, March 16, 1866, Goodell Papers, Berea.

The end of the slavery controversy led to a revival of interest in the temperance cause. By the summer of 1865 the fifth National Temperance Convention was held at Saratoga, fourteen years after the last such gathering had convened. At the 1865 meeting the American Temperance Union, that was founded in 1836, was merged into the new organization, the National Temperance Society.⁸² However, probably due to the success of political abolitionism, many temperance reformers began to show an interest in organizing a separate Prohibition Party. A convention to form such a political organization was therefore called to meet in Chicago on September 1, 1869.⁸³

Goodell, as always was a ready advocate of separate political action. He therefore made plans to attend the Chicago Convention. Taking a tour of western New York on his way to Chicago, Goodell stopped over to visit the veteran New York temperance leader, E. C. Delavan. The latter was opposed to independent political action⁸⁴ and Goodell apparently made an effort

⁸² August F. Fehlandt, A Century of Drink Reform p. 223; Ernest H. Cherrington, The Evolution of Prohibition in the United States of America (Westerville: American Issue Press, 1920), p. 163.

⁸³ Fehland, A Century of Drink Reform, p. 248-251; Cherrington, Prchibition, p. 166.

⁸⁴ See latter of Delavan to the Chicago Convention reprinted in the New York Times, September 3, 1869; Letter, E. C. Delavan to Smith, September 13, 1869, Smith Papers, Syracuse.

85

to win him over to his views.

Appointed one of the vice presidents of the Convention, Goodell played a prominent part in the debates over the wisdom of independent political action. To Goodell it may have all sounded familiar, for in reality it was a reiteration of the arguments pro and con used by the abolitionists in the late 1830's regarding a separate political party. In the end, a National Prohibition Party was organized on the basis of an address prepared by Gerrit Smith. The latter was the leading figure at the Convention in favor of independent political action.⁸⁶ It was here that Goodell and Smith revived their friendship.

Goodell continued to work in the temperance movement on the local level. In Connecticut, where he lived, he lectured and preached on temperance and attended local temperance conventions.⁸⁷ When in November, 1870 Goodell and his wife moved to

85

Letter, Goodell to Maria Frost, August 24, 1869; Goodell Papers, Berea.

86

New York Times, September 2 and 3, 1869; Fehlandt, A Century of Drink Reform, p. 251-252.

87

Letter, Mrs. Goodell to Maria Frost, March 25, 1868; Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Mrs. Goodell to Maria, January 11, 1870, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Mrs. Goodell to Maria, March 27, (no year but probably written sometime between 1865 and 1870 since it was written from Goshen, Lebanon, Conn.), Goodell Papers, Berea; Sermon "Temperance and Legislation," (no date) MSS, Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Sermon "The Strait and Broad Way," September 27, 1868, MSS Goodell Papers, Oberlin; Sermon "Tests of Gratitude," November 21, 1869, Goodell Papers, Oberlin.

join their oldest daughter and her family in the town of Janesville, Wisconsin,⁸⁸ he continued his work for the cause, mostly locally, until his death there seven years later. Goodell became active in the local temperance movement in Wisconsin, writing articles for the Wisconsin Good Templar and for the Janesville Gazette and attending conventions.⁸⁹ Convinced of the importance of political action in achieving reform, Goodell worked to persuade his fellow temperance workers in Wisconsin to enter politics. In 1874 he therefore assisted in organizing a Wisconsin State Prohibition Party which met at Ripon in October.⁹⁰

Goodell's interest in abolitionism, however, still continued,

⁸⁸William Fiske Brown, ed. Rock County Wisconsin A New History of its Cities, Villages, Towns, Citizens and varied interests from Earliest Times up to date (2 vols. Chicago: C.F. Cooper, 1908), II, 521-605.

⁸⁹Letter, Goodell to Lewis Frost, February 26, 1870, Goodell Papers Berea; Letter, Goodell to Lavinia Goodell, December 2, 1870, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Lavinia Goodell to parents, July 3, 1871, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Mrs. Goodell and Lavinia Goodell to Maria Frost, December 18, 1873, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Goodell to Maria Frost, May 30, 1873, Goodell Papers, Berea; Letter, Goodell to Maria, November 26, 1873, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁹⁰"William Goodell, Janesville," The United States Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self-Made Men. Wisconsin Volume (Chicago: American Biographical Pub. Co., 1877), 195.

though on a sentimental level. At age eighty two Goodell travelled to Chicago to join the reunion of abolitionists that was taking place in June, 1874. According to the New York Times, he was the oldest living abolitionist who met together with other "men and women -- venerable with age, stooping beneath burdens borne in the past, proud that they were one incorruptible and invincible in times which 'tried men's souls' -- ... in friendly conferences to talk over the past, to revive pleasant remembrances, and to utter eulogies of those gone down to the grave in glory," On the first day the abolitionists crowded into the Second Baptist Church to hear Governor John L. Beveridge of Illinois welcome them in eloquent terms as American heroes, after which Goodell read part of an address on the history of the antislavery movement. Goodell, however, was not done with reminiscing about the cause. On the second day he described to the reunion Convention the two personal interviews he had with Lincoln.⁹¹

The Convention, however, was not given over entirely to reminiscing. On the afternoon of the second day, the gathering was enlivened by a forceful effort by a group of women led by Rebecca W. Mott to take over the Convention in name of women's rights. Though the women were unsuccessful in convincing the

⁹¹New York Times, June 10, 11 and 12, 1874.

members to endorse their demands, some of the younger men at the Convention did create excitement when they tried to introduce resolutions lamenting social discrimination practiced against blacks in public schools, in seating on railroad cars, in the churches, in places of amusement, and in hotels. They reminded the veteran abolitionists that their work was not yet done. After some debate, the resolutions favoring social rights for the Negro were adopted by the Convention.⁹²

Goodell, too, did not believe that the reformer's task was done. A year after returning from the reunion Convention he expressed in a sketch of his life his conviction that there were "gigantic forces of evil yet to be encountered, the strong holds of iniquity in high places yet to be overthrown, the obstacles yet to be surmounted; the still greater struggle with the power of darkness that is yet to come." The task of the reformer in the Gilded Age, therefore, was to fight for the "establishment of protecting law, the restoration of honesty, justice, mercy, equity, equality, in the conduct of public affairs, the proper use, instead of the abuse of civil government, the abolition of unrighteous monopolies, castes and class legislation, and the enfranchisement of law-

⁹²
Ibid., June 12, and 13, 1874.

abiding citizens, irrespective of race, color, or sex. " But Goodell was not done. He specified in greater detail the reforms he thought must be achieved: prohibition of the liquor traffic, suppression of crime, civil rights to the freedmen, "national restraint of their oppressors," equal and just taxation, reform of civil service, abolition of the custom house, free trade, justice and protection for the Indians and the Chinese, women suffrage, and their right to hold office, and the settlement of international disputes by "righteous adjudication."⁹³

Such a long list of reforms required more than a lifetime to achieve. Goodell had only three more years to live. He continued to write on temperance and on theology almost to the very last day of his life. Gerrit Smith, who was amazed to hear that his friend, at the age of eighty, was writing a book on the theology of Jesus, told Goodell that while other people were born with a golden spoon in their mouths, Goodell was born with a pen in his hand.⁹⁴

Goodell almost died with a pen in his hand. When death came on February 14, 1878, he was engaged in completing a series

⁹³ Goodell, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea; from internal evidence it was probably written in 1875.

⁹⁴ Letter, Smith to Goodell, December 12, 1872, Goodell Papers, Berea.

of articles on the "Maine Law and its Lessons."⁹⁵

A number of years after his death, Goodell's grandson and namesake, William Goodell Frost, who was to become president of Berea College in 1892, brought Goodell's remains to be buried in Berea, Kentucky. It was here that Goodell's friend, the staunch southern abolitionist, John G. Fee, had founded the second integrated college in America in 1855.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Maria G. Frost, "Life of Lavinia Goodell," Goodell Papers Berea; Maria Frost, Sketch, Goodell Papers, Berea.

⁹⁶ John G. Fee, An Autobiography (Chicago: National Christian Association, 1891), p. 85-86; Elizabeth S. Peck, Berea's First Century 1855-1955 (Lexington: Univ. of Ky. Press, 1955), p. 3, 39, 68; William G. Frost, For the Mountains, p. 60-69. None of the sources mention Goodell's burial place. I found his grave by accident when I visited Berea College in the summer of 1970 to do research on Goodell's small collection of papers. In addition to Goodell, his wife and two daughters are buried in the Berea cemetery, all under one tombstone.

CONCLUSION

In 1867 Lewis Tappan inquired in a postscript to a letter he wrote Gerrit Smith, "Do you ever hear from our old friend William Goodell, whether he is alive and well?...."¹ It is an interesting commentary on the history of abolitionism that a man like Goodell, who in the 1830's and 1840's was so influential a figure within the movement, would now come to mind only as an afterthought to ~~some~~ a co-worker as Tappan. Ironically, the qualities that enabled Goodell to become an important propagandist and historian of the abolitionist movement served to alienate him from the mainstream of that cause. His strict religious orthodoxy, uncompromising morality, and keen logical mind made it difficult for him to adjust to the changes in the antislavery movement of the 1850's.

The overwhelming majority of abolitionists who founded the movement were religious orthodox, but as the abolitionist cause progressed they found their radical views increasingly in conflict with orthodoxy; for the established church tended to support the status quo. Thus, while most of the abolitionists either abandoned entirely orthodoxy in favor of other religious philosophies

¹Letter, Lewis Tappan to Gerrit Smith, October 21, 1867, Gerrit Smith Papers, Syracuse University Library.

or at least were willing to adjust their creeds to the needs of the times, Goodell was ready to do neither. As the antislavery movement broadened its base of support and became more and more secular Goodell was left behind. He failed to realize that his religious approach to abolitionism, effective in the 1830's, was not suited to the antislavery movement of the 'fifties.

Politics, not religion, was the guiding force of the latter decade. Although Goodell built his reputation as a political abolitionist, he was unable to adjust to the political atmosphere of the 1850's. For Goodell continued to approach politics from an orthodox religious position, while most antislavery men refused to mix religion with politics.

If Goodell was behind the times in clinging to a strict religious orthodox faith, he was far ahead of his times in his approach to slavery and the Negro. In the 1840's and 1850's Goodell sought to push the abolitionist movement a step beyond its 1833 position, which had conceded to the South the Constitutional right to maintain slavery in the states. Through his unique constitutional argument Goodell sought to provide the antislavery cause and especially political abolitionism with its raison d'être as a radical movement. By interpreting the Constitution as an anti-slavery document Goodell hoped to provide abolitionists with an

effective method for abolishing slavery by political action. Compared to the "higher law" doctrine and the disunionist position, which if followed would have led to anarchy and revolution, Goodell's constitutional argument fell within the American tradition of achieving radical ends through constitutional means.

Goodell's failure to convince political abolitionists to make the constitutional argument the basis of the Liberty party's position of slavery and the Negro, doomed political abolitionism as an independent radical movement and assured its absorption within a broad but moderate antislavery coalition. The resulting Republican party and its antislavery ideology proved to be far removed from Goodell's program for the abolition of slavery and the guarantee of Negro equality after emancipation. Very few within the Republican party agreed to the idea of direct abolition in the states, and only a handful were ready to provide through the Constitution full economic and political rights to the newly freed slaves.² It would take close to a century before the nation and the Supreme Court would be ready to place the Constitution in the forefront in the struggle for civil rights.

²Recent scholarship has confirmed Goodell's contention that even some Radicals within the Republican party were racists; see Hans L. Trefousse, The Radical Republicans Lincoln Vanguard for Racial Justice (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 33.

Goodell's decision not to join the Republican party highlights the dilemma that has confronted radicals in America: whether to be absorbed within the mainstream of political action at a possible cost of basic principle, or to retain the integrity of their radicalism by sacrificing political effectiveness. More intent on preserving the purity of his conscience than in winning momentary political victories, Goodell appears to have been unconcerned that his radical abolitionist group in the 'fifties remained on the periphery of the antislavery movement. A religious and moral reformer to the end, Goodell was convinced that truth would eventually triumph. He would have agreed with his contemporary, Henry David Thoreau, when he said that "it is enough if they [the abolitionists] have God on their side, without waiting for that other one [political majorities]. Moreover, any man more right than his neighbor constitutes a majority of one already."³

³Henry David Thoreau, "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," Walden, On the Duty of Civil Disobedience (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1948), p. 290.

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