

**THE BAPTISTS AND
SLAVERY,
1840-1845**

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The Baptists and Slavery, 1840-1845 by Mary Burnham Putnam

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MARY BURNHAM PUTNAM

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THE BAPTISTS AND SLAVERY

1840-1845

BY
MARY BURNHAM PUTNAM, PH. M.

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MARY BURNHAM PUTNAM.

Ypsilanti, Michigan.

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I.

SLAVERY AND THE CHURCHES.

In the Slavery Controversy, beginning about 1829, both anti-slavery and pro-slavery men early sought the aid of the churches. The former, when they failed to secure the active support they thought their due, were especially bitter toward clergymen and church members. Pamphlets like Birney's *American Churches the Bulwarks of Slavery* or Foster's *Brotherhood of Thieves; or a True Picture of the American Church and Clergy*, show the rather general opinion that the attitude of the churches was the greatest obstacle to anti-slavery success.¹

Beginning with the New England Society in 1832, anti-slavery societies grew very rapidly for a few years and they soon demanded a decided attitude on the part of the churches toward their measures. The Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Convention at Providence in February 1836, claimed "that the people have a right to expect of the ministers of Christ that they will cheerfully engage in the work of abolition, and to call upon them to proclaim the truth on this subject, as those who are bound to declare the counsel of God." They held that "so far as moral means are concerned the system of American slavery is now sustained chiefly through the influence of the pulpit."²

Tracts and resolutions began to demand the non-fel-

¹ On Lundy's visit to Boston in 1828, he talked with several clergymen finding them heartily opposed to slavery, but fearful that it would alarm and enrage the South to know that an anti-slavery society was formed in Boston, thus doing harm rather than good by agitating the subject. Only one or two were ready for any bold action. Garrison's: *Garrison*, I, 93-94.

² *Proceedings of Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society*, 1836.