SOME INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ABOLITION MOVEMENT

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
TUNG-HSUN SUN
1972

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ABSTRACT

SOME INTERPRETATIONS OF
THE ABOLITION MOVEMENT

By

Tung-hsun Sun

It is well known that the interpretation of American history has been in the constant process of revision. Being a part of the American past, it can be expected that the abolition movement would be subjected to the same process of interpretative change from time to time. The purpose of this thesis is to try to trace the changes in abolition historiography by an analysis of monographic studies of this subject and the writings of representative scholars of the several schools of interpretation in American historiography, and to determine what factors contributed to these changes.

It is found that since trained historians began to write about the abolition movement during the last decade of the nineteenth century, the interpretation of it has undergone several changes. Nationalist historians like James Ford Rhodes, Albert B. Hart and Jesse Macy whose studies

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fighters for liberties for all men. However, the unreservedly sympathetic reappraisal of the abolition movement did not come until the 1960's when admiring historians came to view the abolitionists as far-sighted, practical revolutionaries and upheld their radicalism.

The reasons for such changes in interpretation and attitude were complex. The accumulation of material and scholarship was certainly one of the factors. Another was the background and belief of individual historians. But the fact that during a given age, historians were more or less united in their approach and attitude to the abolitionists may suggest a close relation of the changes in interpretation to those in the general outlook of different ages. Thus, the nationalist historians' favorable reaction to the political abolitionists was in accord with the popular emphasis on sectional reconciliation and national unity of their time. The disillusionment with the First World War and the debunking mood of the post-war years accounted at least partially for Barnes' ambivalent attitude, and largely for the revisionists' denunciation of the abolitionists as warmongers. The relatively conservative mood with a mistrust of reforms during the 1950's was responsible for the psychologist-historians' minimization of the abolitionists as true reformers. And finally the completely sympathetic rehabilitating trend in abolition historiography of the last decade was mainly a product of the rise of radicalism and the growing sympathy for the Negro's struggle for equality and justice.

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appeared in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century viewed the abolitionists as true reformers battling against a real social and moral evil. Although they found it difficult to endorse Garrisonian radicalism, they were on the whole favorable to the abolitionists, in particular the moderate or political group. During the late 1920's, the leading Progressive historians, Frederick Jackson Turner, Charles A. Beard, and Vernon L. Parrington, presented an interpretation which minimized the significance of the abolition agitation in the sectional conflict. Gilbert H. Barnes revived the importance of the moral issue over slavery, and was sympathetic to the Weld-Tappan group, but he regarded the abolitionists as denunciators of slavery as a sin rather than true reformers aiming at the destruction of slavery. The detracting trend implicit in Barnes' ambiguous attitude reached its height in the writings of the revisionist historians during the period from the mid-thirties to the mid-forties and in those of such psychologist-historians as David Donald and Stanley M. Elkins in the 1950's. To the former, the abolitionists were fanatics whose irresponsible propaganda made a needless war unavoidable; to the latter, they were neurotics seeking to reduce their own internal tensions rather than to end slavery. But such critical views did not dominate the entire abolition historiography even during their heyday. Dwight L. Dumond, Alice Felt Tyler, and Russell B. Nye raised dissenting voices now and then, and described the abolitionists as noble

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Department of History

1972

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Preface

Students of American historiography have recognized that the interpretations of the American past have been in the constant process of revision. Ever since the rise of professional historians, few major schools of interpretation had dominated American historical study more than a generation without being subjected to change. This is probably natural. Since the historian is a part of the hostirical process, his view of the past must be influenced by the subject elements of his own and his time. Despite the ideal of objectivity, few historians can escape the trap of their own preferences and those of their age.

Being a part of the American past, it can be expected that the interpretation of the abolition movement would also go through this same process of revision from time to time. This is what actually happened. The purpose of this thesis is to trace the changes in the interpretations of the abolition movement from the last decade of the nineteenth century when trained historians first came to write about it down to the present. During these four score years, the historical treatment of the ante-bellum crusade against slavery has changed from a partial approval through a total denunciation to an unreservedly sympathetic reappraisal.

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In the analysis of these changes in abolition historiography, efforts were made to locate the factors contributing to such shifts in interpretation and attitude. It was found that the accumulations of scholarship and material, and the historian's background and convictions were influential. But more attention was paid to the relationships of the historian's view of the abolitionists to the general outlook of his age. This is largely because during a given period, abolition historians often agreed on a general pattern in their attitudes and interpretations of the abolition movement.

No attempt was made to include all the historical literature on this subject. In selecting the historians, it was decided to include only those who did monographic studies on the abolition movement and those who although making no specific investigations, represented the major schools in American historiography. Except for illustration, biographies of individual abolitionists were excluded.

I am indebted to Professor Douglas T. Miller who has always been generous in offering suggestions, criticisms, corrections, and other help I desperately needed; Professor Warren I. Cohen without whose arrangement and kind help I could not have come to study American history and obtained the necessary financial support, and whose unselfish criticisms and suggestions aided me in clarifying several crucial questions in writing this thesis; and Professor Frederick Williams

who first suggested this topic to me. Without their generous encouragement, I could not have possibly passed through all the doubts, despairs, and frustrations I felt during the preparation for the thesis. Finally, I want to thank the Department of History, Michigan State University, Institute of International Education, and American Council of Learned Societies whose financial grants enabled me to complete my study in the United States.

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I Law-Abiding
The View of

II A Negligible
Progressive

III Revivalists
Barnes' Vie

IV Irresponsi
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V Abolition a
The View of

VI Planters a
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VII Practical
Historians

VIII The Aboli
tion . . .

Bibliography . .

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
Preface		ii
I	Law-Abiding Citizens as Abolitionists -- The View of The Nationalist Historians	1
II	A Negligible Minority -- The View of the Progressive Historians	51
III	Revivalists in Abolition -- Gilbert H. Barnes' View	92
IV	Irresponsible Propagandists -- The Revisionist View	122
V	Abolition as a Means of Tension Reduction -- The View of The Consensus Historians	174
VI	Fighters for the Rights of Men -- A Dissenting Voice	210
VII	Practical Revolutionaries -- The View of Historians of the Last Decade	245
VIII	The Abolition Movement in General Histories.	287
Conclusion		325
Bibliography		330

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CHAPTER I

LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS AS ABOLITIONISTS

- THE VIEW OF THE NATIONALIST HISTORIANS -

It has lone been well recognized that there were many and often conflicting opinions on the matters of ends and means within the abolition movement. The abolitionists quarrelled with each other in the crusading days. But the chief dispute was between the Garrisonian and the non-Garrisonian abolitionists. The quarrel was then carried over into the post-Civil War era when ex-abolitionists or their descendants published works justifying the position of and claiming preeminence for the group with which they identified themselves. Thus, Oliver Johnson, Samuel J. May, and Parker Pillsbury painted the abolition movement as led solely by Garrison and centering in New England.[1] This interpretation, however, could not be accepted by William Birney, son of James G. Birney, Lewis Tappan, and other non-Garrisonian ex-abolitionists. They certainly agreed with the Garrisonian interpreters that the abolition movement was

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[1] Oliver Johnson, William Lloyd Garrison and His Times (Boston, 1879); Samuel J. May, Some Recollections of Our Anti-Slavery Conflict (Boston, 1869); and Parker Pillsbury, Acts of the Anti-Slavery Apostles (Concord, N.H., 1883).

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responsible for the final emancipation of slaves. What they contended is that neither Garrison was its undisputed leader nor New England its sole center.[2]

When professional historians in or outside colleges came to write on this subject during the period from the 1890's to the early 1920's, there still was no consensus on the problem of leadership or the relative importance of the Garrisonian or non-Garrisonian abolitionists in the crusade against slavery. Historians with strong western abolitionist connections like Albert Bushnell Hart and Jesse Macy denied the leadership of Garrison; and those without such connections generally followed the Garrisonian tradition, considering Garrison as the originator and leader of the militant phase of the antislavery crusade, James Schouler, John W. Burgess, James Ford Rhodes, Woodrow Wilson, and Edward Channing belonged to this category. However, it must be pointed out that, unlike Hart and Macy who consciously asserted the importance of the western abolitionists, the other group of historians made no particular effort to justify Garrison's leadership. They were simply the followers of the Garrisonian tradition, not its advocates or defenders.

This lack of enthusiasm about asserting Garrison's leadership already marked a departure from the ex-Garrisonian

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[2] William Birney, James G. Birney and His Times (New York, 1890); and Lewis Tappan, The Life of Arthur Tappan (New York, 1879).

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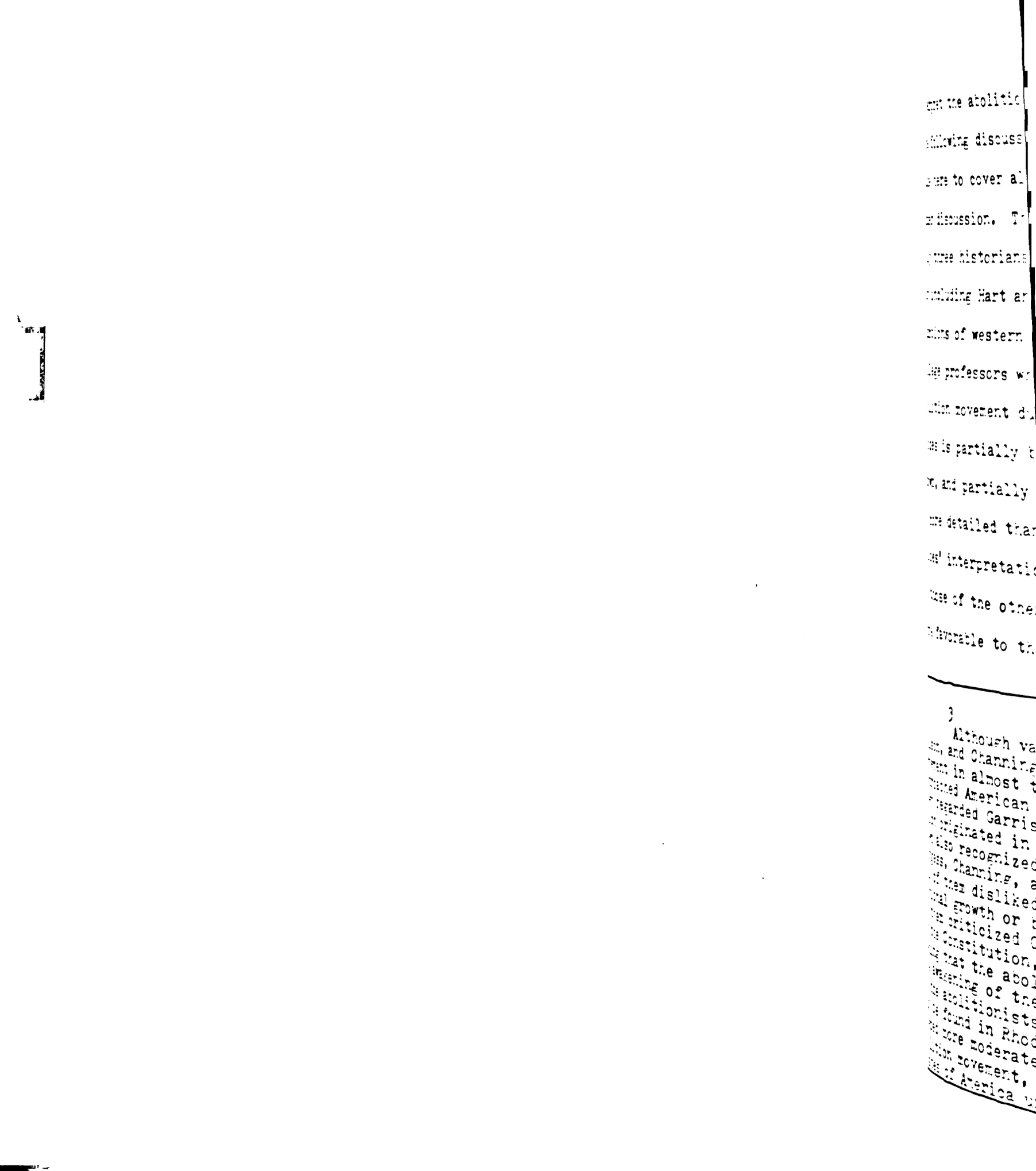
interpreters of the abolition movement. But the most significant breach with the Garrisonian tradition is the fact that no one of the historians who began to write histories in the last decade of the nineteenth century was unreservedly favorable to Garrison and his faithful followers. Hart and Macy were hostile to the Garrisonians from beginning to end, but favorable to the western political abolitionists. Others harshly criticized the Garrisonians for their incendiary language, their advocacy of disunionism, disrespect for the Constitution, or anarchism, while conceding more or less that they contributed something to the awakening of northern conscience. Even the criticism of Hart and Macy was not very different in nature from that of other historians. Their favorable reaction to the attempts of the moderate political abolitionists to achieve their purpose by established means indicated that they disliked the Garrisonians mainly because of their radicalism and anarchism. So despite their disagreement on the question of leadership, they held more or less similar views about the abolitionists. Their agitation to arouse Northerners' conscience against slavery was good, but their abusive language and radicalism was bad. This is the general theme of the interpretations of the abolition movement by most of the nationalist historians who wrote their histories in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of this century.

What factors brought about this departure from the Garrisonian tradition? How did the nationalist historians



interpret the abolition movement? These are the questions the following discussion tries to answer. But no attempt is made here to cover all the leading historians of the period under discussion. The discussion will be concentrated on only three historians, Hart, Macy and Rhodes. The reason for including Hart and Macy is obvious. They were not only champions of western abolitionism but also the only two college professors who wrote monographic studies on the abolition movement during this period. The concentration on Rhodes is partially because his history has been most widely known, and partially because his discussion of the subject is more detailed than others. But more important is that Rhodes' interpretation of the abolition movement was typical of those of the other nationalist historians, though he was more favorable to the abolitionists in comparison.[3]

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[3] Although varied in details, Schouler , Burgess, Wilson, and Channing interpreted and viewed the abolition movement in almost the same way as Rhodes. All of them approached American history from a nationalist point of view. They regarded Garrison as the leader of the abolition crusade which originated in moral sense or humanitarianism. Most of them also recognized the influence of British abolitionism. Burgess, Channing, and Wilson had a strong racial bias. But all of them disliked slavery either because it hindered national growth or because it violated moral principles. All of them criticized Garrison's incendiary language, disrespect of the Constitution, and disunionism, while more or less conceding that the abolition agitation contributed something to the awakening of the national conscience. Their hostility to the abolitionists was very pronounced. All these points can be found in Rhodes. But in comparison, Rhodes' criticism seemed more moderate. For these author's discussions of the abolition movement, see James Schouler, History of the United States of America under the Constitution (7 vols, New York,

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The chief factor which influenced the thinking and interpretation of the nationalist historians was the climate of opinion in which they came to age, studied and wrote their histories. The outlook of the decades from the 1880's to 1920 was different from that of the anti-bellum age. The passage of time itself blurred old memories. But more important is that time also brought about new developments which tended to heal old sectional wounds and to work for national solidarity.

One of these developments was the withdrawal of the last federal army troops from the South in 1877. To many Southerners, the abandonment of the radical reconstruction signalled by this withdrawal was a partial vindication of their position, and thus they could feel contented and less hostile to the North. Another development was the beginning of industrialization in the South after the Civil War which was to make the South more like the North economically. The commercial relations between the South and the rest of the nation were also restored and extended. Such

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1889-1913), IV, 210-221; John W. Burgess, The Middle Period, 1817-1858 (New York, 1902), pp. 243-277; Woodrow Wilson, Disunion and Reunion (New York, 1893), pp. 119-123, and A History of the American People (5 vols, New York, 1901-1902), IV, 76-79 and 101; and Edward Channing, A History of the United States (6 vols, New York, 1905-1925), V, 145-171, and VI, 180-185. For their nationalism, see Thomas J. Pressly, Americans Interpret their Civil War (New York, 1954), p. 161, 162, 204-205, 214, and 220. For racism of Burgess, Wilson, and Channing, see, Thomas F. Gossett, Race: The History of An Idea in America (Dallas, Texas, 1963), pp. 118-119, 279, and 284.

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economic ties naturally encouraged sectional solidarity. Then, there were new problems which further drew public attention from old northern-southern disputes. The rapid growth of industrialization and urbanization after the Civil War created a whole series of problems completely different from those which engaged the nation in the ante-bellum period. Instead of the dispute over slavery, the anti-abolition mobs, the bleeding Kansas, the John Brown raid, or the Liberty and Free-Soil parties, there was the dispute between capitalists and workers and farmers, strikes, the Haymarket Affair, or the Populist party. Whether these events can be interpreted as a contest between the East and West, or between capitalism and socialism, or between the city and farm, they apparently indicated that the struggle was no longer between a united North and a united South. All these developments tended to soften the old sectional antagonism and encouraged sectional reconciliation, as Thomas J. Pressly ably demonstrated in his study of the changing interpretations of the Civil War.[4]

Though the new political, social and economic developments were important forces working for sectional reconciliation and nationalism, another factor was of no less

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[4] Thomas J. Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, pp. 151-155, and 167-168.

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importance. That is the racial bias of Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon superiority. According to Richard Hofstadter, white racism was the product of modern nationalism, but further reinforced by Darwin's evolutionary theory, social Darwinism, and eugenics.[5] Whatever might have been its origins, the idea of racism dominated the thought of many American intellectuals from the last three decades of the nineteenth century to the 1920's.[6] While anthropologists tried to measure racial difference by the size of human brains, while eugenists proposed to better racial qualities by controlling marriage and birth, historians like Herbert B. Adams, and James K. Kosmer, and political scientists like John W. Burgess sought to prove the Teutonic origin of democratic institutions. Theodore Roosevelt, Albert T. Beveridge, Henry C. Lodge, John Hay, Henry and Brook Adams, John Fiske, the Reverend Josiah Strong, Captain Alfred Mahan and many others used the idea of racism to justify in one way or another imperialist expansionism. This predominance of white racism strengthened the trend toward sectional reconciliation and nationalism because the dominant element in the nation's population was Teutonic in origin. Senator John N. Daniel of Virginia found common bonds between North and South in Anglo-Saxism. "The instinct

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[5] Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915 (Philadelphia, 1944), p. 148.

[6] Gossett, Race, pp. 84-370.

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of race integrity," he said in 1890, "is the most glorious, as it is the predominant characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race, and the sections have it in common."[7] As southern racists like Benjamin R. Tillman, James K. Vardeman, Thomas E. Watson, the leaders of southern Populists, Henry N. Grady, the leading advocate of a New South and sectional accomodation, and others endeavored to maintain white supremacy in the South and to keep it a whiteman's country by racial segregation and disenfranchising Negroes,[8] this "instinct of race integrity" also moved many Northerners to acquiesce, even to help the South's racist drive to turn the Negroes into second-class citizens. Nathaniel S. Shaler, later dean of the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard, published an article, "The Negro problem," in the Atlantic Monthly in 1884, in which he showed his sympathy to the south's attempt to disenfranchise the Negro.[9] In 1889, T.B. Edington, a former officer in the Union Army, urged his audience in a

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7 John W. Daniel, "Life, Services and Character of Jefferson Davis", Southern Historical Society Papers, XVII (1889), 140. Quoted in Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, p. 153.

8 For a detailed discussion of racial segregation and disenfranchisement in the South, see C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York, 1955); and Gossett, Race, pp. 253-286. Ulrich B. Phillips argued that the determination to keep the South "a white man's country" was the central theme of southern history, in his "The Central Theme of Southern History," American Historical Review, XXXIV (Oct., 1928), 30-43.

9 Nathaniel S. Shaler, "The Negro Problem," Atlantic Monthly, LIV (Nov., 1884), 696-709.

Memorial Day service at a national cemetery to "listen attentively for the faintest whispering that comes from these graves, and you will hear no syllable of approbation of this overthrow of the white race and the destruction of all its dearest aspirations and hopes."[10] Henry M. Field, a northern minister, wrote, "We must not try to enforce in the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans what cannot be enforced in the Fifth-Avenue Hotel in New York." When, in 1907 Kentucky separated Negro students from white students in Berea College, President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard showed his sympathy by pointing out that "perhaps if there were as many Negroes here as there, we might think it better for them to be in separate schools."[11] The northern acquiescence or sympathy must have been very widespread because an editorial in the New York Times announced in 1900 that northern men "no longer denounce the suppression of the Negro vote /in the South/ as it used to be denounced in the reconstruction days. The necessity of it under the supreme law of self-preservation is candidly recognized."[12] No wonder C. Vann Woodward insisted that northern liberals' acquiescence in the southern race policy was one of the

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10 T.B. Edington, "The Race Problem in the South - Was the Fifteenth Amendment a Mistake?" Southern Historical Society Papers, XVII (1889), 26, 28, quoted in Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, p. 153.

11 Quoted in Gossett, Race, p. 285.

12 New York Times, May 10, 1900.

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reasons for the rise of Jim Crow. Their racial expressions "did much to add to the reconciliation of North and South, but they did so at the expense of the Negro,"[13] he concluded.

Time, new developments in politics and economics, and the widespread belief in racism worked powerfully for sectional reconciliation and national solidarity. This trend was reflected in the election of Grover Cleveland to the presidency in 1884, the first Democratic president since James Buchanan; in the many popular novels, plays, and poems which stressed the theme of sectional reconciliation; in the frequent joint "Blue and Gray reunions" of Confederate and Union veterans;[14] and in the emergence of the term "The Civil War" to substitute the term "rebellion." Then came the war with Spain. No longer cutting the throats of each other, the Northerner and the Southerner fought together once again for national expansion. The war itself was a tremendous spur to the growth of nationalism.

Nationalism alone was already powerful enough to move historians to adopt a more reconciliatory approach to the Civil War. But within the guild of the historical profession, there was another prevailing idea which also worked to the same effect as nationalism did. This is the

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[13] C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, p. 70.

[14] Paul H. Buck, The Road to Reunion, 1865-1900 (Boston, 1937).

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idea of scientific history. Inspired either by Darwin's method of arriving at his evolutionary theory or by the Rankean ideal of telling past events as they actually happened, American masters like Herbert B. Adams taught their students in the seminars to write scientific history impartially and objectively. "Impartiality" and "objectivity" became the standards of historians. They became wary of any bias. Consequently, they came to regard sectional bias as unscientific and a threat to their professional aims and standards, and made every effort to guard its possible influence. Allen Johnson in his biography of Stephen A. Douglas pointed out that he came from a New England state with an antislavery atmosphere hostile to Douglas. Likewise, Hart warned his readers in the preface of his Slavery and Abolition that he was a son and grandson of abolitionists, and that they could not expect him to "approach so explosive a question with impartiality."[15] Whether or not such conscious effort to guard against bias can really produce objective history, the awareness of such bias must have moved historians to see the other side of the same story.[16] This in turn led the northern historians like Rhodes, Hart, and Macy to approach the southern side

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15 Albert B. Hart, Slavery and Abolition, 1831-1841 (New York, 1906), p. XV.

16 In the "Prefactory Note" to Hilary A. Herbert, The Abolition Crusade and Its Consequences: Four Periods of American History (New York, 1912), Rhodes wrote: "As we are more than forty-six years distant from our own civil war, is it not incumbent on Northerners to endeavor to see the

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This shift in emphasis brought about by nationalism and the ideal of scientific history was destined to have profound effects on the views of historians about the abolitionists. The call for sectional reconciliation and the demand for fairness made them distrust extremism on both sides. Love for the Union growing out of nationalist feeling led them to dislike the deeds and words of abolitionists like Garrison which they believed jeopardized the very existence of the Union. Yet, the hatred of slavery as hindering the national growth or a moral wrong predisposed them to appreciate the abolitionists' agitation to rouse the national conscience against slavery. Put these effects together, it is no wonder that the nationalist historians would uphold the more moderate or practical part of the abolition agitation while repudiating its more radical or anarchical part.

How far these effects prepared historians to go in their approach to the abolition movement can be seen in the attitude toward the abolitionists of an early nationalist historians. James Schouler, a New Englander who had voted for Lincoln in 1860 and 1864, and served in the Union

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Southern side? We may be certain that the historian a hundred years hence, when he contemplates the lining up of five and one-half million people against twenty-two million . . . will, as matter of course, aver that the question over which they fought for four years had two sides; that all the right was not on one side and all the wrong on the other." pp. vii-viii. Hart set forth his purpose of writing Slavery and Abolition in "Author's Preface" as to show that "there was more than one side to the controversy." p. XV.

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Army, presumably should have been favorable to Garrison. Yet in his history of the United States, Garrison appears to be only a lesser evil than slavery. He repeatedly criticized Garrison's disregard for legal procedures and the Constitution. "A bomb-thrower" on the Constitution, Garrison openly assaulted the Constitution as a "compact absolutely void for its guilt." The abolitionists were wild anarchists whose "constant instigation was to throttle that law which was the breath of our being, to trample down the Union rather than convert, constrain, or conquer slavery behind the shield of the Constitution." Tending to incendiarism, these "apostles of fanaticism" appealed to "terrorism" and launched a "foolish experiment" by sending "dangerous matter," "infamous matter" to the South to "arouse slaves against their masters." His criticism was so severe that he sounded almost like an ante-bellum apostle of slavery. Yet, at the end of his discussion, he came around to defend the abolitionist. "The essential gain of all this," he stated, "was to awaken the northern conscience from its long sleep, and force up opinion to the healthier plane of conforming the human decree to the divine. . . . Better this agitation, though it sent a two-edged sword, than the poisonous lethargy before it; better a quarter-century of sharp collision, followed by the desperate struggle for the mastery, than another century of

corrupt growth and bonded misalliance."[17] Apparently Schouler disliked the abolitionists' disregard for the legal procedures and their disrespect for the Constitution and the Union, but approved their agitation to arouse northern conscience to get rid of slavery. His view of the abolitionist perfectly fitted the dictates of the prevailing climate of opinion of his time.

If that climate of opinion affected the attitude of a former New England Union soldier toward the militant antislavery crusaders, it must also have had determining influences on Rhodes, Hart and Macy who belonged to the same war generation and grew up in the same intellectual atmosphere as Schouler. In fact, the three historians imbibed in all the main elements of nationalism and the idea of scientific history.

In the first place, Rhodes, Hart and Macy all succumbed to the influence of scientific history. Although Rhodes wrote his History of the United States From the Compromise of 1850[18] essentially in the tradition of the "romantic" historians who entertained a special relish for literary style, moral judgment, great men, and politics,[19]

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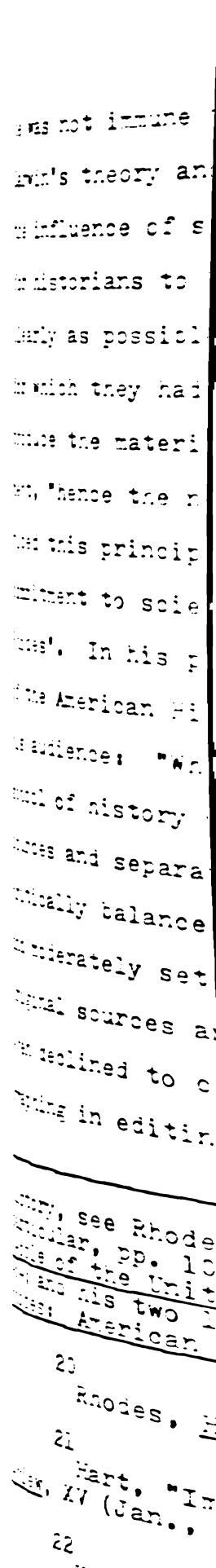
17 All the quotations are taken from Schouler, History of the United States of America Under the Constitution, IV, 214-220.

18 James Ford Rhodes, History of the United States From the Compromise of 1850 (7 volumes, New York, 1893-1906).

19 For his opinion on the study and writing of



he was not immune to the impact of science, particularly Darwin's theory and method, on the study of history. Under the influence of scientific study, he deemed it imperative for historians to "get at the truth and express it as clearly as possible," and urged them not to assert anything for which they had no evidence. Historians were bound to produce the materials upon which they based their statement, "hence the necessity of footnotes."[20] And he practiced this principle carefully in his History. Hart's commitment to scientific history was even stronger than Rhodes'. In his presidential address to the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in 1909, Hart told his audience: "What we need is a genuinely scientific school of history which shall remorselessly examine the sources and separate the wheat from the chaff; which shall critically balance evidence; which shall dispassionately and moderately set forth results."[21] His obsession with original sources and historical facts was so great that he even declined to change any spelling, capitals, or paragraphing in editing materials.[22] One commentator declared

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history, see Rhodes, Historical Essays (New York, 1909), in particular, pp. 1079; his review of McMaster, History of the people of the United States, Magazine of Western History, II, 464; and his two letters in M.A. DeWolfe Howe, James Ford Rhodes: American Historian (New York, 1929), p. 72 and 149.

20 Rhodes, Historical Essays, p. 43 and 33.

21 Hart, "Imagination in History," American Historical Review, XV (Jan., 1910), 232.

22 Hart, ed., American History Told by

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of Hart that he was "at all times thirsty for historical fact."[23] Like Rhodes and Hart, Macy was also greatly impressed by the achievements of new sciences and the method they used. He had a strong desire to apply the new scientific method to the study of politics and society, expecting that it "would lighten many a dark place in political, industrial and moral research."[24]

Then, it seems unquestionable that the thought and practice of Rhodes, Hart and Macy reflected to different degrees the influence of the idea of scientific history commonly shared by historians of their time. The same can be said in regard to nationalism. Though they had not aired their opinions on nationalism as systematically as they did on scientific history, it is still possible to discern their nationalist inclination in their historical writings. In fact, several historians of American historiography have demonstrated beyond any doubt that nationalism played a determining role in Rhodes' interpretation of United States history since 1850.[25] His love of the Union

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Contemporaries (5 vols., New York, 1897-1929), III, vii.

[23] New York Times, June 17, 1943, "Eulogy," p. 21.

[24] Macy, Jesse Macy: An Autobiography (Baltimore, 1933), p. 104. Also see pp. 34, 89, 140 and 151.

[25] Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, pp. 171-181; John Higham, History: The Development of Historical Studies in the United States (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), pp. 153-154.

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practically determined his comments on the political leaders before the Civil War. Rhodes hailed Daniel Webster as a great statesman and orator mainly because Webster spoke out on March 7, 1850, for compromise to save the Union. His praise of Lincoln and the Republican party sprang from the fact that the party and its great leader saved the Union while abolishing slavery. For the sake of the Union, Rhodes heaped praises on those who devoted themselves to the cause of the Union. For the same reason he bitterly censured Douglas because his political ambition moved him to introduce the Kansas-Nebraska bill which disrupted the national peace just brought about by the Compromise of 1850; and Calhoun because his state-right doctrine led the South to secession.[26]

While his love of the Union decided his blame and praise, nationalistic feeling blunted his northern bias and moved him nearer to the Mason-Dixon line in interpreting American history. His northern view of the coming of the Civil War was balanced by his southern view of the Reconstruction.

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26 Rhodes, History of the United States. For comment on Webster, see I, 137-163; on the Republican party, II, 210; on Calhoun, I, 95; on Douglas, I, 428-431. Both Raymond C. Miller, "James Ford Rhodes," in William T. Hutchingson, ed., The Marcus W. Jernigan Essays in American Historiography (Chicago, 1937), p. 185, and Harvey Wish, The American Historian: A Social-Intellectual History of the Writing of the American Past (New York, 1960), p. 220, mentioned with approval F.H. Hodder's suggestion that Rhodes' attack on Douglas might result from his losing in a law suit brought against him by Douglas' heirs. Hodder's article is entitled "Propaganda As a Source of American History," in Mississippi Valley Historical Review, IX (June,1922), pp.2-18.

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Certainly he hated slavery; but when he came to describe the peculiar institution, he abandoned the language used by abolitionists, and was even reluctant to use materials left by them.[27] He did not paint the slavery system completely black, though he admitted its basic brutality and cruelty. Paying no attention to the abolitionists' charge that sinister slaveholders conspired to protect and expand slavery, he even tried to remove the responsibility for slavery from the shoulders of slaveholders by suggesting that both England and the North had a hand in the establishment of slavery in the South, and that it was the invention of the cotton gin and the subsequent development of cotton cultivation which prevented the peaceful abolition of slavery. He never believed that the South's determination to fight for slavery had any connection with personal depravity of the southern people." "If we suppose," he hinted, "the Puritan to have settled Virginia and the Cavalier Massachusetts, it is not inconceivable that, while the question would have remained the same, the Puritan should have fought for slavery and the Cavalier for liberty."[28] Clearly, Rhodes approached the institution of slavery without any sectional bias.

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[27] His sources are mainly drawn from foreign travellers, with only occasional references to abolitionists' works.

[28] Rhodes, History of the United States, I, 381.

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Nationalism and its effects are also clear in the case of Hart. He treated American history essentially in terms of national growth. For example, his American History Told by Contemporaries was divided into five periods: Era of Colonization, Building of the Republic, National Expansion, Welding of the Nation, and Twentieth Century United States. His attention was concentrated on national development. When he edited the The American Nation series, he grouped the twenty-seven volumes under the heading of: 1) Foundations of the Nation; 2) Transformation Into a Nation; 3) Development of the Nation; 4) Trial of Nationality; and 5) National Expansion. Though a descendent of abolitionists, Hart felt no chagrin to "pick southerners to write several volumes of the series, and even attempted to persuade an Alabamian, William Garrot Brown, to write the volume on the Civil War."[29] This may indicate to what extent national feeling had softened sectional bitterness. Just like Rhodes, the faith in national unity induced Hart to adopt a more neutral attitude toward the institution of slavery. He hated slavery just as much as Rhodes did; and yet he never used resounding moral language to denounce slavery in his description of it, which was also based on the observation of foreign travelers.

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[29] Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, p. 185.

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Though he could not accept the southern view of slavery, in the end he confessed that it was difficult to decide how far slavery was inhuman or to make generalizations about it. Even where slave codes were cruel, he did not leave the blame completely at the door of the South because the Southerners simply continued the old English common law of colonial times. Like Rhodes, he also tried to explain the existence of slavery in the South in economic terms, and thus spared the South all moral responsibilities.[30] Under the influence of nationalism, Hart, therefore, showed more sympathy and lenience toward the South than his northern predecessors.

From what little evidence is available, it is also possible to establish Macy's nationalism and unprejudiced attitude toward the South. A certain French professor said in a letter that he was deeply struck by Macy's patriotism which permeated the lectures Macy delivered at French Provincial Universities in 1912.[31] Macy himself once claimed that the ante-bellum party system had a "distinct and useful function" in enabling "people to get together, to become acquainted with one another, to develop a sentiment of nationality and sympathy between the different

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[30] Hart, Slavery and Abolition, p. 53, 120, and 138.

[31] This letter is quoted by John S. Nollen in "Grinnell--College and Town," in Macy, Jesse Macy: An Autobiography, p. 158.

sections." The national parties were indeed "the most influential of the agencies for union and a good understanding." Then just before or during the war, came the telegraph, the daily press, and a national railway, the "great" nationalizing forces.[32] His approving attitude toward the growth of national feeling cannot be missed. As in the case of Rhodes and Hart, nationalism softened his northern bias and compelled him to see the South with greater sympathy. As a result, he insisted that not all the Southerners and their leaders were defenders of slavery. Even as late as 1835, he believed with Harriet Martineau that few slaveholders justified slavery as being itself just; and that many southern Whites and Negroes were always ready to help runaway slaves. It is obvious that Macy never intended to blame the South as a whole, and all the slaveholders in particular. He did denounce the extreme defenders of slavery, but even here he did not accuse the southern extremists alone. Macy always believed it possible to emancipate slaves peacefully. What finally made it impossible was the activities of the extremists North and South. "On both sides", the appeal of the extremists was to "feeling, sentiment, and conviction, supported by dogmatism rather than by reason,"[33] he declared. If the

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[32] Ibid., p. 117.

[33] Ibid., p. 114. Macy repeatedly suggested that the struggle between slavery and abolition was an

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southern extremists should be held responsible for "the irrepressible conflict," their northern brethren had certainly no less responsibility for it. Macy's reconciliating attitude toward the South is beyond any doubt.

There is no question that a strong sense of national solidarity led Rhodes, Hart, and Macy to adopt a more sympathetic view about the South. In this respect, the widely believed white supremacy probably also had some effects. It is true that Hart and Macy can hardly be called racists. Because of his faith in Quakerism, it is doubtful that Macy could ever be a racist. Although Hart included the Teutonic origin in a set of "fundamental principles of American history"[34] in 1883, in a letter to the editor of Journal of Negro History, protesting against the inclusion of a proslavery article in the Journal in 1922, he expressed his deep regret that a journal which has "done so much for the cause of the Negro race""should admit an article so full of statements untrue and dangerous to the

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"irrepressible conflict." But he also insisted that peaceable emancipation was possible. For irrepressible conflict, see Macy, The Anti-Slavery Crusade: A Chronicle of the Gathering Storm (New Haven, 1919), p. 178, 181, 199, and 232. For peaceable abolition, see ibid, p. 141-143; and Macy, Jesse Macy: An Autobiography, p. 106.

[34] G. Stanley Hall, ed., Methods of teaching and studying History (1886), p. 3. Quoted in Higham, History, p. 161. The third principle reads: "Our institutions are Teutonic in origin: they have come to us through English institutions."

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Negro race,"[35] Maybe a belief in the Teutonic theory did not necessarily imply a racial bias against the Negro; or maybe Hart changed his view during the intervening years. The fact is that there is no evidence in Slavery and Abolition indicating his racism.

But there is no doubt that Rhodes accepted the idea of racial inferiority of the Negroes. He thought that the promises of the radical Republicans to the Negroes had "fostered the native laziness and improvidence of the race." He accused Charles Sumner of his failure to appreciate "the great fact of race." He deemed it to be a great pity that the North paid no attention to scientists like Louis Agassiz who could have told them that the Negroes were incapable of citizenship.[36] Given this racial bias, it was not strange that Rhodes would oppose Negro suffrage. Such racial bias against the Negro not only removed Rhodes' objections to slavery on racial ground[37] but also made him unable to appreciate abolitionists' advocacy of human equality. Even though Hart and Macy had no such racial bias as Rhodes, the generally accepted white racism must

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[35] Hart, "Letter to Woodson," Journal of Negro History, VII (Oct. 1922), 420.

[36] Quotations are taken from Rhodes, History, V, 558; VII, 168; VI, 39.

[37] There is no contradiction between Rhodes' racism and his hatred of slavery. Slavery involved a question of morals, but what he called the Negro question involved race. He hated slavery on moral ground. See Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, p. 176.

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have rendered it easier for them to approach the South and its peculiar institution with a more sympathetic attitude, and consequently to view the radical abolitionists with less tolerance than otherwise.

Then it seems clear that Rhodes, Hart, and Macy were under the influence of nationalism and the ideal of scientific history. The nationalism shared by Americans and most of their historians of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries was composed of a belief in the gradual realization of freedom through national solidarity,[38] and a tendency toward sectional reconciliation to advance national unity. The later was further reinforced by the popular belief in white supremacy and by the theory of scientific history which taught historians to be balanced and fair in dealing with the Civil War history. Thinking and writing within this frame of reference, the three historians under discussion all exhibited a strong love of freedom and an equally strong hatred of slavery. Yet both the love and the hatred were not strong enough to allow them to appreciate those whose words and deeds threatened the Union which they loved the most. From such preconceptions, it is pretty easy to predict how they would interpret the abolition movement. They would praise those moderate abolitionists who advocated gradual emancipation through established political channels, and even praise the radicals

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[38] Higham, History, p. 154.

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for their agitation to arouse northern antislavery feelings. But they would criticize these same radicals for their denouncing the time-honored Constitution and urging the breakup of the Union. This is what they actually did in their historical writings.

Rhodes was the first of the three historians to white about the abolition movement. Born in Cleveland in 1848 to a family indifferent to the antislavery crusade,[39] Rhodes devoted himself to the writing of American history after retiring from a coal and iron business. Strongly admiring the New England culture, and eagerly seeking for admission to the New England patrician circle,[40] he moved his family to Boston shortly before the appearance of the first two volumes of his History in 1893 and became a New

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[39] His father, a close friend and admirer of Stephen A. Douglas, was a strong Douglas Democrat and became a copperhead during the Civil War. Rhodes himself showed no consistent party allegience.

[40] According to his biographer Howe, the reason for Rhodes' moving to Boston was "his natural desire to create a personal association with the men of his late-adopted craft." His desire was more than realized when in 1893 he was notified that he was elected a resident member of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the only learned society to which he gave any attention, according to his own confession. In a letter he humbly thanked the society's corresponding secretary and announced that "this I have always thought the highest honor a historical scholar can receive in this country." Later when the fifth volume of his History came out, it proudly carries these words: "Member of the Massachusetts Historical Society." This shows with what eagerness Rhodes sought admission to the patrician circle, and how great his pleasure was when admission came. See Howe, James Ford Rhodes: American Historian, p.65, 288, and 82.

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Englander by choice. The lack of family connection with the western abolition movement and the close identification with New England perhaps accounted in part for Rhodes' emphasis on the importance of Garrison in the abolition crusade.

Anyway, Rhodes recognized Garrison as the sole originator of the abolition movement, and the publication of the Liberator as its beginning date. What actuated the crusade was Chritian teachings. The abolitionists met hostilities in both the South and the North as soon as Garrison launched it. Mob violence to silence them reached its heights in 1835. But the abolitionists refused to be intimidated. Encouraged by the success of the British abolition movement, the American abolitionists, in spite of misrepresentation, obloquy, and derision, continued their "work of converting and creating Northern sentiment" by attacking slavery from Chritian principles. Their influence grew, turning many Northerners into opponents of slavery as exemplified by William Ellery Channing's change. By 1837, "it no longer required the martyr spirit to be an abolitionist in the Eastern part of the country." Yet the crusade drew few adherents from the influential part of the community. Thus, it was a great moment for the abolitionists when Wendell Phillips and Edmund Quincy, both from Boston's highest social circle, joined their crusade. By 1839, the abolitionist vote was beginning to have effect on

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Rhode's interpretation was simple and sketchy. But his meaning cannot be missed. He believed the function of the abolition movement lay chiefly in breaking the public silence on the problem of slavery, arousing the northern conscience, and thus preparing the stage for the great debut of the Republican party. This is quite clear from his own comment on the effects of abolitionists' agitation. He admitted it to be a historical dogmatism to say that "if Garrison had not lived, the Republicans would not have succeeded in 1860." Yet, he contended that if one wished to estimate correctly the influence of the abolitionists, he had to take into consideration "the impelling power of their positive dogmas, and of their never-ceasing inculcation" on voters and would-be voters, and the process of discussion, of persuasion, and of argument, going on for

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[41] The summary is based on Rhodes, History of the United States, I, 53-74. The quotations are taken from p.69, 72, and 74.

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[42] All the quotations are taken from ibid., I, 62-63.

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[43] Ibid., ...

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stupor of great material prosperity."[43] Delegates to the Philadelphia convention which organized the American Anti-slavery Society were "men of good character, pure morals, and were law-abiding citizens."[44] A noble spirit of truthfulness pervaded the whole abolition literature. And finally he whole-heartedly accepted the praises of Garrison and the crusade voiced by Lowell and Whittier without any reservation.[45]

Despite such praises, Rhodes was not an unqualified lover of the abolitionists. His true sympathy was with those moderate antislavery men most of whom later supported the Republican party.[46] This can be illustrated by his favorable comment on Channing and his critical attitude toward the abolitionists after about 1840. He estimated Channing's book on slavery, with the exception of the Liberator, "the most remarkable contribution of this decade to the cause of the abolitionists." It was so convincing

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[43] Ibid., I, 55.

[44] Ibid., I, 59.

[45] Ibid., I, 75.

[46] Strangely enough, Rhodes seemed to see no significant connection between the Liberty party, the Free-Soil party, and the Republican party. His treatment of the first two was very brief and with a little criticism. He said, for example, that the participation of the Liberty party in the election of 1844 was a "well-meaning" but "ill-considered" action, ibid., I, 84, and that the nomination of Van Buren as the presidential candidate of the Free-Soil party in 1848 was "grotesque", ibid., I, 97.

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and so widely read that soon many defenders of slavery thought Channing more dangerous than Garrison. From Rhodes' summary of Channing's theme, it appears that Channing's book was no more than a philosopher's theoretical denouncing of slavery. The only means of action he proposed was to "spread the truth on the subject of slavery." Rhodes pointed out that a potential influence of Channing's book was his apathy to Garrison's method of agitation. He also recognized a difference between the two men. According to Rhodes, Channing, like Emerson, was not a man of action with an aggressive nature.[47] Thus, by praising Channing, Rhodes seemed to throw doubt upon both Garrison's doctrine of immediate emancipation and his method of agitation, if not upon Garrison the man himself. This is of course because he valued above all other things the work of awakening the national conscience. For this he was willing to pay tributes to both Channing and the Garrisonian abolitionists for their contribution. But when the abolitionists went beyond the work of arousing the national conscience, his attitude became critical. Their influence declined after 1840, he insisted, not because of the split of the movement, but because Garrison advocated non-union with slavery. "In the next decade," he wrote, "the Garrison abolitionists suffered loss of influence by advocating disunion as a remedy. Failing to

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[47] For Rhodes' description of Channing, see ibid., I, 64-65.

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4 Ibid., I

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appreciate the love for the Union and reverence for the Constitution that prevailed among the mass of the Northern people, they adopted the motto, 'No Union with slaveholders', and proclaimed the Constitution 'a covenant with death and agreement with hell.'" That this was a "mistake" even Garrison himself admitted years later.[48] He cited as one example of the lawlessness and riot of 1854 the burning of the Constitution by Garrison who was "infatuated by his own method and blind to the trend of events."[49] He insisted that Parker and Phillips were the leading exponents of abolitionism in the decade of 1850-1860. And he was very critical of Parker's attack on Webster, the greatest Unionist. It was the criticism of "an honest fanatic."[50] These statements make clear Rhodes' dislike of the abolitionists after 1840, if not before.

Obviously, Rhodes judged the abolition movement from its contribution to the political uprising against slavery of the 1850's. Before 1840, he deemed its efforts helpful in that they awoke the conscience of the North. But after 1840, its efforts became harmful because the abolitionists went astray by advocating disunionism. This opinion is best summarized by Rhodes himself:

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[48] Ibid., I, 74-75.

[49] Ibid., II, 57.

[50] For his criticism of Parker, see ibid., I, 288-290.

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> The influence of the abolitionists in the decade between 1850-1860 was by no means commensurate with their ability and zeal.... They rejected the most feasible and regular means of checking the slavepower, for the reason that the Republicans did not go far enough. They only proposed to prohibit slavery in the territories, while the abolitionists were for its abolition in the states.... Yet the only practical result of their labor lay in the fact that, having convinced men that slavery was wrong, they made Republican voters.... The work of Garrison and his disciples between 1831-1840, in arousing the conscience of the nation, had borne good fruit; but that work was done. The public mind had now to grapple with the question, How could the sentiment that slavery was wrong accomplish results and stop the spread of evil? The abolitionists said, by disunion; while the Republicans, intending to preserve union and liberty, proposed constitutional and regular method.[51]

Whatever might have been the reason for his treating Garrison as the leading crusader against slavery, the determining factor in his interpretation was no doubt nationalism. He hated slavery. But because he loved the Union even more, he would like to see slavery abolished through established channels. This is borne out by his unqualified praise of the Republican party and moderate antislavery men like Channing. It is also significant that he said delegates to the Philadelphia convention were law-abiding citizens. He liked Garrison and his followers before 1840 because they were apparently more moderate than after 1840 when they began to advocate disunion with slavery. If they confined their agitation to arousing northern conscience and spreading antislavery feelings, it was fine;

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[51] Ibid., II, 435.

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but when they moved a step further toward anarchism, they became the disturbers of the Union to Rhodes. All these things showed clearly that Rhodes in depicting the abolition movement followed the dictates of the prevailing belief in nationalism of his time.

This is also true in the case of Hart as well as Macy, though they denied the leadership of Garrison. Hart, like Rhodes, grew up in Cleveland.[52] But unlike Rhodes, his family had very close connection with the western political antislavery movement.[53] Probably because of this family background, he upheld the importance of the Western abolitionists in his interpretation. But so far as the basic attitude toward the abolition movement is concerned, Hart differed very little from Rhodes.

Hart's treatment of the abolition movement was both more minute in detail and more comprehensive in scope than

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[52] Hart was born Clarksville, Pennsylvania, in 1854. But his family was in Cleveland.

[53] Hart's father, a physician by profession, had been active in the western political antislavery movement. A conductor on the underground railroad, and a Liberty man, he participated as a member of the Ohio delegation in the 1848 Buffalo convention which organized the Free-Soil party. Later, he served as a Major in the Union army. Hart must have been very proud of his father's antislavery activities because he dedicated his Salmon Portland Chase (New York, 1899) to his father with pride and gratitude: "To Albert Gaillard Hart, Abolitionist, Underground-Railroad Conductor, Liberty Man, Union Soldier - A Son's Gratitude." In the preface to his biography of Chase whom he, like his father, adored, he claimed "some special interest in him as an exponent of that western political antislavery movement which

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Rhodes'. He touched on the early antislavery movement which seemed on the decline by 1830. Then, suddenly there appeared the new abolition movement with renewed vigor. Hart attributed this sudden appearance of the new militant opposition to slavery to three factors: the impact on the American public sentiment of the successful emancipation of slaves in the western world; the recently rising concern of the public mind with the weak and the helpless; and the opening up of new fields of economic activity which called for a new kind of labor unsuitable for slavery and considering slaves as its competitors. Hart did not assign the role of the originator to Garrison but to Benjamin Lundy, "the first link in a chain of impulse to which nearly all the other abolitionists traced their beginning."[54] Garrison published the Liberator and organized the New England Antislavery Society. But the Philadelphia convention was not called and organized by him. From then on the abolition movement grew rapidly, both in the number of antislavery societies and in membership, until 1840 when a continued quarrel between the Garrisonians and non-Garrisonians over the questions of personal disagreements, the status of women, the Bible, non-resistance, and politics resulted in

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[54] Hart, Slavery and Abolition, p. 180.

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55 Ibid.,

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a "weakening split" of the movement.[55] The original American Antislavery Society rapidly declined, "giving way to the antislavery movement stirred by the efforts to annex Texas,"[56] that is, the political antislavery movement.

What were the effects of the abolition movement? So far as the efforts to improve the conditions of the slave, and to persuade slaveholders to free their slaves are concerned, the crusade was a complete failure, Hart maintained. But the movement had its positive contribution. The unrelented agitation of the abolitionists aroused and spread antislavery sentiment throughout the whole North, making "it impossible for a great number of northern antislavery men, who were not abolitionists, to remain on terms of friendship with their southern brethren."[57]

The overall impression from a reading of Slavery and Abolition is that the author was favorable to the abolition movement. Hart did not always say bad words even about Garrison. He went so far as to concede that Garrison was "a natural journalist," "a remarkable writer", and "an effective speaker", whose "personal courage was undeniable."[58] Yet his greater sympathy lay undoubtedly with the more

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55 Ibid., p.197.

56 Ibid., p. 201.

57 Ibid., p. 214.

58 Ibid., p. 181, 182, and 205.

moderate and practical western political abolitionists. Except the Garrisonians, he divided all the non-Garrisonian abolitionists into three groups: the New England, the Middle States, and the western. He was fair enough to pay tribute to all the three groups by pointing out that: "All the three sections had their part in the great abolition struggle; all three groups contributed forces necessary for the struggle."[59] However, he considered western abolitionists the most practical and the most effective. It seems that Hart believed the effectiveness of abolition had a direct relation to a practical knowledge of slavery and the adoption of political means. In answering his own question why there was an unequal development of abolition among the three sections, he pointed out that in New England, far removed from the slave states, slavery was not a personal thing, while in the West, particularly in his home state, Ohio, being only next door to slavery and having many southern antislavery men living there, the evil of slavery was more real and personal. The Middle States stood between these two extremes.[60] On another occasion, he observed that the Garrisonian abolition had three disadvantages: "Its seat was in a commonwealth not much affected by actual slavery; it was conducted almost entirely by men born in free states; and it abjured political

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[59] Ibid., pp. 196-197.

[60] Ibid., pp. 194-195.

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action." On the other hand, the western abolitionists had three "powerful advantages: they knew the benumbing effect of slavery in neighboring states; they might call in the aid of anti-slavery men who had been slaveholders; and they did not underrate the method of political organization."[61] What is implied in these assertions is his conviction that a political abolition movement based on a practical knowledge of slavery was the most effective means of attacking slavery. Given this belief, it is no surprise when he declared that: "The third, or western, movement was from the beginning the most effective, because it was brought face to face with the actualities of slavery, and because it used political means to destroy the traces of the accursed system in its own communities,"[62] and that the political antislavery movement organized mainly by western abolitionists was "destined to have a greater effect than their philanthropic propaganda."[63] For this reason, he hailed Chase, the leading organizer of antislavery parties, as his great hero.[64]

Of course, it is for this same reason that he criticized the radicalism of Garrison and his followers. To

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61 Hart, Salmon Portland Chase, pp. 36-37.

62 Ibid., p.37.

63 Hart, Slavery and Abolition, pp. 315-316.

64 Ibid., p. 195 and 318; also see Hart, Salmon Portland Chase, pp. 39-177.

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deprive Garrison of his leadership, Hart not only refused to regard him as the originator of the movement, but also denied that he had ever been accepted as their leader by most abolitionists, in particular by any western abolitionist. The forces which produced the crusade were "older than Garrison, and would have made themselves felt if he had never lived."[65] Although it was one of Garrison's disciples, Theodore D. Weld, who introduced the needed spark to blaze the already widespread antislavery sentiment in the West into the abolition movement, and although Garrison visited the West after its abolition movement was well under way, "he was never recognized as the head or leader of the western abolitionists."[66] In and outside New England, many antislavery men had never worked with him. While "plenty of abolitionists" had never "accepted allegiance to him", many of his old friends "cast off his leadership" and pursued ends of which he disapproved."[67] According to his estimation, "not one abolitionist out of twenty for a moment accepted" his denouncement of the Constitution.[68] Garrison advocated immediate emancipation; "yet outside New England,

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65 Hart, Slavery and Abolition, p. 188.

66 Ibid., p. 194. In this book Hart denied any influence of Garrison in the West. However, in Salmon Portland Chase, he admitted at least that Garrison had an indirect influence, see p. 36.

67 Hart, Slavery and Abolition, p. 189.

68 Ibid., p. 253.

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69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

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the societies and leaders would have cheerfully accepted gradual emancipation acts from the neighboring slave states."[69] He was opposed to political action; yet most abolitionists went into politics "in defiance of Garrison's teaching."[70] And it was this political movement that most clearly showed how little Garrison was entitled to be taken as the typical or chief abolitionist.[71] In short, Garrison was an extremist, never accepted by the abolitionists as the leader.

To discredit Garrison, perhaps it was useful to say something bad about Garrison the person. In his discussion of the factors leading to the split, Hart put almost all the responsibilities on the shoulders of Garrison, and even accepted the serious charge that Garrison was an infidel.[72] Garrison often abused enemies as well as friends. While most abolitionists were people "who paid their debts, attended divine service, and had the reputation of an orderly life," Garrison and Phillips were one-sided men, "held a brief for liberty and did not trouble themselves to look at the case of the other side."[73] Hart sized up Garrison in

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[69] Ibid., p. 204.

[70] Ibid., p. 317.

[71] Ibid., p. 320.

[72] Ibid., pp. 197-201.

[73] Ibid., p. 204.

scathing words: "He was egotistic, unpractical, uncompromising, courageous, zealous almost to fanaticism."[74]

A reviewer summarized Hart's theme as that the conservative abolitionists of New England, the Middle-States, and the West contributed much more to the success of the abolition movement than the radical Garrison.[75] This is quite right. Given his nationalism, it would have been a surprise if he had interpreted the movement otherwise. His repeated emphasis on the effectiveness and practicability of the political means, and his picturing most abolitionists as law-abiding and pious citizens clearly show that Hart regarded action through established political means as the proper way to abolish slavery. Even his effort to discredit Garrison was motivated not so much by his family tie with the western abolition movement as by his dislike of Garrison's disregard for political means, impracticability, and radicalism. In short, like Rhodes, Hart would like to see slavery abolished, but not at the price of jeopardizing the Union.

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74 Hart, ed., American History Told by Contemporaries III, 595. In this book, Hart always introduced with a few words each author whose works he selected. His comments on other abolitionists or antislavery men were dispassionate and neutral, in marked difference from that on Garrison. His comments on others may be found on the following pages: William Jay, p. 583; Frederick Douglass, p. 579; Whittier, p. 612; Birney, p. 608; Joshua Leavitt, p. 626; and Channing, p. 642.

75 J.C. Ballagh, "Review of Hart, Slavery and Abolition," American Historical Review, XII (July, 1907), 904.

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Macy, another Westerner from a Quaker family with strong connection with western political antislavery movement,[76] presented in 1919 an interpretation similar to that of Hart. He also stressed the importance of the moderate western abolitionists. He divided the nation into three regions in terms of proximity to the slavery institution: New England, the Middle-states including all the states between New England on the North and South Carolina on the South, and the Deep South. Because the people of the second region knew slavery both from experience and observation, an active protest against it had always existed there. In fact, the modern antislavery movement had its origin in and main support from this great middle section. The early anti-slavery leaders were Lundy and Birney. For the change from early mild protest against slavery to modern abolition, Macy suggested two reasons. One was the southern ruling classes' resort to mob action to put down antislavery agitation and defense of slavery as a divinely ordained institution, which brought about a change in spirit in the controversy over slavery. The other was the success of the

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[76] Macy was born in 1842 to a Quaker family in Indiana. Because of hatred of slavery, his parents had decided to move their family from North Carolina to Indiana, and then to Iowa. Both in Indiana and Iowa, they continued their antislavery activities such as conducting the underground railroad, voting for Birney in 1840, and the Republican ticket in 1856. The family ardently discussed current national and local problems in which "the children were deeply interested," Macy recalled, "and could hardly fail to become ardent antislavery partisans." See Macy, Jesse Macy: An Autobiography, p. 75.

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77 Ibid.

emancipation of slaves in Central America. According to Macy, "These acts of emancipation added zeal to the determination of the Southern planters to secure territory for the indefinite extension of slavery to the Southwest." "When Lundy and Birney discovered these plans, their desire to husband and extend the direct political influence of abolitionists were greatly stimulated."[77] The slaveholders' determination to extend slavery caused the abolitionists to turn to politics as an antislavery means. Then, there was not only a change in spirit. It appears that the method also changed. But he insisted that there was no change in principle.

Accompanying slaveholders' determination to perpetuate and extend slavery, they decided to use all means, mob violence, gag rules in Congress, governmental curb on the free use of the mail, appeals to the northern state authorities, and finally oppressive state laws, to silence critics of slavery in the South and North. In slave states, the campaign was successful in either silencing or driving out the antislavery people. But in the North it not only was a complete failure, but also helped the antislavery crusade greatly. Many Northerners turned into abolitionists not because they cared much about slaves, but because they saw clearly the dangers of slavery to their civil rights as freemen.

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[77] Ibid., pp. 61-62.

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[78] Ibid.,

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Although the fight for freemen's liberty "quickened the zeal of the abolitionists and made converts to their cause,"[78] it was the debate in Congress inaugurated by John Quincy Adams and others over the extension of slave territory in connection with the early attempts to annex Texas which stimulated the abolitionists to try to accomplish "their ends by political action."[79] They tried in vain to compel the major parties to accept their program. So they organized a party of their own, the Liberty Party, in 1840. This party "for the defense of liberty," assuming "the broad principle of human brotherhood as the foundation for a democracy or a republic," aiming at carrying "the principle of equal rights into all social relations," was "the first really effective national organization" of all abolitionists.[80] Aided by the disputes over the Wilmot Proviso and the Compromise of 1850, the "bleeding Kansas", the antislavery books of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Hinton Rowan Helper, and the Dred Scott decision, the political movement grew stronger and stronger until the formation of the Republican party whose "policies were based upon the assumption that slavery is both a moral and a political evil," and with whose appearance the crusade

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78 Ibid., p. 83.

79 Ibid., p. 88.

80 Ibid., p.93-96.

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61 Ibid

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against slavery was "nearing its final stage."[81]

Throughout the book, Macy hammered home the idea that gradual emancipation by individual states through political action was the program of typical or true abolitionists. He repeatedly asserted that the majority of the abolitionists were aware of the tremendous difficulties involved in emancipation, favored gradual abolition, advocated political action, stood for the perpetuation of the Union, and frowned at the kind of verbal denunciation of the South used by Garrison.[82] He insisted that most abolitionists were "ardently devoted to the interests of peace. They would abolish slavery by peaceful means because they believed the alternative was a terrible war."[83] And the peaceful means was political. They admitted that Congress had no power over slavery in the states. But they insisted that Congress had exclusive right over slavery in the District of Columbia and territories. So the proper way of action was to urge Congress to abolish slavery and slave trade in the District of Columbia and exclude slavery from the territories through the operation of national antislavery parties. As for slavery in the individual states, abolition had to be achieved by state antislavery parties.[84]

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81 Ibid., p. 202.

82 Ibid., pp. 20, 38-39, 56-59, 86, and 94-95.

83 Ibid., p. 52.

84 Ibid., p. 94.

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Macy believed that this program might have worked, but for the extremists on both sides.[85]

In this kind of interpretation, Garrison and his radical followers could never receive favorable treatment. He was described as an extremist, inconsistent in thought and action, outside of the mainstream of the abolition movement. His influence on the crusade was"greatly misunderstood and exaggerated."[86] To discredit Garrison totally, Macy even suggested that Garrison's inflammatory language might encourage slave revolts. He admitted that there was no evidence to prove a direct connection between the Liberator and the Nat Turner revolt. However, "a few utterances of the paper were fitted, if not intended, to incite insurrection." Finally, Macy concluded that Garrison, "a man of obvious, even glaring, intellectual and moral defects," certainly drew from the South odium upon all abolitionists by his unrestrained attack.[87]

In reviewing Macy's interpretation of the abolition movement, it is clear that in his emphasis and attitude, he was almost identical with Hart. He also upheld the moderate western abolitionists who proposed and tried to do away with slavery gradually by established constitutional means,

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85 See above.

86 Macy, The Anti-Slavery Crusade, p. 214.

87 Ibid., pp. 59-60.

and who repudiated the radicalism of Garrison. Nationalism worked on Macy no less than on Rhodes or Hart.

The treatment of the abolition movement by Rhodes, Hart, and Macy was at best simple and sketchy. They gave no systematic analysis of the reasons for the rise of the militant abolitionists, their organized activities, and their quarrels and split. They mentioned only a few abolitionists. These omissions are probably inevitable in consideration of the handicaps they faced in writing on the subject. First, many materials were not available. Then too, there were very few special studies to draw upon. In his "Critical Essay on Authorities" in Slavery and Abolition, besides general histories, Hart could list only seven "specific histories" about the slavery controversy and twenty-nine biographies. Most of these can hardly be called true scholarly studies because they were written mostly by ex-abolitionists, children of abolitionists, or their opponents. A check of American Historical Review (began in 1895), Mississippi Valley Historical Review (began in 1895), Mississippi Valley Historical Review (1915), and Journal of Negro History (1916) reveals the surprising fact that from 1895 to 1920, there are fewer than half-dozen articles which have any bearing on the anti-slavery subject. Of these, one deals with the underground railroad, one with the Western Reserve in the antislavery movement,[88] one with

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[88] This article appears in Mississippi Valley Historical Association, Proceedings, V (1911-12).

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the antislavery press in the border states before 1830, the remaining two with colonization. Without both material and secondary specific studies, it can hardly be expected that Rhodes, Hart, and Macy could have written more detailed histories on the abolition movement than they did.

Despite simple and sketchy descriptions, their opinions are quite clear. Though they disagreed on the problem of leadership, they shared a basic dislike of Garrison's anarchic proposal of breaking up the Union and disregard for Constitutional means to abolish slavery. Rhodes showed his disapproval by criticizing the Garrisonians after 1840, Hart and Macy by denying Garrison's importance in the abolition crusade. Contrary to their dislike of Garrison's radicalism, they praised those who tried to get rid of slavery by established political means. For this reason, Rhodes hailed the Republican party, while Hart and Macy applauded the Liberty men, Free-Soilers, as well as Republicans. Because Garrison's agitation prepared the way for the triumph of the Republican party by arousing the northern conscience, Rhodes was willing to pay tribute to the Garrisonians before 1840. In short, because they hated slavery, they would like to see it destroyed, but not at the price of breaking up the Union which they loved even more.

It can never be overemphasized that the views of Rhodes, Hart, and Macy on the abolition movement were the natural product of nationalism they shared with their fellow-Americans of their age. Believing in the gradual

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realization of freedom through national unity, they hated slavery. This feeling predestined their favorable reaction to the abolitionists. But their respect for the Union and for constitutional procedures precluded their embrace of the radicals without reservations. As a result, they took up the cause of the moderate or practical abolitionists. The need for sectional reconciliation, the idea of white supremacy, and the professional ideal of scientific history, in one way or another, also moved them to the same direction. Their family backgrounds might affect their approaches, but the overriding influence was the climate of opinion of the period from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth.

Finally, there is the problem whether the view of Rhodes, Hart, and Macy influenced later historians. This question is hard to answer because there is no clear evidence to establish relations between them and other historians. But a check of the discussions of the abolition movement by randomly selected historians of the first quarter of this century seems to show that their attitudes were in at least one aspect similar to that of Rhodes, Hart and Macy. No one accepted the Garrisonian abolitionism without any reservations. Some criticized Garrison more harshly than others. For example, Carl Russell Fish denounced Garrison as "legally criminal" for his organizing a "system of stealing slaves," the underground railroad.

By criticizing Garrison's radicalism, and by maintaining that Garrison was repudiated by many moderate abolitionists who "wished to pursue the more usual American method of political effort," he seemed more favorable to the moderate than to the radical abolitionists.[89] Although Edward Channing found that the Liberator had "readers in every part of the Northern states and kept alive the movement whenever it seemed to be slackening," he called the Garrisonians "ultra anti-slavery people," and accused them of excoriating the Constitution and advocating disunionism. The people of the North who "loved the Union" did not "in the least agree with the aggressive abolitionists." He believed the middle path taken by William Jay and William Ellery Channing sometimes "is the path of wisdom."[90] Others such as James Truslow Adams were sympathetic to the abolitionists. Adams' discussion of the crusade in New England in the Republic, 1776-1850 was largely a defense of the Garrisonians against their detractors. He justified Garrison's agitation on the ground that he "shattered forever the smug complacency of Northerners who were wholly satisfied with 'things as they are'." Yet, he readily

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89 Carl Russell Fish, The Rise of the Common Man (New York, 1927), pp. 227-290. Quotations are taken from p.282, and 280.

90 Channing, A History of the United States, V, 147-161; VI, 180-187. Quotations are taken from V, 148, VI, 180, V, 152, 170.

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admitted that the abolitionists were fanatics and that "the chief and characteristic work of the Abolitionists was accomplished by 1840."[91] Even two of Garrison's biographers who were in general favorable to him and upheld his importance were critical, though mildly, of his method of agitation.[92] In spite of this difference in degree, all these writers showed an ambivalent attitude toward the abolitionists. This mixed feeling of attraction and repulsion was little different from that of Rhodes, or Hart, or Macy. So, even if it is difficult to prove whether these writers were influenced by the three historians discussed above, it seems reasonable to conclude that the nationalist view of the abolition movement as represented by Rhodes, Hart, and Macy still lingered on during the nineteen-twenties.

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91 James Truslow Adams, New England in the Republic, 1776-1850 (Boston, 1926), pp. 401-422. Quotations are taken from p. 403, and 408.

92 Lindsay Swift, William Lloyd Garrison (Philadelphia, 1911); John J. Chapman, William Lloyd Garrison (Boston, 1913).

CHAPTER II

A NEGLIGIBLE MINORITY

- THE VIEW OF THE PROGRESSIVE HISTORIANS -

Whatever the differences Rhodes, Hart, and Macy showed in their interpretations of the abolition movement, they shared the basic view that the moral controversy over the peculiar institution was a major factor in the sectional conflict. Whether or not they attributed the final emancipation of slaves to the work of the abolitionists, they all believed that it was their incessant agitation which broke the silence on the problem of slavery, prepared the way for the appearance of the political antislavery movement, and revealed the incompatibility of liberty and slavery within one nation. In their opinion, the irrepressible struggle between freedom and slavery had more or less something to do with the coming of the Civil War. The agitation against slavery had obviously meanings of its own in this kind of interpretation.

But this interpretation was challenged in the 1920's by some leading progressive historians. They denied that the abolition movement had any influence in the shaping of

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events in the period preceding the Civil War. Trying to interpret American history in terms of some inanimate forces--geographical, socio-economic, or a combination of the two--they insisted that the ante-bellum sectional conflict was not between a static South and a static North over the morality or immorality of slavery. It was a conflict among several developing sections growing out of conflicting socio-economic interests. In this conflict, the struggle over the institution of slavery was at best only incidental to the more fundamental rivalry. Even when the slavery question did become important in the sectional strife in the 1850's, the dispute was not so much over slavery as a moral question as over slavery as a labor system. Since the Progressive historians greatly reduced the significance of the slavery controversy, it is natural that they would also play down the importance of the abolition movement. To them the abolition movement, except perhaps for stirring up some riplets in the public opinion, came and passed away without leaving any noticeable marks on the conflict among sections.

Many historians have discussed the rise, and conviction and practice of the "New" or "Progressive" historians.[1]

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[1] Among the historians who have discussed the Progressive historians, I have benefitted from Richard Hofstadter, The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington (New York, 1968), pp. 47-434; John Higham, History: The Development of Historical Studies in the United States (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), pp. 171-197; Lee Benson, Turner and Beard: American Historical Writing Reconsidered (New York, 1960); Robert Allen Skotheim, American Intellectual Histories and Historians (Princeton, N.J., 1966); and Charles Crouse, "The Emergence of Progressive History,"

Suffice it here to say that the Progressive historians were products of their time. Rapid industrialization and urbanization after the Civil War deepened social and economic dislocations which had been emerging since the Jacksonian period.[2] The ghastly contrast between conspicious consumption and conspicuous poverty, the ruthless exploitation of workers, and the miserable plight of farmers finally brought about social protest and reform movements. Strikes became epidemic; farmers sought salvation first in cooperative endeavors and then in the Populist movement; some clergymen tried to make the church an agency of social betterment by preaching the doctrine of social gospel; urban reformers demanded changes in civil service and in party machine to clean up political corruption; and several journalists devoted themselves to exposing city corruption or the shabby methods by which industrialists built up their empires. This social unrest was accompanied by an intellectual reorientation which Morton White called "the Revolt against Formalism."[3] American thinkers rejected the formal structure of thought based on logical abstractions, and turned to concrete experiences, men's prejudice and bias, for the basis of thought in jurisprudence, economics, politics, society, philosophy, and history. Pragmatism and realism

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Journal of the History of Ideas, XXVII (Jan.-March, 1966), 109-124.

[2] Douglas T. Miller, Jacksonian Aristocracy: Class and Democracy in New York, 1830-1860 (New York, 1967).

[3] Morton White, Social Thought in America: The Revolt

became the cardinal faith of the new intellectuals. All this protest, reform, and reorientation finally combined in the early twentieth century to form a general reform movement - the Progressive Movement.

The Progressives developed a special kind of social theory. Deeply affected by the post-Darwinian thinking, they saw in history an evolutionary growth. However, unlike orthodox Darwinians, they did not believe the continuing growth was a smooth self-unfolding or self-evolving process. It was dotted by changes wrought by human will and reforming efforts. This is because the Progressives assumed that human nature was basically good, and that through changing men's environments by rational choice to allow a greater realization of their good potential would better men and a better society result. Thus, an optimistic view of human nature turned the involuntary Darwinian evolutionary process into a continuing growth or betterment of society by man-made changes and reforms. Voluntary changes to better society were not only desirable but also possible.

This widespread reforming zeal and intellectual ferment prepared the way for the appearance of a new theory of historical investigation and writing. In fact, the Progressive historiography was part and parcel of the Progressive movement. Born later than most of the nationalist

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historians in a region which felt the agricultural depression most acutely,[4] leading Progressive historians such as James Harvey Robinson, Frederick Jackson Turner, Charles A. Beard, Vernon L. Parrington, and Carl Becker, inclined strongly toward the reforms and intellectual reorientation of their growing-up years. It is true that of the three historians whose interpretations of the abolition movement will be discussed, Turner remained aloof to the reform movement, but his sympathy for it was very clear. Beard and Parrington were not merely sympathetic to it but took active part in it. After a visit to Chicago in 1896, Beard became an advocate of unionism and income-tax. When he was in London, he helped establish a college for workers and participated in organizing a labor party. Parrington, on the other hand, served as a delegate to the Kansas Populist convention of 1897, and wrote essays advocating reforms for a paper of Emporia College where he taught.[5]

But the more significant contribution of the Progressive historians to the Progressive Movement was the fact that they developed a theory of historical study and

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[4] Turner was born in Wisconsin in 1861; Robinson in Illinois in 1863; Parrington in Illinois in 1871; Becker in Iowa in 1873; and Beard in Indiana in 1874.

[5] Hofstadter, The Progressive Historians, pp. 106-107, 170-171; 174-179; and 370.

writing which turned history into a kind of tool for social reform. In this respect, they were influenced by Progressive thought. True to the Progressive social theory, the Progressive historians discovered in American history a series of conflicts between two antagonistic groups of different interests or ideologies. Consequently they concentrated their attention on drastic historical changes, and endeavored to explain how and why these changes came about. In the explanation of the how and why, pragmatism had its play. The contribution of pragmatism to the study of history was twofold. First, faith in pragmatism made the Progressive historians willing to use history as a tool for the understanding of the present situation. Before Robinson elaborated the idea of presentism, and later Beard and Becker expanded it into a theory of environmental relativism, Turner already argued in 1891 that "each age writes the history of past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in its own time," and that "the aim of history, then, is to know the elements of the present by understanding what came into the present from the past. For the present is simply the developing past, the past the undeveloped present."[6] This opinion is so strikingly alike to those of Robinson that Ray Allen Billington lamented

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[6] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of History," in Ray Allen Billington, ed., Frontier and Section: Selected Essays of Frederick Jackson Turner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1961), p. 17. For presentism of Robinson, Beard, and Becker, see Robinson, New History: Essays Illustrating the Modern Historical Outlook (New York, 1912). Robinson and Beard, The Development of Modern Europe (2 vols., 1907-1908),

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that had it been given a wider audience in 1891, Turner, rather than Robinson, might have been acclaimed as the father of the "New History."[7] Given this presentism and their close identification with the Progressive movement, it would be a surprise if Turner, Beard, and Parrington did not try to turn the study of history into a means of helping the cause of reform. Besides pragmatism also turned them away from ideals or preconceived principles; to the real forces or agencies in explaining historical development. And they thought they found them in geographical or economic forces, or in the combination of the two. The way in which these forces worked for the growth of democracy was through political struggles among several contending groups of conflicting sectional or economic interests.

In short, Progressivism produced a new historiography quite different from that of the nationalist historians. Whatever else the differences might be, that which concerns this discussion most directly is that the Progressive

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I, "Preface"; Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," American Historical Review, XXXIX (1934), 219-229; and Becker's three articles: "Some Aspects of the Influence of Social Problems upon the Study and Writing of History," American Journal of Sociology, XVIII (March, 1913), 641-675 "Everyman His Own Historian", in Becker, Everyman His Own Historian: Essays on History and Politics (New York, 1935), pp. 233-255, and "What Are Historical Facts?" in Hans Meyerhoff, ed., The Philosophy of History in Our Time (New York, 1939), pp. 120-137.

[7] Billington, "Frederick Jackson Turner--Universal Historian", in Billington, ed., Frontier and Section, p. 4.

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historians substituted for the nationalist historians' conception of a North-South conflict a more complex and varied view of conflict, and sought to interpret historical changes in terms of some inanimate or impersonal forces instead of some lofty ideals or constitutional theories. This difference was bound to be reflected in their approach to the problem of slavery. While the shift from the dichotomous North-South conflict to a struggle among multiple groups helped to reduce the importance of the slavery question, the sectional and economic realism tended to downgrade its constitutional and moral aspects which the nationalist historians emphasized so much. In addition, the widespread conviction of racial inferiority of the Negro of their time might also have made them indifferent to the racial problem involved in the slavery controversy. As a result, in the works of the Progressive historians, the slavery question became incidental to the more fundamental sectional or economic struggle; and slavery as a constitutional and moral question received only scant attention. It may be said, therefore, that with the ascendency of the Progressive historians, the agitation against slavery entered into a period of neglect. The abolitionists became a negligible minority.

All the three Progressive historians under discussion, Turner, Beard, and Parrington, agreed that the abolition movement was not important as a factor in the sectional

struggle. They also shared the view that Garrison was the undisputed leader of the crusade and New England its center. Within these areas of agreement, however, they differed from each other in detail and attitude toward the abolitionists. Turner's was the scantest treatment of the three. With only a few casual remarks, his handling of the movement almost gave the impression that it never existed. Beard did give a somewhat more detailed and sustained description; but it is characterized sometimes by uncertainties, and followed by a definite denial of its importance. Parrington's treatment stood between Turner and Beardin detail. However, what differentiated him from Turner and Beard most clearly was his attitude toward the abolition movement and Garrison. His description of the movement and the man amounted almost to a sentimental applause. While his ideological closeness to Garrison's might have some influence, this was mainly because he considered the abolitionist's agitation as a form of the liberalization of the New England mind from the deadening grip of what he called the commercial mind and the Calvinist dogmatism which he hated very much. In spite of this divergence in detail and attitude, the three historians agreed on the relative unimportance of the abolition agitation in the sectional conflict.

It is well known that Turner devoted most of his life to the advocacy of the frontier theory and sectionalism. And true to his own theory, Turner interpreted the history of the first half of nineteenth century in terms of

sectional struggle and compromise. In both Rise of the New West, 1819-1829 and The United States, 1830-1850, Turner's approach was first an analysis of the leading geographical conditions, economic interests, and ideals of the several sections, and then a description of the political battles and compromises among these sections in party conventions and Congress.

An emphasis on sectionalism is bound to have bearings on Turner's view of the slavery question. And the net result is the reduction of the importance of slavery as a leading issue in the sectional struggle. Turner not only believed that the sectional conflict was older than the slavery question, but also saw other issues such as those over public lands, tariff, internal improvements, national bank and currency, and state sovereignty as "vital forces in the alignment of sections".[8] The dispute over slavery was only one of the issues which divided the nation. What is more important is that there was no persistent and clear-cut alignment or division between sections at least before the 1850's. On one issue, the West might join the South to defeat the Northeast; on another, the Northeast might combine with the South to defeat the West. The constant shifting and instability in the sectional alignment suggested that the slavery dispute was not a controlling element in

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[8] Turner, The United States, 1830-1850: The Nation and Its Sections (Gloucester, Mass., 1935), p. 383.

the sectional division. "When American history comes to be rightly viewed," Turner declared, "it will be seen that slavery question is an incident." Even when the slavery question did submerge all other issues after the annexation of Texas, "it rose to primary, but far from exclusive, importance."[9]

Turner also shifted the traditional focus on the North-South conflict over slavery by introducing a new element, the West. While his pitching the West against the East broke the traditional view of the North-South rivalry, he made the slavery question incidental to the westward expansion. The Northeast and the Southeast engaged in a struggle for power, and "power was to be gained by drawing upon the growing West."[10] And the battle to win the West affected the slavery question. "Such a struggle as the slavery contest," he said, "can only be understood by bearing in mind that it was not merely a contest of North against South, but that its form and its causes were fundamentally shaped by the dynamic factor of expanding sections, of a West to be won."[11] It seems that if there had not been an area of expansion in the West, slavery might have

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[9] Turner, "The significance of the Frontier in American History," in Billington, ed., Frontier and Section, p.52.

[10] Turner, "The significance of the section," in ibid., p. 118.

[11] Ibid., p. 123.

gradually died away.[12] Slavery itself was not a formative force. Even when finally the Northeast joined the Northwest in opposition to the Southeast-Southwest combination over the problem of slavery, neither the South nor the North was united by the slavery dispute alone. In the southern case, it was the spread of cotton plantations, and the colonization of the Southwest by southeastern people. In that of the North, in addition to the spread of northeastern people to the Northwest, and the strong feeling of nationalism in that region, there was the fact that the economic interests of the Northwest were tied to the Northeast by canals and railroads. The slavery question was of course relevant to the final sectional realignment, but it was at best only one among several factors. Indeed, even though "the struggle over slavery is a most important incident in our history," still "the real lines of American development, the forces dominating our character, are to be studied in the history of westward expansion."[13] With this subordination of the slavery question to the westward expansion, it is no wonder that Turner criticized H.E. Von Holst and Rhodes for their neglect of this aspect of the slavery question.[14]

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12 Pressly made the same comment on the meaning of Turner's statement, see Americans Interpret Their Civil War, p.208.

13 Turner, "Problems in American History," in Billington, ed., Frontier and Section, p. 29.

14 Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier," in ibid., p. 208. His criticism of Rhodes may also be found in

With the reduction of the slavery dispute to a mere incident, the abolition movement naturally lost much of its meaning and significance. Consequently in Turner's histories there is no extensive, coherent discussion of the crusade. He was apparently satisfied with dismissing this subject with some occasional casual remarks. In his early book, Rise of the New West, there is no listing of "abolition" of "anti-slavery" in the index. However, there is the entry of "Colonization Society" and "Benjamin Lundy." The latter together with his antislavery paper appeared in Turner's discussion of the Colonization Society which occupies the space of less than one page.[15] He also mentioned antislavery feelings in Indiana, Illinois, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky in connection with the Missouri Compromise. These references are all that he made about the early anti-slavery movement in The Rise of the West. In the next book, The United States, he gave greater attention to the abolition movement. But his remarks remain casual and disorganized. In fact, they are so scattered and out of joint that it is almost

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his review of the third volume of Rhodes' History of the United States, in Political Science Quarterly, XI (March, 1896), 167-170. Pressly mentioned in Americans Interpret Their Civil War, p. 196, and 364, another article in which Turner criticized Rhodes. This is "Recent Studies in American History," in Atlantic Monthly, LXXVII (June, 1896), 837-844. But this article appears without the name of its author.

15 Turner, Rise of the New West, 1819-1829 (Gloucester, Mass., 1906), p. 152.

impossible to patch up the disconnected pieces into an integrated picture. He touched upon the crusade in somewhat greater length only four times; and each time he mentioned it in his discussion of some broader topics which had no apparent relation to the abolition movement. For example, in discussing New England culture, he cited the abolition crusade as one of the many isms or third party movements springing up from the fertile soil of the New England conscience, and listed the Liberator as one among many examples of the New England press. The political antislavery movement was included along with the Anti-masonry, the Workingman's party, and Locofocoism in the discussion of the social and spiritual life of the Middle Atlantic States. The fourth and last mention of the movement was mixed up with the Van Buren Administration. Broken into isolated pieces, it is hard to get a clear idea about the abolition movement as a whole from reading Turner's book.

His treatment of the abolitionists was equally scattered and disconnected. There are about a dozen names of abolitionists. But except Garrison, Wendell Phillips, E.P. Lovejoy of whom Turner only said that his murder further inflamed northern sentiment, and perhaps Charles Sumner, who, along with Phillips, was ostracized by the high class of Boston from which they came for their radicalism,[16] he gave no clear indication whether such men as

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[16] Turner, The United States, pp. 75-76, 84-85, 130-131, and 465.

Birney, William Ellery Channing, Salmon P. Chase, Joshua R. Giddings, Horace Greeley, James Russell Lowell, Theodore Parker, and Samuel J. May had any direct connection with the crusade against slavery at all because their names appear, too, in connection with matters other than the crusade. Birney was mentioned for his presidential candidacies in national elections; Channing, Lowell, and Parker for their literary achievements; Giddings and Chase as western political leaders; Greeley for his success in the press and his involvement in reform movements; May for his pacifism. He never made clear what their relationships were to the abolition movement.

However, from the isolated and casual remarks he gave, it is nevertheless possible to draw some conclusions concerning the abolition story. First, the crusade against slavery was a part of the general reform movement which was the product of the New England conscience. "The slavery issue appealed strongly to all New England," he explained, "for, as a whole, the section. . . had no important Southern population in its midst, and was easily swayed by idealistic consideration under the Puritan doctrine of community responsibility for sin." Although his next assertion that "moreover, New England found in the slave-holding South a persistent opponent of the protective tariff,"[17] may suggest economic interests being also involved,

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[17] Ibid., p. 75.

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his comments elsewhere put great emphasis on the idealistic side. And this idealism was a product of Calvinistic conception of individualism and social responsibility which was still at work in New England. The Calvinistic doctrine, coupled with the New England conscience, explained "her reforming instinct". So, it is no wonder that New England proved to be "a center from which reforms and ideals spread," as her sons, carrying the New England conscience and the idea of community responsibility, fanned out to the Middle Atlantic States, to the North Central States, and finally to the Far West.[18] It was in New England and the areas settled by New Englanders that the home of the many reform movements before the Civil War was to be found. Naturally, the anti-slavery agitation was the strongest in New England, and those parts of the Middle Atlantic States and the North Central States where immigrants from New England had dominated.[19]

The second thing is that the abolition movement had two wings, and that Garrison was the leader of a small band of extremists. "The antislavery men divided," he said, "in their policies, into the radical wing favored by William Lloyd Garrison, and those who recognized the Constitutional

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[18] Ibid., p. 41, 42, and 43.

[19] Ibid., p. 118, and 130.

right of slaveholding within the states where it already existed, but denied its right either to expand into the territories or to retain a position of security in the District of Columbia . . . . This latter wing was also recruited from those who supported the right of petition and opposed the 'gag laws' . . ."[20] But the "radical abolitionists, headed by William Lloyd Garrison" were a "relatively small group."[21] The "cutting declaration" of Garrison in the first issue of the Liberator won but "a small direct following." Nevertheless, it probed the nerve center of the New England conscience, he admitted, and stirred up hatred of slavery, if it did not win adherents to the doctrine of immediate emancipation. Here Turner's dislike, though slight, of Garrison's radicalism, can be discerned for he said Garrison's declaration was "a voice from the early days of intolerant Puritanism, in the spirit of the martyrs..."[22]

The third thing that can be gathered from his remarks is his recognition of the Liberty party as being organized by abolitionists. Of the election of 1840, he said that in the autumn of 1839, "a wing of the abolitionist group met in national convention at Albany and nominated James G. Birney,

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[20] Ibid., p. 465.

[21] Ibid., p. 75.

[22] Ibid., p. 85.

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of New York, for President, and Thomas Earle, of Pennsylvania, for Vice-President."[23] Of the election of 1844, he said again that "a convention of abolitionists" met in Buffalo and nominated Birney for President, "Demanding the divorce of the federal government from slavery, these abolitionists denied that they were a sectional party."[24] There is no problem that the Liberty party was organized by some abolitionists.

The last thing that can be drawn from his discussion about the abolition movement is that at least the Garrisonian agitation had something to do with the aggressiveness and consolidation of southern sentiment. As late as 1833, anti-slavery feeling was still strong in the border states, according to Turner. The legislatures of Virginia and North Carolina were debating the advisability of gradual emancipation, while Kentucky passed an act prohibiting slave trade within her borders. But the attack of the Garrisonian abolitionists killed all the antislavery feelings, and "hardened and unified the resistance of all the slaveholding states." The South came to believe that "the economic interests, the social institutions, and the political power of the section were dependent upon the

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[23] Ibid., p. 480.

[24] Ibid., p. 524.

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defense of slavery."[25] Henceforward, the South became more adamant and unified in demanding federal protection of slavery.

Except these things, Turner told no more about the abolition movement. He did not indicate whether there were other abolitionists beside those affiliated with New England, nor did he dwell upon the principles, organizations, activities, and internal disputes of the abolition movement or why the crusade against slavery suddenly became militant by 1830. Since his early book, Rise of the New West, covers a period, 1819-1829, before the rise of the abolition movement, his dismiss of the subject is understandable. But in The United States, which deals with the period when the abolition movement was most active, his omissions, or, rather, casual treatment, can only be interpreted as a sign of his unwillingness to acknowledge the crusade of having much meaning in itself, and hence of being worthy of any detailed treatment by the historian.

If Turner belittled the significance of the abolition movement implicitly by intentional neglect, Beard did so explicitly by unequivocal denial. In his economic explanation of the coming of "The Second American Revolution," there is simply no place for a moral assault on the slavery institution.

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[25] Ibid., pp. 575-576.

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Beard's economic interpretation of history has been well known. He found economic interests working in the draft and ratification of the Constitution, and in the formation of Jeffersonian democracy.[26] He also applied the economic interpretation to the Civil War history. A social cataclysm in which "the capitalists, the laborers, and farmers of the North and West drove from power in the national government the planting aristocracy of the South,"[27] the Civil War was brought about by "a sweep of economic forces." All the other factors in the sectional conflict were subordinated to the socio-economic difference among the North, the South, and the West. Even cultural matters were thought by Beard to be largely influenced by different economic developments.[28] He insisted that the Civil War was an economic clash, operating through classes, and that it was a sectional dispute "merely by the accident of climate, soil, and geography."[29]

In such a strict economic interpretation, slavery, except as a socio-economic system, lost much of its meaning. Practical men of North and South argued over the merits or

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26 Charles A. Beard, An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States (New York, 1913); The Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy (New York, 1915).

27 Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, The Rise of American Civilization (New York, 1927), II, 51.

28 Ibid., I, 725-726.

29 Ibid., II, 53.

demerits of slavery as a labor system and a basis of southern aristocracy, rather than as a moral abstraction.[30] As a moral issue, it never bothered contemporaries very much. "If the number of abolitionists is any evidence," he contended, slavery was but "a minor element, in the sweep of political and economic forces that occupied the attention of statesmen throughout the middle period and finally brought on the irrepressible conflict."[31] Garrison's creed never rose to "the dignity of a first rate political issue in the North," according to Beard. Nobody but moral crusaders, who were held in contempt by the great statesmen of the time, dared to advocate it. No major parties even gave it "the most casual indorsement." When the abolitionists launched the Liberty party, the people showed their apathy to its emancipation platform by giving it only sixty-five thousand votes out of more than two and a half million ballots. No other parties at that time went beyond the limit of the exclusion of slavery from the territories, and even this moderated demand won no more than a handful of voters. Moreover, not a single "responsible statesman" of the middle period "committed himself to the doctrine of immediate and unconditional abolition," because they could see nothing tangible in this extreme demand. Since the

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[30] For Beard's treatment of the slavery question as an economic issue, see ibid., I, 693-694; and II, 36-37.

[31] Ibid., I, 710.

abolitionist demand was never endorsed by any major party, never accepted by a large segment of the electorate, Beard naturally drew the conclusion that, "the institution of slavery was not the fundamental issue during the epoch preceding the bombardment of Fort Sumter."[32]

Although Beard did not give much weight to the moral dispute over slavery as a factor in the coming of the Civil War, he could not dismiss the abolition movement as casually as Turner did. Consequently, he gave a fuller, more coherent description of the crusade. But it is characterized by uncertainties and omissions. He began by pointing out that in the early days, hostility to slavery was firmer and more vital in the North than in the South because in the North the value of slaves was slight. But the early anti-slavery activities in the North declined after slavery was abolished in the northern states. It was not until the middle period when the economic struggle between the sections grew tense that "the agitation against slavery became relentless and virulent."[33]

Garrison's publication of the Liberator in 1831 marked the beginning of the militant phase of the abolition movement. Demanding immediate and unconditional emancipation, he used language "as imperious as the declamation of

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[32] All the quotations are taken from ibid., II, 39-40.

[33] Ibid., I, 696.

the ancient prophets" to denounce slavery as "a crime---a damning crime," and slaveholders as criminals. Day and night he cried that slavery must be immediately abolished; yet he had no definite scheme of realizing his aim. A believer in non-resistance, he opposed resorting to either politics or revolution. Impractical as it might sound, soon he gathered around him a band of adherents---among whom Beard named Phillips, Whittier, Lowell, Emerson, and Harriet Beecher Stowe---as severe and uncompromising as he himself. To arouse public sentiment, the small band of abolitionists used every known instrument--organizing national and local antislavery societies, sending antislavery petitions to Congress, writing and distributing antislavery tracts and papers, applying pressure on state legislatures to pass antislavery laws, conducting underground railroads, and resorting sometimes to mob violence. Some of the agitators tried to keep the crusade on a high level of ethics and argument, while others "descended to the depths of abuse and scurrility." Whatever differences in their method there might be, all of them met tremendous resistance both in the North and in the South. The Southerners stamped out the agitators and their literature by law and mob violence. In the North, though there were no anti-abolition laws, mob actions were frequently employed to silence the crusaders. Such resorts to violence were

generally welcomed by respectable people in the North.[34]

So far Beard's narration is clear and certain. But when he tried to answer questions such as what were the motives of the abolitionists, what were the effects of the agitation, and how did they divide among themselves on problems of ends and means, Beard began to show uncertainty and confusion. As mentioned above, Beard pointed out that it was when the economic conflict between the sections grew tense that the agitation became relentless and virulent. This might suggest that the extremity of the abolition movement had something to do with economic considerations. However, later Beard admitted that "the sources of this remarkable movement are difficult to discover."[35] He then dismissed Christian principles, the Declaration of Independence, and sacrificial benevolence as controlling forces in the abolition motivation because both the foes and friends of slavery appealed to the same sources in attacking and justifying it. But at the end of his analysis he came up with the somewhat surprising conclusion that "it remained a fact that devotion to the creed sprang largely from sentiments of a moral nature."[36]

The same uncertainty characterizes his opinion on the effects of the abolition movement. It is first revealed by his confession of inability to ascertain "how

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[34] Ibid., I, 695-698, and 707-708.

[35] Ibid., I, 698-699.

[36] Ibid., I, 699.

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deep this agitation went and how many people were really stirred up by it."[37] Nevertheless, he attempted an evaluation anyway. By comparing the number of the members of antislavery societies which was put at about two hundred thousands with the sixty-five thousand votes cast for Birney in the election of 1844, Beard declared that "immediate and unconditional emancipation as a rallying cry for a political party was from the beginning to the end a total failure."[38] Following the miserable failure in 1844, the advocates of the doctrine never again put up another candidate to run for office. After this denial, Beard tried to concede some influence to the abolitionists by pointing out that in places where the strength of the two major parties was fairly equal, the balance of power lay in the hands of a few agitators. By a little pressure and some threats, the abolitionists were often able to force many Whit candidates into the open, and many northern Democrats to soften their pro-slavery stand. Consequently, "haunted by the fear of such schisms" as that which had happened in 1844, "politicians bent on the possession of office and power had to be careful lest a tiny minority of agitators throw their entire national machine out of gear." "In a word," Beard emphasized his point again, "the fortune of

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[37] Ibid., I, 699.

[38] Ibid., I, 700.

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politics often hung upon the maneuvers of a 'contemptible' minority."[39] But again Beard shifted his ground when he said that "the more confident statesmen referred to their activities as 'a rub-a-dub' agitation,"[40] for this certainly suggests that the politicians did not care about the abolitionists at all.

Beard's discussion of the various groups of abolitionists is also characterized by uncertainty and confusion. It would be a mistake, he warned, if it is assumed that "opponents were solidly united in their creed and in their strategy,"[41] because they divided into many factions. Between a right wing which regretted the existence of slavery but believed nothing could be done to mitigate its evils or remove it, and a left wing of Garrisonians who were prepared to tear up the Constitution and break up the Union in order to get rid of it, there were all shades of opinion. A large number of people were merely opposed to the extension of slavery into the territories, while a small group proposed to use the revenues from the sales of public lands to buy the freedom of slaves. But a majority of those who disliked slavery in their hearts were puzzled by the complexity and difficulties involved in every solution proposed. They

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[39] Ibid., I, 701.

[40] Ibid., I, 708.

[41] Ibid., I, 701.

were largely practical men and politicians like Lincoln. They evolved "little plots and plans" to prevent the gathering storm; but they proved to be powerless.[42] So far the meaning is quite clear. Beard was talking about all those who disliked slavery, including all the radicals, moderates, and conservatives. But following the assertion that practical men were powerless to prevent the storm, Beard concluded his discussion with a statement which throws his readers into complete confusion. "In the economy of Providence," he said, "abolition agitators were to be justified by history, not by the work of their own hands or by any of the political instruments they had forged."[43] Did he use "the opponents of slavery" and "abolition agitators" synonymously? His inclusion of Mrs. Stowe and Emerson in the Garrisonian group seems to suggest so. If this was his true intention, then not only did Beard use the term "abolition agitator" too loosely but also he contradicted his own assertion about the small number and little influence of the abolitionists. If it was not Beard's intention to equate "the opponents of slavery" and "abolition agitators", then what did he really mean by the above quoted sentence? Certainly he could not mean the Garrisonians alone by "abolition agitators" because they never forged any political instruments. Nor could he apply

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[42] Ibid., I, 703.

[43] Ibid., I, 703.

this term only to the Liberty men and the anti-extensionists either, for he also called the Garrisonians "abolition agitators". Of course, he might mean by "abolition agitators" all the Garrisonians and political abolitionists. But nowhere in his discussion did he make this clear. In the final analysis, all the confusion is caused by his too careless use of the terms "abolition" and "abolition agitators." This carelessness in turn suggests his lack of a clear idea about the whole abolition movement.

Beside these uncertainties and confusions, Beard, like Turner, left out about the abolition movement much more than he included in his discussion. Except Elihu Embree, Lundy, Garrison, Phillips, Whittier, Lowell, Emerson, Mrs. Stowe, Lovejoy, and Samuel May, he mentioned no other abolitionists and antislavery men. Not even Birney was mentioned. He said nothing about the structure and activities of the organized antislavery movement, the disputes over ends and means among the abolitionists, the split of the movement, or what happened to the non-Garrisonian abolitionists.

All in all, it may be said that so far as the abolition movement is concerned, Beard's treatment is far from satisfactory, even for such a general survey history as his. It is true that his discussion is more systematic and coherent than Turner's. But it is also characterized by uncertainties and omissions. As in the case of Turner, perhaps such defects are inevitable from a historian who

did not consider moral issues as having much significance in the historical development of the United States.

Like Turner and Beard, Vernon Parrington also gave scant attention to the abolition movement as a whole in the second volume of his Main Currents in American Thought.[44] Parrington, like Beard, adopted a very narrow view of the crusade, centering his description around the person Garrison, and thus leaving out a lot of the movement as a whole. But unlike Turner and Beard who were unfavorable to the abolitionists, Parrington was quite sympathetic to them.

On the surface, the title of his history may suggest that Parrington dealt with all the leading ideas in American history. Actually, this is not the case. What he was really interested in is the political ideas of thinkers, statesmen, and writers whom he considered to be representative. And he approached them in economic terms. In this respect, he was not too different from Beard. Although he sometimes thought there were other formative forces in historical development, Parrington generally subordinated these other forces to that of economics. "The economic interpretation of things is in the air," he proclaimed in a paper prepared in 1917, "... it is fast becoming for us both the law and prophet." He continued, "Literature is

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[44] The Romantic Revolution in America, 1800-1860 (New York, 1927).

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the fair flower of culture, but underneath culture are the deeper strata of philosophy, theology, law, statecraft--of ideology and institutionalism--resting finally upon the subsoil of economics."[45] However, his conversion to an economic interpretation dated from an earlier time. When he left University of Oklahoma in Norman in 1908, he remembered that "the economic interpretation of history had not yet risen for me, but it lay just below the horizon and was soon to become the chief luminary in my intellectual sky. My new interest in American literature opened a fresh field for me and in that field I applied the economic interpretation more and more rigidly."[46]

His application of the economic interpretation to American literature is quite clear in the second volume of his history. He not only interpreted the rise of romanticism and its later development in the South, the West, and the North in economic terms but also saw the Civil War as the result of the rivalry among three "imperialisms." The capitalistic imperialism of the industrial Northeast, the

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45 The quotation is taken from Hofstadter, The Progressive Historians, p. 389. It is originally in "Economics and Criticisms," written by Parrington in 1917, but not published until 1935 when it appeared in Pacific Northwest Quarterly, 44 (1935), 91-105. It was edited and published by his son, Vernon Parrington, Jr.

46 The quotation is taken from Hofstadter, The Progressive Historians, p. 374. It is originally in an untitled biographical memoir written by Parrington in 1918 for his children, now in possession of Vernon Parrington, Jr.

Cotton-slavery imperialism of the agricultural South, and the "Inland Empire" in the West, with different economic interests and political demands, clashed with each other, and drove "blindly to a collision," in which "the dream of the South was destroyed."[47]

This interpretation of ante-bellum history as a three-way battle between economic imperialisms does not differ very much from Beard's thesis of a sweep of economic forces in bringing about the Second American Revolution. So far as the abolition movement is concerned, the result is about the same. Parrington also paid scant attention to the movement as a sectional issue. In his whole discussion of the crusade and its leaders only three instances can be found in which he suggested any relations between the abolitionist attack on and the southern defense of slavery as a sectional dispute. In a sentence of a dozen words, he said that the arrogance of slaveholders stirred up the strongest resentment in New England.[48] In another of even less words, he pointed out that the agitation against slavery angered the South.[49] In a third of seventeen words, he suggested that the struggle in Kansas was in part due to the abolitionists' agitation.[50] Since he saw little or no

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[47] Parrington, The Romantic Revolution in America, p. xiii. For his discussion of the rise of romanticism and its later development, and the three imperialisms, see pp. ix-xiii.

[48] Ibid., p. 342.

[49] Ibid., pp. 342-343.

[50] Ibid., p. 344.

significance in the abolition movement as a sectional issue, it is a matter of course that he would skip over its effects on such practical matters as sectional struggle and national politics.

However, for Parrington the abolition movement was not without any significance, only it lay somewhere else. After all, Parrington was not a neutral economic determinist per se. He was also a moralist, passing judgments freely upon the persons who appeared in his book. His hero was the idealist and reformer, while his villain was the conservative and possessor. It has been recognized by historians that Parrington had a tendency to seek the motives of the persons he disliked in a selfish economic interests, and to characterize those he liked in terms of the originating and motivating power of ideas.[51] And there is not the slightest doubt from a reading of his book that he liked the New England humanitarian reformers who represented a liberalization from the stifling dominance of the possessed merchants and conservative clergymen whose materialism and Puritan dogmatism greatly disgusted him. It is in this humanitarian liberalization, or what he called

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[51] Hofstadter, The Progressive Historians, p. 407; Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, p. 246. However, the most extensive analysis is Skotheim, American Intellectual Histories and Historians, pp. 134-138. But Skotheim argued that not only Parrington, but all the Progressive historians had the same tendency, see p. 150. However, the case of Beard was different. He did not begin to emphasize the causal significance of ideas until the 1930's. See ibid., pp. 100-109.

the New England renaissance, that Parrington found the true significance of the abolition movement. He therefore not only treated the moral crusade against slavery as an example of the renaissance but also departed from the economic approach and interpreted the abolitionists and their agitation in idealistic terms.

According to Parrington, a renaissance came to New England much later than to Virginia. This is largely because the New England mind became torpified under the long and rigid dominance of a "dead system" of aristocratic rationalism and Puritan dogmatism that "debased human nature."[52] But at last, when industrialization disrupted the static social order of an agricultural economy, there came an intellectual disruption to New England. Though economic changes might have something to do with the disruption of intellectual life, in the realm of ideas the renaissance was largely dominated by the revolutionary doctrines of English literary romanticism, French social utopianism, and, in particular, German philosophical idealism. They mingled together to liberate the New England mind from the deadening grip of conservative Puritan dogmatism. But since the New England mind had long been dominated by Puritanism, the renaissance first came to New England by way of a theological revolution in the form of Unitarianism. And again since the essence of Puritanism

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[52] Parrington, The Romantic Revolution in America, p.265.

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was after all ethics, the renaissance was profoundly affected by its ethical spirit. The most important results of the movement were the quickening of humanitarian zeal and "the liberation of the New England conscience from its long bondage to dogma, setting it free to engage" in reforming the society.[53] Therefore, "the golden age of New England was quite as much the golden age of the New England conscience as of the New England mind."[54]

Although Parrington mentioned ten reform movements as the result of the awakened New England conscience, he described only three of them in any detail: perfectionism, the communistic experiment on Brook Farm, and abolitionism. From this textual arrangement, it can be seen where Parrington put the significance of the abolition movement. He regarded it primarily as a demonstration of the liberated New England social conscience. This is also clear from his discussion of "Certain Militants" in Chapter IV of Part Two of Book Three. In this chapter, that follows the one in which he analyzed the rise of the New England social conscience and three of its forms mentioned above, he included only Garrison, Whittier, and Mrs. Stowe. All of them were abolitionists in a sense, but his discussion

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[53] Ibid., p. 310.

[54] Ibid., p. 334.

did not concentrate on their abolition agitation alone. Rather, he treated them as examples of how the New England social conscience turned them and others like them into universal reformers.

Yet, the clearest evidence for his emphasis on the significance of the abolition movement as an example of the New England conscience is provided by his discussion of the movement itself. The very first sentence opening the discussion strikes the key note. "With awakening interest in social problems," he stated, "the conscience of New England could no longer remain indifferent to slavery."[55] Urged by an awakened interest in social reform, many New Englanders became abolitionists. They were bound to arouse the hostility of the conservative merchants who feared that the crusade might alienate their southern customers. But all the merchants' weapons of coercion, intimidation, and abuses failed to quench these "good fighters". To this New England "fighting phalanx" of whom Parrington named fourteen, were later gathered "heroic souls" from other states: the Tappan brothers and Gerrit Smith from New York; Birney from Kentucky; Lucretia Mott from Philadelphia; and the Grimke sisters from South Carolina.[56] They fought together

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[55] Ibid., p. 342.

[56] Ibid., pp. 343-344.

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for a while. Then, Garrison's "doctrine of Nullification and disunion," the logical child of his perfectionism, provoked a furious discussion among the abolitionist ranks about the question of loyalty to the political state.[57] The effect of this debate was very bad indeed. "With Garrison's conversion to spiritual anarchism," he said, "the abolition movement was sundered by a division between the perfectionists and the political actionists." Rejecting Garrison's principle of non-voting and of refusing allegiance to the Constitution, the latter group, including Whittier, Smith, Birney, and the Tappans, went into third party politics.[58] What was the fate of the movement after the split? Which wing of the abolitionists was more effective or successful? Parrington never touched such questions. However, he was sure about the contribution of the movement as a whole to the final emancipation of slaves. It was negative, for, though single-minded men like the abolitionists sometimes did succeed in removing mountains, "slavery was not destroyed by the conscience of New England, but by the economics of free labor."[59] To Parrington the major

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[57] Ibid., p. 350.

[58] Ibid., pp. 357-358.

[59] Ibid., p. 353.

contribution of the abolitionists rather lay in the fact that their persistent agitation temporarily overwhelmed "the Tory minority in Massachusetts."[60] And it is for this reason that Parrington paid his unlimited admiration to the abolitionists. "They were the kindliest men, with generous sympathies and disinterested motives." They were not interested in money and power, but were self-sacrificing and willing to face social ostracism. Good fighters, they refused to be browbeaten. Few in number, but they were "the best New England had." The New England conscience had never before mustered such a fighting band for glorious causes, nor has since. The admiration was so great that Parrington could not refrain from exclaiming: "What an excellent company they were."[61]

So, Parrington began the abolition movement in the New England social conscience released by the liberalization of the New England mind from the yoke of Puritan dogmatism, and ended it in subjugating for a time the New

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60 Ibid., p. 344.

61 All the quotation of praises are taken from ibid., p. 343. Parrington's lavish praises on Garrison are omitted here because his discussion of Garrison amounts to be little more than a long eulogy. See ibid., pp. 344-353. His admiration for Garrison is in marked difference from both Turner and Beard. This is probably because of their ideological differences. Turner and Beard came from middle-class families. They later turned Progressives. Like many other Progressives, they were middle-class liberals. Parrington also came from a middle-class family, but the radical legacy of his grandfather, the social resentment of his Harvard years, the protest spirit of the Populist 1890's,

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England conservatism. His economic interpretation of the sectional struggle already minimized the significance of the abolition movement as a sectional issue. His treatment of it as a part and parcel of the New England renaissance further reduced its importance in this respect, if, indeed, there was any importance still remaining. His neglect of the abolition movement as a sectional issue is in fact so complete that except for his lavish praises of the abolitionists and his emphasis on the significance of the abolition crusade in connection with the New England renaissance, there is little remaining in his discussion about how the abolitionists thought and acted, or what they effected or failed to effect in the realm of sectional conflict.

Beard's The Rise of American Civilization and Parrington's The Romantic Revolution in America were published in 1927, while Turner's The United States did not appear until 1935. But the basic historical thinkings of the three historians were formulated long before that time. These histories were essentially the product of a generation of historians which came to maturity around the turn of this century. And this was an age of great social unrest and

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and his unhappy teaching experience at University of Oklahoma landed him on an agrarianism profoundly affected by socialism and anarchism. Out of this radical inclination, it is possible that Parrington appreciated Garrison's radicalism more than Turner and Beard did. For Parrington's radicalism and its formation, see Hofstadter, The Progressive Historians, p. 374, and 430.

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intellectual ferment. Influenced by reforming zeal and pragmatism, Turner, Beard, and Parrington tried consciously or unconsciously to turn the study and writing of history into an instrument of social betterment by viewing history as a series of drastic changes wrought by some fundamental amoral or inanimate forces. Consequently, they approached American history in terms of economic determinism, or sectionalism, or a combination of the two.

When interpreting the ante-bellum sectional conflict as the result of such forces, it is probably natural that they would be little the significance of both slavery and the abolitionist attack upon it. Either in the grand theme of Turner's sectionalism, or in that of Beard's sweep of economic forces, or in that of Parrington's rival imperialisms, the moral dispute over slavery could hardly have much meaning in itself. As a result, the abolitionists received only very scant attention in their books, and their significance in the sectional conflict was greatly minimized. Though their discussion varied in detail and attitude, so far as the relation of the abolition movement to the sectional antagonism is concerned, Turner, Beard, and Parrington were certain that the abolitionists agitators were only a negligible minority.

The writings of Turner, Beard, and Parrington had enjoyed a great popularity and exercised a tremendous influence upon the study and writing of American history during the first four decades of the twentieth century. But this

was because of their historical theories and their general interpretations of American history. So far as their view of the abolition movement is concerned, their influence seemed very little, if indeed there was any. It is true that Julian P. Bretz declared in 1929 that "with the more recent interest in economic influences upon history, and, in particular, upon the history of events leading to the Civil War,"[62] an economic approach to the rise of the Liberty party was of interest. And he and Thomas P. Martin both ventured an economic interpretation of that party.[63] Although they were influenced by Beard's economic determinism, they obviously did not accept his minimization of at least the political abolition movement. In fact, the interpretation of Turner, Beard, and Parrington was challenged almost as soon as it appeared first by Gilbert H. Barnes, then by the revisionist historians. Even Beard himself later abandoned his denial of the importance of the abolitionists. In A Basic History of the United States published in 1944, he wrote: "the intellectual and moral crusade against slavery had gained such momentum that it ripped into the discussion of almost every national question," and asserted that it prepared the way for the appearance of

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62 Julian P. Bretz, "The Economic Background of the Liberty Party," American Historical Review, XXXIV (January, 1929), 250.

63 Thomas P. Martin, "The Upper Mississippi Valley in Anglo-American Anti-Slavery and Free Trade Relations, 1837-1842," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVI (September, 1928), 204-220.

the Free-Soil and Republican party.[64] He came around to uphold the significance of the abolition agitation in the sectional controversy. Beard's rather quick shift of opinion underscores the negligible influence of the Progressive historians' view of the abolitionists on other historians.

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64 Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, A Basic History of the United States (Philadelphia, 1944), pp. 231-232, and 262-263.

CHAPTER III

REVIVALISTS IN ABOLITION

- GILBERT H. BARNES' VIEW -

Probably by an historical accident, the first challenge to the Progressive interpretation of the abolition movement came not from a professional historian but from a professor of economics. Gilbert H. Barnes discovered by chance a trunkful of Theodore Weld's long forgotten private letters. A study of these letters told Barnes a story about the antislavery crusade completely different from the traditional or the Progressive version. He was moved to tell this story to others. And the Antislavery Impulse, 1830-1844[1] became one of the most remarkable studies of the abolition movement.

The Garrisonian interpretation of the abolition movement recognized Garrison as its sole leader, New England as its sole center. The Progressive historians accepted this picture but played down the significance of

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[1] (New York, 1933). The edition used here is the Harbinger edition, published in 1964 by Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.

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the crusade in the sectional conflict. To Barnes nothing was more wrong. The guiding spirit of the abolition movement was Weld instead of Garrison, its true center the West instead of Boston. He also insisted that "the movement of the 'thirties was not inconsiderable; it was a major factor in the rise of sectionalism and a prime cause of the final conflict."[2] He stressed the moral nature of the antislavery agitation. "Indeed from first to last," he announced:

> throughout the antislavery host the cause continued to be a moral issue and not an economic one. Neither in their propaganda nor in their sentiments was the economic issue dominant. Ministers, merchants, mechanics and farmers, their attitude toward slavery was determined by the chances of origin or personal influence and not by calculations of material advantage. Moreover, the areas of their antislavery strength coordinated with no single Northern interest.[3]

Barnes denied the correctness of both the Garrisonian and the Progressive interpretations of the abolition movement. And in the denial of Garrison's leadership and in the emphasis on the importance of the slavery dispute in the sectional conflict, Barnes seemed in the tradition of such nationalist historians like Albert B. Hart and Jesse Macy. But they differed on crucial points. Macy never mentioned Weld; Hart did only in passing and mistook him as a disciple

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[2] Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, pp. xxiv.

[3] Ibid., p. 197.

of Garrison. Nor did Macy and Hart connect abolitionism to revivalism as Barnes did. Finally Macy and Hart were highly favorable to the abolitionists while Barnes' attitude was at best ambiguous. All in all, what Barnes presented was a completely new interpretation, deviating from those of all his predecessors

Barnes dealt mainly with the organized antislavery movement beginning in the early 1830's. He attributed the rise of the crusade to two factors. The more important one was the revivals of Charles G. Finney. His emphasis on "disinterested benevolence" as a way of achieving salvation "released a mighty impulse toward social reform,"[4] and turned many of his young converts into ardent reformers. Led by Weld, the greatest of them all, the "holy hand" of Finney's devoted themselves to "converting the world at once."[5] They were interested in every sort of reform; but at last they concentrated all their time and energy on the one big cause: the crusade against slavery. The other source of inspiration was the example of British abolition, the final success of which set a potential precedent for the American abolitionists to follow. Eager to capitalize on the prestige provided by the British precedent, the American opponents of slavery not only organized the American Antislavery Society in imitation of the British

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[4] Ibid., p. 11.

[5] Ibid., p. 12.

organization but also adopted its slogan of immediate emancipation. After its organization, the American Antislavery Society dispatched agents to local communities and launched a pamphlet campaign to abolitionize the North. But "burdened with the epithet of 'Garrisonism' and crippled by its misunderstood motto of immediatism," the efforts achieved nothing but tremendous hostilities.[6] By early 1835, many leading abolitionists became so disappointed that they were ready to admit failure.

The cause, however, was not to be lost at this point because the Lane rebels under the leadership of Weld came in time to rescue it. Using the method of the Great Revival, working through the local church, Weld and other Lane rebels agitated in 1835-1836 the antislavery cause in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and even in parts of New England, to such a great success that often whole communities were converted overnight, leaving behind them a host of new local antislavery societies. Their success was so encouraging that the leaders of the national organization decided early in 1836 to abandon the disastrous pamphlet campaign and to concentrate all its sources on the agency method. Commissioned by the national society, Weld, with

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6 Barnes, "Introduction" to Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, ed., Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimke Weld and Sarah Grimke, 1822-1844 (New York, 1934), p. viii. Hereafter cited as Letters of Weld. See also Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, pp. 59-63, 88-99, and 100-103.

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the help of Henry B. Stanton and John G. Whittier, selected, trained, and sent out the famous "Seventy" to comb the North. The agitation was again a great success. At the time when "the Seventy" began to work, a new opportunity of reaching the northern people was presented to the abolitionists in the form of the "gag rule" dispute. Deciding to seize the opportunity of acting as champions for the right of petition, the national society appointed Weld, Stanton, and Whittier to conduct a large-scale campaign to overwhelm Congress with antislavery petitions. Successful in forcing the slavery question on the floor of Congress, the petition campaign also worked a profound change in the organized antislavery movement itself. With volunteer workers for getting signers to petitions multiplying, and rendering the work of agents no longer necessary, the organization became decentralized. Decentralization, the financial difficulties of the national society after the panic of 1837 bankrupted the Tappan brothers, the odium brought on it by Garrisonism and immediatism, and the passing away of the Great Revival by 1839 caused many abolitionists to conclude that the usefulness of the American Antislavery Society ended, and to propose to disband it. But Garrison was not prepared to let that happen. So, in its annual meeting in 1840, the American Antislavery Society split over the question of womens rights. After that, the old national organization, retained under the control of Garrison, was nothing but a name. Some of the non-Garrisonians organized the American and Foreign Antislavery Society as a rival

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organization; others formed the Liberty Party. But both were pitiful failures because by 1840 the true antislavery center shifted to Washington where Weld directed a powerful antislavery lobby to help John Quincy Adams, Joshua Giddings and other Whig insurgents to force the slavery question into open discussion. The angered Whit chieftains tried to silence them. But Adams' name was too great to be censured, while the censure of Giddings resulted only in his returning triumphantly to Congress on reelection. After that, "the struggle for the floor of Congress as a rostrum for antislavery agitation was won." This proved to be "the turning point" of the whole abolition movement. "Thereafter the insurgent group of Congressmen formed and antislavery bloc of Congress which became the nucleus of a new movement in national affairs," and which finally "divided their party and the nation."[7]

As Barnes saw it, the antislavery agitation was purely a moral movement inspired by religious revivalism, encouraged by the British example, and led by Weld. He believed the movement was in close connection with the Great Revival. He pointed out that "the conjunction of so many elements of the Great Revival in the Antislavery agitation was more than coincidence." The leaders and the Seventy were converts of Finney and Weld; "their method was

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[7] Barnes, "Introduction," to Barnes and Dumond, ed., **Letter of Weld**, p. xvi.

the evangelism of the Great Revival; their doctrine was a doctrine of sin; and their program was to convert congregations of the North to the duty of testimony against the slaveholders of the South. In leadership, in method, and in program. . . the antislavery agitation as a whole was what it had long been in larger part, an aspect of the Great Revival in benevolent reform."[8] This identification of the antislavery agitation with the Great Revival is also evinced by the coincidence of his narration of the movement with the rise and fall of that great religious enthusiasm. Since denunciation was the chief method of the revivalists, it also became the chief concern of the abolitions. To Barnes, the antislavery movement was an evangelical agitation for the repentance from the sin of slavery by denouncing slavery as such. Its basis was "denunciation and not reform," said Barnes.[9]

So far as the origins, the nature, and the organized activities of the abolition movement are concerned, Barnes' discussion is rather clear and certain. But it is not so with his attitude toward the crusaders and their crusade. In this respect, he was so ambivalent and vague that his interpretation-like a two-edged sword capable of cutting both ways - can be interpreted as either anti-abolitionist or proabolitionist. This ambivalent attitude creates difficulties in determining the factors which influenced Barnes

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8 Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, p. 107.

9 Ibid., p. 101.

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to interpret the abolition movement in the way he did.

The first impression on reading The Antislavery Impulse is that he was basically hostile to the abolition crusade. Certainly, there is no lack of evidence to support such a claim. The dedication of the book to his former teacher, the proslavery Ulrich B. Phillips, and the acknowledgement of Phillips' direction and help in the study[10] presumably influenced Barnes' own view on this subject. Then, he denounced the revivalists' appeal to emotion in their hell-fire sermons and the hysteria of the camp meeting,[11] yet he made the Great Revival the origin of the abolition agitation. He labelled the Philadelphia convention which founded the American Antislavery Society a "fiasco".[12] He bitterly criticized the doctrine of immediatism, whether the Garrisonian version which demanded exactly what the word meant or the New York version which interpreted the doctrine as to mean immediate emancipation gradually accomplished.[13] He argued that "gag rules" did not violate the constitutional right of petition, so that

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10 Ibid., p. xxxiv. Harvey Wish, The American Historian (New York, 1960), p. 256, and Fred Landon, "Ulrich Bonnell Phillips: Historian of the South," Journal of Southern History, V (1939), 365-366, suggests the influence of Phillips on Barnes' writing his book.

11 Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, pp. 4, and 7-10.

12 Ibid., p. 56.

13 Ibid., p. 102.

the whole petition controversy created "windy, unreal issues of constitutional abstractions."[14]

Barnes hostility toward Garrison and his followers was even more unreserved. One can find on page after page in The Antislavery Impulse some kind of denunciation or derision of the Garrisonians. To Barnes, Garrison meant nothing more than "a notorious name, a term of opprobrium, a grotesque of abolition fanaticism," whose meager formal education deprived him of a "general knowledge to balance the radical doctrine of the British extremists." "A figure-head of fanaticism," he had "no qualification for leader-ship." "Always ready to think well of himself," he used every opportunity to enhance his own importance, to the great detriment to the antislavery cause. "His rancorous denunciations and his brawling ferocious abuse raised new opponents and embarrassed faithful friends." A "egregious fanatic," "the devil genius of the antislavery movement," he "borrowed some of the hersies rife in the 'thirties", and weaved "them with self-righteous logic into his indictment of the church" and human government. But "these vagaries of his reforming spirit were minor irritants." The great-est of his offendings was "his promiscuous vilification of all individuals, institutions, and beliefs with which at the moment he did not agree." He and his faithful followers,

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[14] Ibid., p. 118.

concluded Barnes, were indeed "dead weights to the abolition cause."[15] Finally, caping all these criticisms and denunciations, there is his indictment of the whole antislavery movement. He wrote.

> And the greatest benevolent society of the 'thirties, the American Anti-Slavery Society, was to achieve its end by persuading citizens in the non-slaveholding North to denounce slavery in the slaveholding South. Its first concern was not the abolition of slavery; it was "the duty of rebuke which every inhabitant of the Free States owes to every slaveholder." Denunciation of the evil came first; reform of the evil was incidental to that primary obligation." 16

The anti-abolitionist evidence seemed so overwhelmingly conclusive that James G. Randall and Avery Craven embraced Barnes as a fellow-revisionist. Craven hailed The Antislavery Impulse as "revolutionary" and the "first fair correction" of the traditional pro-Garrisonian interpretation, while Randall described it as "the revisionist interpretation of the antislavery crusade."[17] Thomas J. Pressly identified Barnes as one of the beginners of revisionism, and thought his book occupied "a prominent

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15 All the quotations are taken from ibid., p. 51, 42, 58, 57, 91, 174, 175, 93, 98, and 99.

16 Ibid., p. 25.

17 Craven, "Review of Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse" New York Herald Tribune Books, April 22, 1934, p. 8; and Randall, "Review of Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse," Journal of Southern History, I (1935), 96.

place in the emergence of the 'revisionist' viewpoint."[18]

Then, it seems certain that Barnes was a revisionist historian of the Civil War. But a careful second reading of the book reveals that the case is not so simple. Nor was Barnes so one-sided. For one thing, nowhere did Barnes show his hostility to the Civil War which was the underlying attitude of all revisionists of the Civil War history. Then, too, Barnes was neither proslavery nor pro-southern. Indeed, he was rather unsympathetic to both the South and its peculiar institution. "American opinion, in 1831, had much dignity and little humor," he commented once, "but that dignity had a quality of juvenile self-importance peculiarly intolerant of criticism and rebuke. Nowhere in the nation was this sensibility so tender as in the South, the home of Southern chivalry and the duelling code."[19] On another occasion he pointed out that the gag rules finally "became a part of the challenging policy of the South, the basis of the system of coercive silence by which the Southern leaders 'enslaved the North' on the subject of slavery." While northern members in the House of Representatives were divided over the problem of the gag rules, the southern leaders were united and decided on aggression, on not permitting strictures to be heard in the

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18 Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War (New York, 1954), p. 304.

19 Ibid., p. 51.

House, as their best policy.[20] His criticism of Arthur Young Lloyd's The Slavery Controversy, 1831-1860 was also revealing. He deplored that "the case for the Southern point of view in the pamphlet controversy should thus be marred by bias in the selection of and interpretation of material."[21] Such remarks can hardly be called pro-southern or pro-slavery. This is another difference from the revisionist historians.

Yet, the most important difference is that Barnes was fundamentally sympathetic at least to the Weldian abolitionists. This is all the more significant because Barnes regarded Weld as representing the true antislavery impulse. It is true that Barnes criticized revivals but he never denounced Finney's revivalism. After justifying Finney's appeal to emotion by pointing out that the 1820's was a time of emotional release and excess, he further defended Finney by contrasting him with other revivals:

> In contrast, Finney 'pressed the anxious sinners with the closely reasoned truth.' Only after he had won their minds did he address himself to their 'sympathy'. Even then he exercised his gift of hypnotic eloquence with moderation, and never for a moment did he let the emotions of his converts get beyond his iron control. . . . and even his critics were forced to admit that in his revivals there was 'less appearance of mere sympathy and excitement than usual.'22

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20 Ibid., p. 121.

21 Barnes, "Review of Lloyd, The Slavery Controversy, 1831-1860," Journal of Southern History, VI (1940), 273.

22 Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, p. 10.

He called the Philadelphia convention a "fiasco" because Weld did not take part in it, because of the scarcity of attendance resulting from the inconvenient time of the meeting, and because the decision to hold it at such a time was forced by Garrison upon the New York Committee against its own better judgment to postpone the meeting until a more auspicious time.[23] It is also worthwhile to note that he bitterly attacked immediatism and Garrison not so much for their intrinsic evil as for their cumbersome effects on the progress of the antislavery cause. The harm of the principle of immediatism to the crusade lay in the fact that it was so hard to explain its exact meaning that people were frightened away by its misunderstood meanings. When the Lane rebels' version of immediatism which simply denounced slavery as a sin and "on that account ought immediately to be abandoned,"[24] was adopted by the New York Committee as the official principle in 1836, Barnes ceased his criticism because he believed this version freed the abolitionists from the need for a workable plan and thus dispersed the dilemma created by other versions. In like manner, he attacked Garrison. "Over the entire agitation," he said, Garrison's "name cast 'a vague and indefinite odium' which hampered its growth from the beginning." His Liberator became "a greater incubus upon the cause with each

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[23] Ibid., pp. 54-57.

[24] Ibid., p. 103.

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week's issue."[25] His exaltation in the newly founded American Antislavery Society "did no sort of benefit to the cause. Indeed, it was a disaster second only to the endorsement of immediate emancipation."[26] He seldom spoke favorably of Garrison; but when he did so speak, it is particularly significant:

> They [Garrison's faithful followers] knew the man himself, the austerity of his life and his singleness of purpose. They know that the harshness of his writings was derived from his righteous absolutes of faith, never from vindictiveness; and that his intolerance was for the principles that he hated, and not for the men who followed them. For all his "I-ness"--his obsessive self-importance -- Garrison was truly what his followers believed him to be, the embodiment of devotion to a cause.[27]

Then, Barnes questioned neither Garrison's sincerity of devotion nor the cause to which he devoted himself. What he found unbearable was Garrison's obsession with self-importance, intolerance, and "vagaries" which he thought was a liability rather than an assessment to the antislavery cause.

But the most convincing evidence for Barnes' sympathetic attitude toward the antislavery crusade is his praise of Weld, the true hero of his story. If Garrison

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25 Barnes, "Introduction" to Barnes and Dumond, ed., Letters of Weld, p. viii. See also Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, p. 57, and 62.

26 Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, p. 57.

27 Ibid., pp. 98-99.

was the "devil genius" of the abolition movement, Weld was its "man of power, the greatest individual factor for its triumph."[28] Indeed, Weld was "a prize to win." Energetic, courageous, vividly charming, with a full and musical voice, he brought to the antislavery labor "the constitution of a hero." "Selfless and lovable," he gained the lasting admiration, affection and loyalty of his co-workers. "Weld's 'sagacious, active, fair-reading mind', his unique knowledge of British antislavery doctrine, and his greatness of heart and flaming zeal for abolition must have exercised a powerful influence to action." "Modesty was an essential part of his nature." In fact, he was so modest that he even lost the right place in history that he deserved. By quoting an eyewitness, Barnes contrasted Weld's moderation with Garrison's extremism. "He [Weld]. . . uttered no malice; sharpened no phrases so that its venomed point might rankle in another's breast. . . . His great soul was full of compassion for the oppressor and the oppressed. . . . Nobly simple in manner, free from thought of self, he touched the springs of the human heart." His humility, meekness, and compassion always disarmed the most hostile anti-abolition mobs. He was an eloquent orator, excellent writer who wrote "such solid treatises" as Slavery as It Is, and "super lobbyist." But above all "he was an evangelist as well, the genius of the abolition revival; and the power

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28 Barnes, "Introduction" to Barnes and Dumond, ed., Letters of Weld, p. xix.

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which had wrought miracles of inspiration in Tappans' Association of Gentlemen, among the Lane Seminary, in the rural communities of the West, in the Presbyterian General Assembly, among the Seventy -- in every group which his magnetic presence had invaded -- that power was still his own. With Weld, even the conversion of Congressmen may have been possible."[29] Barnes was lavish not only in praising Weld. He also hailed all those who came under his influence. Their names "amek up a roll of heroes," whom God thrusted out to "awake a slumbering nation."[30] Barnes was so enthusiastic about his heroes, it can hardly be imagined that he would discredit the cause to which they dedicated themselves. Precisely because he thought that cause worthwhile and wanted it to succeed, he became impatient with men like Garrison whose principles, words, or actions he regarded as harmful to the progress of the cause.

Then, Barnes was not as hostile to the abolition movement as a superficial reading of the book may suggest. Nor was he pro-southern and pro-slavery. Pressly's classification of Barnes as a revisionist and the hails of Craven and Randall are not very convincing. However, they are not without ground either. His lack of sympathy for Garrisonism, dislike of the emotionalism of the revivals, and, above all, critical comment on the nature of the crusade

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[29] Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, p. 12, 13, 35, 64, 67, 139, and 192.

[30] Barnes, "Introduction," to Barnes and Dumond, ed., Letters of Weld, p. xvii.

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are too obvious to be explained away. The whole picture is complicated and ambiguous. On the one hand there is enough evidence to show that Barnes was favorable to the crusaders and their cause. On the other hand, there is not only his denunciation of Garrison and his radicalism but also his unfavorable reaction to the whole agitation. He was both repulsed and attracted by it.

Why did Barnes have such an ambivalent feeling toward the abolitionists and their cause? Another related question is why he insisted that the abolition movement was a moral agitation? To answer these questions is to identify the factors which influenced him to interpret the crusade in the way he actually did.

The second question is more easy to answer than the first. William G. McLaughlin suggested that Barnes' reassertion of the importance of moral factors in history was the result of an intellectual reorientation Barnes went through between 1926 and 1933. Taking notice of the difference between the emphasis on behaviorism, instrumentalism, and scientific history in a textbook written by Barnes and three other colleagues in 1926[31] and Barnes' commitment to a moral cause implicit in The Antislavery Impulse, he pointed out that Barnes shared in a general

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[31] Ben A. Arneson, Gilbert H. Barnes, Charles W. Coulter, and Harvey C. Hubbart, A Gateway to the Social Sciences (New York, 1926).

intellectual reorientation going on in both Europe and the United States in the late twenties and the thirties, which revolted against behaviorism, naturalism, positivism, and scientism, and moved to moralism.[32] Whether the reorientation theory is correct or not, one thing seems certain. It is that Barnes wrote his book on the anti-slavery movement with a definite purpose in mind. In a copy of his book found in the library of Pembroke College in Brown University, Barnes wrote the following inscription:

> To Larry and Christine Sears
> from the author,
> Gilbert H. Barnes
> Designed as written, in part for the education of the first named, who once remarked in the author's hearing that no revival of religion had or could produce a social movement of intrinsic importance.[33]

If this is really what he originally intended to prove and not an afterthought, it goes far to explain why Barnes put so great an emphasis on the connection between the anti-slavery impulse and the Great Revival, and on the central role of Finney and Weld. It also helps to answer the question why Barnes insisted on the moral nature of the crusade. Although Barnes' intention answers the second question, it fails to do so as to the first question. A mere desire to prove that some kind of revivalism could produce an intrinsically

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[32] William C. McLaughlin, "Introduction to the Harbinger Edition" of Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, pp. xvi-xix, and xxv.

[33] Quoted in ibid., p. xxv.

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important social movement does not necessarily imply the author's favorable or unfavorable attitude toward that movement. Even if it does, it can certainly not explain Barnes' basically ambivalent attitude toward the antislavery crusade.

Therefore, the explanation has to be sought somewhere else. One possible factor which influenced Barnes' thinking was the intellectual atmosphere produced by the disillusionment with the First World War. In 1917, Americans went to war with high ideals, but only to be dismayed and shocked by the result of peace. Given the circumstance under which the United States entered the war, the disillusionment naturally touched off a wave of suspicion of abstract idealism, emotionalism and propaganda, and an effort to redefine American traditional values.[34] Thus, moral and religious bigotry came under heavy fire. Coming to maturity in the twenties,[35] it is highly possible that Barnes shared in this so-called debunking mood. When Pressly classified Barnes as a revisionist historian, he implied the influence of the disillusionment on Barnes. McLaughlin also believed that Barnes' criticism of some aspects of the abolition movement was in line with the debunking spirit of men like H.L. Mencken. Certainly,

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[34] For a more detailed analysis of the effects of the disillusionment with the First World War, see Chapter IV,

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Barnes attacked the dogmas of Calvinism, the emotionalism of frontier revivalism, the moral self-importance of Boston, and Garrison's obsession with abstract principles. In this respect, he was the same as Mencken in deriding fundamentalism, denouncing Puritanism and scorning the New England genteel culture. If Barnes was affected by the intellectual trends of the twenties, it can not be expected that he would have embraced the abolition movement without any misgivings. His occasional hostile comments on the crusade then is probably the popping up of his basic dislike of the agitation. But if he disliked the antislavery crusade, he did not go all the way and mount a frontal attack on all the abolitionists as the revisionist historians did. This is because another factor pulled him to the opposite direction.

This other factor is Barnes' fascination with Weld. Barnes was fascinated by Weld, first because Barnes found Weld's personality and ideological preferences akin to his own. A reviewer of his book was sure that Barnes was "the kind of man who is temperamentally disgusted with exhibitionism and has an inherent sympathy for quiet, patient, self-effacing effort," and that this temper influenced his reaction to Garrison and Weld.[36] In ideology, Barnes was essentially a liberal leaning toward the right. As revealed

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[36] Alphonese B. Miller, "Review of Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse", Annuals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 173 (May, 1934), 216.

in The Gateway to Social Sciences, he had confidence in reform and progress, but only in "practical utopia." He thought variations of social mores "are interesting and welcome," but only "within these limits." If he criticized laissez-faire doctrine, he did not like state socialism either. What he favored was "the happy medium" between laissez faire and socialism, the general welfare policy.[37] Given such moderate temperament and preference, it is no wonder that Barnes was attracted by Welds' meekness, humility, self-effacement, moderation, and practicality which he praised throughout The Antislavery Impulse. By the same token, his liberalism set him against Garrison's radicalism.

Yet, a man so lovable and so important in the anti-slavery movement as Weld was largely neglected in history. When he found out this, his reaction was one of bitter indignation against the Garrisonians, the publicists, and New England historians. His indignation in behalf of Weld was further augmented by his own sectional bitterness against the East. Barnes was born in Nebraska, educated at University of Michigan, and taught economics at Ohio Wesleyan University. He was a Westerner. And ever since the late nineteenth century, the West's resentment against the East's exploitation and dominance continued bitter until the nineteen-thirties. This feeling was particularly strong in

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[37] Arneson, Barnes, Coulter, and Hubbart, A Gateway to the Social Sciences, p. 3, 105, 231, 288, and 291.

western intellectuals. The leading Progressive historians wrote their histories in a sense as a protest against eastern historians' writings which they believed either neglected or abused the West. Being one of them, Barnes must have had the same feeling. Was not the neglect of Weld, a Westerner, an example of the biased treatment of the West by eastern historians? This feeling of common grievance for Weld and for the West no doubt caused Barnes to further identify himself with Weld. To fight for Weld's historical recognition was at the same time a reassertion of the West. So Barnes poured all his outrages at those whom he believed to be responsible for Weld's oblivion in history. According to Barnes, the only historical significance and function of the Garrisonians were to "sustain the legend that Garrison and the abolition cause were one." The publicists "ready to damn the antislavery cause with every epithet, gladly ratified their claims." By their repetition, the legend of Garrison's leadership was made "a part of our tradition."[38] And the New England writers of abolition histories and biographies perpetuated this tradition. This is the process through which Garrison was made the leader of the antislavery movement, while the true leader, Weld, was delivered to oblivion. This was historical usurpation to Barnes. And he accepted the task of setting the record straight.

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[38] Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, p. 175.

Admiration for Weld and indignation over his neglect moved Barnes to right the wrongs history had done to Weld. This desire in turn determined his approach and interpretation of the antislavery agitation. In fact the whole narration of the abolition movement is keyed to Weld's activities. Before Weld touched it everything was bad or failing. When Weld appeared, it marvellously changed from bad to good, from failure to success. Barnes began the antislavery cause in the Great Revivalism, of course, because of Weld's connection with it. All other revivals were bad, but that of Finney, Weld's inspiration, good. The Philadelphia convention was a fiasco because Weld declined to attend, and because it was dominated by Garrison. The Garrisonian and New York versions of immediatism produced dilemma and hostility, but that of the Lane rebels provided an escape. While all the first agents of American Antislavery Society achieved nothing but hostilities, the agency of Weld and the Seventy was a great success, abolitionizing whole communities, and saving the national society. In sharp contrast to the miserable failure of the pamphlet campaign conducted by American Antislavery Society, Weld's tracts were so successful that they "took the place of antislavery agents."[39] When the loss of New England was threatened by Garrison, Weld and Stanton were called to save

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[39] Ibid., p. 139.

it. Needless to say, they succeeded. Despite the increasing sentiments for antislavery petitions, it was not efficiently organized. But after Weld was put in charge of directing the campaign, it was so effectively organized and ably directed that it made the antislavery movement "a true community movement."[40] Sarah Grimke's bad platform style and her sister, Angelina's inexperience handicapped their effectiveness as antislavery lecturers; but after Weld's short coaching, they "began to attract more favorable attention," and Angelina became "an orator of considerable power."[41] After the split of 1840, Barnes contemptuously dismissed all the old American Antislavery Society, the newly formed American and Foreign Antislavery Society and the Liberty party. This was natural because Weld was a foe of Garrison, refused to join the American and Foreign Antislavery Society because of Lewis Tappan's opposition to women's rights, and was opposed to independent political action. Then where was the antislavery impulse to turn? Barnes moved it to Washington because Weld went there to direct an antislavery lobby in Congress. Here again Weld worked a miracle. The antislavery Whigs in Congress had the determination to make slavery an issue in Congress, but they lacked information and advice. Weld not

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[40] Ibid., p. 135.

[41] Ibid., p. 155.

only provided them with what they needed but also supplied them with inspiration, sustained their fighting, and directed their strategy. He finally succeeded in opening Congress to antislavery agitation. Then in 1844, Weld retired into private life. In spite of a lot of agitation still to be done, Barnes abruptly ended his story with the bowing out of the antislavery movement of his hero.

Then, from the beginning to the end, Barnes described the antislavery cause not in terms of the movement itself but in terms of Weld's connection with it. And in the description, Weld appeared not as a human being with both assets and liabilities but as a superman whose touch changed everything from bad to good, from doom to triumph. Barnes' bias for Weld was so one-sided that he never mentioned Weld's many queer habits like insisting on wearing shabby John Baptist attire, taking a cold water bath every day, the conviction that he was an agent of God, and his agents' failure to invade Indiana and Illinois.[42] He even did not mention Finney's firm opposition to Weld's antislavery agitation. While he attacked Garrison's many vagaries and vituperative language, he said nothing about the interest in many other reforms and the abusive language of Charles Stuart, the friend, tutor, guardian of Weld.

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[42] McLaughlin, "Introduction to the Harbinger Edition" of Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, p. xxix.

Nor did he say anything about antislavery agitation before 1830. While historians generally agreed that after 1840, most abolitionists either remained in the old national society or followed Birney into politics, Barnes considered the former retaining nothing but a name, the latter "the most pathetic residue of antislavery organization."[43] But at the true center of the antislavery impulse in Washington, Barnes could count no more than a dozen antislavery congressmen.[44] Barnes' enthusiasm for Weld was so great, his desire to restore Weld's historical significance so earnest that he even disregarded some historical facts.

If his enthusiasm and desire was so strong that he even sacrificed some historical facts in order to uphold Weld, they must have been strong enough to overcome his dislike of the abolition movement. If this is true, then his basic ambivalent attitude toward the movement can be satisfactorily explained. Sharing the distrust of moral agitation produced by the disillusionment with the First World War, he sometimes showed his dislike of the abolition movement when Weld's name was not mentioned. But this distrust was subdued by his great admiration for Weld and his desire to reestablish Weld's proper historical position. As a result, in his narration of events with which Weld had connections, nothing but praise for the man and his cause can be found.

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[43] Barnes, The Antislavery Impulse, p. 176.

[44] Ibid., pp. 181-182.

Despite this ambivalence, and despite all the shortcomings resulting from the author's overriding enthusiasm for Weld and his desire to restore Weld's proper place in history, The Antislavery Impulse still constituted a milestone in abolition historiography. It is true that some early historians had already noticed some of Barnes' discoveries. For example, Albert B. Hart and Jesse Macy stressed the western center of abolition movement. Hart also mentioned Weld and the Lane rebels.[45] Theodore C. Smith claimed that the abolition movement in Ohio owed more to Weld's agitation than to any other factor.[46] Karl F. Geiser not only recognized the importance of the Lane episode in the development of antislavery movement in Ohio, the connection of Arthur Tappan with the Lane rebels, and the joining of the seceding students to Oberline College but also pointed out that Weld "later became prominent in the antislavery movement."[47] Eugene P. Southall stressed the financial support Arthur Tappan gave to the antislavery crusade. He also found that Weld was the leader of the Lane

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[45] See Chapter I.

[46] Theodore C. Smith, The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest (New York, 1897).

[47] Karl F. Geiser, "The Western Reserve in the Anti-Slavery Movement," Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, V (1911-1912), 82.

rebels.[48] Caroline C. Shanks said that Weld, whose The Bible Against Slavery was "one of the most popular" biblical arguments against slavery, was "already known as an eloquent abolitionist orator."[49] However, none of them saw the real significance of Weld. Indeed, Geiser and Hart mistook Weld as a follower of Garrison. Nor did they recognize the close relation between Weld and Tappan, or where the inspiration of the antislavery impulse of Weld and Tappan came. It is Barnes who first put together Finney's revivalism, Weld's talents and Tappan's money to constitute the pivotal force of the entire abolition movement. Armed with modern techniques of research, supported by evidence drawn from hitherto unused material, Barnes presented his findings in a brand new interpretation with such solid scholarship that The Antislavery Impulse really marked a solid contribution to abolition historiography.

There is no doubt that Barnes' study has influenced subsequent abolition historians. The revivalist origin of the crusade, the British influence, the leadership of Weld, and the western center became fairly established and generally accepted by historians. They may not have shared his attitude toward the abolitionists, but the majority of them accepted most of his assertions. Although the

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[48] Eugene P. Southall, "Arthur Tappan and the Antislavery Movement," Journal of Negro History, XV (April,1930) 162-179.

[49] Caroline L. Shanks, "The Biblical Antislavery Argument of the Decade 1830-1840," Journal of Negro History, XVI (April, 1931), 135.

revisionist historians attacked all the abolitionists, they generally followed his interpretation. Nor did those who defended the abolitionists question his basic ideas. Some even further explored one or the other of his suggestions. For example, Frank Thestlethwaite and Thomas F. Harwood both emphasized the influence of England on the American abolition movement.[50]

However, this is not to say that every later historian agreed with Barnes on all points. There were some who tried to modify his interpretation on some points. Others challenged him. For example, Elaine Brooks and Roman J. Zorn reasserted the pioneering labor of New England abolition agitation and the pre-eminence of Garrison, while David Brion Davis claimed that the doctrine of immediatism emerged simultaneously in British and American antislavery thought.[51] In fact, most subsequent major historians of the abolition movement differed from Barnes on one point or another.[52]

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50 Frank Thestlethwaite, The Anglo-American Connection in the Early Nineteenth Century (Philadelphia, 1959); and Thomas F. Harwood, "British Evangelical Abolitionism and American Churches in the 1830's," Journal of Southern History XXVIII (1962), 287-306.

51 Elaine Brooks, "Massachusetts Antislavery Society," Journal of Negro History, XXX (July, 1945), 311-330; Roman J. Zorn, "The New England Anti-Slavery Society: Pioneer Abolition Organization," ibid., XLII (July, 1957), 157-176; David Brion Davis, "The Emergence of Immediatism in British and American Antislavery Thought," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLIX (September, 1962), 209-230.

52 See following chapters.

Yet no one could really completely disregard or repudiate all his basic opinions.

Then, it may be concluded that designed to prove the possibility of a religious revival to produce an important social movement, Barnes' study restored the significance of the antislavery crusade as a moral issue in the sectional conflict, which had been drastically minimized or neglected by the Progressive historians. Influenced by the debunking spirit of his time, he looked askance at the abolitionists and their cause. But his personal fascination with Weld prevented him from making a total denunciation. The result was not only his ambivalent attitude but also an interpretation which oversimplified the entire abolition movement. Still, The Antislavery Impulse was the first truly scholarly study of the organized antislavery crusade with some significant discoveries. Being such, it deserves to be regarded as one of the most important contributions to the understanding of the abolition movement.

CHAPTER IV

IRRESPONSIBLE PROPAGANDISTS

- THE REVISIONIST VIEW -

It is well known that the revisionist interpretation of the Civil War, which reached its height of popularity during the decade from about the mid-thirties to about the mid-forties, was a revolt against both the nationalist and progressive interpretations. What is less emphasized is that it also represented a revision of the views of the latter two groups of historians about the abolition movement. While they were not quite clear on the question of the connection between the abolition agitation and the coming of the Civil War, the nationalist historians were in general favorable to the moderate and practical aspect of the abolition movement. It is true that the Progressive historians treated the abolitionists as a negligible minority. But they did not indict them as warmongers because the abolition crusaders, they claimed, had little influence on the sectional conflict. To the revisionist historians,[1]

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[1] Thomas J. Pressly in Americans Interpret Their Civil War (New York, 1954), pp. 273-287, classified some of the historians, like Charles W. Ramsdell, Arthur Young Lloyd, and Henry H. Simms, discussed in this chapter as new

the contrary was true. Along with other agitators and politicians of "the blundering generation," the revisionist historians held the abolitionists guilty of bringing about the great American tragedy - the needless Civil War. In this respect, they were also different from Gilbert H. Barnes who was favorable at least to the Weldian abolitionists. In the hands of the revisionists, however, there was no such distinction. All the abolitionists, whether Weldians or Garrisonians, were condemned as irresponsible extremists or fanatics, who, by constant propaganda, aroused the emotions of an otherwise peaceable people over distorted or unreal issues, and thus plunged the nation into a bloody war. With the advent of revisionism, therefore, the abolitionists met the most harsh treatment by historians.

Revisionism of the Civil War was largely the product of the widespread disillusionment with the First World War. The close relation between the two is clearly indicated by James G. Randall. In 1940, he wrote:

> Just as Americans beginning about 1935 executed something like an about-face in their interpretation of the World War . . . so the retelling of the Civil War is a matter of changed and changing viewpoints. In the present troubled age, it may be of more than academic interest to reexamine the human beings of that war generation with less thought of the 'splendor of

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vindicators of the South. But so far as their backgrounds, attitude toward the South, and interpretation of the abolition movement are concerned, there is not much difference between them and the leading revisionists, James G. Randall and Avery Craven. So, no distinction between them is made here.

> battle flags' and with more of the sophisticated and unsentimental searchlight of reality.[2]

In 1917, Americans went to war with the purpose to make the world safe for democracy, but only were to be shocked out of their high ideals by the results of the Peace in Paris. A general disillusionment ensued. Considering the British propaganda before the American entrance to enlist this country's help, and the heavy war propaganda conducted by George Creel's Committee on Public Information during the war, the disillusionment certainly put a heavy discount on the romantic notion of war, moral absolutes, abstract principles,emotions, and propaganda. It is no wonder that repudiation of absolutes and abstract principles became the central theme of the writings of the so-called "Lost Generation" writers and intellectuals like H.L. Mencken; and that economic determinism which minimized the role of morals in history and pragmatism which proposed to define values of ideas or institutions in terms of their practical utility in helping people to solve problems enjoyed a new popularity. The nature of all wars also came into question. To the generation of Theodore Roosevelt, war might be a heroic thing; but to the disillusioned postwar Americans, war meant nothing but waste, brutality,

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[2] James G. Randall, "The Blundering Generation," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXVII (June, 1940), 27-28.

suffering, and futility. This disgust for war turned into a determination to keep this country from being dragged into another major killing, which, when the world was again threatened by a second global war, was hardened into the Neutrality Acts of 1935-1937.

As for the widespread distrust of emotion-arousing propaganda, it was best exemplified by the investigation and report of the famous Nye Committee. This Committee charged that the United States was manipulated into the First World War by some devils, mainly the munition makers, the Wall Street bankers, and British agents, who aroused the emotions of the American people by propaganda and agitation on some lofty ideals. This interpretation of war causation in terms of irrational drives was made more convincing by psychology which began to have considerable impact on the way American intellectuals conceived human nature just before the great war. Psychology does not deny the notion of rational man. It, however, does seek to explain human behavior by the subconscious or unconscious elements in men, and suggest the possibility of controlling human behavior by appealing to those elements. In fact, war propaganda during the war, and the theory of advertisement developed in the post-war years relied heavily on psychological principles. Not all Americans believed in psychology; but to many intellectuals psychological theories "offered a way of interpreting . . . the senseless,

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destructive behavior that had seemed so large a part of life since 1914."[3] Psychology, thus, gave the irrational theory of war causation a scientific respectability.

Disillusioned with the First World War just as others were, the revisionist historians also shared the general suspicion of moralism, distrust of emotion and propaganda, and disgust for war. Both Randall and Avery Craven denounced reforming zeal and reformers. To Randall, the zeal for salvation, when "unrelieved by wisdom, toleration, tact, and the sense of human values," became "at its worst a means of self-promotion; it became at times an instrument of propaganda for collateral and unrelated causes that utilized it; and it remained an agent of destruction and disturbance, more than a force for genuine social improvement."[4] Craven wondered "if the development of history might not have been more sound" without the extreme reformer. Anyway, he was sure that "mere desire to do'right' is no defense at the bar of history."[5] Such remarks showed their suspicion of abstract moralism. The same attitude of other

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[3] Roderick Nash, The Nervous Generation: American Thought 1917-1930 (Chicago, 1970), pp. 45-55. The quotation is taken from p. 55.

[4] James G. Randall, Civil War and Reconstruction (New York, 1937), pp. 147-148.

[5] Avery Craven, The Coming of the Civil War (New York, 1942), p. 117, and 118.

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revisionist historians can be seen from their denunciation of the abolitionists as extremists or fanatics.

Their distrust of emotions and propaganda was as pronounced as their suspicion of unbridled moral zeal. As early as 1921, an obscure historian, Mary Scrugham, already singled out emotion as a leading factor for the coming of the Civil War.[6] F.H. Hodder who did much to revise the traditional interpretations of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill and the decision of the Dred Scott case, expressed his deep concern over the extent to which propaganda had been accepted as sources of historical evidence, and talked about "the poison gas of propaganda."[7] Concluding his survey of new trends in Civil War historiography, Charles W. Ramsdell declared that "to attack our present problems with less of emotion and more of reason than we frequently display. . . should be /italics his/ one of the lessons of history."[8] Craven thought that "we have begun to realize what it costa a people to permit emotion to rule. . . ."[9]

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6 The Peacable Americans of 1860-1861: A Study of Public Opinion (New York, 1921). See also Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, pp. 291-295.

7 F.H. Hodder, "Propaganda as a Source of American History," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, IX (June, 1922) 3-18. The quotation is taken from p. 18.

8 Charles W. Ramsdell, "The Changing Interpretation of the Civil War," Journal of Southern History, III (1937),27.

9 Avery Craven, "The Repressible Conflict," in An Historian and the Civil War, p. 63. This is a reprint from Craven, The Repressible Conflict (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1939), pp.63-97.

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Not only this. They also used psychological terms in their writings about the Civil War. Scrugham attempted sometimes to employ "psychological explanations" of events;[10] Ramsdell mentioned "war psychosis";[11] Henry H. Simms believed "psychological" as well as other factors were involved "in the spirited slavery controversy of this emotional decade" of 1851-1861;[12] and Craven suggested that if living today, Garrison should consult a psychiatrist, and talked about modern psychologists' suspicion of the purity of motives of reformers.[13] Anyone who reads their writings cannot fail to get the impression that they considered emotion and propaganda to be very bad.

The revisionists also shared the general disgust for war following the disillusionment with the First World War.[14] But the most outspoken critic of war among the revisionist

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10 Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, p. 293.

11 Ramsdell, "The Changing Interpretation of the Civil War," Journal of Southern History, III (1937), 4.

12 Henry H. Simms, A Decade of Sectional Controversy, 1851-1861 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1942), p. viii.

13 Avery Craven, "Coming of the War Between the States: An Interpretation," originally published in Journal of Southern History, II (1936), 1-20, reprinted in Craven, An Historian and the Civil War (Chicago, 1964), p. 36; and Craven, The Coming of the Civil War, p. 117.

14 Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, p. 309.

historians was Randall. "For the very word 'war'," he thought, "the realist would have to substitute some such word as 'organized murder' or 'human slaughterhouse.'" He saw in war only "its blood and filth. . . multilated flesh, and other revolting things." He criticized most historical accounts of war because in them "the war is offstage in that its stench and hideousness do not appear."[15] Although Craven was not as outspoken on the horrible nature of war as Randall, he agreed that war was unjustifiable. "Those who force the settlement of human problems by war," he wrote, "can expect only an unsympathetic hearing from the future."[16]

Out of all these suspicions, distrust and disgust evolved a theory of war causation which stressed irrational factors. This is most clearly set forth by Randall. On one occasion, he wrote:

> War-making is too much dignified if it is told in terms of broad national urges. . . when nations stumble into war, or when peoples rub their eyes and find they have been dragged into war, there is at some point a psychopathic case. Omit the element of abnormality, of bogus leadership, or inordinate ambition for conquest, and diagnosis fails. In the modern scene it fails also if one omits manipulation, dummies, bogeys, false fronts, Provocative agents, fifth columns, make-up incidents, frustration of elemental

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[15] Randall, "The Blundering Generation," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXVII (June, 1940), 7.

[16] Craven, The Coming of the Civil War, p. 118.

> impulses, negation of culture, propaganda that is false in intent, criminal usurpation, and terrorist violence.[17]

And again:

> There are writers who would have us believe that fundamental motives produced war . . . but a study of modern warmaking reveals that such an idea is a fallacy. In contrast to the normal and basically valid demand for peace, the desire for war, or the whipping up of hostile feeling by those who begin a war, is artificial, unnatural, and abnormal.[18]

Obviously, Randall believed that peace is the normal condition of living. Assuming peoples' desire for peace, he just could not understand why people went to war over economic, or social, or cultural, or racial, or national motives. War is not the result of peoples' rational choice. It comes because they - the people - were manipulated, duped, or led into it by their irresponsible leaders who thought war could best serve their purposes - or no purpose at all. In other words, war comes only because people are emotionally aroused and blinded by propaganda and agitation. This theory of war causation is exactly the one which the disillusioned Americans between the two world wars used to explain the American entrance into the First World War. Considering this striking similarity, revisionism in the Civil War historiography was really a part of that debunking

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17 Randall, "The Blundering Generation," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXVII (June, 1940), 11.

18 Randall, Lincoln The Liberal Statesman (New York, 1947), p. 88.

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When approaching the Civil War with such a disillusioned view of war and such an assumption of war causation, the revisionist historians, understandably, could not consider it as anything but a great national tragedy. To them, the Civil War was tragic not only because it involved a great deal of killing and destruction but also because it was needless. Instead of solving old problems, the Civil War created a lot of new difficulties which have plagued the nation ever since.

But the revisionist historians considered the war needless in another, perhaps more important, sense. They believed that the Civil War could have been avoided. All the revisionists readily admitted that real differences did exist between the North and South. In this respect, they were influenced by the Progressive historians. What differentiates the revisionist from the Progressive historian is the former's insistence that these sectional differences themselves did not make war inevitable. Given time, patience, moderation, and understanding, they claimed, these differences could have been peaceably adjusted through compromise. What made peaceable adjustment impossible and war unavoidable was the propaganda and indoctrination of the extremists on both sides, which turned normal differences of conditions into a conflict of sacred principles and convictions, and whipped up the emotions of whole sections

to the point of hysteria which could be released only by actual bloodshed. So, all the blame was put on the heads of the extremists.

But who were these extremists? In answering this question, the revisionists had no difficulty. The extremists were abolition agitators and politicians in the North, and "fire-eaters" in the South. Though professing to criticize all extremists on both sides, the revisionists reserved their most bitter denunciation for the northern extremists. They were charged with wiping out antislavery sentiment in the South, arousing southern sectional consciousness, being insensitive to the South's racial dilemma, and finally forcing a needless war upon a peace-loving people. Applying the "devil theory" of war causation to the Civil War, the revisionist historians singled out the abolitionists and their political brethren as whipping-boys for all their suspicion, distrust, disgust, and anger growing out of the disillusionment with the First World War.

There was another factor worked on the revisionist historians to treat the abolitionists harshly. This is the increasing conflict of opinion over the status of Negroes in the South. With the opening of this century, Negroes gradually became discontented with their lot and protested. The Niagara Movement, Carter G. Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History which later launched the Journal of Negro History, the Negro exodus from the South just after the First World War, the Harlem Renaissance,

and Marcus Garvey's "back to Africa" movement all indicated in one way or another the awakening, unrest, and protest of the Negroes. At the same time, some liberal-minded white Northerners became interested in the Negro fight for equality and better living conditions. Humanitarian sympathy, disgust for the lawlessness and lynching of the Klu Klux Klan, the upsurge of liberalism in the New Deal era, and the struggle between Nazism and Democracy might all contribute something to this change of opinion. The important thing is that the champions for the Negro cause necessarily criticized the South's racism and injustice in treating the Negroes as second-class citizens. This in turn provoked the South. To many Southerners, this was another crusade against the South.

However, the first for Negro civil rights was an uphill struggle for racism was still strong throughout the thirties. During the First World War, the use of intelligence tests in the army strengthened already existing racial bias. In addition, many eminent scientists in various fields were generally convinced that races vary greatly in innate intelligence and temperament. Depicting the Negroes as an inferior race, such pseudo-scientific theories only reenforced the popularly held bias against the Negro. Racial discrimination remained unchallenged. The Ku Klux Klan once again swept over the entire country and did not begin to decline until 1930. The racial bias against the Negro was in fact so strong that even President A. Lawrence

Lowell of Harvard tried to establish a ban on Negro students' living in freshmen dormitories in the early 1920's.[19] Such prevalence of racial bias must have caused many Americans indifferent, or even actively hostile to the Negro problem. It also made it easier for some historians to denounce the meddling of southern affairs by both the Negro civil rights advocates and the abolitionists.

It is in thisatmosphere of new sectional tension that the revisionist historians produced their works on the Civil War. Most of the revisionists either were born in the South or had resided there for some time.[20] As might be expected, they showed pro-southern and pro-slavery attitudes in their writings. Although it can not be said that all of them studied the Civil War history with an intension to vindicate the South against the attack of the Negro Civil rights advocates, the indignation is quite clear in at least one of the revisionist studies. "The entire galaxy of mob riots, killings, lynchings, burnings, and other atrocities published in 'Southern Outrages' by the abolitionist press," declared Arthur Young Lloyd, "can be compared only . . . to the more recent crusade of certain Northern elements to turn attention to the alleged political

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19 Thomas F. Gossett, Race: The History of An Idea in America (Dallas, Texas, 1963), pp. 372-373.

20 Ramsdell was born in Texas, and taught at the University of Texas; Craven born in North Carolina; Simms born in Virginia, Lloyd was a southern historian. But Randall was born in Indiana.

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and judicial discriminations against the Negro in the South."[21] Other revisionists were not so outspoken, but the resentment against "the recent crusade of certain Northern elements" must have been a subtle influence on their favorable attitude toward the South and slavery.

In defending the South and slavery, the prevailing racial bias facilitated their work. In fact there are many remarks in their writings which indicate, if not their racial bias, at least their low opinion of the African. Perhaps few of them went so far as Lloyd whose racial prejudice was only thinly veiled. He talked about the "improvidence and criminality of freed blacks;" and asserted that "the blacks thrived under a climate that caused the whites to sicken and die" in the rice swamps of the Carolinas and Georgia. In criticizing what he called "philosophical abolitionists" like William Ellery Channing, he charged that "their theories were based upon the rights of all moral beings without regard for mental or physical disparities of the individuals; nor did they take into consideration the difference in the scale of civilization between the African and the Caucasian." He thought economically, the only choice of the southern whites "lay between disciplined slaves and the menace of uncontrollable, barbarous free blacks."[22]

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21 Arthur Young Lloyd, The Slavery Controversy, 1831-1860 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1939), p. 76.

22 Ibid., p. 54, 17, 60 and 224.

Others were not as racist as Lloyd, but contempt for the Negros' race or culture was not absent either. In considering the difficulties of emancipation, Ramsdell posed a series of questions which indicated his view of the Negro. One of the difficulties of emancipation, he declared, was the question of what to do with the freed Negro. "Could he take care of himself without becoming a public charge and a social danger? . . . Should he not then remain under some form of control both in his own interest and in the interest of the larger social order?"[23] Simms deplored that the abolitionists did not take into consideration the fact that some of the slaves in the early thirties were "natives of Africa," and that many were not very far removed from that "unfortunate condition which was theirs in Africa."[24] Craven was in agreement with Ramsdell and Simms. In one place he declared that the Negro "should be thought of, first, only as a different racial element in this society, a human being of another color and with another cultural background." While this statement might sound neutral, his assertions elsewhere implied that black color and African culture meant racial and cultural inferiority.

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23 Ramsdell, "The Natural Limits of Slavery Expansion," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVI (Sept., 1929), 170.

24 Simms, "A Critical Analysis of Abolition Literature, 1830-1840," Journal of Southern History, VI (1940), 370.

Accustomed to slavery in his native land, Craven insisted, the Negro "brought directly from Africa was quite unfitted for the liberal nature of indenture. Savage that he was, he needed a longer period for adjustment and for the acquiring of skills; he reached a fitness for freedom much more slowly than the white European." The Negro needed slavery "for his own best welfare." On the other hand, slavery offered a system to protect social security because the slaveholder took over most of the functions of local government for controlling "the lowest and hence the most troublesome, element in the population."[25] Randall concurred. He believed slavery lifted the Negro "above the level of savage life" he lived in Africa; and stated that in contrast to other races, "the Negro adapted himself to bondage with a minimum of resistance, doing cheerfully the manual work of the South and loyally serving those who held them in chains."[26]

Then, in one way or another, the revisionist historians expressed their contempt for the African's racial or cultural background. Whether such expressions indicate that they were also twentieth-century racists is hard to say. But the significant point here is that their opinion found support in the prevailing racial bias, and made easier

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[25] Craven, The Coming of the Civil War, p. 36, 71, 81-82.

[26] Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 48.

their work of defending the South and slavery and of attacking the abolition crusaders.

The influence of the current climate of opinion during the nineteen-twenties and the following decade on the approach of the revisionist historians to the Civil War is, then, beyond question. All the sentiments produced by the disillusionment with the First World War and the new dispute over the Negro problem found their way into the revisionist studies. There is much truth in John S. Rosenberg's comment that the revisionists' interpretation of the Civil War was "written by a generation whose outlook was heavily influenced by the war of 1917 and its aftermath and which was largely indifferent to the problems of American Negroes."[27] Both of the trends worked in different ways to the disadvantage of the abolitionists.

Although the revisionist interpretation did not come to maturity until Randall and Craven began to publish their works on the Civil War in the late thirties, signs of change in the interpretation of the Civil War and the abolition movement already appeared in the writings of Albert J. Beveridge and Ramsdell. Beveridge was born to a Union soldier in Indiana where abolition was glorified. In politics he was a waver of "the bloody shirt." Yet his denunciation of the abolitionists was unreserved. The

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[27] John S. Rosenberg, "Toward a New Civil War Revisionism," The American Scholar, XXXVIII (Spring, 1969), 250.

plausible explanation seemed to be his strong racial bias and dislike of moralism. In this respect, he was in agreement with the revisionists, though in background he differed from them in that he seemed to have no connection with the South. This fact may suggest that the revisionist interpretation was influenced more by the climate of opinion of the age than by the background of individual historians.

Whatever might be the reason, Beveridge's hostility to the abolitionists was clear and strong. Calling them "the abolition propagandists,"[28] he regarded the abolitionists as the typical products of "a sin-hunting age, a period of rigid moral formulas when absolutist of right and wrong issued decrees with uncompromising intolerance." He agreed with Calhoun that abolitionism "originated in that blind, fanatical zeal which made one man believe that he was responsible for the sins of others." Believing that they were "the chosen interpreters and guardians" of God's ordinances, the abolitionists lashed out at both the sin of slavery and the South.[29] "Well calculated to terrify and madden the Southern people," the "inflammatory" abolition propaganda "drove Southern men to something like frenzy."[30] Sensing the danger of the abolition attack to all that they valued,

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[28] Albert J. Beveridge, Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858 (2 vols, Cambridge, Mass., 1928), II, 22.

[29] Ibid., II, 20, and 21.

[30] Ibid., I, 188.

the southern people were united and determined to preserve their constitutional rights and the old order by secession if necessary.[31] So, "the seeds of War" were sown. "Had it not been for what they [The Abolitionists] said and did and the fear and the anger they aroused," according to Beveridge, "it is not altogether impossible that there would have been no war and that slavery would in time have given way to the pressure of economic forces."[32]

The last assertion anticipated Ramsdell's opinion by a year. In 1929, Ramsdell argued that by 1860 slavery had reached its natural and economic limits. Given a little time, perhaps a generation or less, it would have died of a natural death. But, unfortunately, in their "excited state of mind," the northern antislavery men "could not see the facts clearly," They,together with their counterparts in politics, and southern agitators, "backed by excited constituents, threw fuel to the flames of sectional antagonism until the country blazed into a Civil War that was the greatest tragedy of the nation."[33] To be sure, Ramsdell mentioned the abolitionists only casually. But even so, it can be seen that his criticism of the abolitionists is

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31 Ibid., II, 59-70.

32 Ibid., II, 19.

33 Ramsdell, "The Natural Limits of Slavery Expansion," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVI (Sept., 1929). The quotations are taken from p. 162, and 163.

almost the same as Beveridge's. The only difference is that while Beveridge accused the abolitionists ofbringing about the war by moral agitation, Ramsdell criticized them for agitating over a dying institution. Both accusations found their way into the writings of Randall and Craven. However, Ramsdell's "natural limits" argument seemed more important to the revisionists because it provided one of the ways to challenge effectively the centrality of slavery in the sectional conflict.

Following the direction pointed by Beveridge and Ramsdell, Craven and Randall, the best-known revisionists, presented an interpretation of the abolition movement not unlike that of Beveridge or Ramsdell in their main points except that Craven, contrary to other revisionists, used something very like social psychology to explain the motivation of the abolitionists.

Craven followed the Progressive historians in surveying the ante-bellum situation of the nation. He recognized four major sections, the Northeast, Old South, Northwest, and Southwest, each with its own particular social, economic, and political conditions. But all these were "normal differences," differences which by themselves could never make war inevitable. Even slavery was not important in the sectional differences because "it was not the distinguishing feature of the South; nor was it the thing

which gave the region a sectional flavor."[34] Not only slavery "played a rather minor part in the life of the South and of the Negro."[35] It was also "a faltering and decadent labor system."[36] By describing slavery as a dying, unimportant institution in southern life, Craven minimized the significance of slavery in the sectional conflict.

With sectional differences made compatible and slavery's importance discounted, Craven naturally found no "united North", no "self-conscious South". No conditions made war unavoidable. Yet war did break out. Craven explained the coming of the war as a result of the emotionalization and moralization of the normal sectional disputes growing out of normal sectional differences. Realities were distorted into symbols; ordinary differences exalted into a difference of right and wrong, good and evil. When abstract principles were projected into the sectional conflict, national parties through which compromise was possible broke down; and the emotionally aroused people were ready to "kill or to be killed" for "the honor and sacred duty to maintain those principles."[37]

How did this come about? Certainly, it was not the fault of the people. The revisionist historians'

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[34] Craven, The Coming of the Civil War, p. 74.

[35] Ibid., p. 93.

[36] Ibid., p. 2.

[37] Ibid., p. 2, and 16.

confidence in the people was too strong to blame them, though the people appeared to be a little too gullible in the revisionist works. It was "the work of politicians and pious cranks,"[38] according to Craven. The tragedy of the Civil War must be "charged to a generation of well-meaning Americans, who, busy with the task of getting ahead, permitted their shortsighted politicians, their over-zealous editors, and their pious reformers to emotionalize real and potential differences and conjure up distorted impressions of those who dwelt in other parts of the nation."[39] The reformers were obviously among those whom Craven held responsible for bringing about the Civil War; and it is in this light that Craven approached the abolition movement.

Craven took notice of the existence of antislavery and pro-slavery feelings in the North before 1820. The first clear sign that slavery might become a sectional issue appeared in the Congressional debate over the Missouri Compromise. Although a grave national crisis was finally averted, that "the use to which politicians in sectional conflict could put slavery had been clearly revealed."[40] However, the politicians were not destined to be leaders of the northern assault on slavery. It was led by a different group of people who were motivated by entirely different reasons.

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[38] Craven, "Coming of the War Between the States: An Interpretation," in An Historian and the Civil War, p. 29.

[39] Craven, The Coming of the Civil War, p. 2.

[40] Ibid., p. 123.

Anticipating David Donald, Craven came very close to social psychology in explaining the factors which gave rise to the abolition movement. He pointed out that industrialization and urbanization wrought profound economic and social transformations in New England during the ante-bellum period. For a time, industrialization and the following specialization of agriculture in rural areas near urban centers brought prosperity. But not all shared in the new prosperity. Some were crowded aside, others crushed. When the unfortunate went to the West or to the new industrial towns to make a new start, unfavorably located old towns languished, isolated rural communities deteriorated. People once influential found themselves overshadowed by newly rich industrialists and financers; and factory workers themselves ruthlessly exploited. Those left out of the new fortune became discontented and bitter. Not only this. When the new West was opened up and sent back its cheaper farm products, the prosperous specialized New England farmer was put in a disadvantageous position of competition, and soon found himself ruined. As the West advanced farther, the same process of specialization, prosperity, disadvantageous competition, and ruin was repeated again and again, and put first the farmers of New York, then those of Ohio and Michigan in the same plight as that experienced by the New England farmers. They became also bitter and resentful. As a result, discontent and unrest spread widely both in New England and the Greater New England.

This condition, together with a "stern and forbidding Calvinism,"[41] constituted the background from which sprang up all the "isms" and reforming efforts of the ante-bellum years.

The reforming zeal took different forms. But the underlying idea of all reforms was to save "a faltering democracy,"[42] which was thought "being threatened by the rise of new and greater aristocrats and the imposition of new and harsher restraints." Because the reformer believed that "democracy was one with the will of God and the natural law," and that "it guaranteed a moral order," reform movements easily turned into moral crusades. Both the church and the state were called to serve the purpose of God and the Founding Fathers.[43]

The abolition movement was part and parcel of this great drive to unseat aristocracy and restore American democracy, Craven declared. At first, it was merely one of many reforms. It gradually rose to dominate all the others. The reasons for its ascendency are not hard to find. Slavery violated democratic institutions and offended the moral sense of men more clearly than any other evil of the day; "it was close enough to be touched now and then, yet far

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41 Ibid., p. 128.

42 Craven, "Coming of the War Between the States: An Interpretation," in An Historian and the Civil War, p. 32.

43 Craven, The Coming of the Civil War, p. 130.

enough removed to give widest scope to the imagination;" and "it constituted the most talked-of feature in the life of a rival section long contending for control in a government of majorities."[44] Moral indignation, political resentment, and imagination all played a party in the rise of abolition to a dominating reform movement. And the abolitionists finally succeeded in turning the South into the scapegoat for the northern bitterness, indignation, and fears born of local conditions.

Craven recognized that there were two centers of the abolition crusade, each contributing different things to the whole movement. One center was in the industrial areas of New England, with Garrison whose unrestrained temperament and unhappy early experiences would probably make him spend his life "in protesting even if slavery had never existed,"[45] as its leader. Uncompromising, fanatical, vituperative, self-righteous, and impractical, Garrison's antislavery crusade served only "to draw attention and arouse antagonism rather than to solve the problem.[46] Garrison's following was small. What was important was his extreme attitude which gave an emotional flavor to the sectional conflict. The other center of the abolition agitation was in upper

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[44] Craven, "Coming of The War Between the States: An Interpretation," in An Historian and The Civil War, p. 36.

[45] Craven, The Coming of the Civil War, p. 136.

[46] Ibid., p. 136.

New York and the old Northwest including much of rural New England, and the Middle States. Benjamin Lundy had started the movement there, but "it did not come to full and wide expression until Theodore Weld. . . set about cultivating the great field prepared for social reform by the Finney revivals."[47] Humble, yet proud, having "the Puritan's love of enduring; the saints' 'right' to intolerance", and "always a revivalist,"[48] Weld "adapted the revival technique to the abolition crusade" and spread that crusade throughout the whole Northwest.[49] By making the abolition agitation identical with religion, and by denouncing slavery as a sin, anti slavery evangelists added "religious indignation to the conflict."[50] The western abolition, however, had a hard-headed, practical aspect absent in the New England branch. The leaders of the western group "believed in action as well as agitation:" and in the western way of thinking, action meant political action. Therefore, in spite of the use of camp meeting procedure in spreading the gospel of abolition, "action against slavery followed political precedent."[51]

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[47] Ibid., p. 138.

[48] Ibid., p. 139.

[49] Ibid., p. 140.

[50] Craven, "The Repressible Conflict," in An Historian and the Civil War, p. 54.

[51] Craven, The Coming of the Civil War, p. 140.

They started the petition campaign and the Washington lobby to force the slavery question into politics, and kept it before the public by broadening it into a fight for civil liberties. Then, Birney took the next step by launching the Liberty Party. Abolition was thus hopelessly tangled with politics, and prepared the way for the triumph of a "political party, purely sectional and openly hostile on moral grounds to the institution of another section."[52]

Although Craven admitted the difference between the Garrisonians and Weldians in their agitation against slavery, he indiscriminatingly accused all of them of creating out of an institution which "may have been almost ready to break down of its own weight" an imagined slavery with "all the ills possible in its theory."[53] All this was done by propaganda and indoctrination the techniques of which "reached new efficiency" in the hands of the abolitionists.[54] With consummate skill and lasting effects, they used every agency possible to attack slavery and to discredit slaveholders. They argued and reasoned; but where argument and reasoning failed, "the abolitionists tried entertainment and appeal to emotion."[55] Using such agencies and methods, the abolitionists finally succeeded in picturing the slaveholder

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[52] Craven, "Coming of the War Between the States: An Interpretation," in An Historian and the Civil War, p. 36.

[53] Craven, The Coming of the Civil War, p. 118.

[54] Ibid., p. 142.

[55] Ibid., p. 145.

as "the arch-aristocrat, the great enemy of democracy," and "the flagrant sinner".[56] In short, the slaveholder was made the symbol of all that the northern reformers hated and resented and feared. Thus, "a handful of deadly-in-earnest men and women slowly built into a section's consciousness the belief in a Slave Power."[57]

The guilt of the abolitionists did not stop here, however. Their relentless attack killed the antislavery sentiments in the South, and drove Southerners to self defense. "Gradually the South became conscious and bitter."[58] "A half-apologetic defense of slavery as a necessary evil" was turned into "an aggressive glorification of a way of life."[59] The South began to meet unreasonableness with unreasonableness. Then the Civil War became inevitable.

Craven never said that the abolitionists were the only ones who were responsible for the coming of the Civil War. Politicians and editors, both North and South, were also guilty of making the war unavoidable. But his discussion of the abolition movement clearly shows that he regarded the abolitionists as the primary makers of the

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56 Ibid., p. 150.

57 Ibid., p. 150.

58 Craven, "The Repressible Conflict," in An Historian and the Civil War, p. 58.

59 Ibid., p. 59.

Civil War. The South became bitter and resentful only after enduring the abolitionist attack and abuses so long. And even by then, its position was defensive rather than aggressive. His sympathy was undoubtedly on the side of the South. Despite his anger at the charge of being pro-South and his professed impartiality, he considered the Civil War as caused by "the North's Mistake."[60] As a major part of that mistake, the abolitionists could only expect harsh treatment from Craven.

The same is true in the case of Randall. So far as the cause of the Civil War, and the role the abolitionists played in bringing about the final conflict are concerned, Randall agreed with Craven on the basic points. But they differed considerably in details in their descriptions of the abolition movement. Like Craven, Randall conceded that sections and sectional differences did exist before the Civil War. Also like Craven, he insisted that sectional differences themselves did not work toward irrepressible conflict. "Differences between North and South - e.g. industrial interests in one region and agricultural in another - were by no means inconsistent with a diversified

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60 For his denial of having a "pro-southern" attitude and his stress on impartiality, see Craven, The Coming of the Civil War, p. viii. It is said that the title of The Coming of the Civil War in the manuscript was "The North's Mistake". See Bernard DeVoto, "The Easy Chair", Harper's Magazine, Vol. 192 (Jan.-June, 1946), p. 124.

and well rounded nation."[61] He seemed to have the opinion that economic diversification encouraged interdependence rather than antagonism. As for the slavery question, Randall, like Craven, also reduced its importance. However, he did this in a different way. While Craven discounted the importance of slavery in southern life, Randall lessened its significance as a sectional issue. He pointed out that the principal dispute over slavery really concerned only "two points, the fugitive slave question and slavery in the territories,"[62] and that the actual number involved in both cases were too insignificant -Randall cited the census of 1860 to show that runaway slaves numbered only 803, while there were only two slaves in Kansas, fifteen in Nebraska - to lead the sections to war.[63] Not only was the number of slaves in the territories negligible, but also slavery could not expand farther. The dispute over the question of slavery in the territories was consequently unnecessary. "Northerners forgot the legislative action concerning slavery exclusion in the territories was unnecessary; Southerners overlooked the fact that laws to

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61 Randall, Lincoln the President (2 vols., New York, 1945), I, 78.

62 Ibid., p. 237.

63 Ibid., pp. 239-240. But in the Civil War and Reconstruction he talked about slavery in territories as the only disputed point, p. 111, and 114.

stimulate slavery in such territories as then existed, would be unavailing because of geographical and economic factors."[64] He had obviously in mind Ramsdell's "natural limits" argument. Whatever might be the reasons he offered, slavery in reality was no casus belli to Randall. Yet both economic sectionalism and slavery were dragged into the sectional conflict because they constituted "materia" upon which "certain groups of politicians and agitators"[65] could work to magnify sectional grievances. No matter what the realities were, "let politicians and agitators work on them with pamphlets, tracts, and campaign speeches, let the stock phrases of sectionalism be repeated often enough, and there would come a wretched day when, 'to the astonishment of the actors themselves', an explosion would be set off by an incident or occasion that was not validly disruptive but 'comparatively trifling'."[66] Apparently Randall believed that some politicians and agitators, by distorting realities, turned normally compatible differences into sectional antagonism of North against South, and then created hateful symbols of the opposing sections which finally made the Civil War unavoidable.

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64 Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 115.

65 Ibid., p. 111.

66 Randall, Lincoln the President, I, 76.

The abolitionists were certainly among the politicians and agitators whom Randall held responsible for bringing about the Civil War. In this respect, he was in complete agreement with Craven. However, in explaining the motives of the abolitionists, they differed considerably. While Craven tried a social-psychological explanation, Randall accepted the more convenient explanation in terms of "humanitarian awakening and restless agitation for the betterment of civilization"[67] which caused many men and women to participate in the numerous reform movements. Except this, his description of the abolition movement followed in general Barnes' interpretation. Its more intense phase began about 1831. Though Garrison happened in that year to begin the publication of The Liberator, the tradition of referring to him as the leader of the crusade did not "fit the facts."[68] Garrison was essentially a "free lance agitator-journalist". Without any workable plan but the demand of immediate emancipation, he offended influential leaders by his vituperative language and theological heresies and hostility to churches. His radical following in the North was extremely small and without serious political influence.[69] His was not the guiding spirit of the

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67 Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 100.

68 Ibid., p. 101.

69 Ibid., p. 101, 103, and 146; and Randall, Lincoln the President, I, 90.

antislavery crusade. Borrowing Barnes' words, Randall concluded that Garrison had "no qualification for leadership."[70]

The real leaders of the movement were the Finney-Tappan-Weld group, which organized the American Antislavery Society in 1833, only to have it taken away by Garrison seven years later. Although he recognized the Tappans as the pioneer organizers and financial supporters of the national society, and Weld as "the chief promoter of abolitionism as an organized crusade,"[71] strangely enough, in his classification of antislavery sentiments ranging from Garrison's radicalism to the conservatism of Orville H. Browning of Illinois, he did not mention the name of either Tappan or Weld. But in his discussion of the religious aspect of the antislavery movement, he did talk about the influence of Finney and Weld. It appeared that their influence in the churches was small. "It would be a serious mistake," he warned, to think that abolitionists captured the northern churches. It is true that northern Methodists, Baptists, and Quakers showed considerable antislavery feeling. But it was mild. As for other denominations, hostility toward abolition was the rule rather than exception. Such men as Finney and Weld, "who burned with antislavery zeal, were much like interlopers in the

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[70] Randall, Lincoln the President, I, 87.

[71] Ibid., p. 88.

ecclesiastical field. They were evangelists, not church leaders." Not concerned with normal church activity, nor caring about their preachings creating dissension, "they made trouble within the churches in their drive for converts."[72] His annoyance with the Weldian group is just as clear as his dislike of the Garrisonians. But his greatest hostility seemed reserved for the politician-abolitionists. This is shown in his harsh criticism of Joshua R. Giddings.[73] Anyway, the fact that Randall regarded the abolition agitation as crucial in the coming of the Civil War cannot be missed. He cited the South's "reaction from abolition attacks" as one of the two factors which solidified "that consciousness of common culture and common grievance" into a southern nationalism.[74] And in criticizing the abolitionists, he wrote that "the avenging force of Puritanism in politics" was a "major cause of the conflict itself".[75] Even if he did not find the abolitionists alone guilty of warmaking, there is no question that Randall considered them chief

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[72] Ibid., p. 89.

[73] Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 147.

[74] Ibid., p. 117.

[75] Ibid., p. 146.

among those who were held responsible for bringing about the Civil War.

Though Craven and Randall have been generally recognized as the leading spokesmen of Civil War revisionism, they were not the only critics of the abolitionists at the time when their revisionist studies appeared. In the few years around 1940, at least two other historians, Lloyd and Simms, published their studies of the sectional conflict which also showed a strong hostility toward the abolitionists. Whether they were influenced by the opinions of Craven and Randall is hard to decide. But one thing is certain, and that is that they also considered the abolition agitation as a factor in the making of the Civil War.

Of the two, Simms was more like Craven and Randall than Lloyd in his approach to the sectional conflict. He called the Civil War "tragic."[76] He also played down the importance of slavery by pointing out the small number of runaway slaves and slavery running "out of its course in the territories." He believed these questions of "such little practical significance" might have been solved by "sound statesmanship." However, they were involved in the sectional conflict. The reason for the involvement was political because radical groups in North and South seized it as a means to secure control in their own section.[77] In fact, Simms felt that in the whole sectional conflict,

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[76] Simms, A Decade of Sectional Controversy, p. vii.

[77] Ibid., p. viii.

political factors were more important than any other. But he also insisted that "the psychological factor" produced by the abolitionist attack on slavery not only was ever present but also became increasingly intensified with the development of sectional struggle. To him, therefore, the rise of the militant abolition movement was "a very significant factor in the development of the slavery controversy."[78] As for the reasons for the rise of the militant abolitionism, Simms briefly mentioned a "diversified intellectual life," "a tendency toward critical inquiry," religious impulses, and the British example.[79] To him all the abolitionists were just the same. In his critical survey of the abolition literature, he made no distinction between a Weldian and a Garrisonian.[80] Though his tone of criticism was comparatively mild, still he blamed the abolitionists for the effects their agitation had on the South. Beside stamping out antislavery sentiments in the South, "the rise of militant abolitionists, however sincere, domiciled in a section which did not have the Southern problem, denying, indeed, that there was a problem, frequently using violent language, and begetting its use by opponents, did much to cement the South in defense of her own way of

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[78] Ibid., p. 36.

[79] Ibid., p. 39.

[80] Simms, "A Critical Analysis of Abolition Literature, 1830-1840," Journal of Southern History, VI (1940), 368-382.

life, and to inject into the slavery controversy a psychological factor henceforth never absent from it."[81] His charge against the abolitionists differed in substance not very much from either Craven or Randall.

Simms, as well as Craven and Randall, at least professed to be critical of extremists on both sides. Not so with Lloyd. Concerning himself more with vindicating the southern view in the dispute over slavery than with explaining the coming of the Civil War, he described the abolitionists as aggressors in the sectional conflict. Though his criticism was more one-sided, his interpretation ran roughly parallel to that of Simms'. He divided all the abolitionists into three groups: the philosophical group led by Channing and Wayland, condemning slavery as a moral evil; the political or Free-Soil group later led by Lincoln, which emphasized political action and were opposed to slavery expansion into territories; and the radical abolitionists led by Garrison and Weld who demanded immediate and unconditional emancipation. The function of each group was thus distributed: the radical group stirred up the agitation; the philosophical group gave it moral sanction; and the political group "reaped the rewards after nearly thirty years of propaganda."[82] But in his discussion, he neglected the philosophical group, and concentrated on the

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[81] Ibid., p. 382.

[82] Lloyd, The Slavery Controversy, p. vii, and 59.

other two groups. Sometimes he even blended the radical and political abolitionists together. This is probably because many political abolitionists had been followers of Weld, who, over the question of political means, later broke with the Garrisonians, and went into politics. They "not only continued to spread propaganda discrediting the South but its leaders also aided in the formation of the Free-Soil Party and later the Republican Party."[83] Except for this difference regarding proper means, it was "difficult to separate the radical and political groups of anti-slavery leaders," admitted Lloyd. "Both were violent in their denunciation of slavery and the South."[84]

As for the background of the rise of abolitionism, Lloyd gave a confusing account. At first, he suggested that as a part of the general reform movement in the ante-bellum period, the appearance of the abolition crusade had a connection with humanitarianism, idealism, and transcendentalism, and that western abolitionism grew out of Finney's revivals.[85] Yet, later he challenged this humanitarian or religious interpretation because it failed to explain why the abolitionists were more interested in attacking slavery than in lifting the free Negroes in the North or overcoming

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[83] Ibid., p. 272.

[84] Ibid., p. 61.

[85] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

the evils of industrialization. Granting the sincerity of the abolitionists, it still could not explain why so many northern people who apparently had no interest in southern slavery supported the abolitionists. After repudiating the idealistic and religious explanation, he suggested a new one. "If economic motives can be assigned to the Southern defense," he declared, "it seems even more likely that behind the abolition propaganda lay deeper and more fundamental motives than a mere desire to emancipate the blacks."[86] Apparently Lloyd believed that the abolitionists were moved by economic motives. But in what way did abolition propaganda serve their economic interests? The answer to this question is to be found in Turner's assertion that the slavery controversy was affected by a West to be won. In typical Turnerian terms, Lloyd pictured a commercial and industrial East struggling with an agricultural South over the control of the federal government in order to obtain policies favorable to its own section. With the rise of the West, it became necessary for each of the older sections to win the West to its side. As early as the Missouri debate, some northern politicians like Ruffus King were already determined to use the slavery question to discredit the South, and thus win over the South's natural ally, the agricultural West. The later abolition agitators simply

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86 Ibid., p. 264.

continued the unfinished work of King and other early anti-slavery politicians. Therefore, Lloyd concluded, "that the abolition agitation was used as a means of discrediting the South, especially in the Northwest, and aided in the later formation of a sectional party seems undeniable."[87] So, to Lloyd, the abolition crusade was mainly propaganda designed to win the West by discrediting the South. The motives of the crusaders were economic and political rather than humanitarian and religious in nature.

Lloyd's dislike of the abolitionists was perhaps the strongest of all the historians discussed. He talked about "fervid imaginations of zealous fanatics" running riot in "heaping vituperation upon the South," and in "incendiary propaganda" which "flooded the country in the form of tracts, newspapers, and pictures." But the most scathing indictment was set down in the following sentence: "Because the foundations of slavery lay deep, the unrestrained fanaticism of the abolitionists carried them to the point of denying the Bible which seemed to sanction slavery, attacking the American Church, burning the Constitution, flaunting the laws, advocating disunion, inciting the slaves to bloody race wars, and eventually carried the leaders off on tangents in the form of infidelism, anarchism, free-love, and communistic and utopian schemes of government."[88]

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87 Ibid., p. 270.

88 Ibid., p. 266.

The abolitionists were also held responsible for destroying southern antislavery efforts, consolidating southern pro-slavery opinion, pounding the South into sectional consciousness, and finally by breaking up the Democratic party and electing a president on a platform which "threatened the rights of the Southern people," forcing the South to secede.[89] In short,from the beginning to the end, the sectional conflict was caused by the aggression of the abolitionists. In Lloyd's The Slavery Controversy, both the anti-abolitionist and pro-southern attitudes of the revisionist historians reached their extreme forms.

It is really striking to notice that from 1935 to 1945, the leading historians of the sectional conflict approached and interpreted the coming of the Civil War with such a remarkable similarity. Except Lloyd who did not mention this question, all the other historians discussed above thought the Civil War was an avoidable and needless "tragedy". They admitted the existence of sectional differences, but held that such differences were normal and peacefully adjustable. Even the most disputed question of slavery was not insoluble peacefully because the revisionist historians agreed that slavery was on the way toward dying out; that Southerners were searching for a way to do away with it before the radical abolition attack; and that

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[89] Ibid., p. viii, 284, and 285. The quotation is taken from p. 284.

slavery in reality was really unimportant either in southern life or in the sectional conflict. In Randall's words, with "something more of statesmanship, moderation, and understanding,"[90] all these ordinary differences could have been worked out through compromise, and the Civil War avoided. Yet against their vague sentiment that somehow the Civil War could have been prevented, war did break out; and the disappointed revisionist historian blamed all the extremists whom he held responsible for making the war inevitable by emotionalizing and moralizying normal differences, and by villifying the opposing sections through incessant propaganda and agitation.

This view of the cause of the Civil War naturally affected their attitude toward the abolitionists. The explanations of the revisionists for the motives of the abolition crusaders varied. While Craven saw the crusade against slavery as motivated by frustration, fear, and resentment born of local socio-economic dislocation in the North, all the others considered humanitarian and religious impulses the primary factors which gave rise to the abolition movement. All the revisionist historians followed Barnes' division of the abolitionists into a New England and a western group. However, they did not discriminate between a Weldian or a Garrisonian in their criticism. All the

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90 Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. vii.

abolitionists were held guilty of bringing about the Civil War. They were virtually warmongers in the eyes of the revisionist historians, though no one so called them. This is the point which set the revisionist historians apart from other historians of the abolition movement. Others may have accused this or that group of the abolitionists of this or that blunder, but no other historians so vehemently, so indicriminatingly blamed all the antislavery crusaders for the supposed crime of driving an allegedly innocent people into a meaningless slaughter as did the revisionists.

One of the reasons for the revisionist's dislike of the Civil War and of the abolition crusaders was their belief that no fundamental principles were involved in the sectional conflict. Indeed, sharing in the disillusionment with the First World War, they had a strong distrust of self-righteous moral agitation. However, this is not to say that they were really down-to-earth realists, as Randall deemed them to be. On the contrary, they were disillusioned idealist liberals.[91] The impression from reading their writings is that they attacked "the blundering generation" not because men of that generation were evil, but because a "well-meaning", peace-loving people allowed emotion and moral sense to get upper hand over moderation,

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[91] For the discussion in this paragraph, see Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, p. 336.

understanding and reason. Idealistic and optimistic about human beings, the revisionists expected men to act rationally, to solve their problems by peaceful means. When people failed of their expectation, their disappointment became all the more bitter, their reaction all the more stronger than if they held pessimistic views of human beings - indeed, if they were pessimistic, they might not have been disappointed at all. Disillusioned and dismayed, they became disgusted with all the resounding principles and unbridled emotions. Consequently, they lashed out at those agitators who appealed to abstract principles and emotions. But lingering behind all their denouncement and criticism was a hopeful message: only if men acted moderately and rationally, peace would be assured.

Since the revisionist interpretation of the Civil War was essentially influenced by and reflected the intellectual outlook of a generation largely disillusioned with the First World War and indifferent to the Negro problem, it is natural that the studies of the revisionist historians suited well the taste of many of that generation, and thus enjoyed considerable popularity among historians. The recognition of Randall and Craven as the leading authorities on the Civil War history was by no means an accident. Their total denunciation of the abolitionists as war makers seemed to dominate the opinions of those who wrote books on the sectional conflict from the mid-thirties to the

mid-forties, with the exception of Dwight L. Dumond.[92]

However, the evidence from articles on the sectional conflict or abolitionism published in the American Historical Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Journal of Southern History, and Journal of Negro History from 1930 to 1950[93] seems not so conclusive. On the one hand, the general tone of all the four articles in Journal of Southern History and most of the dozen or so articles in American Historical Review and Mississippi Valley Historical Review was either critical of the abolitionists or pro-southern. On the other hand, all of the seventeen or so articles in the Journal of Negro History were favorable to the abolitionists. The diverse nature and purpose of these several journals may account for the difference of view on the abolitionists as shown by their contributors. The significant thing is that writers other than those who

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92 For discussion of Dumond, see Chapter VI.

93 There are only two articles having any relation with the antislavery movement in American Historical Review, eight in Mississippi Valley Historical Review, seventeen in Journal of Negro History, and four in Journal of Southern History. But since several volumes of these journals are missing from the library of this university, the actual numbers of articles may be larger than counted here. Some of the articles are no more than documents with short introductions; others deal with very special aspects of the antislavery movement or particular persons. Few concern the abolition movement as a whole. But it is still possible to grasp the general tone of these writers. As for articles having anything to do with the abolition movement in the first three journals (Journal of Southern History did not begin to publish until 1935) from 1920 to 1930, there are only about five.

published their articles in Journal of Negro History were fairly much in agreement in their attitude toward the abolitionists. From this fact, it seems reasonable to assume that white American historians who were hostile or indifferent to the Negroes were in large part also hostile to the abolitionists. This is in accordance with the revisionist historians. But whether they were influenced by the revisionists is hard to say.

Even if the revisionist view dominated the approach to the abolition movement during the period under discussion, its predominance did not last long, for as soon as the Second World War was over, challenge to the revisionist interpretation of the Civil War was voiced. Because the revisionists entirely neglected, or rather denied, the moral issue involved in both slavery and the sectional dispute over it, Bernard Devoto in 1946, and Arthur M. Schlsinger, Jr., in 1949, charged that the revisionist historians timidly evaded the responsibility of the historian to make moral judgment by seeking refuge in "a vague sentiment: that if the South had been left quite alone, somehow the slaves would eventually have been freed, an equitable system established, and evils of war and reconstruction prevented."[94] Perhaps because of such criticism, perhaps

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[94] Bernard DeVoto, "The Easy Chair," Harper's Magazine, Vol. 192 (Jan.-June, 1946), pp. 123-126, and 234-237. The quotation is taken from p. 237. And Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "The Causes of the Civil War: A Note on Historical Sentimentalism," Partisan Review, XVI (Oct., 1949), 969-981.

because they themselves sensed the changed intellectual atmosphere, or perhaps because of further study as Craven insisted,[95] some revisionist historians began to yield grounds and to soften their hostile tone toward the abolitionists.

The shifting amounted to not much, to be sure. Yet it can be discerned even in the writings of the most famous revisionists. Randall in 1947 defended himself by arguing that when a historian recognized complex factors, he "should not be thought of as neglecting the ethical merits of the issue." He admitted that "slavery was a moral question," that "the moral issue of slavery constituted indeed a great question," that "the intensely unfavorable caricature of such men as Garrison was. . . unfair. . ." and that among the abolitionists there were men of "pure souls" and "fine caliber."[96] Craven made the same concessions. At the end of the reprint of "Coming of the War Between the States: An Interpretation" in his An Historian and The Civil War which appeared in 1964, he put a significant "Note" in which he said, "It was never the intention of the author of this article to say that the Civil War was simply the product of emotion, as some have

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95 Craven, Civil War in the Making, 1815-1860 (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1959), pp. v-vi.

96 Randall, Lincoln the Liberal Statesman, pp. 23-24.

charged."[97] On another occasion, he denied the charge that he neglected the moral issue by pointing out that "this is not saying as some have charged, that great moral issues were not involved. They certainly were. . ."[98] But the most significant thing was his consideration of the argument over the unavoidability or avoidability of the Civil War as "absurd". "Of course it could /be avoided/," he continued, "that is, if /Italics his/ men had been willing or able to pay the price required for maintaining the peace. Somethings, however, are priceless."[99] He came very close to the opinion that the sectional conflict did involve something priceless, and that the Civil War was inavoidable. This shift of attitude is also clear in Simms' study of the abolition controversy from 1830 to 1845 which appeared in 1960. This study is nothing more than a collection of quotations from published materials, public speeches, and private letters bearing on the pros and cons in the abolition controversy among the abolitionists themselves, and in the North and South. Simms' manner of treating his subject

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97 p. 45.

98 Craven, "The 1840's and the Democratic Process," originally published in Journal of Southern History, XVI (1950), 137-147, reprinted in An Historian and the Civil War, p. 83.

99 Craven, Civil War in the Making, p. vii.

matter was extremely neutral and detached. Preferring not assessing "blame or praise for the actions of people several generations ago,"[100] he adventured no judgment, not even a conclusion, only a few introductory remarks. Except that he deplored the involvement of abolition in political maneuver, the title of the book, "Emotion at High Tide," and the assertion that "out of this medley of conflicting opinions there emerged an unhealthy emotional climate which boded ill for the future of the nation,"[101] there is nothing indicating that the author had once argued that the abolitionist's attack on slavery was a significant factor in the making of the tragic Civil War. The critical attitude toward abolition literature was gone. Despite the title, he did not emphasize the emotional aspect of the controversy in the book. From this book alone, it is hard to imagine that a generation ago, the same author had written in much the same spirit as the well-known revisionist historians did.

In view of this change in the opinion of the leading revisionists and in the general intellectual outlook, it is surprising to notice that in 1960 Arnold Whitridge published his No Compromise! The Story of the Fanatics Who Paved the Way to the Civil War.[102] The theme is already

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100 Simms, Emotion at High Tide: Abolition as a Controversial Factor, 1830-1845 (Richmond, Virginia, 1960), p. vi.

101 Ibid., p. vi.

102 (New York, 1960).

clear in the title. However, Whitridge made it even clearer in these words: "This is a book about fanatics, about the handful of words: "This is a book about fanatics, about the handful of men North and South who fostered hatred between the two sections of the country, who magnified everything that might lead to misunderstanding, blocked every effort at compromise, and finally drove a reluctant people into a war they did not want to fight."[103] He admitted there were "real grievances and anxieties" in both North and South. However, they alone could not cause the war; nor could the dispute over slavery because it was "doomed" and "would never live to see the twentieth century."[104] The war came because of the "incessant propaganda" of fanatics - abolitionists in the North and fireeaters in the South - that "so upset the emotional balance North and South that any suggestion of conciliation, any appeal to common sense, was made to appear like treason or cowardice in disguise."[105] The arrangement of the book is just as simple and straightforward as the theme. The first two chapters deal with the fire-eaters and the abolitionists respectively, while the third and last chapter with the

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103 Whitridge, No Compromise: p. 7.

104 Ibid., p. 195.

105 Ibid., p. 11.

problem how these fanatics blocked the last efforts for peace. The abolitionists appeared to be the principal war criminals. Whitridge seemed particularly to hate Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner, and John Brown.[106] In short, every main point of the revisionist interpretation can be found in it. But he did a disservice to the credibility of the revisionist interpretation. Without explaining why or how it could have happened that a "reluctant" people were driven by "a handful of fanatics" into a war they did not like to fight, Whitridge over-simplified the revisionist argument almost to the point of absurdity. It is no wonder that Louis Filler called it "a curious book."[107]

In conclusion, it may be said that when Whitridge published his study the revisionist interpretation already had passed the high mark of popularity, though the revisionist historians continue to write about the Civil War well into the sixties. In part a reflection of the feeling and attitude of a generation disillusioned with the First World War and indifferent to the problem of racial relations, revisionism enjoyed the widest popularity in the decade

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106 Ibid., pp. 85-146.

107 Louis Filler, "Review of Whitridge, No Compromise!" American Historical Review, LXVII (October, 1960), 230. The book was ignored by Journal of Southern History and Mississippi Valley Historical Review.

from the mid-thirties to the mid-forties. Undoubtedly, the revisionist historians contributed much to the understanding of the causes and nature of the Civil War. But so far as the abolition movement is concerned, they added few really original insights except the total denunciation of the abolitionists and the hint on the psychological aspect of the crusade. As times changed, when historians with a different outlook came to try to understand the abolition movement, some of them repudiated the whole revisionist interpretation; others worked on the psychological aspect and turned the abolitionists into neurotics. Then with the rise of reassessment, the revisionist interpretation of the abolition movement gradually lost ground to other new viewpoints.

CHAPTER V

Abolition as a Means of Tension Reduction
- The View of the Consensus Historians -

Revisionism in Civil War history was the product of the climate of opinion of a particular period. As that general outlook changed, it could be expected that the revisionist interpretation of the abolition movement would also change. Thus, during the 1950's, a new image of the abolitionists emerged from the writings of David Donald and Stanley M. Elkins who produced during the 1950's the most influential studies on the abolition crusade.

This new image of the abolitionists differed from that presented by the revisionist historians. Primarily interested in explaining why or how the Civil War came, the revisionists found among others the abolitionists guilty of bringing about the great national tragedy by emotionalizing and moralizing ordinary sectional differences. While sharing the revisionists' dislike of extreme abolitionism, Donald and Elkins sought to exonerate the abolitionists from war guilt by blaming the unhealthy situation of ante-bellum society for making the war unavoidable. But this shift in

opinion about the relation of the abolitionists to the coming of the Civil War did not result in a more favorable image of the abolition crusaders. It only created another bad composite picture of the militant antislavery agitators. In the writings of Donald and Elkins, the abolitionists were transformed from warmongers to neurotics.

This change of image was largely the result of a psychological approach. Following the example of the revisionist historian Avery Craven, Donald and Elkins interpreted the abolition movement in psychological terms. They did not deal with the same aspect of the crusade; but both of them built their interpretations on a particular behaviorist theory which emphasized "tension reduction" as the main goal of men's thought and action. According to this older and by now much discredited theory, individuals were motivated by "a state of tenseness that leads us to seek equilibrium, rest, adjustment, satisfaction or homeostasis. From this point of view, personality is nothing more than our habitual modes of reducing tension."[1] Applying this theory to the abolitionists, Donald found the motives of the abolitionists in their frustration produced by a change in social status; and Elkins thought that the goal of the abolitionists was to ease their sense of guilt. In so far

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[1] Gordon Allport, Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality (New Haven, 1955), pp. 48-49. For criticism of this theory, see Silvan Tomkins, ed., Affect, Cognition and Personality (New York, 1965); and Rudolf Herberle, Social Movements (New York, 1951).

as the tension-reduction theory admitted no room for ideals in men's behavior, the logical implication in the interpretations of Donald and Elkins is that the abolitionists were not genuine reformers who sought to remove some evils in society. They were concerned primarily with the reduction of their own inner tensions. In this respect, the psychologist-historians were different not only from most revisionist historians but also from other historians discussed thus far. With the notable exception of Craven, most of them agreed that the abolitionists were motivated by humanitarian, religious, or social ideals. Thus, whether intentionally or not, Donald and Elkins by the use of a personality theory which put emphasis on tension reduction as the all-inclusive factor in human thought and action added to the already bad image of the abolitionist a new unfavorable touch; they were neurotics who turned reformers to seek personal equilibrium, satisfaction, or fulfillment for themselves.

Like other prevailing interpretations, that of Donald and Elkins was affected by and reflected the general and historical thinking of the 1950's and the early 1960's. Considering its widespread influence, their interpretation of the abolition movement can be in a sense regarded as representative of the view of the abolitionists of what John Higham called the consensus historians[2] whose approach

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[2] The first historian who saw and delineated this new

to the American past had dominated the study of American history during the 1950's and the early 1960's.

The rise of the consensus, or neo-conservative historiography as it is sometimes called, was closely connected to changes in the general climate of opinion during the post-World War II period. In these years, a series of events brought about a new outlook which leaned toward consensus and conservatism. Culturally, America became increasingly homogeneous as sectional or rural-urban differences were eliminated by cars, radios, and televisions. The affluence caused the living standard of most Americans to rise. While America grew more harmonious and richer than ever before, what Eric Goldman called "the Half-Century of Revolution" went so breathlessly and changed America so much that by the early fifties, many American people wanted to slow down social reforms in order to consolidate what they newly obtained, and by the mid-fifties, a broad consensus on moderation or a middle-of-the-road policy resulted.[3] But the most powerful factor in turning American opinion to

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trend in American historiography was John Higham. See his "The Cult of 'American Consensus': Homogenizing Our History," in Commentary, XXVII (Feb., 1959), 95-100; History: The Development of Historical Studies in the United States (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965) pp. 212-232; and "Beyond Consensus: The Historian as Moral Critic," in American Historical Review, LXVII (April, 1962), 609-625.

[3] Eric Goldman, The Crucial Decade: America, 1945-1955 (New York, 1956).

the right was the disturbing international scene. The struggle for survival with totalitarianism turned many Americans to re-embrace and uphold American traditions, and to doubt whether reform was always good. And the fear about human future created by the Cold War and Atom bomb disposed many intellectuals to adopt a grimmer view about human nature and progress than their progressive predecessors. Rejecting the Progressives' faith in progess as naive, the powerful neo-orthodox theologian Reinhold Niebuhr revived the doctrine of original sin and reasserted the existence of evil in the universe, the tragedy in life, and the complexity of human problems.[4] Echoing Niebuhr, the chastened Progressive historian, Arthur M. Schlessinger, jr., declared in 1949: "man generally is entangled in insoluble problems; history is consequently a tragedy in which we are all involved, whose keynote is anxiety and frustration, not progress and fulfillment."[5] The intellectuals and the general public became more conservative and less interested in reform.[6]

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[4] Reinhold Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness (New York, 1944).

[5] Arthur M. Schlessinger, Jr., "The Causes of the Civil War: A Note on Historical Sentimentalism," in Partisan Review XVI (Oct., 1949), 981.

[6] Arthur Mann pointed out that the widespread criticism of reforms among intellectuals was reinforced in the post-World War II years by "A rising standard of living, increasing opportunities for scholars, cultural pluralism,

Consciously or unconsciously, historians also felt the impact of those events and became "interested in finding evidence to support social harmony."[7] Given this mentality, the consensus historians were bound to be dissatisfied with the method and interpretation of the Progressive historians. As said by Ray F. Nichols, as early as 1946, the correspondence with, and the discussions arranged by the Social Science Research Council showed a definite desire among historians to restudy methodology and dominant concepts of historical study.[8] Nichols himself urged historians to redirect their thinking by engaging in "a species of historical atomic exploration" and by undertaking "a high level of performance." He believed that this historical reorientation would free historians from the clutches of a heedless optimism and present-mindedness, and thus enabled them to see "the more grim endurance, struggle, and discouragement," and to promote philosophical and

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the welfare state, and a healthy balance of power between high business, big labor, and big government. Living in such a going concern, few scholars acquired the kind of compassion, resentments, and hopes for a more equalitarian society that had enabled a previous generation to identify itself with economic and political reform.

"Instead, new perils to human welfare, like racism and totalitarianism, directed attention to the dark sides of reform....in such an atmosphere some liberals were ready to join disillusioned maxians in saying goodby to ideology as they had known it." See his "The Progressive Tradition," in John Higham, ed., The Reconstruction of American History (New York, 1962), p. 167.

7 Dwight W. Hoover, "Some Comments on Recent United States Historiography," in American Quarterly, XVII (Summer, 1965), 300.

8 Ray F. Nichols, "Post War Reorientation of

ethical stabilization.[9] Two years later, in 1950, Samuel Eliot Morison in a presidential address to the American Historical Association criticized the Progressive methodology and urged his audience to return to the scientific method and to an emphasis on tradition in American history.[10] Tired of strife and uncertainty, the consensus historians regarded as unrealistic and outmoded the Progressive historiography which stressed historical relativism in methodology, and class struggle and revolutionary change in the interpretation of American history.

In their criticisms of the Progressive historians and in their own studies, the consensus historians gradually built up a new general view of the American past. Not all of them interpreted American history in the same way. Some stressed stability and therefore continuity of American experiences over the centuries; others emphasized instability and gave more attention to changes.[11] What united them all was the denial of ideological and class confrontation

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Historical Thinking," in American Historical Review, LIX (Oct., 1948), 81.

[9] Ibid., 82-89.

[10] Samuel Eliot Morison, "Faith of a Historian," in American Historical Review, LVI (Jan., 1951), 261-275.

[11] Higham, History, pp. 222-226.

and of convulsive changes in American history. Even those consensus historians who paid more attention to changes viewed such changes as gradual rather than revolutionary, and as brought about by general economic growth or geographical and social mobility rather than by conflicts between definite groups. The consensus historians emphasized the existence of a broad consensus on basic values whether that consensus running through the whole length of history or changing from age to age. In short, the common aim of their efforts was "to find a consensus in American history,"[12] Being such, their view of American history was strikingly conservative.

However, at different times in American history, people believed that their country was ripped open by conflicts, even if there were no real struggles. Apparently, the consensus historians had to account for such imagined or real strifes before they could prescribe a general consensus. This they achieved in several ways. But the most effective one was the use of psychological approach. Although a few historians had applied psychological interpretations to the study of American history before the Second World War, its widest acceptance by historians was during the 1950's and early 1960's. Many leading historians such as Henry Nash Smith, Richard Hofstadter, Marvin Meyers,

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12 Hoover, "Some Comments on Recent United States Historiography," in American Quarterly XVII (Summer, 1965), 300.

Charles G. Sellers, Seymour Lipset, and others used psychological approach to a variety of topics.[13] Even the economic determinist historian, Charles A. Beard, confessed in 1948 that "I may have neglected the irrational."[14] Perhaps it is dogmatic to say that these consensus historians deliberately chose psychological approach with the sole intention to explain away social cleavage or protest. Their acceptance of it might have been because of the insight it provided for their task. Still, the coincidence of the widest use of psychological approach by historians and the rise of the consensus historiography many suggest that something other than its mere usefulness for historical study was involved. In fact, psychological interpretation suited the need of the consensus historian to minimize conflicts remarkably well. It enabled them to internalize or subjectivize external conflicts or class struggle. Social divisions could thus be turned into generalized psychological tensions running through the society as a whole;[15]

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13 Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: the American West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge, Mass., 1950); Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (1955); Marvin Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion (1957); Charles G. Sellers, "The Travail of Slavery," in Seller, ed., The Southerner as American (Chapel Hill, 1960), pp. 40-71; and Seymour Lipset, "Sources of the 'Radical Right'," in Danie Bell, ed., New American Right (New York, 1955).

14 Diary of Alfred Vogts, quoted in Higham, History, p. 230.

15 Higham, "The Cult of 'American Consensus': Homogenizing Our History," in Commentary, XXVII (Feb., 1959), 95.

and socio-economic conflicts could be dismissed either as mere rhetorics or as myths. With divisions or conflicts explained away, it is easy to establish a consensus on some basic values. "All in all," as Higham said, "the psychological vogue has given an implicit sanction to harmony...."[16]

It is needless to say that not all consensus historians adopted psychological approach. But the fact still remains that it had a greater vogue among the consensus historians than among their professional predecessors. Its attractiveness to the consensus historians was largely because it provided an effective means for them to achieve their aim: the minimization of conflicts and the assertion of consensus.

Living through all the experiences which moved the post-war America to the right, Donald and Elkins must have felt the impact of those events in the same way as most Americans did.[17] If the prevailing conservative outlook stirred other contemporary historians to emphasize consensus in the American past, it is scarcely surprising to find that Donald and Elkins showed the same tendency in their historical writings. If Elkins was a conservative as Eugene D. Genovese so labelled him,[18] Donald could certainly

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16 Higham, History, p. 230.

17 Donald was born in 1920, and Elkins in 1925.

18 "Review of Elkins, Slavery," in Science and Society, XXV (Winter, 1961), 41.

be counted as one, too, for the two historians not only shared a deep concern with institutions, traditional values, and society as a whole, but also described the ante-bellum society in almost the same way. To them, the forty years before the Civil War was a period during which traditional America broke down. Economic growth and the expansion of democracy disrupted traditional institutions, diffused powers, eroded established authorities, and freed people from the bonds of prescription and custom. The only thing left was an excess of individualism to Elkins or an excess of democracy to Donald.[19] Whatever they might call this

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[19] Donald argued that "the expansion of the frontier, the rise of the city, the exploitation of the great natural wealth" produced "not cohesion but individualism." Under the impact of these forces, "all the recognized values of orderly civilization were gradually being eroded;" society was atomized; precedent and authority were thrown off; "every institution...was challenged and overthrown;" and the power and authority of the Church, the squirearchy of the Middle States and the South, the Second Bank of the United States, and the government, both federal and state, declined. See his "An Excess of Democracy: the American Civil War and the Social Process," This was his inaugural lecture as Harnsworth Professor of American History at the University of Oxford in 1960, reprinted in David Donald, Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era (New York, Second Edition enlarged, 1965), pp. 209-235. Quotations are taken from p. 235, 223 and 226. Elkins had the same opinion. He said: "the very success of his society--of capitalism, of religious liberalism, and political democracy"--made it unnecessary for the American "to be concerned with institutions." As a result, traditional institutions such as the Church, the bar, the Federalist party, and the stable economic organizations maintained by the great trading families of the East were broken down; traditional centers of power and reference dissolved; and individualism and its counterpart, anti-institutionalism, became so prevailing that Americans could not think and act concretely. See Stanley M. Elkins, Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life, (Chicago, 1959), pp. 27-37.

structural breakdown, its effect on society were believed by them to be disastrous. To Donald the "excess of liberty" made Americans "unable to arrive at seasoned, independent judgments upon the problems which faced their society," and impeded the rise and crystalization of a conservative statesmanship which might have prevented the nation from going to war; to Elkins, individualism with its counterpart, anti-institutionalism, tended to lead antebellum thinking and action toward abstractness, and caused that generation of Americans to be unable to deal with slavery as well as other problems in a concrete, institutional, and pragmatical way.[20] The conservatism implicit in their blaming excessive individualism or democracy, and in their deploring the breakdown of authorities and institutions already put them in the camp of the consensus historians. But there is another point on which they were in agreement with other historians of their time. This is the stress on consensus. Both Donald and Elkins insisted that the institutional breakdown and the excess of democracy or individualism were national phenomenon, not confined to any particular section or class. All sections and classes were hostile to established sources of authorities and exalted the individual.[21]

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[20] Donald, "An Excess of Democracy," in Lincoln Reconsidered, pp. 229-235; and Elkins, Slavery.

[21] Donald urged historians "to emulate the best of these European observers" who "stressed the basic unity of

Not only in outlook and emphasis, but also in method of investigation, Donald and Elkins were in accordance with other consensus historians. They also used psychological approach. Their acceptance of it is perhaps more easily understood because it had a double appeal to them. It enabled them to explain away probably the most obvious conflicts in American history--the conflicts which led to the Civil War. But it also provided an escape for the embarrassment they must have felt in dealing with the slavery problem in the 1950's. This was the decade in which sympathy to the Negroes was increasing, though racism was still strong.[22] And they must have been aware of the fate of revisionism. These facts must have caused them to be unwilling to dismiss the abolitionists as nothing more than troublemakers as the revisionist historians had done. However, their essential conservatism precluded the possibility of an all-out embrace of abolitionism. Caught between their own conservative preference and their unwillingness to denounce

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American culture," and to draw "a broad picture of the common American values in the early nineteenth century," and insisted that the same social process of disorganization "affected all sections of the country." See "An Excess of Democracy," in Lincoln Reconsidered, p. 216, and 235. Elkins made no sectional distinctions in his discussion of the institutional breakdown, the lack of institutional restraints, the exaltation of individualism, and their effects on the thought and action of the ante-bellum generation. See, Slavery.

22 For the changing opinion on the race problem during the period after the Second World War, see Chapter VI.

totally the abolitionist, it is possible that they were trapped in a dilemma in approaching the dispute over slavery. Anyway, the fact is that they were unable to decide whether or not to blame the abolitionists. On the one hand, they excused the abolitionists' extremism by regarding it as the logical product of the unhealthy situation of society or conceded something good to the abolitionists. On the other hand, it is quite clear that they were annoyed by what they considered as the extremism of the abolitionists. If this inability can be regarded as a symptom of dilemma, then psychological interpretation gave them an opportunity to solve their uneasiness by divorcing the abolition movement from the problem of slavery both in cause and aim.

Then, in method and emphasis, Donald and Elkins were under the influence of the general conservative climate of opinion of the 1950's, and moved toward a stress on consensus in history. But in homogenizing the ante-bellum society, they met a formidable difficulty. After all, the Americans of that generation fought a terrible Civil War. Conflicts were too obvious to be ignored. If they could not be ignored, however, they could be explained away. With the help of psychological approach, Donald and Elkins turned the most obvious of the sectional conflicts leading to the Civil War, that over slavery, away from a sectional dispute into a means by which the abolitionists sought to ease their own psychological tension. When the conflict over slavery was removed or minimized, a broad national consensus could thus

be established. Considering the remarkable similarity in method and historical outlook between Donald and Elkins and many other consensus historians, it is reasonable to regard the interpretation of the abolition movement by Donald and Elkins as part and parcel of the consensus historiography.

Of course, Donald and Elkins were not the only historians of the 1950's who tried to interpret the abolition movement in psychological terms. Before them, Hazel C. Wolf produced a psychological study of the abolitionists in 1952.[23] So far as the significance of the slavery dispute for the coming of the Civil War is concerned, she seemed still under the influence of the revisionist historians. She considered the controversy over slavery as "actually least involved with differences in the fundamental needs and interests of the north and south." Yet, the combination of efforts of the moral and political abolitionists convinced in 1861 both the protagonists and antagonists of slavery that "only force could resolve the differences between the two sections."[24] But unlike the revisionist historians, her primary interest was not in the relation of the abolition agitation to the Civil War, but in the role

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[23] Hazel C. Wolf, On Freedom's Altar: The Martyr Complex in the Abolition Movement (Madison, Wisconsin, 1952).

[24] Ibid., p. vii, and xii.

played by the martyr complex in the abolition movement. And in tracing that role, she helped to change partially the abolitionists' image from that of warmongers to that of neurotics.

According to Wolf, drawing their antislavery inspiration from "the combination of the revivalist-taught personal responsibility for salvation and the natural-rights humanitarianism," the abolitionists sought to capitalize on the American tradition of martyrdom to impress their cause upon the public by making themselves identify "with early martyrs of Christianity."[25] They courted persecutions, welcomed sufferings, and gladly sacrificed family, wealth, social standing, and even life. When Elizah Lovejoy, Charles Torrey, John Brown, and Abraham Lincoln actually died for the cause of freedom, and when Garrison, Weld, Birney, Prudence Crandall, Alanson Work, George Thompson, the "Seventy," and many other abolitionists were actually prisoned or rough-handled by mobs, the abolitionists were never tired of publicizing these persecutions, sufferings, and sacrifices, and of calling the public attention to the similarity of their "immolation to that of the heroes and heroines of John Foxes' Book of Martyrs."[26] The strategy of playing upon the martyr tradition paid off in achieving finally publicity for their cause.[27]

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[25] Ibid., p. 16, and 4.

[26] Ibid., p. 147.

[27] Ibid., p. 99.

So far, Wolf seemed to describe the function of the martyr complex in the abolition movement primarily as a "propaganda device."[28] And for that matter, she gave the impression that this strategy was deliberately chosen by the abolitionists, or at least they were aware of its usefulness to their cause, for she repeatedly asserted that the abolitionists "know reaction to martyrdom would favor the abolition cause," that they "welcomed persecution for its advantage to the cause of the slave," and that the favorable response of Americans to the death of Lovejoy "reaffirmed the abolitionists' conviction that one martyrdom converted more men to the cause than could all the lecturers and pamphleteers in two score years."[29] The martyr complex was treated not as a psychological drive but as a means rationally chosen.

However, this is only one aspect of Wolf's treatment of the role of the martyr complex in the abolition crusade. In other places, she also conveys the impression that the martyr complex was a psychological drive. She declared that Weld "glorified in the persecution he suffered;" that Garrison "knew he wanted a cause...he had a mania for uniqueness and for attention," that the abolitionists were "eagerly biding for a martyr's crown," and that "for a decade after Lovejoy, lust for martyrdom permeated abolition

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[28] Ibid., p. 80.

[29] Ibid., pp. 27, 49, and 78.

ranks."[30] Such assertions, together with the use of "the martyr complex"--a psychological term--in the subtitle of her book, may suggest the abolitionists' inner desire for martyrdom for its own sake. In the final analysis, therefore, it seems that Wolf was unable to decide whether to treat the abolitionists as true reformers who used the American tradition of martyrdom merely as a means of achieving their goal of abolishing slavery or as neurotics who, obsessed with the martyr complex, sought persecution in order to glorify in it.

Wolf was in essence a transition figure from the revisionist historians to Donald and Elkins. She recognized the pathological features in the abolition crusade, but was unprepared to absolve the abolitionists from responsibility assigned by the revisionists for bringing about the Civil War. This was done by Donald and Elkins in their more fully psychological interpretations.

Donald addressed himself exclusively to the question of the motivation of the abolitionists. And he found the answer in a "status revolution." This was not an entirely new theory. In 1906, Frank T. Carlton already suggested that the ante-bellum humanitarian reformers came mainly from an old ruling class which was decaying and losing its

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[30] Frank T. Carlton, "Humanitarianism, Past and Present," in International Journal of Ethics, XVII (Oct., 1906), 48-55.

hold on social and economic supremacy with the advent of industrialization. This was essentially the theme of Donald's argument except that while Carlton saw the reformers as motivated by ideals, Donald found the motives of the abolitionists in frustration felt by members of the displaced ruling class.

Unsatisfied with all the previous explanations of why the abolition movement appeared particularly in the 1830's, Donald came to the belief that "the best way to answer this difficult problem is to analyze the leadership of the abolitionist movement." And based on the findings obtained from an analysis of the backgrounds of one hundred and six abolition leaders, he drew a composite portrait of abolitionist leadership:

> "Descended from old and socially dominant Northeastern families, reared in a faith of aggressive piety and moral endeavor, educated for conservative leadership, these young men and women who reached maturity in the 1830's faced a strange and hostile world. Social and economic leadership was being transformed from the country to the city, from the farmer to the manufacturer, from the preacher to the corporation attorney. Too distinguished a family, too gentle an education, too nice a morality were handicaps in a bustling world of business. Expecting to lead, these young people found no followers. They were an elite without function, a displaced class in American society."[31]

Unable to make terms with the new money-grabbing order, and yet prohibited from idleness by family tradition

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[31] David Donald, "Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists." This essay was included in the first edition of his Lincoln Reconsidered, first published in 1956, p. 33.

and education, these young members of the displaced class found in agitation "the only chance for personal and social self-fulfillment." They supported a variety of reforms; but "an attack on slavery was their best, if quite unconscious, attack upon the new industrial system."[32] Although dangerous and sacrificing, participation in abolition "offered these young people a chance for a reassertion of their traditional values, an opportunity for association with others of their kind, and a possibility of achieving that self-fulfillment which should traditionally have been theirs as social leaders." Indeed, "reform gave meaning to the lives of this displaced social elite." "Viewed against the backgrounds and common ideas of its leaders," Donald concluded his analysis, "abolitionism appears to have been a double crusade. Seeking freedom for the Negro in the South, these reformers were also attempting a restoration of the traditional values of their class at home. Leadership of humanitarian reform may have been influenced by revivalism or by British precedent, but its true origin lay in the drastic dislocation of northern society. Basically, abolitionism should be considered the anguished protest of an aggrieved class against a world they never made."[33]

In spite of the title, "Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," Donald dealt in this essay with only a very

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[32] Ibid., p. 34.

[33] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

narrow aspect of the abolition movement, the motivation of abolition leadership. On this point, Donald made himself quite clear. He believed that the abolition leaders were motivated by the suffering of a displaced social elite class, and the basic aim of their crusade was not so much to free the slave as to restore the traditional values of their own class and to achieve their own self-fulfillment. Beside this, there is no way to know from the essay what were the motives of the rank and file of the abolition movement, though Donald implicitly considered his findings about the leaders as applicable to all abolitionists, or how the crusade as a whole fared.

However, it is still possible to discover how he viewed the abolitionists. His attitude toward them seemed marred by an inability to decide whether to blame the abolitionists or not. On the one hand, he made some efforts, albeit casual and perfunctory, to paint the abolitionists in a less unfavorable portrait. In his revised edition of James G. Randall's The Civil War and Reconstruction, he considerably watered down Randall's indictment of the abolitionists.[34] He admitted that at least a part of the

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[34] James G. Randall and David Donald, The Divided Union (Boston, 1961), pp. 21-26. On the request of Randall's widow and publishers, Donald revised and updated Randall's The Civil War and Reconstruction. The Divided Union is the result of this revision with the omission of Lincoln's abortive attempts at reconstruction. A full text of the revised edition was published as J.G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction.

aim of the abolitionists was to free the Negro slave, and granted the sincerity of their devotion to the cause.[35] Though still considering the abolition agitation a factor in the sectional conflict, he indicated in "An Excess of Democracy" that the Civil War came not so much because of the emotion itself aroused by the abolition propaganda as Randall and other revisionist historians maintained as because the unhealthy situation of the whole ante-bellum society rendered it unable to bear emotional shocks, however weak.[36] Thus, the abolitionists were cleared the charge of being responsible for the coming of the Civil War.

Yet all these concessions could not conceal his antipathy toward the abolitionists. He still regarded at least "a small group" of abolitionists as "extreme" and "doctrinaire". He softened Randall's indictment, but did not change his basic hostile attitude. Functioning as a psychiatrist, Donald undertook a psychoanalytical and unfavorable diagnosis of the career of the political abolitionist, Charles Sumner. Frustrated by failure in family life and business, obsessed with a neurotic craving for persecution,

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[35] Donald wrote: "Abolitionism was a dangerous creed of devotion, and no fair-minded person can believe that men joined the movement for personal gain or for conscious self-glorification. In all truth, the decision to become an antislavery crusader was a decision of conscience." Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," in Lincoln Reconsidered, p. 22.

[36] In Donald, Lincoln Reconsidered, pp. 215 and 234-235.

Sumner became so extreme in the abolition cause that Donald felt Sumner responsible in no small part for the sin of the Civil War.[37] However, the most unfavorable reaction of Donald to the abolitionists was implied in his description of them as psychologically and socially maladjusted persons. He was very annoyed by some abolitionists' violent attack on President Lincoln. And in his attack, he discovered "a symptom of some profound social or psychological dislocation" in the abolitionists.[38] He then reduced the whole abolitionist motivation to a neurotic disturbance by writing: "by his (Lincoln's) effective actions against slavery he left the abolitionists without a cause. The freeing of the slaves ended the great crusade that had brought purpose and joy to the abolitionists. For them Abraham Lincoln was not the Great Emancipator; he was the killer of dreams."[39] What is implied here is that deep in their hearts, what the abolitionists really wanted was merely a "cause" to agitate for the easing of their own psychological tension rather than for the realization of the aim of that cause. This implication was in direct contradiction to his own concession about the abolitionists' sincere devotion to the slaves'

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[37] David Donald, Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War (New York, 1961).

[38] Donald, "Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," in Lincoln Reconsidered, p. 20.

[39] Ibid., p. 36.

freedom, for, if the abolitionists were so eager to have merely a cause to agitate in order to alleviate their own sufferings from psychological dislocation that they became so angered over Lincoln's killing that cause by emancipating the slaves, how could they also have been moved by a "decision of conscience" to work sincerely for the abolition of slavery?

Concerning the problem of abolition motivation, Donald suggested that the abolition agitation was used by the abolitionist as a means to achieve personal or social self-fulfillment and inner equilibrium rather than a genuine humanitarian crusade. He admitted the sincerity of the abolitionists' devotion to the slaves' cause, but his admission was contradicted by his basic argument. This is undoubtedly an indication of his indecision as to whether to blame the abolitionists or not. This indecision can also be found in Elkins' discussion of the abolitionists.

Elkins was less interested in the problem of motivation than in why ante-bellum Americans were incapable of dealing with the problem of slavery in a concrete and practical way. He was struck by the abolitionists' anti-institutionalism, individualism, abstractness, and moral aggression. And he found that these traits were only the reflection of the ante-bellum state of mind. With the general breakdown of traditional institutions and diffusion of power, American mind tended to be anti-institutional and individualistic. Cut from the sources of power and thus

from responsibility too, the intellectuals, particularly the Transcendalists, to whom society and reformers looked for cues and wisdom, came to celebrate individualism. Anti-institutional and individualistic, their thinking also became abstract. Americans and their thinkers could not confront social problems institutionally and concretely. When in this state of mind, intellectuals and reformers approached the subject of slavery, "not only did these men fail to analyze slavery itself as an institution, but they failed equally to consider and exploit institutional means for subverting it."[40] Despite the existence of several antislavery groups with different slogans at the beginning, Garrisonian individualism triumphed at last in the nationally organized abolition movement. The denunciation of existing institutions, the breakup of the national antislavery society, the demand for immediate and unconditional emancipation, and the assertion of the moralityof the slaves as individuals all came to exhibit the characteristics of ante-bellum American mind--anti-institutionalism, individualism and abstractness.[41]

But what is of greater interest for this discussion is Elkins' analysis of another trait of the abolition movement: moral aggression or its counterpart, the sense of guilt. According to Elkins, the sense of guilt was a

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[40] Elkins, Slavery, p. 168.

[41] Ibid., pp. 175-193.

necessary element not only for the abolition crusade but also for all other reform movements.[42] A latent element coexisting with slavery itself in time, the guilt sense suddenly became acute in the 1830's. Why? Elkin's answer was the expansion of slavery in the South. "By 1830 the spread of slavery had begun to force upon Americans a catalogue of unsuspected revelations. And accordingly, their guilt and outrage were harassed and quickened from the days of Garrison's first blasts in 1831...until the upheaval of 1861 in which slavery was destroyed by fire and sword."[43] In the unique American social and intellectual setting, this "harassed and quickened" sense of guilt assumed "a unique and disproportionate role in American reform activity."[44] It tended to be personal and destructive because of:

> the absence of clear channels for the harnessing of these drives that made it so.... Guilt must be borne as an individual burden to a degree not to be observed elsewhere. Guilt in a structured situation has formalized outlets, limits within which it may be expressed constructively and with effect. Otherwise, it has no such channels. It will thus accumulate, like static electricity; it became aggressive, unstable, hard to control, often destructive. Guilt may at this point be transformed into implacable moral aggression: hatred of both the sinner and the sin.[45]

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[42] Ibid., p. 161.

[43] Ibid., p. 36.

[44] Ibid., p. 161.

[45] Ibid., p. 161.

This is exactly what happened in the abolition movement. Without "the traditional mechanism" whereby the sense of guilt or moral aggression could be controlled, oppressed by accumulated and undischarged guilt, "the gentle Americans of mild vices was transformed into the bloody avenger."[46] Thus, anti-institituionalism, individualism, abstractness of thinking, and the cutting sense of guilt inclined the abolitionists to reduce complex problems to simple moral absolutes, and turned them into uncompromising, self-righteous moral aggressors crying: "Destroy the evil... root it up, wipe it out."[47]

So far as he blamed the ante-bellum society for the moral absolutism and extremism of the abolition agitation, Elkins seemed to exonerate the abolitionists. In rebuffing the revisionist historians, he argued that "a healthy culture can afford "radicalism and propaganda. He believed that it was a good thing for such a culture to have "its fanaticism and moral passion." The real difficulty was not fanaticism and moral passion as such, but "the lack of proper channels" in American society to direct them.[48] In this society, moderate and gradual solution of the slavery problem was not really a possible alternative.[49] Clearly,

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[46] Ibid.,p. 164, and 35.

[47] Ibid., p. 164.

[48] Ibid., p. 201.

[49] Ibid., p. 194.

Elkins suggested that the fanaticism of the abolitionists was the logical child of the unstructured situation of antebellum American society.

If Elkins considered the fanaticism of the abolition crusade inevitable, he still disliked the abolitionists for not approaching the problem of slavery in an institutional and concrete way. "But while our thinkers and reformers considered the issue in such abstract purity, in such simple grandeur, there was, in principle if not in fact, an alternative philosophical mode. Slavery might have been approached not as a problem in pure morality but as a question of institutional arrangements--a question of those institutions which make the crucial difference in men's relationship with one another. . ."[50] He even suggested a series of "separate short-term reforms" which might have eventually removed slavery without bloodshed.[51] He seemed to maintain that even if gradual reform was impossible, it was still the responsibility of thinkers and reformers to think and act in regard to slavery concretely and institutionally. Anyway, it is quite obvious that Elkins was critical of their anti-institutionalism. His discussion on the Transcendentalists whom he called "intellectuals without responsibility" is a prolonged criticism. Although

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[50] Ibid., p. 28.

[51] Ibid., pp. 194-195.

he declared that "Garrison or no Garrison," abolition was "bound to move" in the direction of simplicity, fragmentation, and diffusion of effort,[52] he could not suppress his dislike of Garrison. According to Elkins, Garrison, "with his egocentric singleness of mind, antagonized most of those who tried to combine with him in any action requiring concerted effort." While the New England Antislavery Society "split wide apart over the venom of his attack on the clergy," the vitality of the American Antislavery Society itself "had been. . . sapped by Garrison's reputation." Borrowing Weld's words, Elkins charged that all the enterprises Garrison's name touched acquired a "vague and infinite odium."[53] Garrisonism meant to Elkins "radical doctrines, intransigence, intolerance, fanaticism."[54] In contrast to the practical British abolitionists, "who was poor Garrison?" Asked Elkins, "what plan had he, what were his resources--other than the impotent fury of his own poisoned pen?"[55] If Garrison and other abolitionists were not responsible for the rise of the pro-slavery consensus of the South, their violent and uncompromising attack certainly "did much to bring it into focus." "What the

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[52] Ibid., p. 184.

[53] All the four quotations are taken from Ibid., p.183.

[54] Ibid., p. 184.

[55] Ibid., pp. 204-205.

abolitionist blasts of Garrison and others could then do, and did with peculiar effectiveness, was to bring that consensus to an acute pitch of self-awareness."[56] To such usual charges, of course, Elkins, like Donald, added a new one by his psychological interpretation. By declaring that "the easing of guilt is always a most important hidden functioning"[57] of American reform movements, Elkins seemed to hint that the abolitionists were concerned not so much with the elimination of an injust and evil institution as with the alleviation of their own guilty feelings.

Accusing and excusing the fanaticism of the abolitionists in the same breath, Elkins showed the indecision comparable to Donald's to blame or not the abolition agitators. In this respect, even Wolf, though still under the influence of the revisionist historians, was not very different from the other two historians because she was also unable to make up her mind to describe the abolitionists as true reformers or neurotics. This indecision was largely a reflection of the dilemma in which they were caught when they dealt with the abolition movement. Influenced by the general intellectual outlook of the 1950's, Donald and Elkins at least, like other consensus historians, went conservative in their historical writings. This conservatism prescribed their basic antipathy toward the abolitionists.

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56 Ibid., pp. 207 and 211-212.

57 Ibid., p. 164.

Yet, the 1950's also witnessed a decline of extreme racial bias and a growing sympathy to the Negroes. Aware of this trend in public opinion on the racial problems, they must have been unwilling to treat the abolitionists as nothing more than irresponsible troublemakers. Hence, the dilemma and indecision. They reluctantly made a few concessions, and even tried to absolve the abolitionists from charges of being either warmongers or fanatics. But these efforts, already overshadowed by their more pronounced criticisms, were repudiated by their application of the "tension reduction" theory to the abolitionists' behavior. Intentionally or not, by the use of this theory, they effectively divorced the whole abolition movement from the real social evil, and turned it into a means for the abolitionists to ease their own tension. Thus, the final and overall image of the abolitionist as portrayed by Wolf, Donald, and Elkins was not that of a true reformer motivated by ideals or humanitarian compassion and seeking to free the Negro slaves, but that of a neurotic who used the abolition agitation to mitigate his own suffering from either a longing for martyrdom, or from a sense of frustration or guilt. Viewed from this image, their concessions, at best only casual and reluctant, can only be regarded as signs of their conscious efforts to ease their own troubled minds.

Probably because of the novelty of and the new opportunity of investigation opened by their interpretations, the writings of Wolf, Donald, and Elkins have been generally

regarded by historians as significant studies of the abolition movement, and, judged by their acceptance as well as refutation, had a great influence on some historians who dealt with reform movements. David Brian Davis predicted that "future studies of American reform will be heavily indebted to the new approaches taken by Donald and Elkins."[58] The importance accorded their interpretations is further attested by the inclusion of Donald's article in one, and Elkins' discussion in two anthologies on the abolition movement widely used in college history courses.[59] Moreover, several historians incorporated the approach of one or the other of the three historians in their studies.[60] For example, George M. Fredrickson in his study of the impact

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58 David Brian Davis, ed., Ante-bellum Reform (New York, 1967), p. 7.

59 Both Hugh Hawkins, ed., The Abolitionists (Boston, 1964), and Richard O. Curry, ed., The Abolitionists: Reformers or Fanatics? (New York, 1965) included Elkins; Donald appears only in the latter.

60 So far as articles in the leading historical journals between 1950 and 1960 show, the influence of Wolf, Donald, and Elkins was negligible. Out of about fifteen articles which have any bearing on the abolition movement in these journals, only one indicates the influence of Donald, this is Merton L. Dillon's article. Another one is Robert Allen Skotheim's criticism of Donald's article. This is probably because the two most significant studies, that of Donald and Elkins, of the three historians did not appear until the late 1950's. The number of articles in Journal of Negro History are eight, in Mississippi Valley Historical Review four, in Journal of Southern History three, and in American Historical Review none.

of the Civil War on northern intellectuals discussed some abolitionists essentially in Elkins' terms. John L. Thomas discovered the same characters in the abolitionists as those stressed by Elkins, and sometimes used a psychological approach. Merton C. Dillon depended heavily on Donald, Wolf, and Clifford S. Griffins' concept of social control in proving the total failure of the abolition movement. Joseph R. Gusfield was influenced by Donald and Griffin in his study of the temperance movement. Walter M. Merrill also borrowed from Wolf and Donald in his unsympathetic psychoanalytical study of Garrison. And Kinley J. Brauer used carefully some of Donald's analytical concepts in tracing the antislavery political movement in Massachusetts.[61]

However, the importance of their studies was not only shown by approvals. It was also attested to by the widespread

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[61] George M. Fredrickson, The Inner Civil War (New York, 1965); John L. Thomas, The Liberator: A Biography of William Lloyd Garrison (Boston, 1963); Merton L. Dillon, "The Failure of American Abolitionists," in Journal of Southern History, XXVI (1959), 157-177; Joseph R. Gusfield, Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement (Urbana, Ill., 1963); Walter M. Merrill, and Against Tide and Wind: A Biography of Wm. Lloyd Garrison (Cambridge, 1963); and Kinley J. Brauer, Cotton Versus Conscience: Massachusetts Whig Politics and Southern Expansion, 1843-1848 (Lexington, Ky., 1967). For Clifford S. Griffins' concept of social control, see his "Religious Benevolence as Social Control, 1815-1860," in Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLIV (Dec. 1957), 423-444.

critical reaction their interpretations, particularly that of Donald and Elkins, provoked. It is really surprising to find so many articles in historical journals which directly or indirectly challenged the validity of their conclusions or the method they used to arrive at those conclusions. Suffice it to mention only a few names here. Robert Allen Skotheim pointed out that Donald's interpretation was not clear in some important respects, and lacked necessary evidence to establish the thesis. Aileen S. Kraditor criticized Elkins for his identification of the entire abolition movement with Garrionism and for his failure to provide relevant evidence for his conclusions. Martin B. Duberman complained about the hastiness of the psychologist-historians in making unsympathetic sweeping generalizations about the abolitionists' behavior at a time when so few of the elements possibly involved in their motivation was known and when psychology itself was in a state of fluidity. Because of the myriad of personalities and diversity of experiences of those who decided to join the abolition crusade, Betty Fladeland seriously doubted the validity of categorizing the whole body of abolitionists in any psychological terms. In repudiating Elkins, Robert D. Marcus argued that the middle period was not an age of chaos or destruction because of the breakdown of old institutions; instead, it was an age rich in the creation of new institutions under which Americans have since lived. And Gerald Sorin in a study of the New York abolitionists drew

conclusions in direct opposition to those of Donald.[62] The list can be further enlarged. But the above named are already enough to show the dissatisfaction among many historians with the methodology and interpretations of Donald and Elkins. It is worthy of pointing out that these critics are historians of a younger generation with a new outlook completely different from that of Donald and Elkins, and that they are very impatient with their predecessor's critical treatment of the abolitionists. From this fact, it is particularly significant that they picked out Donald and Elkins for targets of attack. It indicated how important they estimated the interpretations of Donald and Elkins.

Like other prevailing interpretations of the abolition movement of particular periods, the rise of the consensus interpretation of the crusade had a close relation to the intellectual conservatism of the decades after the Second World War. Being such, the interpretations of

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[62] Robert Allen Skotheim, "A Note on Historical Method: David Donald's Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists;" in Journal of Southern History, XXV (1959), 356-365; Aileen S. Kraditor, "A Note on Elkins and the Abolitionists," in Civil War History, XIII (Dec., 1967), 330-339; Martin B. Duberman, "The Abolitionists and Psychology," in Journal of Negro History, XLVII (1962), 183-191; Betty Fladeland, "Who Were the Abolitionists?" in Journal of Negro History XLIX (1964), 99-115; Robert D. Marcus, "Wendell Phillips and American Institutions," in Journal of American History, LVI (June, 1969), 41-58; and Gerald Sorin, The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism (Westport, Conn., 1971).

Donald and Elkins, and to a lesser degree, that of Wolf, suited well the taste of their fellow-historians and the public in general, and had considerable influences on the study of the abolition movement for some years around 1960. But when the general climate of opinion changed, their views of the abolitionists fell into disfavor, and they became the target of criticism. The duration of their influence on abolition historiography was short. But they did not come and leave without adding something to the image of the abolitions. They put the final touch, that of the abolitionists as neurotics, to finish the bad historical portrait of the abolition agitator.

CHAPTER VI

Fighters for the Rights of Men

- A Dissenting Voice -

It should be clear from the discussion so far that the fate of the abolitionists went from bad to worse at least since the Progressive historians. Although the nationalist historians were critical of the radical aspect of the abolition movement, they upheld the significance of the moral dispute over slavery in the making of the Civil War, and reacted favorably to the moderate abolitionists. With the emerging of the Progressive historiography, the abolitionists suffered their first setback at the hands of historians. It is true that the leading Progressive historians criticized the fanaticism of the abolitionists only mildly. But they drastically reduced the significance of the abolition agitation in the sectional conflict. Then came Gilbert H. Barnes. Despite the fact that he restored the importance of the moral agitation of the abolitionists and that he was favorable to the Weld-Tappan group, Barnes dealt another blow to the image of the abolition agitators by suggesting that their primary concern was not the

abolition of slavery but the denunciation of slavery as a sin in order to discharge the duty they felt owed the South. From then on, historians, though recognizing the existence of different groups within the abolition concert, made no distinction in denouncing all the abolitionists. In the writings of the revisionist historians, the abolitionists became irresponsible propagandists responsible for bringing about the needless Civil War; and in those of the consensus historians who employed psychological approaches to the subject, they were described as psychologically dislocated persons who used the abolition agitation to reduce their own inner tensions. The resulting composite image of the abolitionist emerging from the studies of these historians was that of an extreme, impractical, blind, and irresponsible moral zealot or neurotic who in the attempt to discharge his moral duty or psychological tensions drove a reluctant people to a tragic war, or failed to effect anything except, perhaps, nuisance.

This unsympathetic view of the abolitionists dominated abolition historiography from the 1920's down to the early 1960's. But it had not completely pre-empted the field. Dissenting voices could always be heard. They might not have drawn attention as widely as the dominating interpretations of a given time, but historians with a more favorable view of the abolitionists, even of the Garrisonians, now and then put forth studies to challenge the prevailing view. For example, contributors to the Journal of Negro

History ever since its first appearance in 1915 have been in general sympathetic to the abolition crusaders. But the most noted historians who disagreed with the dominating revisionist and psychological interpretations during the period from the late 1930's to early 1960's were Dwight Lowell Dumond, Alice Felt Tyler, and Russell B. Nye.[1]

Needless to say that these three historians differed in details in their treatment of the abolition movement. But they were remarkably similar in approach and attitude toward the abolition movement which distinguished them from the Progressive masters, Barnes, and the revisionist and psychologist historians. The most distinct feature common to them all is their contention that the abolition crusade involved something more than the mere abolition of slavery. The abolitionists were not only crusaders for the freedom of slaves but also defenders of the fundamental principles and practices of democracy. By describing the abolitionists as genuine reformers fighting for the realization of the American ideals of equality and liberty for all men against the slave power and its northern allies, these historians challenged the Progressive historians' minimization of the

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[1] In emphasis and attitude, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., was similar to these three historians. But because his discussion of the abolition movement was too general, he is excluded from this discussion. See his The American As Reformer (Cambridge, Mass., 1950).

significance of the antislavery controversy, the revisionists' war-guilt charge against the crusaders, and the psychologist historians' demoralization of both the motivation and object of the abolitionists. They were further separated from the other historians by their more sympathetic attitude toward the abolition agitators. They were even less harsh toward Garrison than were historians of the other group.

The dissenting view of Dumond, Tyler, and Nye was the product of their liberalism and commitment to American democracy rather than a reflection of the prevailing outlook of their times. Born, learning, and teaching in the Midwest, they inherited a strong midwestern Progressivism.[2] This is very clear in their writings. In a survey of the history of the United States of the first four decades of the twentieth century, Dumond dismissed both laissez-faire capitalism and "crack-pot" radical collectivism, and came out strongly for the New Deal which to him represented a healthy "compromise program between socialism and individualism, between capitalism and communism."[3] Probably

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[2] Dumond was born in Ohio in 1895 and taught at University of Michigan after receiving his Ph.D. from that institute; Tyler born in Illinois in 1892 and graduated from and taught at University of Minnesota; Nye born in Wisconsin in 1913 and has been teaching at Michigan State University shortly after receiving his Ph.D. from University of Wisconsin.

[3] Dwight L. Dumond, Roosevelt to Roosevelt: The United States in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1937),

because of this liberal thinking, he was very critical of the reactionary activities of the Ku Klux Klan and the religious and economic fundamentalists during the 1920's and the early 1930's. He was particularly annoyed by their attacks on academic freedom. "Academic freedom," he wrote, "was seriously imperilled all over the country by Red hunts and legislative investigations," and the teachers oath laws.[4] Believing in the vital importance of free discussion to democracy, Dumond thought the damage of these encroachments on academic freedom "no one can adequately measure."[5] This concern with civil liberties was later reenforced by the development of events. During and after the Second World War, the threat of totalitarianism to democracy brought about another wave of interference with the freedom of expression which reached its height in McCarthyism in the early 1950's. Bothered by the totalitarian threat from abroad and the violation of civil rights at home, he was convinced that the proper way to save democracy was not to curb personal liberties but to commit more fully to democratic way of life. Thus, he urged in 1949 "our young men" to "raise their voices and never be silent until every person enjoys the inalienable rights of man, free from the

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p. 419. For his criticism of individualism, capitalism, the conservatism of the 1920's, see pp. 13, 401, 262-286, and 371-400.

[4] Ibid., p. 278. For his criticism of the teachers oath laws, see pp. 279-285.

[5] Ibid., p. 284.

persecution of his fellow man." "Living in a period of world revolution," he further declared, nothing but the combination of truth, intelligence, and deep devotion of all men to the freedom of "expression of our thought and opinions in speaking, writing, and printing will save us."[6] Bothered by the communist threat and the violation of civil rights at home, Dumond appealed to young men to protect democracy.

Professor Nye's liberal inclination is attested to by his sympathetic treatment of the midwestern Progressive movement as a struggle between agrarianism and capitalism. Though the old midwestern Progressivism, "so alive, vital, and pulsing with ideas and personalities," died in 1932, yet he hoped with an aging Progressive worker that "maybe someday my grandson will have the chance to do it again."[7] He was apparently troubled by the postwar tendency toward increasing military influence in politics and economy, "corporate concentration," and conservatism.[8] Yet he saw lights of hope in Americans' firm belief in equality, progress and free enterprise modified through the years,[9] and

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6 Dumond, "The Mississippi: Valley of Decision," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXVII (June, 1949), 75.

7 Russell B. Nye, Midwestern Progressive Politics: A Historical Study of Its Origins and Development, 1870-1958 (East Lansing, Mich., 1959), p. 362.

8 Ibid., pp. 351-354.

9 Russell B. Nye, This Almost Chosen People: Essays in

upheld the importance of civil liberties "to the present and to the future America" because they are the essential social process "that made constitutional democracy possible and workable."[10] Thus, Professor Nye, like Dumond, also deemed unhampered civil liberties vital for the preservation of American democracy. Although Mrs. Tyler was not so explicit as Dumond or Nye in her concern with the present menace to democracy, her faith in the ability of the reformers to advance the cause of democracy and freedom was just as optimistic as that of the reformers whom she studied and praised.[11]

Out of their liberalism grew these three historians' conviction of the necessity of unimpeded civil liberties for the preservation and growth of American democracy and their opposition to the interferences with those liberties in their times. Such belief and reaction to contemporary events go far to explain the way in which they interpreted the abolition movement. Since they believed in the positive value of reform, they were likely to approach the abolitionists favorably, And since they stressed the vital

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the History of American Ideas (East Lansing, Mich., 1966).

10 Russell B. Nye, Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860 (East Lansing, Mich., 1948), p. x.

11 Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History From the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War (Minneapolis, Minn., 1944), pp. 548-549.

importance of civil rights, it is only natural that they would accentuate the abolitionists' role as fighters for the civil rights of all men. It is in this sense that their own beliefs influenced their interpretation of the abolition movement more than any other factors did.

But their view of the abolitionists was also affected by their attitudes toward the contemporary controversy over racial relations between the Negro and the white. Ever since the Niagara movement and the organization of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at the beginning of this century, Negroes and their white sympathizers have struggled to win for the Negroes equality and civil rights. But the efforts of almost forty years had achieved little in the face of deep-rooted racial bias. Beginning in the late thirties, however, the Negro civil rights movement gained forces, and the Negro problem once again threatened to divide the nation. Among other factors, the embarrassment felt in battling against fascist and communist countries by professing democracy while tolerating racial inequality at home must have been powerful in causing the government to take action to better race relations.[12] Anyway, it was the executive and judicial branches of the federal government that took initiatives

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12 For factors which contributed to the increasing sympathies to the Negro, see C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York, Second Revised Edition, 1966), pp. 122-134; Nye, This Almost Chosen People, pp. 350-351; and Thomas J. Gasset, Race: The History of an Era in America (Dallas, Texas, 1963), Chpts. XVI and XVII.

during and after the Second World War in eliminating racial segregation and discrimination. The public and Congress remained at first indifferent, but the massive southern resistance to the famous Supreme Courts' decisions of 1954 and 1955 eventually stirred many civil righters and Congress into action.[13] To be sure, racial bias remains strong and pervasive even today. But during the last two decades, sympathy to the Negroes and hostility to racism have been on the increase, and legal sanctions for segregation have been chopped away one after another.

Given their liberal mentality and the changing opinion on the race problem, Dumond, Tyler, and Nye could be expected to be anti-racist and pro-Negro. Unlike the revisionist historians and the psychologist historians who were either indifferent to or avoided the Negro problem,[14] the dissenting historians were disgusted by racism and discrimination against the Negroes. As early as 1939, Dumond denounced racial prejudice.[15] But his strongest indictment

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13 Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, p. 135.

14 By attributing the factors which produced the "Sambo" type of personality of slaves to the "closed system" of southern slavery, Elkins seemed to be challenging the concept of the Negro's racial inferiority. Donald's discussion of slavery in J.G. Randall and Donald, The Divided Union (Boston, 1961),pp. 50-77, largely in terms of the new findings of such historians as Allan Nevins and Kenneth M. Stampps, seemed more critical of slavery than the revisionist historians. But neither Donald nor Elkins attacked racism directly or showed sympathy to the Negro.

15 Dumond, Antislavery Origins of the Civil War in

of slavery, segregation, and racism was in his study of the antislavery crusade. "Slavery was the subordination of nearly four million Negroes to the status of beasts of the field," he indignantly assaulted human bondage. "Slavery was a deadly virus which twisted and distorted intellectual processes, social attitudes, and religious philosophy."[16] The Americans pulled down the temple of slavery; but only to reduce again the Negroes "to a second-class citizenship which is and always has been a modified form of slavery from colonial times to the present."[17] Both slavery and second-class citizenship "rest upon the barbaric, unscientific concept of racialism."[18] Professor Nye was equally strong and clear in this respect. He pointed out that the position of the Negro in American society had "changed very little in many respects since slavery days."[19] Resting on "prejudicial assumptions" and depending "for

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the United States (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1939), p. 14 and 18.

16 Dumond, Antislavery: The Crusade for Equality in America (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1961), "preface", p.v.

17 Ibid., p. 3.

18 Ibid., "preface," p.v. Dumond's denunciation of racism can be found in many places of the book.

19 Nye, This Almost Chosen People, p. 337.

support on pseudo-scientific evidence, most of it discredited by reputable scientists,"[20] the prevailing belief in late nineteenth century in white racism sanctioned Negro segregation. "So the South lost the war, and won the argument over the Negro's position in society. So far as the Negro's equality was concerned, by 1890 the Civil War might not have been fought."[21] His censure of racial bias was also clearly expressed in his contrast of "the mindless racism" of R. Carter Pittman of Alabama with the criticism of racism by William Faulkner, "a thoughtful and sensitive observer...caught like his homeland in the struggle between ancient wrongs and new beliefs."[22] Though not as explicit as Dumond and Nye, Mrs. Tyler was no less annoyed by the racial bias underlying the ante-bellum treatment of free Negroes and the colonization movement.[23]

This anti-racist and pro-Negro attitude was certain to affect their view of the abolitionists. Explicitly or implicitly, the three historians agreed that second-class citizenship was nothing but a modified form of slavery, and saw as Professor Nye that, "parallels do exist" between the ante-bellum antislavery agitation and the present Negro

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20 Ibid., p. 340.

21 Ibid., p. 337.

22 Ibid., p. 353.

23 Tyler, Freedoms' Ferment, pp. 478-479.

civil rights movement in so far as the question of civil rights is concerned.[24] Since they were sympathetic to the present Negroes' struggle for equality, it is only natural that they would emphasize the abolitionists' fight for civil liberties. To them, there was really no difference between the abolitionists and the civil righters; both groups were crusaders for freedom and equality for the black as well as the white.

Unlike most other groups of historians with similar views about the abolitionists, the interpretation of Dumond, Tyler, and Nye was influenced more by their own ideals than by the general perspective of the times. This is probably the reason why they presented a view of the abolition movement so different from those of their contemporary historians. Being liberals, they were disturbed by the attacks on civil liberties during the periods after the two world wars and the prevailing racial prejudice against the black. Believing that unhampered civil liberties were the cornerstone of democracy, confident in the relevancy of reform, and sympathetic to the Negro's struggle for equality, they naturally approached the abolitionists with sympathy and viewed them as crusaders not only for the slave's freedom but also for the freeman's liberties.

Among the three historians, it was Dumond who wrote the first and last dissenting opinion on the abolition movement. His first study of the crusade came out in 1939,

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[24] Nye, Fettered Freedom, p. xi.

the last one in 1961. The interval of more than thirty years had not changed his view at all. In both books, he hammered home the thesis that the antislavery crusaders were fighters for the fundamental principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Christian teachings.[25] Dumond believed that the roots of antislavery sentiment reached back to the revolutionary epoch. It sprang primarily

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25 Dumond has been regarded by some historians as one and the same as Gilbert H. Barnes in their interpretations. Richard O. Curry in his edited, The Abolitionists: Reformers or Fanatics? (New York, 1965), p. 3, pointed out that there were many parallels between Barnes and Dumond; C.S. Griffin in his The Ferment of Reform, 1830-1860 (New York, 1967), p. 25, included Dumond as one of Barnes' converts; and Merton L. Dillon, in "The Abolitionists: A Decade of Historiography, 1959-1969." Journal of Southern History, XXXV (Nov., 1969), 518, labelled their views as "the Barnes-Dumond interpretation." It is true that Barnes and Dumond had a very close relationship, and that their studies had similarity in some respects. For example, both were critical of Garrison and discredited his leadership. Then, they upheld the pivotal importance of western abolitionism and the influence of the Great Revival. But the differences, far outweighing the similarities, did not warrant such a classification. Among others, the following differences are quite clear. Dumond never thought the Great Revival as the only source of abolitionism as Barnes did. While Weld was Barnes' hero, Dumond put more emphasis on the importance of Birney. Barnes treated lightly the third party movement which to Dumond was the mainstream of the antislavery crusade after the schism of 1840. Dumond denounced vehemently both slavery and the South in contrast to Barnes' mild disapproval. But the greatest difference is in their attitude toward the abolitionists. Barnes was ambiguous while Dumond was frankly partisan. Barnes regarded them as no more than denunciators of slavery as a sin; Dumond considered them as heroic fighters for civil liberties.

up from the Christian teaching, particularly the Quaker doctrine of equality of all men before God, and the doctrine of natural right set down in the Declaration of Independence, though later it received a mighty impulse from the Great Revival.[26] The organized antislavery movement passed through three stages. The first, centering around the activities of the colonization society, was a failure; but it prepared the stage for the appearance of the second. This stage, extending from 1833 to 1839, was essentially a religious movement, using churches as forums, denouncing slavery as a sin, and demanding immediate emancipation. Under the effective direction of the American Antislavery Society, the abolitionists succeeded during this period in abolitionizing and converting the North.[27] The most significant development in this stage, however, was the evolvement of the Higher Law doctrine. This was largely the result of the efforts to put down antislavery agitation. The slaveholders, determined to perpetuate slavery, not only stamped out free discussion in their own section but also developed a political philosophy of concurrent majority to butress their demand for federal protection of slavery and suppression of agitation against it.[28] The Northerners for political, economic or racial reasons also

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[26] Dumond, Antislavery Origins of the Civil War, p. 121; and Antislavery, p. 17 and 26.

[27] Dumond, Antislavery Origins of the Civil War, p. 5.

[28] Ibid., pp. 68-70; and Antislavery, pp. 231-232.

endeavored to suppress the abolitionists by legislation or lawless mob actions, and thus violated the rights of petitions, and free discussion and expression of a minority group.[29] Seeing "the full significance of the denial of free inquiry and discussion," Birney and others developed "the thesis that slavery was incompatible with the fundamental principles of Americanism, and expanded the movement to free the Negro into a movement to preserve the essence of freedom for the white man."[30] To justify their demands, they combined natural law and moral law to produce the Higher Law doctrine.

So it was that natural and moral law--natural rights and moral

> obligations--bacame one and the same in the antislavery movement. Freedom of individuals to perform all the obligations arising out of the relationships between persons and between persons and God is what they called the natural rights of man [Italics his]. The natural law and the moral law lead to the same basic concept in all human relationships: the equality of all men in the eyes of God. The first words and the most important words of the Declaration had been an affirmation of human equality and the natural rights of man. It was no accident, therefore, that the first amendment should have been a guarantee of those rights...nor that antislavery men...should have reaffirmed it with such clarity and unanimity. The Declaration became the most quoted of all documents for thirty years. This was the higher law.[31]

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[29] Dumond, Antislavery, pp. 229-231.

[30] Dumond, Antislavery Origins of the Civil War, p. 50.

[31] Dumond, Antislavery, pp. 232-233.

Resting their authority on the supremacy of the Declaration of Independence, the abolitionists argued that the Constitution was an antislavery document, and that Congress had constitutional powers to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, outlaw inter-state slave trade, exclude slavery from territories, and refuse to admit into the Union new slave states. What the abolitionists had to do was only to capture the federal government to change its policies. With such a philosophy, and with local antislavery societies already acting as local political units, it was natural that the abolition movement went into politics, the third stage of organized antislavery movement. Beginning with the organization of the Liberty party in 1840, and broadening its popular basis through the Free-Soil party, the antislavery crusaders finally brought their cause to triumph in the election of Lincoln in 1860. The platform of the Republican party was in direct tradition of the antislavery movement, according to Dumond, and Lincoln a great abolitionist. "If Birney and Weld were abolitionists," he declared, "Lincoln was one; and if they had a plan, he had a better one."[32] After all, it was Lincoln who saved the Union while realizing the aim of the abolitionists by freeing the slaves.

There is not the slightest doubt that Dumond saw the abolition movement as more than just a crusade for the

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[32] Dumond, Antislavery Origins of the Civil War, p. 103.

emancipation of the slaves. It was also a movement to save "the civil rights of free men"[33] against the slave power's encroachment upon free inquiry and discussion without which "no democratic government can survive a single generation."[34] Justified by the Higher Law doctrine,

> the antislavery men were fighting for the basic principle of democracy; the exaltation of the individual, recognition of his natural rights, and protection against restraints by the government and his fellow men that he might develop his talents to the utmost of his ability. In short, they were fighting to free four million men, women, and children from slavery, and a half million more from the cruel oppression of the Northern black laws and spoilation by their neighbors. They were fighting for justice and equality under the law for all men. They were fighting for the survival of law itself, for this was a contest between government by law and government by man.[35]

"A small group in the beginning, a constitutional majority in the end,"[36] never hesitating and deviating, they carried the crusade through "to a successful conclusion, and saved the Union in the process," and scored "this country's greatest victory for democracy."[37] Then, to Dumond, the abolitionists were the great liberators of the slaves as well as the great savers of American democracy.

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[33] Ibid., p. 67.

[34] Ibid., p. 116.

[35] Dumond, Antislavery, p. 232.

[36] Ibid., "preface," p. v.

[37] Dumond, Antislavery Origins of the Civil War, p. 98;

This is also the thesis of Mrs. Tyler, Like Dumond, she considered the abolitionists to be fighters for the principles of democracy. She found the origins of the abolition movement in religious humanitarianism and the doctrine of natural rights. "At the same time," she said, "these religious humanitarians were democrats with a deep conviction of the worth of the individual and of the equality of all men." They opposed slavery because it violated democracy, degraded the individual, and denied "the most elementary human rights." Moreover, the North in silencing the abolitionists trespassed the rights of free speech and petition, while the South in protecting slavery

> had attacked the safeguards that had been placed in the constitution and in every revolutionary bill of rights to protect the civil rights which alone could guarantee the democratic way of life. Freedom of discussion was the lifeblood of democracy, and the denial of that freedom in respect to slavery was regarded as an attack upon liberties too vital to be surrendered without a struggle. Slavery thus became a menace to the white citizen and to the non-slavery North as well as to the South. 38

To fight against this menace, the abolitionists called "the democrats of the North to aid in preserving the liberties of white men as well as in securing freedom of the slaves."[39] Their call did not fail, with each instance of

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and Antislavery, "preface", p. v.

38 All the quotations are taken from Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, p. 489.

39 Ibid., p. 511.

interference with the freedom of speech, some persons were won "to the antislavery cause and to the demand for free speech."[40] At last, there presented in northern opinion "a passionate interest in the welfare of the Negro and a clear conviction that abolition of slavery and the continuance of American democracy were irrevocably connected."[41] And "the growing antislavery feeling of the country" prepared the way for the triumph of the Republican party in 1860.[42] In short, Mrs. Tyler not only saw the abolition crusade as beginning in the same sources, but also painted the abolitionists in the same manner as Dumond did.

The implication for civil liberties in the antislavery controversy was so vital, yet so neglected that Professor Nye wrote several articles and a book to expose the significance of this side of the abolition movement. He pointed out that the attention paid by historians to the political, social, and economic causes of the Civil War tended to obscure the fact that "it was motivated as well by the desire of the North to protect democratic government

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[40] Ibid., p. 506.

[41] Ibid., p. 513.

[42] Ibid., p. 499. Tyler never argued that ideological differences were the only issue that divided the nation over the problem of slavery. Sectional interests were also important. But she asserted that "the moral issue was of far more importance than economics or sectionalism to countless Northerners." Ibid., p. 545.

and the rights of Northern white freemen, rights considered by many to have been under attack for thirty years by a 'slavepower conspiracy.'"[43] To him, all the abolitionists were "sincerely concerned with the preservation of freedom in their struggle to end slavery."[44]

Professor Nye located several roots of the great ante-bellum reform movement. The Enlightenment, the Declaration of Independence, Christianity, European reform movements, Romanticism, Revivalism, and the militant Jacksonian democracy--all these elements converted to produce the reform impulse, a compound of idealism, liberalism, humanitarianism, and democracy, and a general movement seeking to perfect human institutions.[45] The abolition movement was at first only one of several reforms, but it "bulked larger and larger until at the end it overshadowed all others."[46] This is mainly because the abolition movement involved the future of democracy more intimately than other reforms. Denying the validity of the slavepower conspiracy as expounded by the abolitionists, Professor Nye

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[43] Nye, "Civil Liberties and the Antislavery Controversy," Science and Society, IX (1945), 125.

[44] Nye, Fettered Freedom, p. 317.

[45] Nye, William Lloyd Garrison and the Humanitarian Reformers (Boston, 1955), pp. 37-40, and 3; and Nye, Fettered Freedom, p. 2.

[46] Nye, William Lloyd Garrison and the Humanitarian Reformers, p. 40.

nevertheless contended that there did exist an "excellent support" in the South and a "significant support" in the North for the theory of slavery being a positive good which was itself "a counterattack on free institutions,"[47] and "in the South and also in the North, among those who would be most affected economically by agitation of the emancipation question, an agreement to suppress discussion of the slavery issue, and if possible, to promulgate neutral or proslavery sentiments."[48] In order to put down the abolitionist agitation, the slaveholders and their northern sympathizers were willing to infringe upon personal and civil rights. The abolitionists soon found this out and never ceased telling the public that slavery jeopardized "nearly every major principle of American civil rights"[49]. And the events since the 1830's gradually convinced many Northerners who were concerned less with the wrongs of the Negro than with the rights of white men that the abolitionists were right and joined the ranks of the abolitionists.[50] As a result, "the attempt of Southern ruling class to suppress the movement in the free states as it had been done

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47 Nye, Fettered Freedom, p. 315; and "The Slave Power Conspiracy: 1830-1860," Science and Society, X (1946), 273-274.

48 Nye, "Civil Liberties and the Antislavery Controversy," Science and Society, IX (1945), 125.

49 Ibid., 125.

50 Ibid., 127-128.

in slave states, involving as it necessarily did an abridgement of the civil rights of the abolitionists, probably did more to consolate anti-Southern feeling in the North and West than any other single factor."[51] By successfully merging antislavery with civil rights, the abolitionists mobilized northern opinion on their side, and turned anti-southern into antislavery sentiments.[52] Those Northerners "whose sympathies led them to see slavery as a threat to freedom" eventually joined the abolitionists "to protect those rights, basic to a democracy, by abolishing slavery."[53] In the interpretation of Professor Nye, then, the protection of democracy and freedom played from beginning to end a primary if not exclusive role in the whole abolition movement.

Dumond, Tyler, and Nye all believed that the abolition agitation began because some people considered slavery a violation of the principle of the freedom and equality of all men taught by natural as well as moral law. Furthermore, they held the opinion that its final success was helped by the identification of the antislavery cause with that of preserving the civil rights of all men which were seriously

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[51] Ibid., p. 127.

[52] Nye, Fettered Freedom, p. 316.

[53] Ibid., p. 317.

threatened by the slaveholders' drive to protect slavery. The crusade for the freedom of the slave was broadened into a movement to prevent civil liberties from being submerged by slavocracy. To them, the abolitionists were not only true reformers, sincerely concerned with the evils of slavery. They were important reformers as well because in their fighting to liberate the slaves, they at the same time preserved the fundamental principles of American democracy.

This emphasis already put them in direct contrast to their contemporary revisionist and psychologist historians. The sympathies implied in the description of the abolitionists as fighters for equality and freedom further removed them from the later group of historians who were critical of the abolitionists, particularly the Garrisonians. It is true that Dumond, Tyler, and Nye followed Gilbert H. Barnes' dichotomy of the abolitionists, and in general were more favorable to the western group than to the Garrisonians. But they were less harsh even in their evaluations of Garrison and his followers.

Dumond was the most outspoken among the three historians to glorify the non-Garrisonian abolitionists among whom Birney, Weld, and Stanton, "the great triumvirate"[54] of the antislavery cause received the most lavish praises.

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[54] Dumond, Antislavery, p. 284.

His admiration for them was so great in fact that he felt no qualm in quoting Birney's daughter, Catherine, who was of necessity partisan, to pay his homage:

> their moderation, good judgment, and piety had been seen and known of all men. Faithful in the exposure of unfaithfulness to freedom on the part of politicians and clergymen, they denounced either the Constitution, or the Bible. Their devotion to the cause of abolition was pure; for its sake they suppressed the vanity of personal notoriety and of oratorial display.[55]

These men were "neither fanatics nor incendaries." They unhesitatingly devoted themselves to the preservation of the Union and to the defense of the freedom of men. And they succeeded in both.[56] But if the abolitionists were giants, Birney was the giant of giants. His "public career extended through the entire span of the antislavery crusade, no other man was so prominantly identified with every aspect of it."[57] "A man of indomitable courage and unyielding conviction...a humanitarian by instinct,"[58] and "the very soul of dignity, integrity, and Christian virtue," Birney's emphasis on the incompability of slavery and the fundamental principles of Americanism "blossomed eventually, through his leadership, as the principle upon which Northern

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55 Ibid., p. 190.

56 Ibid., "preface," p.v.

57 Dumond, ed., Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831-1857 (New York, 1938), "Introduction", p. xii.

58 Dumond, Antislavery Origins of the Civil War, pp. 21-22.

sectionalism sought to administer the government."[59]

The praises of Mrs. Tyler and Professor Nye were more moderate. "Lundy's coverage and devotion," in Tyler's opinion, "were characteristic of the early abolitionists, and his lack of fanaticism and yet unwillingness to compromise were shown in all his writings."[60] Congressman fighting against the gag rules were called "doughty fighters."[61] "Fortunately" not all the abolitionists were of the Garrisonian type, there were in the field revivalist-abolitionists who "coupled a practical interest in social betterment with their concern over the souls of their flocks."[62] The "backbone" of the publicity program conducted by the American Antislavery Society was "the Weld-Finney group in the West" who were "responsible for much of whatever measure of success was achieved."[63] But the most favorable comment came with her eulogy of all the ante-bellum reformers of whom the abolitionists were a part: "the fundamentals of American faith and the American way of life had been set by the pioneers and the crusaders of the

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59 Ibid., p. 35.

60 Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, p. 402.

61 Ibid., p. 511.

62 Ibid., p. 490.

63 Ibid., p. 494.

early years: men to whom the life of the perfect Christ gave hope that their lives and their institutions might be perfected...men who were proud to fight in the cause of democracy and freedom."[64] Dr. Nye also praised all the abolitionists. But he seemed to consider the western-political group to be more effective than the Garrisonians. He believed that the Tappan-Weld group was larger, better-organized, better-financed, and better-skilled.[65] The work of organization and publicity campaign was mainly carried out by this group. And after 1840, because abolition was "no longer a moral but a political issue," those who favored political action became the mainstream of abolitionism. More and more western abolitionists came to believe that "success lay in politics, in the Liberty party, in the Free-Soil party, and eventually in the Republican party.... By 1856 abolitionism was the great political issue facing the nation--a question with moral implications, but one that could be answered only in political terms...the vote of the old abolitionist territories, state by state, made Lincoln president."[66] And with the Emancipation Proclamation the abolitionist crusade to free the slave was brought to a successful conclusion.[67] Like Dumond and Tyler, Professor Nye

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64 Ibid., p. 549.

65 Nye, William Lloyd Garrison and the Humanitarian Reformers, p. 59.

66 Ibid., p. 131.

67 Nye, Fettered Freedom, p.xi.

seemed to regard the practical New York-western-political abolitionists as the most effective and important group in the antislavery crusade.

So far as the classification of the abolitionists into two groups and the admiration for the western group are concerned, Dumond, Tyler, and Nye were not unlike Barnes. What set them apart from Barnes as well as other leading historians of their age was their remarkable lenience toward Garrison. It is true that they still could not embrace wholeheartedly Garrison. Criticisms of Garrison permeated their works. To Dumond, Garrison was "notoriously intolerant even toward his strongest friends," ignorant of American history and constitutional law, and "a timid soul except when safely behind the editorial desk."[68] Essentially he was "a man of distinctly narrow limitations among the giants of antislavery movement."[69] He did nothing to help the free Negro as Weld and Birney did. What was more intolerable to Dumond appeared to be Garrison's bad effects on the crusade. He became "insufferably arrogant at times in his treatment of other men, to the detriment of the cause."[70] His wrong interpretation of the Constitution as a pro-slavery document deprived the abolitionists of an

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68 Dumond, Antislavery, p. 283, 167, and 182.

69 Ibid., p. 174.

70 Ibid., p. 173.

effective means to end slavery by Congressional legislation. His denunciation of the Constitution and federal government, and his refusal to vote "hurt the cause of emancipation... played into the hands of the proslavery men. It was an obstacle to political action against slavery. It split the American Anti-Slavery Society.... It need not have done so had the colossal conceit of the man not led him to claim credit for almost everything that was done in the movement before 1840."[71] To Tyler, the Liberator was "unreasoning and unreasonable in its demands, unguarded and unequivocal in its accusation."[72] The American Antislavery Society was handicapped by its inheritance of "the public dislike" of Garrisonism which meant "radicalism, lack of practical planning, and the advocacy of everything ultra in the way of reform."[73] To Garrison "everyone who opposed him was enemy, and since he was convinced of the validity of his position, all opponents were of necessity wrong."[74] And the Garrisonians were determined to capture the American Antislavery Society and use it for their own ends of advocating nonresistance, women's rights, and disunion.[75] Nye

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[71] Ibid., p. 174.

[72] Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, p. 485.

[73] Ibid., p. 493.

[74] Ibid., p. 499.

[75] Ibid., p. 499, and 497.

was definitely of the opinion that the abolition movement was not begun by Garrison, nor organized and dominated by him. "The movement, set in motion by others, was carried to its conclusion by methods he could not accept and ideas he could not understand. Abolition passed through him, not from him."[76] He not only denied Garrison's originality and leadership but also criticized Garrison's egotism and vagaries. Garrison's "moral self-righteousness" and "absolute self-confidence" made him "unconsciously dictorial." He refused personal praise and credit; yet he "constantly sought it with a real inward hunger." His ideas sometimes were "ill-advised, wrong, or downright foolish;" yet he always obstinately identified with them to such a degree that it was "almost impossible to persuade him he was wrong."[77] His "own addiction to women's rights, religious unorthodoxy, non-government, and nonresistance as well as his imperious self-righteousness" alienated friends and helped to force the division of the American Antislavery Society.[78] Nye's dislike of Garrison was just as plain as Dumond's or Tyler's.

However, this is not the whole story. Though they found it hard to swallow all his radicalism, vagaries,

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[76] Nye, William Lloyd Garrison and the Humanitarian Reformers, p. 205.

[77] Ibid., pp. 202-203.

[78] Ibid., p. 131.

violent abuses, and self-righteousness, Dumond, Tyler, and Nye either made efforts to justify him or accorded him some significance in the antislavery movement. To measure Garrison's contribution to the movement, Dumond thought that it "must be paradoxical." Against his heavy liabilities, Dumond gave him certain credits or exonerated him from some accusations. His harsh language provoked the anger of slaveholders, but "that was of little consequence" because they "hated anyone who spoke against slavery." Moreover, "nothing short of intense, uncompromising, even violent denunciation of slavery and slaveholders would have aroused the country.... It did not retard emancipation because there was nothing to retard. It did not evoke a violent defense of slavery because slaveholders had always been vehement in its defense."[79] On the positive side, Garrison had a contribution, not an overpowering one to be sure. He provided in the Liberator "an opportunity for the Negro leaders to express their views and encourage their people. His strong, relentless championship of human rights; his refusal to recognize distinction of color or race with respect to ability, achievement, and rights; his condemnation of every sort of injustice were an encouragement and a blessing to an oppressed people which cannot be measured but was very great."[80] Tyler conceded on the other hand that the Liberator

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[79] Dumond, Antislavery, p. 173.

[80] Ibid., p. 174.

was "the cry of the outraged conscience of North." It "broke up the 'conspiracy of silence' with which the institution of slavery had been protected."[81] In his overall estimation of Garrison, Nye considered him "a person of real historical importance, for he was a symbol to his generation of the moral and ideological conflict that took its final shape in the Civil War."[82] During the first decade of the movement, he was pre-eminent; and after 1840, even though his support remained regional, he was still "an effective speaker and tireless leader."[83] To the North, he was "a goad,a prick to the conscience, a symbol of the moral problem of slavery.... Garrison, more than any other one person, shattered the 'conspiracy of silence'.... To disagree with Garrison, men had to face up to the problem, rethink their beliefs, examine their own conscience. When men did this, slavery was doomed.... Garrison's career aptly symbolized to the victorious North" the moral causes of the Civil War.[84] In essence, the three historians made substantially the same evaluation of Garrison's contribution, though they differed in the matter of Garrison's significance. He did more harm than good to the abolition movement with

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81 Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, p. 485.

82 Nye, William Lloyd Garrison and the Humanitarian Reformers, p. 205.

83 Ibid., p. 132.

84 Ibid., p. 206.

his anarchism, violent invectives, vagaries, and egotism. But at the same time he contributed much to the cause by breaking up the conspiracy of silence over the slavery question by pricking the national conscience, and thus spreading the antislavery feeling.

However, they varied in details, Dumond, Tyler, and Nye agreed on two basic points in their treatments of the abolition movement. One is that the abolitionists were fighters for both the slave's freedom and the free man's civil rights. The other is that they were sympathetic to the abolitionist. This view of the crusaders seemed to be the natural result of the reaction of their liberalism to the recurrent conservative attacks on civil liberties after both the First and Second World War and the general racist bias against the Negro. Offended by the encroachments on the freedom of thought and expression they firmly believed that the best way to protect democracy was for Americans to commit themselves more fully to civil liberties and personal rights, the cornerstone of American democracy. This emphasis on personal and civil rights was bound to affect their view on the Negro problem. If for nothing else, the need to make democracy more perfect rendered it imperative to pull down social segregations which turned the boast of democracy into a big joke. However, their pro-Negro attitude was further reinforced by their liberalism. This stress on unimpeded civil liberties, and this sympathy toward the Negro's struggle for equality were clearly reflected

in their interpretation of the abolitionists. After all, there are parallels between the present and the ante-bellum situation, and between the civil righters and abolitionists. Then, there is no wonder that their liberal mentality reacting to their contemporary experiences determined their sympathetic view of the abolitionists as brave fighters for the equality and freedom of men, white and black. Though they failed to achieve full equality for the Negroes, the abolitionists nevertheless succeeded in freeing the slaves, and in saving the Union and democracy. It is in this way that Dumond, Tyler, and Nye challenged the prevailing bad image of the abolitionists as described by the Progressive historians, Barnes, the revisionists, and the psychological historians. They were indeed dissenters.

Precisely because they were dissenters, their view of the abolitionists was not accepted widely by their contemporaries. As shown before, the major studies on the abolition movement during the period from the late 1930's to the early 1960's showed little sympathy to the crusaders, and almost none described them as constructive reformers. For that matter, few of the contributions to American Historical Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review and Journal of Southern History took up the cause of the abolitionists. Some writers in the Journal of Negro History emphasized the role of the abolitionists as fighters for human rights, or sustained the importance of the New

England abolitionists, or excused the abolitionists from some accusations.[85] But considering the nature and the traditional tone of the journal, the views of these writers can hardly be thought to be influenced by the three historians. Even the reviewers of the writings of Dumond and Nye were not all favorable.[86] While most reviewers of the two books of Nye praised his scholarship, clarity of presentation, or contribution to the understanding of the abolition movement, at least one of them complained that Nye presented only "a unilateral view of a complex subject." Another one showed his own dislike of Garrisonism."[87] Dumond fared far worse than Nye. In general, most of his reviewers disapproved his strong pro-abolitionist

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85 R.P. Ludlum, "The Antislavery 'Gag Rule': History and Argument," Journal of Negro History, XXVI (April, 1941), 203-243; Kenneth M. Stampp, "The Fate of the Southern Antislavery Movement," ibid., XXVIII (Jan., 1943), 9-22; Dorothy B. Porter, "David M. Ruggles, An Apostle of Human Rights," ibid; XXVIII (Jan., 1943), 23-50; Charles H. Wesley, "The Participation of Negroes in Antislavery Political Parties," ibid; XXIX (Jan. 1944), 32-74; Elaine Brooks, "Massachusetts Antislavery Society", ibid, XXX (July, 1945), 311-330; Louis Ruchames, "Race, Marriage, and Abolition in Massachusetts", ibid., XL (July, 1955), 250-273; and Roman J. Zorn, "The New England Antislavery Society, Pioneer Abolition Organization," ibid; XLII (July, 1957), 157-176.

86 Reviews of Tyler's book has not much use here because reviewers commented little on her treatment of the abolition movement.

87 Howard C. Perkins, "Review of Nye, Fettered Freedom", Journal of Southern History, XVI (1950), 92; and Henry Lee Swint, "Review of Nye, William Lloyd Garrison and the

and anti-southern stand, or his insensitiveness to the findings of his contemporary historians.[88] Such criticisms indicate that the warm endorsement of the abolitionists by Dumond, Tyler, and Nye ran counter to the taste of their times. It was not until the 1960's when a younger generation of historians began an all-out reassessment of the abolitionists that the interpretation of the three historians came to be appreciated.

Humanitarian Reformers," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLII (Oct., 1955), 326-327.

88 Frank L. Owsley, "Review of Dumond, ed., Letters of Birney", Journal of Southern History, V (1939), 263; Theodore Clarke Smith, "Review of Dumond, Antislavery Origins of the Civil War," American Historical Review, XLV (April, 1960), 663-664; E. Merton Coulter, "Review of Dumond, Antislavery Origins of the Civil War," Journal of Southern History, VI (1940), 270-271; and the following reviews of Dumond, Antislavery, by David M. Potter, in American Historical Review; Marcus Cancliffe, in The Spectator, vol. 208 (Jan.-June, 1962), p. 688; David Donald, in Political Science Quarterly, LXXVII (June, 1962), 273-276; Arthur Bestor, in Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLIX (Dec. 1962), 521; and C. Vann Woodward, "The Antislavery Myth", in American Scholar XXXI (Spring, 1962), 312-328.

CHAPTER VII

Practical Revolutionaries

- The View of Historians of the Last Decade -

For almost a half a century, the abolitionists had faced a largely unsympathetic academic audience. They had been neglected, derided, and denounced. Whether they were described as irresponsible fanatics or as psychologically maladjusted persons, their aim of agitation had been discredited, and their efforts seen as doing more harm than good to society as well as to the slave. The description of the abolitionists was so stereotyped that such terms as "extreme", "radical", "impractical", "zealous", "irrational", "self-righteous", "irresponsible", and "ignorant" became the most frequently used adjectives in describing them. In reading the works of these anti-abolitionists historians, it is hardly possible for one to escape the impression that it would have been far better and healthier for the development of the anti-bellum America if the abolition crusade had never existed.

Of course, not all historians prior to the 1960's accepted this stereotyped image of the abolitionists. Even

in the heyday of condemnation, some historians like Dwight L. Dumond, Alice Felt Tyler, and Russell B. Nye raised a dissenting voice, and granted the abolitionists a warmer hearing. Approaching the abolition movement with greater sympathy, they restored the image of the crusaders as true reformers moved by certain ideals and compassions for the downtrodden to remove a genuine social evil. But their sympathies were still limited, especially toward Garrison. If they wholeheartedly applauded the moderate abolitionists, they still found it difficult to embrace Garrison without reservations. It is true that they exonerated him from certain charges, and gave him agreater degree of significance in the abolition movement, but they also found fault with his radicalism and personality. They were not unqualified defenders of Garrison. Yet, in comparison, it is still correct to say that their overall view of the abolitionists was more favorable than that of the detracting historians.

The full swing of the pendulum of interpretation began by Dumond, Tyler, and Nye did not come until the recent decade when historians familiar with a radical reform movement came to explore the meanings of the abolition movement for the present-day racial problem. Recent historians showed a broader range of interest and covered a greater variety of topics than previous historians. On the surface, they seem to have little in common. However, beneath the apparent differences, there is an unreservedly sympathetic

view of the abolitionists uniting them all together. Generally speaking, they described the abolitionists as practical revolutionaries struggling not only to abolish slavery but also to eliminate deep-rooted racial prejudice. To them, the abolitionists, particularly Garrison, became the objects of respect and admiration, if not affection.[1] In this regard, they were drastically different from most previous historians. In fact, their studies amounted to a complete, sympathetic reappraisal of the abolition movement. How great was the change in attitude is shown by Martin Duberman's futile effort in 1965 to solicit some critical writings about the abolitionist from historians. Historians of the older generation declined his request on the ground that they had nothing new to say, while the younger historians were not willing to criticize the abolitionists. Indeed, as one historian indicated to Duberman, "as for 'anti-abolitionists', you are right - they are hard to find" in the mid-1960's.[2]

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1 Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Abolitionism: Its Meaning for Contemporary American Reform," The Midwest Quarterly, VIII (Autumn, 1966), 54; and Merton L. Dillon, "The Abolitionists: A Decade of Historiography, 1959-1969," Journal of Southern History, XXXV (Nov., 1969), 501.

2 Martin Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists (Princeton, N.J., 1965), "Introduction," p. viii.

More clearly than any previous change in the interpretation of the abolition movement, the recent alteration in abolition historiography was related to the intellectual shift in the last decade. The most obvious trend during the last ten years has been the rise of a radical protest movement and radical thought. The root of this radicalism was the growing tension over the problem of Negro civil rights which came to a head by the 1960's. But it was also helped by a gradual relaxation of the confrontation between communism and democracy. The thawing of the Cold War mentality brought about by the relaxation released many Americans, in particular the young Americans, from the concern with survival, and turned their attention to domestic problems. The Negro's struggle against discrimination naturally drew their attention and sympathy; but other related problems such as poverty and the Vietnam War also fanned the fire of discontent. Full of idealistic zeal, the young on campuses protested against discrimination, poverty, the Vietnam War, and other evils. When their protests brought no results, these persons became more militant. Angry and frustrated, they now cried out against the "establishment" and vowed to destroy the monster in order to make America a better place to live. They turned to radicalism.

Out of this dissatisfaction with the present soon grew a dissatisfaction with the consensus historians' description of the past. How could so imperfect a present

come from a perfect past? This doubt made them impatient with the smugness and complacency which seemed to characterize the historical studies of the 1950's. Moreover, regarding them as part of the establishment, the young radicals charged the established historians of using their academic positions to discourage dissenting. However, the most important reason for their outrage against the applogists for the past was because the young radicals felt that the established historians did not provide them with a "usable past." They were keenly aware of the need for a historical justification for their radicalism. They could not find it in the writings of the consensus historians who for the most part minimized the significance of past reform, to say nothing of radicalism. If the established historians gave them no usable past, the young radicals were determined to build one for themselves. So, some of them turned to American history to search for a radical tradition. The result was the emerging of the New-Left historiography which by and large revived the Beardian concept of class struggle.[3] So far as their aim was to establish a radical tradition in the American past, abolitionism in general and Garrisonism in particular,

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[3] For the rise of the New Left historiography, see Irwin Unger, "The 'New Left' and American History: Some Recent Trends in United States Historiography," American Historical Review, LXXII (July, 1967), 1237-1263; and the same, ed., Beyond Liberalism: The New Left Views American History (Waltham, Mass., 1971), "Introduction," pp. xi-xvi.

naturally attracted both their attention and sympathy.

However, the search for a radical past was not the only factor which contributed to the change in attitude toward the abolitionists. Another even more important reason was the intensification of the Negro civil rights movement and the growing sympathy to it. Decades of mild protests finally resulted in a militant movement during the 1960's. Angered by the massive southern resistance to desegregation and the pervasive racial bias, Negroes themselves fought against discrimination in the courts, on the campuses, and in the streets. A few of them became eventually so disillusioned and despaired of integration that they began to advocate African nationalism and Black Power. The Negroes' struggle for equality drew increasing sympathy and support from white young Americans. They participated in sit-ins, freedom-rides, peaceful marches, and other protesting activities. Historians were not immune to this growing enthusiasm for the Negro civil rights movement. Some New-Left historians were deeply involved in it.[4] But this favorable reaction was not confined to the radical

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[4] Howard Zinn was extensively involved as advisor and participant in the civil rights activities, especially those of SNCC. Martin Duberman contributed "a little money" to the Negro civil rights movement in addition to writing about it, and took part in the 1965 march to Montgomery. Staughton Lynd lost his job at Yale University because of his involvement in protests.

historians. Perhaps, even more indicative of the changing attitude among historians toward the Negro movement was a New York Times report about twenty historians, including some of the most distinguished scholars on slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, who planned to join the march led by Martin Luther King from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery in the Spring of 1965.[5] According to Merton L. Dillon, the sympathy shown by these historians seems to have been rather widely shared by other historians who did not venture to Alabama.[6]

The sympathy underlying these historians' active participation in or support to the Negroes' struggle for equality was bound to influence their view of the abolition movement. Since there are certain similarities between the present civil rights movement and the nineteenth-century crusade against slavery, it is easy for the recent advocates of civil rights to identify their activities with those of the old abolitionists. Indeed, one participant called them "the New Abolitionists."[7] And their own experiences in the

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[5] New York Times, March 23, 1965, p. 28.

[6] "The Abolitionists: A Decade of Historiography 1959-1969", Journal of Southern History, XXXV (Nov., 1969), 502.

[7] Howard Zinn, SNCC: The New Abolitionists (Boston, 1964).

civil rights movement made it possible for them to approach the abolition movement with greater perception and understanding than ever before. Then, it is no surprise that the recent studies of the crusade against slavery show a greater sympathy to the abolitionists than any previous writings on the same subject.

However, this is not to imply that all the studies on the abolition movement in the last decade were produced by young radical historians. While it is true that most of the recent abolition historians were young scholars, there were others who belonged to an older generation. The significant thing is that even these older historians were no less sympathetic to the abolitionists than their young colleagues. This fact seems to indicate that the change of attitude toward the abolitionists owed more to the growing sympathy to the Negro civil rights movement than to the rise of radicalism.

Whatever may be the relative significance of radicalism and sympathy to the Negro for the recent interpretation change, it is beyond doubt that it was influenced by them. The influence is attested to by the historians' recognition of the relevance of the experiences of the old abolitionists to the new abolitionists. It is highly significant that Howard Zinn entitled his article on the abolitionists "Abolitionists, Freedom-Riders, and the Tactics of

Agitation,"[8] and Bertram Wyatt-Brown his "Abolitionism: Its Meaning for Contemporary American Reform."[9] Martin Duberman in introducing The Antislavery Vanguard said that by presenting the past debate on the Negro question, the contributors to this volume would feel rewarded if they made "any small contribution toward its present foreshortening."[10] Aileen S. Kraditor expressed the hope that her study of the means and ends of the abolition movement would benefit the current movements for change.[11] The connection between the present and the past movement was clearly in the minds of these and other historians who wrote about the abolition movement during the last decade. Given this recognition, it is understandable that they would project their sympathy to the present-day civil righters back to the abolitionists in their studies.

It is easier to locate the roots of the charge in abolition historiography in recent years than to summarize the interpretations of the historians whose studies constituted that change. This is not only because their writings took the form of biographies, monographs, articles,

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8 In Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard, pp. 417-451.

9 In The Midwest Quarterly, VIII (Autumn, 1966), 41-55.

10 "Introduction," p .x.

11 Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison And His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850 (New York, 1967), p.3.

or review essays dealing with specific aspects or individuals of the abolition movement, but also because of the diversity of their interests. Some of them reexamined old problems, others took interest in hitherto seldom explored topics. Yet, despite the difference in interest and in interpretation, the sentiment underlying most recent studies was a sympathy for the abolitionists and an indignation against the views of previous disparaging historians. The overall image of the abolitionists emerging from these writings was one of tough-minded revolutionaries who agitated to end slavery as well as to change men's thought.

Recent historians continued to search for an answer to the question raised by David Donald: Why abolitionism appeared particularly in the early 1830's. Although they themselves provided no answers, Martin Duberman, Betty Fladeland, and Robert Allen Skotheim, showed their interest in this problem in their criticism of Donald's status revolution theory.[12] More positive were the efforts of David Brion Davis, Anne C. Loveland, and Robert H. Abzug to account for the rise of immediatism. In a very influential article published in 1962, Davis attributed the appearance of immediatism in both England and the United States to the development of the romantic and evangelical frame of mind as well as the slaveholders' resistance to

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12 See Chapter V.

even the most indirect and gradual attack on slavery.[13] Loveland traced the rise of immediatism to evangelicalism growing out of the theological speculations of Joseph Bellamy, Samuel Hopkins, Timothy Dwight, Nathaniel William Taylor, Lyman Beecher, and Charles G. Finney.[14] Drawing on the conclusion of Loveland, Abzug argued that immediatism was the product of the combination of the principles of evangelical religion and the Garrisonian abolitionists' fear of slave violence. Fearing the danger of a general slave revolt, the Garrisonians believed that the only way to remove it was "immediate recognition of the sin of slavery and immediate repentence which would result in the abolition of slavery because benevolence would replace evil self-interest."[15]

Davis, Loveland, and Abzug paid no attention to Donald. Nor did they describe the aim of the abolitionists as Gilbert H. Barnes did, despite the fact that they, like Barnes, stressed the importance of evangelical thought for

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13 David Brion Davis, "The Emergence of Immediatism in British and American Antislavery Thought," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLIX (Sept., 1962), 209-230.

14 Anne C. Loveland, "Evangelicalism and 'Immediate Emancipation' in American Antislavery Thought," Journal of Southern History, XXXII (May, 1966), 172-188.

15 Robert H. Abzug, "The Influence of Garrisonian Abolitionists' Fears of Slave Violence on the Antislavery Argument, 1829-1840," Journal of Negro History, LV (Jan.,1970), 15-26.

the appearance of abolitionism. From the revival principles Barnes derived the aim of the crusaders as denouncing slavery as a sin and immediate repentence. Davis, Loveland, and Abzug arrived at a different conclusion from the same source. They never doubted that the object of the abolitionists was to end slavery. In fact, Loveland criticized Barnes for his distorting of the meaning of immediatism as originally understood by the abolitionists.[16] To her and the other two historians, the antislavery crusaders were no mere denunciators. They were true reformers aiming at the destruction of a real evil. Davis pointed out that "in one sense immediatism was simply a shift in strategy brought on by the failure of less direct plans for abolition." If the public could once be convinced of the wrongness of slavery and of the necessity of doing something about it at once through the propaganda of immediate emancipation, "the governments would be forced to take care of the detail."[17] Loveland argued that the abolitionists preached immediate repentence and emancipation "in an effort to persuade the American people of their duty and

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16 Loveland, "Evangelicalism and 'Immediate Emancipation' in American Antislavery Thought," Journal of Southern History, XXXII (May, 1966), 174.

17 Davis, "The Emergence of Immediatism in British and American Antislavery Thought," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLIX (Sept., 1962), 227.

ability to abolish slavery immediately. They called for immediate repentence of the sin of slavery, believing that repentence would ultimately result in total abolition."[18] And what underlay the whole argument of Abzug was the notion that the Garrisonians advocated immediate emancipation as a practical means to remove the danger of slave violence. Such opinions clearly indicate that these historians viewed the abolitionists not as mere denunciators or neurotics, but as true reformers dedicating themselves to arousing public action against slavery through the preaching of immediate repentence.

Recent historians also showed continuing interest in the problem of the effects the abolition agitators had on ante-bellum events, institutions, or the sectional conflict. In an examination of the petition campaign and the controversy over the gag rule, James M. McPherson came to the conclusion that the abolitionists finally broke up the conspiracy of silence around slavery and "bust the bonds of intersectional party alliance and foreshadowed the breakup of parties."[19] Robert T. Lewit found that the growth of

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18 Loveland, "Evangelicalism and 'Immediate Emancipation' in American Antislavery Thought," Journal of Southern History, XXXII (May, 1966), 188.

19 James M. McPherson, "The Fight Against the Gag Rule: Joshua Leawitt and Antislavery Insurgency in the Whit Party, 1839-1842," Journal of Negro History, XLVIII (July, 1963), 177-195.

antislavery sentiments in the North disrupted the missionary activities of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in the slaveholding Cherokee and Choctaw Indians.[20] Challenging Barnes' belittling the significance of the postal campaign, Wyatt-Brown contended that Southerners' violent reaction to the sending of antislavery material to their section helped the abolitionists to convince many Northerners of the danger of slavery to their own civil liberties and hence of the necessity of emancipation.[21] Larry Gara discovered the same effect on the North in the controversy over the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. It not only brought the whole slavery question home to the people of the free states but also contributed much to the breakup of the remaining ties between the North and South.[22] By this, he seems to suggest that the antislavery people's resistance to the execution of this law was one of the reasons for the making of the Civil War.

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20 Robert T. Lewit, "Indian Missions and Antislavery Sentiment: A Conflict of Evangelical and Humanitarian Ideals," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, L (June, 1963), 39-55.

21 Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "The Abolitionists' Postal Campaign of 1835," Journal of Negro History, L (Oct. 1965), 227-238.

22 Larry Gara, "The Fugitive Slave Law: A Double Paradox," Civil War History, X (Sept., 1964), 229-241.

However, it is significant that he did not blame the abolitionists for this. On the contrary, he, McPherson, Lewit, and Wyatt-Brown, while varying in their judgments about their relative importance, all considered these issues and the abolitionists involvment in them as helping the triumph of a just cause. As McPherson said of Joshua Leawitt, "it is certain that Leawitt's 'upandicular' perseverance and unwavering belief in the righteousness of his cause were important factors in the triumph of antislavery insurgency," his great contribution to the antislavery movement.[23]

In addition to the reexamination of such old problems, recent historians also ventured into some aspects of the abolition movement which had previously seldom received systematical attention. Aware of the problem of proper strategy and tactics confronting present-day reformers, several historians found interest in the dilemma of means and ends which troubled the abolitionists and split their crusade. Repudiating the opinion that Garrison's come-outerism was a deviation from abolitionism, Lewis Perry argued that all the abolitionists shared in anarchism.[24]

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[23] McPherson, "The Fight Against the Gag Rule: Joshua Leawitt and Antislavery Insurgency in the Whit Party, 1839-1842," Journal of Negro History, XLVII (July, 1963),195.

[24] Lewis Perry, "Versions of Anarchism in the Antislavery Movement," American Quarterly, XX (Winter, 1968), 768-782.

However, other historians found the abolitionists not so united as Perry's study may suggest. According to John Demos, there was a shift in the abolition strategy and tactics from non-violent to violent means, leaving Garrison isolated from the antislavery mainstream.[25] To Larry Gara, the division of opinion within the movement was not over proper means but over the object opposed. The Garrisonians and other moral suasionists were opposed to the system of slavery itself and agitated to abolish it as a sin. Opposing them were the political antislavery men who cared little about the morality or immorality of slavery. What they objected to was the slavery power; and their aim was to destroy the southern power based on slavery which they believed was encroaching upon northern rights and interests.[26] Aileen S. Kraditor disagreed with them all. In the most systematic study of this problem, she pitched the Garrisonians against the non-Garrisonians in both ends and means. The Garrisonians were radicals who regarded the American society as fundamentally immoral and sought to remake its institutional structure and ideology. To reach this object, they favored moral suasion and a "broad" antislavery society to

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[25] John Demos, "The Antislavery Movement and the Problem of Violemt 'Means'," New England Quarterly, XXXVII (Dec., 1964), 501-526.

[26] Larry Gara, "Slavery and Slave Power: A Crucial Distinction," Civil War History, XV (March, 1969), 5-18.

include all those who adhered to the abolitionist's principles regardless of their views on politics, religion and society. The non-Garrisonians were conservative reformers who wanted to abolish slavery in order to strengthen and preserve the basically good and moral American society. They desired a "narrow" antislavery organization which would admit as members only those whose religious and social views were not such as to alienate the general northern public; they demanded, from 1839 on, a formal endorsement of political action by antislavery societies.[27] Although more favorable to the radicals than to the reformers, Kraditor treated both factions with respect and understanding. There is much truth in Dillon's observation that she "conceded to the abolitionists a seriousness of purpose and a degree of intellectual responsibility not always acknowledged elsewhere."[28] The same can also be said of Perry, Demos, and Gara.

Another topic which drew greater attention from recent historians is the abolitionists' view on the racial problem. Up until 1960, almost no one of the major historians of the abolition movement had dealt exclusively with this aspect of the antislavery crusade. But with the growth of

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27 Kraditor, Means and Ends in American Abolitionism.

28 Dillon, "The Abolitionists, A Decade of Historiography, 1959-1969," Journal of Southern History, XXXVI (Nov., 1969), 512.

Negro civil rights into one of the major domestic issues in recent years, the interest of historians in the abolitionists' racial attitude also increased. Several historians have devoted themselves to this subject. Their conclusions varied. But in general, their studies conveyed the impression that the racial prejudice of Americans was simply too strong for the abolitionists' struggle for racial equality.

Leon F. Litwack documented the existence of racial bias and discrimination in both the North and South, though in the North Negroes could challenge the assumption of the Negro's racial inferiority and strive to improve his position.[29] While Lorman Ratner emphasized racial bias as the main reason for the northern opposition to the anti-slavery movement,[30] Merton L. Dillon believed it was so strong that it accounted for the abolitionists' failure to move the public to act against slavery and for racial equality.[31] Eric Foner and Robert F. Durden not only concurred in Litwack's conclusion, but also found that deep-rooted and permeating racial bias was responsible for the silence

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29 Leon F. Litwack, North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860 (Chicago, 1961).

30 Lorman Ratner, Powder Keg: Northern Opposition to the Antislavery Movement, 1831-1840 (New York, 1968).

31 Merton L. Dillon, "The Abolitionists as a Dissenting Minority," in Alfred F. Young, ed., Dissent: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism (DeKalb, Illinois, 1968), pp. 85-108.

or ambivalence of the Free-Soil party and the Republican party on the issue of Negro civil rights. Racist or not, Free-Soilers and Republicans deemed it politically expedient and effective to acquiesce in the prevailing racial prejudice by keeping quiet on the problem of Negro equality.[32] Their findings are indirectly supported by Eugene H. Berwanger's study of the nature of the Westerners' opposition to slavery. According to him, the frontier favored non-extensionism not because Westerners hated slavery itself but because of their anti-Negro prejudice.[33] However, the political antislavery men were not the only abolitionists who were ambiguous on the racial issue. In fact, the whole abolition movement was characterized by this ambiguity, according to William H. and Jane H. Pease. In abstract, the abolitionists idealized the Negro, and accepted the principle of racial equality. But in practice and in daily contact with the Negro, they succumbed to the dictates of expedience, and temporized their principle. The result was their inability to decide whether the Negro

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[32] Eric Foner, "Politics and Prejudice: The Free-Soil party and the Negro, 1849-1852," Journal of Negro History, L (Oct. 1965), 239-256; Robert F. Durden, "Ambiguities in the Antislavery Crusade of the Republican Party," in Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard, pp. 362-394.

[33] Eugene H. Berwanger, The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy (Chicago, 1967).

was really equal to the white, and whether immediate social and political equality for the Negro should be stressed or not. The abolitionnists, the Peases found, often maintained a paternalistic attitude to the Negro which was more often than not a mere patronizing of a superior class.[34] To Litwack, this patronizing attitude, coupled with the double-standard by which some abolitionists judged the respective abilities of the two races, infuriated the black abolitionists, and contributed to the development of the black's demand for ideological and political indepdence and the emergence of a strong race pride and consciousness among Negroes.[35] Thus, not only the abolitionists were not free from racial prejudice but also their patronizing attitude alienated the black abolitionists.

These historians took notice of the existence of racial prejudice in society in general, in the antislavery parties, evenin the abolition concert. They criticized the ante-bellum society and showed dissatisfaction with the Free-Soil and Republic parties for it. But they seemed

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[34] William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, "Antislavery Ambivalence: Immediatism, Expediency, Race," American Quarterly, XVII (1965), 682-695.

[35] Leon T. Litwack, "The Emancipation of the Negro Abolitionist," in Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard, pp. 137-55. See also his North of Slavery, and "The Abolitionist Dilemma: The Antislavery Movement and the Northern Negro," New England Quarterly, XXIV (March, 1961), 50-73.

unwilling to condemn the abolitionists for their ambiguity on the matter of race. Neither the Peases nor Litwack said the abolitionists were consciously racist; and they stressed that the abolitionists at least believed in the principle of racial equality, and worked for the uplifting of the oppressed free Negro. Instead of condemnation, they rather sympathized with the abolitionists for their powerlessness in the face of strong popular racial bias. This is clearly shown in Dillon's blaming the racist society for the failure of the abolitionists.

If the Peases and Litwack found the abolitionists ambivalent on the race issue, most other historians who studied this subject saw the abolitionists as fighters against racial bias and discrimination both in words and in deeds. In an investigation of the successes of four anti-slavery agents appointed by American Antislavery Society to work among the Negroes in the North and Canada, John L. Myers concluded: "by these appointments and through this financial support, the American Antislavery Society demonstrated a sincere interest in the welfare of the colored people and indicated a channel of service and a direction of endeavor which the state antislavery societies. . . could follow" after the decline of the national society.[36]

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[36] John L. Myers, "American Antislavery Society Agents and the Free Negro, 1833-1838," Journal of Negro History, LII (July, 1967), 219.

Gerda Lerner warmly praised the Grimke sisters' "life-long struggle against race prejudice."[37] Kempes Schnell demonstrated the effectiveness of antislavery anti-racial arguments in the courts for securing freedom for slaves who entered a free state with the consent of their masters.[38] While conceding the unwillingness of Pennsylvania Courts to grant political and social rights for Negroes, Stanley I. Kutler contended that their decisions after the Pennsylvania Abolition Act of 1780 gradually established equal legal rights for Negroes.[39] To these historians, the abolitionists espoused the cause of Negro equality both in principle and in practice. In addition, they scored some successes in helping the free Negroes in the North.

The abolitionists' work for the elimination of racial discrimination did not stop with the outbreak of the Civil War as some previous historians claimed. This is clearly shown by the studies of Louis Ruchames, James McPherson, and Willie Lee Rose. Challenging John L. Thomas' assertion

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37 Gerda Lerner, "The Grimke Sisters and the Struggle Against Race Prejudice," Journal of Negro History, XLVIII (Oct., 1963), 277.

38 Kempes Schnell, "Antislavery Influence on the Status of Slaves in a Free State," Journal of Negro History, L (Oct., 1965), 257-273.

39 Stanley I. Kutler, "Pennsylvania Courts, the Abolition Act, and Negro Rights," Pennsylvania History, XXX (Jan., 1963), 14-27.

about Garrison's growing conservatism in the matter of race equality, Ruchames concluded his review of Garrison's opinion and activities regarding Negro rights during the Civil War by writing that "at no time did he depart from his affirmation of Negro equality in all areas involving political, social and economic rights, including the suffrage."[40] Not only Garrison, but other abolitionists also did not abandon the Negro during and after the Civil War. According to Rose, many abolitionists took part or actively backed the Port Royal experiment during the war in order to create on the Sea Islands of South Carolina "a model for the regeneration of Southern society, a model which would include the education and rehabilitation of the slave, and a conclusive demonstration of his capacity for freedom." Although the experiment failed, nevertheless it did accomplish its purpose in setting an example for the broader reconstruction and demonstrating beyond any question the freedmen's willing and able response to freedom.[41]

In a much broader scope, McPherson examined the abolitionists' struggle for Negro equality during and after the Civil War. He gave the impression that the abolitionists

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[40] Louis Ruchames, "William Lloyd Garrison and the Negro Suffrage," Journal of Negro History, L (Jan.1965), 48.

[41] Willie Lee Rose, "Iconoclasm Had Its Day: Abolitionists and Freedmen in South Carolina," in Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard, p. 184. The Port Royal Experiment is fully treated in her Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment (New York, 1964).

were not only scientific disclaimers of the concept of Negro racial inferiority but also practical and far-sighted fighters for the realization of racial equality for the freedmen. Drawing on social science, they rebuffed the prevailing belief in the racial inferiority of the Negro, participated in education and relief work for the freedmen, and advocated a Freedmen's Bureau and a federal program of aid and rehabilitation. And finally when they realized that without political and economic power the Negro could never be truly free, could never hope to be the social equal of the white, they supported the military occupation of the South in order to carry out the needed social and economic changes.[42] While doing no special study on this subject himself, David Brion Davis gave his complete consent to the conclusions of Rose and McPherson in a review article.[43]

So, the abolitionists fought against racial prejudice and for the Negro's freedom and equality both before and after the outbreak of the Civil War. However, in spite of their noble intentions and unceasing efforts, they failed to achieve one of their purposes. After all, Dillon was right. Racial prejudice in society proved too strong for

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[42] James M. McPherson, "A Brief for Equality: The Abolitionist Reply to the Racist Myth, 1860-1865," in Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard, pp. 156-177. See also his The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Princeton, N.J. 1964).

[43] David Brion Davis, "Abolitionists and the Freedmen:

the abolitionists. There was simply no chance for them to convince enough people of the falsity of the concept of the Negro's racial inferiority for the necessary social and ideological revolution. They could not realize their purpose of establishing racial equality and integration. Yet, even in failure, their insistence that the Negro was a human being and as such was entitled equally to all the rights and privileges enjoyed by other Americans, their daring challenge to the racist myth, and their tireless efforts to establish racial equality and social justice won the admiration of historians sympathetic to the modern Negro's struggle against racist discrimination. "The history of our own time," declared McPherson, "has demonstrated that the abolitionists had perhaps a deeper understanding of the racial problem than any other men of their time -- and many of ours."[44] He spoke of the general view of these historians.

A third topic which received more attention from historians than before was the activities of the black abolitionists in the crusade against slavery. Captivated by Frederick Douglass, few previous white historians paid attention to other Negro abolitionists. "They passed into

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An Essay Review," Journal of Southern History, XXI (May, 1965), 164-170.

[44] McPherson, "A Brief for Equality: The Abolitionist Reply to the Racist Myth, 1860-1865," in Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard, p. 177.

an historical limbo," as Robert T. Smith said, "to be resurrected, now and then, as minor footnotes in the history of the Negro."[45] In recent years, this neglect has been remedied, though only partially. Smith's own article documented the activities of one of theless known but equally important black abolitionists, William Cooper Nell, from 1831 to his death in 1874. Litwack's study of the emancipation of the black abolitionists mentioned above traced the development of the independent movement of the black to end slavery. And Robert C. Dick devoted his research to the contributions of black orators to the abolition movement.[46] But the most comprehensive study of the black abolitionists was Benjamin Quarles, Black Abolitionists.[47] In highly sympathetic terms, Quarles told the story of how the Negro abolitionists cooperated with the white crusaders, how they organized independent activities to agitate for the emancipation of their brethren in bondage and to help those in freedom, how they reacted to current

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45 Robert T. Smith, "William Cooper Nell: Crusading Black Abolitionist," Journal of Negro History, LV (July, 1970), 196.

46 Robert C. Dick, "Negro Oratory in the Antislavery Societies, 1800-1860," Western Speech, XXVIII (Winter, 1964), 5-14.

47(New York, 1969).

events, and how they finally became disillusioned with the method of moral suasion and tended more and more to violent means for the achievement of their aims. Such studies undoubtedly contributed to the understanding of an important aspect of the abolition movement. But the investigations of most individual black abolitionists remain to be made.

Whether they re-examined old problems or dealt with hitherto little touched aspects of the abolition movement, the writings cited so far clearly show the favorable disposition of the authors toward the abolitionists. But even more clearly their sympathy was shown in their defense of the abolition crusaders. When Fawn M. Brodie asked "who defends the abolitionists?" and could find none,[48] she simply expressed the general impatience of recent historians with the interpretations of their predecessors. Out of this dissatisfaction, some of them purposively set out to rescue the abolitionists from condemnation.

A persistent notion held by most historians before 1960 had been that there was a strong antislavery movement in the Upper South before the early 1830's, and that if there had been no vicious abolitionist attacks on slavery and slaveholders, this antislavery sentiment might have gradually ended slavery. Dumond and Nye already challenged

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[48] Fawn M. Brodie, "Who Defends the Abolitionists?" in Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard, pp. 52-67.

the validity of this assertion; but it was not until Gordon E. Finnie published his study of the antislavery movement in the Upper South that evidence became available to demonstrate the weakness of the movement.[49] His conclusion was supported by the early findings of Robert McColley's study of slavery in Virginia, and Don B. Kates' study of the early antislavery movement.[50] By demonstrating the weakness of the southern antislavery movement, they effectively refuted the charge that the abolitionist attacks hardened the South's pro-slavery stand, and resistance to emancipation.

A second familiar charge against the abolitionists had been their denunciation of the Constitution. It was met by Staughton Lynd. His own analysis of the sectional conflict during the revolutionary era and the sectional compromises in the making of the Constitution confirmed the abolitionist critique that slavery helped to shape the Constitution. He ended his study by claiming that "The Abolitionists were right in seeing the American Revolution as a revolution betrayed."[51]

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[49] Gordon E. Finnie, "The Antislavery Movement in the Upper South Before 1840," Journal of Southern History, XXXV (August 1969), 319-342.

[50] Robert McColley, Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia (Urbana, 1964); Don B. Kates, "Abolition, Deportation, Integration: Attitude Toward Slavery in the Early Republic," Journal of Negro History, LIII (Jan., 1968), 33-47.

[51] Staughton Lynd, "The Abolitionist Critique of the

Directing his charge against another familiar criticism that held that the abolitionists had no proper understanding of slavery, and therefore were irrational in their attack on the South, Donald G. Mathews asserted that behind the abolitionists' exaggerated rhetoric and elaborate condemnation, there was "a legitimate critique", and "a balanced view" of slavery which was the result of a combination of "astute insight, humane sympathy, and wide knowledge." They understood slavery better than anyone else. To Mathews, even the unconditional attack was not undefensible, for, in the first place, this method of agitation was used by other reform movements of the time, and, in the second, the abolitionists understood the "balky, stubborn American democrat" too well to be contented with sweet reason and careful analysis.[52]

At least one recent historian has sought also to absolve the abolitionists from the revisionist indictment of war-guilt. While most recent historians believed explicitly or implicitly that the slavery issue was a primary factor in the coming of the Civil War, no one was willing to pin the responsibility on the shoulders of the abolitionists.

United States Constitution," in Duberman, ed., The Anti-slavery Vanguard, pp. 219-239. The quotation is taken from p. 239.

52 Donald G. Mathews, "The Abolitionists on Slavery: The Critique Behind the Social Movement," Journal of Southern History, XXXIII (May, 1967), 163-182.

Indeed, Howard Zinn insisted that the abolitionists had no connection whatsoever with the making of the Civil War. The agitators, Zinn argued, had the power to arouse feelings and tensions, but they were outside the policy-making machinery which alone had the power to make a war. Moreover, the war came not because of the feelings and tensions heightened by the abolition agitation, but because of the determination of leading Southerners, holding state power, to create a separate nation, and the equally determined resistance to it by the Republicans, in possession of the national government. The abolitionists had nothing to do with this policy-decision.[53]

However, the modern defenders of the abolitionists have not confined their justification of the crusade against slavery to repudiating such specific charges alone. Some of them upheld the abolitionists' radicalism in general. Familiar with the growing violence of radical protests and sympathetic to the frustration felt by the protesters, these historians certainly had no fear of radicalism. And it is only natural that they defended the "extremism" of the abolitionists. Thus, Howard Zinn considered slavery so monstrous that it justified all the abolitionists' radicalism, extremism, emotionalism, harsh language, and

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[53] Howard Zinn, "Abolitionists, Freedom-Riders, and the Tactics of Agitation," in Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard, pp. 443-446.

exaggeration of the truth. In the face of the intransigent defense of slavery, he seriously questioned the effectiveness of moderation.[54] Martin Duberman believed the lukewarm response to the abolitionists' demand in the North and the intransigency of the South were the chief factors for the shift of the abolition agitation from a "reform" to a "revolution". He doubted whether anybody except the abolitionists could have roused the public debate on slavery, and, without this heated debate, whether any action would have been taken against the institution.[55] In essence, this is also the conclusion of Howard R. Temperley's comparative study of the British and American antislavery movement. Confronting formidable obstacles posed by the question of what to do with the Negro after emancipation, and the fact that slavery was an integral part of American economy and that slavery was confined to and protected by the constitutional right of the South without whose consent -- an improbability -- there was simply no way to abolish it, the radical abolitionists resorted to the policy of unconditional denunciation because there was nothing else they could do. If they were vulnerable judged by the

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54 Ibid., pp. 417-451.

55 Martin Duberman, "Black Power and the American Radical Tradition," in his The Uncompleted Past (New York, 1971), pp. 242-245; and "The Northern Response to Slavery," in Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard, pp. 395-413. See particularly footnote 12, on pages 411-412.

strict standard of political responsibility, so too were the political leaders of the time such as the Jacksons and the Websters, and the moderate, respectable citizens who deplored the excess of the extremists, yet refused to co-operate with them to find a reasonable solution to the problem. In the final analysis, according to Temperley, the failure to abolish slavery peacefully was not that of the abolitionists or any particular group. "It was the failure of a whole society."[56] Like Dillon and Duberman, Temperley blamed the whole ante-bellum society for the abolitionists' extremism, and failure. All in all, what had been once regarded as deplorable excess in the abolitionist attack on slavery and demand for immediate emancipation has now been defended as either an appropriate response to a monstrous evil or an inevitable result of the hostile reaction of the public in both the North and South to the abolition agitation.

But the most clear sign of a turn-about in the interpretation of the abolition movement is revealed in the sympathetic treatment of Garrison and his followers. Most recent historians stressed the primary importance of Garrison in the movement as well as justified his radicalism. Dillon was quite right in his claim that "much of the

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[56] Howard R. Temperley, "The British and American Abolitionists Compared," in Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard, pp. 343-361. The quotation is taken from p. 361.

writing on abolitionism in the 1960's had the effect of rehabilitating Garrison and New England abolitionists in general."[57] It cannot be denied that not all the studies on the abolition movement in the last decade were favorable to Garrison. For example, the year 1963 saw the publications of two of the most harsh treatments of Garrison, those of Walter M. Merrill and John L. Thomas.[58] But their disparagements of Garrison were definitely out of tone with the rehabilitating trend in recent years when compared with the highly favorable comments about Garrison and his circle by most recent historians.

Historians sympathetic to Garrison were united in their emphasis on the importance of Garrison in the crusade against slavery. But they could not agree completely on the exact nature of Garrisonism. While most of them recognized and approved his radicalism, at least one historian denied his radicalism. Calling them liberal nineteenth-century reformers, Bertram Wyatt-Brown believed that Garrison and his followers differed little from others of their kind in the attempt to reach the middle-class by using

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57 Dillon, "The Abolitionists: A Decade of Historiography, 1959-1969," Journal of Southern History, XXXV (Nov., 1969), 509.

58 Walter M. Merrill, Against Wind and Tide: A Biography of Wm. Lloyd Garrison (Cambridge, Mass., 1963); John L. Thomas, The Liberator: A Biography of William Lloyd Garrison (Boston, 1963).

the tactics of shock and exaggeration. Far from being an irresponsible fanatic, Garrison's own respectability and refusal to go beyond pleas for national repentence and the platform measures of disunionism not only restrained abolitionism from turning into a violent revolution but also was a great asset to the antislavery unity.[59]

Although sharing Wyatt-Brown's warmth about Garrison, other historians have not tried to explain away Garrison's radicalism. On the contrary, they accepted his radicalism and praised him for it. The trend began with Louis Filler's book published in 1960. In probably the most comprehensive study of the antislavery movement in all its personnel and relations with other reforms of the times, Filler emphasized the influence and remarkable ability and personality of Garrison. Admitting the difficulty of giving precedence to the moderate, or the radical, or anybody else because all of them contributed something to the triumph of the crusade, nevertheless, he asserted that Garrison "outranked them one and all as . . . an antislavery symbol, in his own time and after."[60] Filler only occasionally or

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59 Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Abolitionism: Its Meaning for Contemporary American Reform," The Midwest Quarterly, VIII (Autumn, 1966), 52; and "William Lloyd Garrison and Antislavery Unity: A Reappraisal," Civil War History, XIII (March, 1967), 5-24.

60 Louis Filler, The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860 (New York, 1960), p. 56. For his judgment of the relative importance of abolitionists, see pp. 279-280. His praises and defenses of Garrison are scattered throughout

indirectly defended Garrison's influence and his extremism.[61] The systematic and explicit espousal of Garrisonism remained to be done by later historians.

The first historian to espouse Garrisonism was Louis Ruchames. He not only put Garrison at the center of the abolition movement but also upheld Garrison's radicalism. To him, even John Brown's violent actions were not unjustifiable.[62] Since the Garrisonians were the radicals in the abolition movement, the defense of abolitionist radicalism offered by Zinn and Duberman[63] was essentially a justification of Garrisonism. Even Kraditor herself was quite aware of the fact that her picture of Garrison who she designated as a radical "is far more favorable than is common even now when the abolitionists are being rehabilitated." To her, the abstract attack on slavery as a moral wrong struck the slaveholders' most vulnerable spot: their conscience.

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the book. His sympathy to Garrison was also expressed in his "Garrison Again, and Again: A Review Article," Civil War History, XI (March, 1965), 69-75.

61 For example, Filler said that the southern intransigency produced Garrisonism, that Garrison's disunionism was finally accepted by numerous antislavery men, and that in supporting John Brown, "moderate reformers had come a long way since they had feared the 'incendiary' views of Garrison." See The Crusade Against Slavery, p.59, 259, and 269.

62 Louis Ruchames, ed, The Abololitionists: A Collection of Their Writings (New York, 1963); "William Lloyd Garrison and the Negro Franchise," Journal of Negro History, L (Jan., 1965), 37-49; and Ruchames, ed., A John Brown Reader (New York, 1959), pp. 11-32.

63 See above.

Thus, this Garrisonian tactic proved to be more effective than the political means which, Kraditor believed, seriously weakened the moral forces of the tactics of agitation because of the compromises dictated by political expedience.[64] Much of Kraditor's opinion was shared by James B. Stewart who believed that the best way to promote antislavery political strength was the method of moral suasion. It allowed the radicals to remain unfettered by any formal political tie and thus free from the necessity of compromise, while stirring political discontent against slavery among politicians and voters.[65] All these historians approved the ends and means of Garrison in one way and another. But the most passionate praise came from Truman Wilson. In a mystical and eulogistic language, he described Garrison, "the incarnation of the greatest moral crusade this country has ever known," as a true practical revolutionary who aimed to"destroy a going economic system, a political institution and way of life, thought and belief so deeply rooted in the national character that it is still (unanswerably) predominant."[66]

Ever since trained historians began to write about the abolition movement at the turn of this century, Garrison

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[64] Kraditor, Means and Ends in American Abolitionism, p. ix, and 260.

[65] James B. Stewart, "The Aim and Impact of Garrisonian Abolitionism, 1840-1860," Civil War History, XV (Sept., 1969), 197-209.

[66] Truman Wilson, "The Liberator," Ramparts, IV (Nov.,

had been the main target of denunciation. Every sort of stricture had been heaped on his head. It is indeed a rare occasion when one or two authors said something favorable about him. Apparently he was nobody's favorite. Considering this overwhelming hostility among previous historians toward Garrison, the image of Garrison emerging from the recent writings on the abolition movement amounted really to a near revolution in abolition historiography. To be sure, not all recent historians completely agreed on the nature of his agitation. To a few, he was a liberal reformer; to many others he was a revolutionary working to remake American society. Whatever the individual opinion on this matter may be, the significant thing is the conspicuous absence of criticism and denunciation from the newer studies of Garrison. Instead, permeating most of the studies, there is an admiring enthusiasm about what he said and did a century ago. His central importance in the crusade was reaffirmed, his method of agitation defended, and his aim applauded. Instead of being an impractical fanatic or neurotic standing on the fringe of the crusade, the emerging new portrait of Garrison is more often than not painted as a practical, far-sighted agitator who had a

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1965), p. 24 and 21. See also Wilson, ed., Document of Upheaval: Selections from William Lloyd Garrison's The Liberator, 1831-1865 (New York, 1966), "Introduction," pp. ix-xxii.

better understanding than most of his contemporaries of the ante-bellum society, politics, and slavery, and thus could adopt a more effective means to achieve the aims of the cause he espoused. Garrison became the object of adoration.

The new image of Garrison is but only the most significant sign of the general reappraisal of the whole abolition movement undertaken during the recent decade. The rise of New-Left radicalism, and the mounting concern with the Negro civil rights movement explained much of the reassessing trend in abolition historiography. The influence was obvious and direct. Some historians who wrote about the abolition movement during recent years were deeply involved in the radical protest movement of which the Negro civil rights campaign has been an integral part. Others felt active sympathy to it. The close ideological and emotional ties they felt to the ante-bellum reformers naturally predisposed their sympathy toward the abolitionists. And the experiences they gained from working within the modern radical movement and direct observations enabled them to approach abolitionism with a greater understanding than could be possible otherwise. All these factors produced a mentality and a sentiment in the newer historians drastically different from that of previous historians. When with such a radical mentality and such a sympathetic sentiment they came to study the abolitionists, they found, as Kraditor, that what their predecessors told them about

the abolitionists was wrong.[67] As a result, they plunged into a reexamination of the abolition movement. The efforts of reevaluation reached into a broad range of topics, some of them repeatedly explored, others hitherto rarely touched. But whatever topics they may have investigated, so far as the image of the abolitionists is concerned, the result of their studies is the same. The abolitionists were no longer viewed as impractical, irrational, irresponsible fanatics or persons obsessed with internal tensions. Instead, they now appeared to be normal men and women concerned deeply with a genuine social evil, much like present-day reformers. Thus, Duberman found James Russell Lowell happy, witty, warm, and adhering to certain ethical ideals which turned him an abolitionist; Ruchames emphasized the "unusual political perceptiveness and statesmanship" of Garrison; and Kraditor discovered in Garrison's writings consistency, tactical acumen, foresight, percipience, humility, and even humor.[68] Such

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67 Kraditor wrote: "I started this project with a rather negative opinion of Garrison. This is understandable, since all I had read about him was the secondary literature. . . . Then I turned to Garrison's own writings. . . and the more I read, the more I became convinced that I was meeting the man for the first time." See her Means and Ends in American Abolitionism, p. ix.

68 Duberman, "The Abolitionists and Psychology," Journal of Negro History, XLVII (1962), 188; Ruchames, "William Lloyd Garrison and the Negro Franchise," Ibid., L (Jan., 1965), 46; Kraditor, Means and Ends in American Abolitionism, p. x. Kraditor's assertion about Garrison's humor showed how great

judgements were not confined to individual abolitionists, however. Duberman believed that the abolitionists were "in some ways the most tough-minded of Americans;" and Wyatt-Brown called them "tough old birds."[69] But the most representative view of recent historians about the abolitionists was given by Ruchames. The abolitionists, he wrote: "were not paranoiacs or narrow-minded fanatics, but men and women who were devoted to the highest ideals of equality and democracy, influenced by the best in the Judaeo-Christian tradition and all that was good and noble in the thoughts and actions of the Founding Fathers."[70] They were not different from other normal people except that they were more sincere in their belief and were willing to speak out and act against an institution and a prejudice which were in direct contradiction to their beloved ideals.

In an article on the New-Left historiography, Irwin Unger deplored the poor showing of the radical historians in the field of the abolition movement. He said, "the New

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was the change in the interpretation of the abolition movement when compared with the opinion of such a relatively sympathetic historian like Russell B. Nye who wrote: "There was little lightness or humor in Garrison. He was a deadly serious man." See his William Lloyd Garrison and the Humanitarian Reformers (Boston, 1955), p. 198.

69 Duberman, "Northern Response to Slavery," in Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard, p. 402; Wyatt-Brown, "Abolitionism: Its Meaning for Contemporary American Reform," The Midwest Quarterly, VIII (Autumn, 1966), 54.

70 Ruchames, A John Brown Reader, "Introduction," p.16.

Left seldom does more than reiterate the evil of slavery . . . as sufficient explanation for the abolitionist impulse."[71] This is not a correct judgment. Admittedly, a few of the writings on the subject were no more than rebuttals; a few others were argumentative rather than scholarly. And the present-mindedness exhibited by them all to some degree certainly implied the possibility of prejudiced judgments. But by and large recent studies were just as scholarly and serious as any other historical writings. In addition, they not only presented more subtle explanations for the rise of abolitionism, but also embodied sustantial results of investigating into a broad range of new topics. In fact, the contributions of recent historians to the understanding of the abolition movement is greater than any previous age. And above all, their studies provided the long overdue correction to the harsh judgments of the abolitionists rendered by most historians of preceding generations.

Because of the intimate connection between the re-appraisal of the abolitionists and the present-day radical reform and thought, it is legitimate to ask: when the prevailing mode changes, will this sympathetic trend in abolition historiography also pass away? Of course, there

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71 Irwin Unger, "The 'New Left' and American History: Some Recent Trends in United States Historiography," American Historical Review, LXII (July, 1967), 1255.

is no way to know. But at present one thing seems quite certain. Up until now this trend is still dominating the historical interpretation of the abolition movement, and whatever may happen to it, future historians must take these defenders of the abolitionists into consideration before they pass judgments on the abolition crusade.

CHAPTER VIII

The Abolition Movement in General Histories

Ever since trained historians came to write about the abolition movement around the beginning of the twentieth century, interpretation of it has undergone several changes. Roughly speaking, it began with the nationalist historians' approving view of moderate abolitionism, went through the Progressive historians' minimization of the importance of the crusade in the sectional conflict, Gilbert H. Barnes' ambivalent attitude, the revisionists' total denunciation of the abolitionists as irresponsible propagandists, and the psychologist-historians' description of them as paranoiacs, to the unreservedly sympathetic reaffirmation of the abolition crusaders during the last ten years. After tracing these changes in the more specialized studies, it seems now appropriate to ask whether or how far these different interpretations and attitudes have filtered down into popular and textbook histories. An examination of the treatment of the abolition movement in general histories will also serve as an indicator of the relative influence of the specialized studies.

The following discussion is based on an analysis of about forty randomly selected general histories published from 1905 to 1971. The evidence seems to indicate that the textbook treatment of the abolition movement has undergone three changes. The writers whose histories were published during the first three decades of this century, and during the period from the late 1950's to the present were in general more sympathetic to the abolitionists than those who wrote general histories during the years between the first and the third period. But all of them were more or less critical of Garrison. The rehabilitating tendency among recent admiring historians has not yet penetrated the survey histories of the United States.

In comparison, the first group of general histories, or those published before the early 1930's, were the most favorable to the abolitionists. In general, the six books examined followed the nationalist interpretation of the abolitionists as true reformers who were moved by conscience or hatred of slavery to "rid the country of the disgrace and cure of human bondage."[1] Most authors mildly criticized

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[1] David S. Muzzey, An American History (Boston, 1911), p. 316. The question of the background of the abolition movement was largely ignored by these authors. In this and his other book, The American Adventure (New York, 1927), Muzzey did not touch this problem at all. Nor did Charles A. Beard and William Bagley in their coauthored The History of the American People (New York, 1934). But Edward Channing in The United States of America(Cambridge, Mass., 1905), p. 235, and James Alton James and Albert Hart Sanford in their American History (New York, 1909), p. 314, mentioned conscience or social conscience as the motivating force. And

the South's violent reaction to the abolition agitation, believing that Southerners' efforts to put down abolition petitions and to prevent antislavery material from being sent to their section helped the growth of antislavery feelings in the North.[2] They also noticed the importance of the slavery controversy in the sectional conflict. But no one explicitly blamed the abolitionists for promoting sectional hostility. Indeed, none of them tried to pin the responsibility on them for the growing southern pro-slavery stance. On all these points, the writers presented views similar to those of the nationalist historians.

Even in attitude, they did not differ very much from the nationalist historians. Although not all of them considered Garrison as the originator and leader of the abolition movement,[3] all the authors except Channing who seemed to be neutral, more or less disliked Garrison's

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John Spencer Bassett in A Short History of the United States (New York, 1913), p. 429, said that the hatred of slavery and the remembrance of his imprisonment in Baltimore moved Garrison to crusade against slavery.

[2] Channing, The United States of America, p. 236; James and Sanford, American History, p. 317; Muzzey, An American History, pp. 320-312; Muzzey, The American Adventure, pp. 389-390; and Bassett, A Short History of the United States, pp. 430-431.

[3] Bassett, History of the United States, p. 429, and Sanford, American History, p. 316, mentioned the western abolitionists who did not acknowledge Garrison's leadership. Muzzey, An American History, p. 320, gave Benjamin Lundy the credit of organizing the antislavery sentiment into a strong united movement. The remaining writers emphasized Garrison's role.

radicalism. The least critical were Charles A. Beard and William Bagley who merely said that Garrison was so extreme that he even "openly criticized the Constitution of the United States and declared that he wanted rather to see the Union broken up than to remain a citizen of a slave nation."[4] On the other extreme stood David S. Muzzey. In contrast to his sympathy with the political antislavery people, he criticized Garrison's denunciation of the Constitution, advocacy of disunionism, opposition to political action, and simplification of the complex problem of slavery. Garrison's radicalism made him the leader only of a small extremist sect, and did "more to harm the antislavery cause than all its enemies."[5] They did not question his sincerity or the righteousness of his cause, but rather, the extreme method he used.

Then all these authors gave a view of the abolitionists which was in general similar to that of James. F. Rhodes or Albert Bushnell Hart. They approved the abolition agitation and its aim, and were favorable to the moderate abolitionists. However, they criticized Garrison's extremism in denouncing the Constitution and the Union, and repudiating the political means of achieving the end of emancipation.

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[4] Beard and Bagley, The History of the American People, pp. 396-397.

[5] Muzzey, An American History, pp. 319-320. The quotation is Charles Sumner's words which Muzzey quoted with approval.

This generally favorable view of the abolitionists began to change with the opening of the 1930's. During the next thirty years, the abolitionists were treated more harshly than before in most general histories. The image of Garrison and his radical followers in most of these texts went from bad to worse. But even the moderate abolitionists lost much of their appeal. They were treated less harshly than the Garrisonians; but they were not favorites to most of the authors either. More often than not, most of the writers simply lumped all the abolitionists together and rendered them an unfavorable verdict.

This change in the treatment of the abolitionists had much to do with the influence of the revisionist studies. It is true that in the distribution of praise and blame among the abolitionists themselves, Gilbert H. Barnes' opinion seemed more pervasive and lasting because ever since 1940 to the present, almost all the general history writers examined followed Barnes' division of the abolitionists into the Weld-Tappan and Garrisonian groups.[6] But so far as the description of slavery and the judgment

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[6] Before 1940, Barnes was completely neglected by the authors of these examined histories. His influence became clear for the first time in George M. Stephenson, American History to 1865 (New York, 1940), pp. 272-273.

of the abolitionists are concerned, the revisionist historians were more influential than Barnes in the general history treatment of the abolition movement from about the mid-1930's to the late 1950's. Since the revisionists were the most harsh critics of the abolitionists, it is not surprising that most of the authors of general histories during this period were also the most unsympathetic censors of the abolition crusaders among all the authors whose books were analyzed here.

However, not all the examined general histories published during this period were equally critical. At least four of them were far less harsh than the others. Although three out of the four histories explicitly denounced Garrison's extremism, and the other one completely neglected him, at least two were sympathetic to the abolition movement as a whole, while the other two favored the moderate abolitionists. However they disliked Garrison's extremism, no one apologized for slavery, or accused the radicals' attacks on slavery and slaveholders for the South's increasing intransigency on slavery.[7] In essence,

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[7] The four histories are Allen Nevins and Henry Steele Commager, America: The Story of a Free People (Boston, 1942), pp. 214-219; Dwight Lowell Dumond, A History of the United States (New York, 1942), pp. 316-333; Homer Carey Hackett and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Land of the Free: A Short History of the American People (New York, 1944), pp. 253-257; and Louis M. Hacker, The Shaping of American Tradition (New York, 1947), pp. 559-561. Dumond's was a summary of

the authors of these histories seemed nearer to the writers of the preceding period than to their contemporaries.

But the remaining eighteen histories were frankly hostile to the abolitionists. Most of the authors took for granted the sincerity of the abolitionists' humanitarian motives. Only Ralph Volney Harlow and his reviser, Nelson Blake, suggested a psychological explanation by pointing out that "probably the extreme abolitionists were driven on by emotions stimulated by causes largely within themselves."[8] But almost all of them disliked the abolitionists' fanaticism or extremism in their severe attacks on slavery and slaveholders and uncompromising demand for immediate and unconditional emancipation. In contrast to their hostility to the abolition crusaders, these authors were in general apologetic for slavery and sympathetic to the South.

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the Interpretation in his special studies. Hacker based his description exclusively on Barnes' with the complete omission of Garrison. The other two books were influenced by Barnes to some degree. Dumond and Hacker were favorable to the abolition movement, while all the others upheld the moderates at the expense of Garrison.

8 Ralph Volney Harlow and Nelson Blake, The United States: From Wilderness to World Power (New York, 1949), p. 283. Originally this book was written by Harlow alone and first published in 1925 under the title, The Growth of the United States (New York). In 1949, it was revised by Harlow and Blake. Because the first edition is not available, no comparison of the two editions is possible.

The first severe critic of the abolitionists was James Truslow Adams. Probably influenced by the debunking mode of the post-World War I period, Adams bitterly attacked New England Puritans' fanaticism and dogmatism for the extremism of the abolitionists. According to him, New England had contributed some of the best and some of the worst influences to the national development. "Unfortunately one of the latter was fanaticism and intolerance." The abolitionists who were mostly New Englanders approached slavery with the same Puritan characteristics. They never troubled themselves to understand the viewpoint of the other section, and seldom questioned their own. They refused to consider the complexity of slavery and the difficulties involved in emancipation but chose to moralize and simplify the whole issue. Their shouting "for immediate emancipation of all slaves," their agitation "for immediate dissolution of the Union," and their vituperative attacks on the morality of slaveholding "stirred the country, North as well as South, to a pitch of passion such as has never been witnessed among us before or since," and "sowed the seeds of intense bitterness between the sections." Both the North and South resented the meddling of these fanatics, and rightly so. Comparing with the bitter feelings aroused by the twentieth-century prohibitionists, Adams declared: "if we can imagine that, instead of having merely deprived a large part of our population - a part that

considers itself quite as moral and high-minded as the reformers - of the enjoyment of a social habit, the reformers had threatened in addition on moral grounds to deprive them of so large a part of their property as to ruin them financially, we can get a better idea of the feeling stirred up by abolitionists."[9] His criticism of the abolitionists was not only bitter but also complete. He said hardly a single favorable word about the abolition agitators.

Few of the other authors were as severe and complete as Adams in their denunciation of the abolitionists. But the abolition story told by them was just as slanted as that by Adams. Generally speaking, they considered the unreasonable attacks of the abolitionists on both slaveholders and slavery which, to them, was not too bad, in simple moral terms as making a rational solution of the problem more difficult, if not impossible altogether. By hurting the South's pride, and by threatening the South's way of life, the abolition agitation also hardened the Southerner's determination to defend slavery as a positive good.

To begin with, most of these writers followed the studies of Ulrich B. Phillips, and adapted an apologistic

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9 James Truslow Adams, The Epic of America (Boston, 1931), pp. 199-255. The quotations are taken from p. 253, 252, 203, and 200.

attitude toward slavery. W.E. Woodward's judgment of slavery sounded like the typical ante-bellum defender of slavery. He admitted the degrading effects of slavery. Yet he insisted:

> but a point to remember is that the Negroes, when they came, were already degraded - so much so, indeed, that African chiefs sold their own people to slave traders by the shipload. They came from a savagery in which they possessed no rights at all, and were considered nothing more than so many parcels of human meat.

If this is already too much, his other opinions seemed even more ridiculous. Lifting the Negro from savagery, his bondage "taught him discipline, cleanliness and a conception of moral standards." In civilizing him, the South paid what a terrible price! "The white people of the South paid in poverty and blood and tears for the Negro's civilization," he said. Indeed, slavery "did incalculable harm to the white people of the South, and benefitted nobody but the Negro, in that it served as a vast training school for African savages."[10]

To a present-day reader, such statements sound fanatic and incredible; nevertheless the opinions of Woodward in regard to slavery were shared to different degrees by most writers of this period. For example, Harlow and Blake believed that the slaveholders "treated their

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[10] W.E. Woodward, A New American History (New York, 1936). All the quotations are taken from pp. 412-413.

slaves well, as humane, kindly men should."[11] To John D. Hicks, the slave "got much positive enjoyment out of life." He was carefree, humorous, singing and dancing. He was treated well and loyal to his master. "By and large," the authors wrote,"the condition of his life represented a distinct advance over the lot that would have befallen him had he remained in Africa."[12] Harold U. Faulkner agreed with Phillips that "the theory of rigid coercion and complete exploitation was asstrange to the bulk of the planters as the doctrine and practice of moderation was to those who viewed the regime from afar and with the mind's eye."[13] Aaron I. Abell and his co-authors had the opinion that slaves were seldom ill-treated. They "led easy, even pampered lives.... They were trusted by their masters and repaid this trust with loyalty and devotion." Indeed, the southern contention that slaves were better off than northern wage workers was not without justification.[14]

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11 Harlow and Blake, The United States: From Wilderness to World Power, p. 281.

12 John D. Hicks, A Short History of American Democracy (New York, 1943), p. 291.

13 Harold U. Faulkner, American Political and Social History (New York, 1937), p. 309.

14 Aaron I. Abell, Bernard J. Fleming, A Paul Levack, Thomas T. McAvoy, and Lawrence J. Mannsion, A History of the United States of America (New York, 1952), p. 236.

Robert E. Riegel and David F. Long said that the usual owner was careful of his slaves, and suggested that the lower state of the Negroes' cultural development justified slavery as a means of handling race relations. They argued that "slavery did establish a settled way of life between the white master and the Negro slave," and that however cruel, immoral and inefficient it was, still slavery was a method of "civilizing and Christianizing the Negroes."[15] Thomas A. Bailey derided Southerners' defense of slavery; yet he asserted that "the uprooted Africans, despite the harshness of their lot, often gave evidence of contentment and even happiness."[16] Even Richard Hofstadter, William Miller, and Daniel Aaron who were harshly critical of slavery admitted that there was a brighter side of the peculiar institution. "Many white southerns," they claimed, "treated their slaves affectionately and. . . many slaves responded to this treatment with loyalty and devotion."[17] These authors were certainly not unalloyed defenders of slavery; but they were not its staunch enemy either.

Given this apologetic or ambivalent attitude toward slavery, it could not be expected that they would like the

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15 Robert E. Riegel and David F. Long, The American Story (New York, 1955), p. 180, and 182.

16 Thomas A. Bailey, The American Pageant: A History of the Republic (Boston, 1956), p. 364.

17 Richard Hofstadter, William Miller, and Daniel Aaron, The American Republic (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1959), I, 515.

abolition agitation very much. Indeed, there were some authors who even doubted the advisibility of the entire crusade. William Miller's description was too sketchy to be of much meaning for this discussion; but in one place he suggested that abolition was but one of the manufactured issues with which the political managers hoped to engage the interest of uncommitted voters.[18] He seemed to throw doubt on the motives of the abolitionists. Others did not raise such a question. Instead, they questioned whether the abolitionists were not beating a dying horse. Accepting the revisionist argument of the "natural limits" of slavery, Faulkner, and Abell and his co-workers believed that slavery would eventually disappear before 1900.[19] Taking the natural death of slavery for granted, Stephenson thought it was unfortunate that the abolitionists did not let the nature take its own course, and Harlow and Blake wondered "whether the abolitionists were not attacking the problem in the wrong way."[20]

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18 William Miller, A New History of the United States (New York, 1958), p. 183.

19 Faulkner, American Political and Social History, p. 308; and Abell and others, A History of the United States of America, p. 236.

20 Stephenson, American History to 1865, p. 467; and Harlow and Blake, The United States: From Wilderness to World Power, p. 283.

But most of the authors were not so sanguine about the inevitability of the natural death of slavery. Consequently, it was not the fact that some persons agitated against slavery which disturbed them. What they disliked was the alleged excess of the abolitionists' agitation, or fanaticism, or extremism. Garrison naturally became the main target of bitter criticism, but other abolitionists were not spared either. Every sort of charge was heaped on their heads.

Thus, to Woodward, Garrison was a visionary, living in "a tight box of his own limitations."[21] Leland D. Baldwin described Garrison as a bundle of contradictions between a pacifist and a militant fighter, a moralist and an enemy of orthodox Christianity, a theorist and one who demanded immediate result, a patriot and one who damned the Constitution and the Union. Garrison loved persecution, and his "rancorous diatribes did more to hinder than to advance the cause of abolition."[22]

The charges of other writers were more inclusive and complex. Jeanette P. Nichols and Ray F. Nichols believed that Garrison's "violent propaganda" and "vitriolic argument" caused the Southerners to fear slave revolts.

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21 Woodward, A New American History, p. 414.

22 Leland D. Baldwin, The Stream of American History (New York, 1953), pp. 658-659.

However, other abolitionists were not harmless either. The fanaticism of the abolitionist "zealots" was "socially dangerous and in various places even in the North conservative members of society attempted to put them down by force."[23] And Faulkner not only agreed to such blames but also added another one. "The exaggerations of abolition agitators" he wrote, "made the solution of the slavery question a difficult one."[24]

According to Hicks, the abolitionists "knew little" about slavery. Their agitation was disliked in both sections. "The indifference of the extremists among them to the Constitution and their openly expressed willingness to see "the Union broken up were "thoroughly resented by a generation which held both the Constitution and the Union in the deepest reverence." "With good reason" Southerners held responsible for the losses of their slaves the abolitionists who "deliberately suggested to the slaves . . . the possibility of running away;" and the extremists' "occasional unguarded utterances" certainly justified the southern charge that the abolitionists were promoting Negro insurrections.[25]

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[23] Jeanette P. Nichols and Ray F. Nichols, The Growth of American Democracy (New York, 1939), pp. 493-494.

[24] Faulkner, American Political and Social History, p. 309 and 319.

[25] Hicks, A Short History of American Democracy, pp. 294, 297, and 298.

Harlow and Blake made similar charges. They considered Garrison to be "a master of invective," who for thirty years flooded the Liberator with vituperation and "passionate, seditious appeals for disunion." In view of the character of Garrison's attacks, they found that the South "could hardly be blamed" for trying to keep his journal from their homes because of fearing slave revolts. If Garrison was not an open advocate of slave violence, certainly Theodore Parker was one, according to the authors. Parker not only preached violence but also prided himself "upon his success in breaking the laws of his country."[26]

The charge of lawlessness was also advanced by Oscar Theodore Barck and his co-authors. The underground railroad activities of the abolitionists infuriated slaveholders whose "property was thus unlawfully alienated." But, the crimes of the abolition crusaders did not stop here. Garrison was ignorant of the actual conditions of slavery and intemperate in his program. "The more erratic 'do-gooders'" like Garrison were responsible for the South's shift from accepting slavery as a necessary evil to defending it as a positive good.[27]

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26 Harlow and Blake, The United States: From Wilderness to World Power, pp. 277, 281, and 282.

27 Oscar Theodore Barck, Walter L. Wakefield, and Hugh Talmage Lefter, The United States: A Survey of National Development (New York, 1950), pp. 343-346.

Another author playing upon the theme of lawlessness was Henry B. Parkes. To him Garrison was "impractical idealist with extreme views on many other questions." All abolitionists were at first regarded in the North as "dangerous radicals and troublemakers, trying to destroy law and order." And slaveholders were "understandably indignant" at being called criminals by the abolitionists. He clearly suggested the lawlessness of the abolitionists' helping fugitive slaves by insisting that this was "in defiance of a clause in the Constitution requiring states to cooperate in returning them to their masters." In addition, many of the abolitionists "were fanatics who saw the problem in dangerously simple terms and were incapable of a realistic appraisal of racial relationship in the South." His final judgment of the abolition agitation was that "in so far as the abolitionists helped to make any peaceful settlement of the slavery question impossible, it can be argued that, in the long run, they did more harm than good."[28]

Garet Garrett was even more scathing in his denunciation of Garrison and other extreme abolitionists. To him, Garrison was a "dreadful knight," and "an obsessed and reckless man, to whom moderation was unknown." The Liberator was a "fearsome torch that blackened the day and

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[28] Henry B. Parkes, The United States of America: A History (New York, 1953), pp. 323-324.

disrupted the night. To quench it ultimately required the blood of more than a million men - but none of Garrisons'." He defied the Fugitive Slave Law and organized the underground railroad. Since slavery was legal, "this was theft." The South "could hardly be blamed," according to Garrett, if they imagined that incitement for the Nat Turner revolt came from the North. It appeared to him that the South's defense of slavery as a positive good was not without reason, for its pride was deeply hurt by "the vituperations of the North."[29]

Riegel and Long also justified the South's growing intransigency. They declared that "hotheads like William Lloyd Garrison were perfectly willing to advocate that the slaves should alter their unfortunate way of life by doing violence to their masters." Fearful of slave revolts, "the embattled South" was determined to "defend its maligned way of life" by suppressing antislavery propaganda and by preaching the positive-good theory of slavery. Besides, the authors also accused the abolitionists of promoting sectional hostilities, of neglecting the difficulties involved in sudden emancipation, and of providing no adequate substitute "for slavery during the years when the ex-slaves must be trained for citizenship."[30]

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[29] Garet Garrett, The American Story (Chicago, 1955), pp. 97-98.

[30] Riegel and Long, The American Story, pp. 297-299.

Although denying the charge of the abolitionists intentionally fostering slave violence, Hofstadter, Miller and Aaron agreed with Riegel and Long that the abolitionists had no practical program of emancipation. Nor were the abolitionists clear on "how the slave, once emancipated, was to rise from his ignorance, and inexperience and take his place as a free man. Indeed, when emancipation finally did come, few of them were prepared with a constructive program." Garrison was of course one of these impractical abolitionists. But he had other liabilities. He was "neurotic and wayward," and "fanatically uncompromising about his cherished beliefs." His Liberator was "an incendiary periodical of extreme abolitionism." His "vituperative attacks against the 'southern oppressors' did much to intensify antiabolition sentiment in the South."[31]

Richard N. Current, T. Harry Williams and Frank Freidel were moderate in tone, but equally critical of the abolitionists. Garrison's extremism "shocked many friends of freedom." He opposed the government and the church, denounced the Constitution, and split the American Anti-slavery movement. Perhaps Garrison was a little insane because the authors announced that by comparison, Theodore Weld was "far more sane and sensible." Anyway there is no doubt that Harriet Beecher Stowe had only very meagre knowledge

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[31] Hofstadter, Miller, and Aaron, The American Republic, I, 463.

of the actuality of slavery. The authors' pro-southern sentiment was revealed in their treatment of mob violence in the North and South. Northerners trying to rescue captured runaway slaves were described as "mobs or organized groups" attempting to "impede enforcement" of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850; and the personal liberty laws as attempts by several northern states to nullify this federal act. "Such displays of violence" naturally angered and alarmed the South. They said nothing about the anti-abolition mob violence in the South, but allowed an impression of the South as a helpless victim of the abolitionists' aggressive violence.[32]

However, Harry J. Carman was not so one-sided because heblamed extremists on both sides. "To the radicals of both sections - the Garrisons, the Phillipses, the Yanceys, the Quitmans - who lost no opportunity to broadcast the seeds of hatred and distrust," he wrote, "belongs the responsibility for removing the problem of slavery from the realm of reason to that of emotionalism."[33]

All the above criticisms became rather mild when compared with the accusations of Bailey. The "Garrisonian hotheads" did not understand the complex problem of the South --

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[32] Richard N. Current, T. Harry Williams, and Frank Freidel, American History: A Survey (New York, 1959), pp. 314, 362, and 363.

[33] Harry J. Carman, Social and Political History of the United States (2 vols., New York, 1930-1934), II, 484.

and evidently had no real desire to do so," he charged. Their accusations "knew no restraint." Some of them "went so far as to urge the slaves to slay their masters in their beds." The "boat-rocking tactics of the radical anti-slaveryites" provoked a strong hostility among ordinary Northerners who were decent and "reasonable people" with a deep respect for the Constitution, the Union, and private property. Violence begetting violence, angered by "the holier-than-thou abuse of the Garrisonians," "the meddling of ignorant reformers, and the appeals to the slaves to massacre their masters," the South retaliated in kind. If Bailey was occasionally more harsh to the Garrisonians, the "lunatic fringe" of the abolition movement, other abolitionists fared no better than the Garrisonians in his final judgment of all the abolitionists:

> Abolitionist violence bore a bitter harvest. For over a generation, it partially eclipsed other worthy reforms, including woman's rights. It ended all hope for the success of gradual emancipation in the northernmost of the Southern slave states, where the movement had been making promising progress. It contributed to a splitting of the parties and the churches into sectional groupings. It jeopardized fundamental American rights, both North and South, including the right to petition, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom on inquiry, freedom of travel, and freedom of teaching - almost everything "free".
>
> The radical abolitionists also helped destroy the comity between the sections--the goodwill that was the cement of union. Delicate social problems cannot be solved by screaming and name-calling and the Garrisonians introduced emotion into a situation that called for light--not heat. Shouting led inexorably to shooting.

"Bonfires of hatred" thus aroused could only be "partially extinguished by buckets of blood". So, in the final judgment, the belief of statesmen like Lincoln was not unreasonable that "the Garrisonians were doing more harm than good," Bailey concluded.[34]

Judgments like these may be unreasonable, but Bailey was not alone among his contemporary general history authors in voicing them. Abell and his co-workers expressed more succinctly the same views. The Garrisonians were "socially dangerous men" who "certainly contributed more than any other group to render it impossible for politicians, statesmen and the American people as a whole to settle in a reasonable, democratic fashion the /slavery/ issue which lay at the roots" of the Civil War.[35]

However different in tone, most of the authors of the examined general histories published between the early 1930's and the late 1950's were highly critical of the abolitionists. Garrison and the radicals were the primary target of denunciation. But in the overall judgment, the line dividing the radicals and moderates was often blurred. All of the abolitionists were criticized. They were described as impractical, uncompromising, visionary, single-minded, irresponsible, fanatical, socially dangerous agitators

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[34] Bailey, The American Pageant, pp. 368-369, and 370-373.

[35] Abell and others, A History of the United States of America, p. 241.

who were ignorant of the actual conditions of slavery and insensitive to the immense difficulties involved in emancipation, had no workable plan for emancipation or for training the freedmen for citizenship, respected no law, and encouraged slaves to kill their masters in beds. Their violent words and actions provoked among lawabiding Northerners bitter resentment and alarmed Southerners to protect their much abused way of life. A few of them even questioned the sincerity of the abolitionists' devotion to the cause of freedom, or the wisdom of the entire abolition movement. Under the influence of the revisionist historians, a great majority of them came to regard the abolitionists as troublemakers who except for making the reasonable and peaceful solution of the slavery issue impossible and heightening sectional hatred accomplished almost nothing.

After about thirty years of dominance, this view of total domination gave way to a more favorable interpretation. With the gradual penetration of Kenneth M. Stampp's study of slavery and the writings of Dwight L. Dumond and Russell B. Nye about the abolition movement, a more sympathetic treatment of the abolitionists emerged from most general histories during the period from the late 1950's to the present. It is true that Garrison was still disliked by most of the authors of the eight books examined. But no longer were the sincerity and aims of the abolitionists

questioned. And the non-Garrisonians were in general warmly praised. The apologetic tone in describing slavery was gone. Few of these writers blamed the abolitionists for the Souths' intransigency indefending slavery. So far as the division of the abolition concert is concerned, Barnes was still dominating. But in tone and attitude, Dumond and Nye proved to be more influential.

How far the change went can be measured by a revisionist historian's treatment of the abolition movement. In a textbook history co-authored with Walter Johnson, Avery Craven still traced the rise of the abolition crusade to the economic and social dislocations taking place in the ante-bellum North, and interpreted the coming of the Civil War in terms of the moralization of issues by radical minorities on both sides. Yet, in the discussion of the abolitionists, the general tone was calm and favorable. Slavery was described as "an evil which was more bluntly violated the democratic ideals of liberty and equality and the Christian doctrine of justice than any other in the United States." And the abolition agitation against it was "a great and effective moral crusade." John Quincy Adams became "gallant" fighter "to save the fundamental right of petition." The surprising thing is that abusive words were not even leveled at Garrison.[36]

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[36] Avery Craven and Walter Johnson, The United States: Experiment in Democracy (New York, Second edition, 1962), pp. 225, and 226. For discussion of the rise of abolitionism, see pp. 220-223; for the coming of the Civil War, see p. 269.

However, not all the general histories examined were favorable to the abolitionists. At least one author criticized the crusaders as harshly as any writer of the preceding period. This was John A. Garraty. Incidentally his was the only general history among all those examined in which David Donald's interpretation was noticed. Although he thought Donald's theme "difficult to prove," it caused him to "take a fresh look at the abolitionists." And the result of his fresh look was devastating to the abolitionists. According to him, a few abolitionists were "zealots" who "would not listen to reason". They were so intoxicated with the concepts of equality and progress that "the logic of circumstances had little influence upon them." Benjamin Lundy was one of them; but Garrison was "even more provocative." "Utterly indifferent to what effect the sudden freeing of the slave would have on the South," Garrison would "neither compromise, nor negotiate, nor wait" in his denunciation and demand. Theodore Weld was more reasonable and less extreme, "but he was also more emotional in his approach." Indeed, all the abolitionists "adopted an oversimplified and distorted view of the problem of slavery." They painted all southern whites black, all blacks white." Their "specious reasoning" was "destructive" because their "exaggerations angered moderate southerners and made them more receptive to the talk of

their own hotheads." However, Garraty did not blame the abolitionists alone. He also criticized the southern radicals, holding them responsible for driving the moderate antislavery men to extreme abolitionism. Whatever he might say about the extremists in the South, his antipathy to the abolitionists was so obvious that it made his history belong to the former age rather than to the decade during which he wrote.[37]

The remaining six general histories were generally favorable to the abolitionists as a whole. This is clearly shown in their description of the abolition movement. Michael Kraus called it "the great cause," and Herman L. Crow and William L. Turnbull "the most noble" of all the ante-bellum reform movements.[38] To Oscar Handlin, it was "the brightest star in the galaxy of reforms," aiming at "the liberation of a group totally dependent, totally deprived of freedom, and therefore more than any other in need of improvement."[39] Kenneth M. Stampp described the crusaders

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37 John A. Garraty, The American Nation: A History of the United States (New York, 1966). All the quotations are taken from pp. 272-275.

38 Michael Kraus, The United States to 1865 (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1959), p. 446; and Herman L. Crow and William L. Turnbull, American History: A Problems Approach (New York, 1971), p. 295.

39 Oscar Handlin, The History of the United States (New York, 1967), I, 513. His other two histories, The Americans: A New History of the People of the United States

as "champions of civil liberties not only for Negroes but for white men."[40]

But there were other signs of a change to sympathy. To begin with, no one of these writers apologized for slavery. The general view of these writers about slavery could be seen from that of Gilman M. Ostrander who desscribed it as "barbarous, inhumane, degrading,"[41] of Richard B. Morris, William Greenleaf, and Robert H. Ferrell who believed the slavery was a combination of a conscript army and a concentration camp,[42] and of Handlin who wrote about it: "slavery was the greatest indignity of all, for it denied to millions the most elementary human qualities and, by its degrading effect upon both master and slave, stood in the way of the whole nation's progress."[43] Beside their denunciation of slavery, no one of them accepted the

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(Boston, 1963), pp. 234-237, and America: A History (New York, 1968), pp. 426-428 were also examined. There is no difference among the three books in the treatment of the abolition movement.

40 John M. Blum, Bruce Catton, Edmund S. Morgan, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Kenneth M. Stampp, and C. Vann Woodward, The National Experience: A History of the United States (New York, 1963), p. 254. The chapter including the abolition movement was written by Stampp. Hereafter cited as Stampp and others, The National Experience.

41 Gilman M. Ostrander, A Profile History of the United States (New York, 1964), p. 190.

42 Richard B. Morris, William Greenleaf, and Robert H. Ferrell, America: A History of the People (Chicago,1971), p.288.

43 Handlin, The Americans: A New History of the People of the United States, p. 234.

"natural limits" argument of slavery. With Stampp, these authors held the opinion that instead of decline, slavery was "flourishing and spreading," and that without interference from the North, it would be never destroyed.[44]

In contrast to the rather sympathetic attitude of the writers of the previous period toward the early antislavery movement which was supposed to have been particularly strong in the South,[45] few authors of the recent ten years or so took the early crusade against slavery very seriously, and several of them criticized the colonization movement. Ostrander pointed out that the "most advanced Southern solution" to the slavery problem was no more than some masters' support of "the hopelessly impractical and equally inhumane solution of wholesale expulsion to Africa," while Morris and his co-authors considered colonization as a "reactionary" scheme, predicated on the belief of the Negroes' inferiority in race.[46]

Another sign of the change from condemnation to sympathy was that no one of these writers accused the abolitionists of hardening the South's pro-slavery stand and thus making a reasonable solution of the slavery issue impossible. Instead, some of them insisted that slaveholders

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[44] Stampp and others, The National Experience, p. 252.

[45] For example, Bailey, The American Pageant, p. 367, contrasted early "reasonable" antislavery men to later "hotheads." And Abell and others, A History of the United States of America, p. 238, called the colonization movement "this noble venture."

[46] Ostrander, A Profile History of the United States,

shifted to a militant defense of slavery before or abreast the rise of the abolition movement. For example, Kraus said that by the 1820's, the South "had become committed to the institution as a beneficial way of life."[47] Ostrander pointed out that the trend toward a stricter control of slaves and a positive defense of slavery in the South long began before 1832 which saw the last open debate over the possibility of some kind of emancipation in the Virginia legislature.[48] And Handlin and Stampp were certain that it was the failure of the South to emancipate its slaves which caused the reformers to believe that "stronger measures" were required to end slavery.[49]

Such shifts of opinions naturally resulted in amore sympathetic view of the abolition movement. And most of the participants received warm praises except Garrison.[50] Most of these writers were still critical of Garrison's radicalism or extremism. However, even their criticisms of

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p. 190; and Morris and others, America: A History of the People, p. 292.

47 Kraus, The United States to 1865, p. 448.

48 Ostrander, A Profile History of the United States, pp. 190-192.

49 Handlin, The History of the United States, p. 513. Also, Stampp and others, The National Experience, p. 252.

50 The praises of most abolitionists can be found in almost all of the books examined.

Garrison were less harsh than before. While conceding that Garrison broke the conspiracy of silence, Kraus considered him too uncompromising and fiery to be liked by most Northerners.[51] Handlin argued that Garrison's insistence on the absoluteness of liberty provided a standard to which events eventually drove other moderate reformers. But he called him a zealot and disliked his extremism in denouncing the Constitution and the Church, and his susceptibility to "eccentric" reforms.[52] Ostrander said that Garrison was an agitator without a practical program.[53] The most severe critics of Garrison among these writers were Morris, Greenleaf, and Ferrell. To them, he was an extremist whose "intemperate utterances often embarrassed his colleagues," whose fanaticism "alienated many moderate abolitionists," and whose inspiration was taken "more from a hatred of slaveholders than alove for the blacks."[54]

With one exception, all the examined general histories of the last decade showed an antislavery and proabolitionist attitude. All the authors considered the

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[51] Kraus, The United States to 1865, pp. 445-446.

[52] Handlin, The History of the United States, p. 507, and 513.

[53] Ostrander, A Profile History of the United States, p. 192.

[54] Morris, Greenleaf, and Ferrell, America: A History of the People, p. 294.

abolition movement a just cause and a legitimate product of the growing intransigency of the slaveholders' defense of slavery. The abolitionists were no longer described as troublemakers whose agitation hindered rather than helped the solution of the slavery problem. Instead, they were now regarded as noble fighters for the liberties of black as well as white men. Even though they failed to persuade the slaveholders to free their slaves, as emphasized by Stampp,[55] nevertheless, by combining the slave's cause with the preservation of whitemen's civil liberties, they convinced many Northerners that "abolition was not a doctrine of wild-eyed radicals,"[56] and that slavery was morally wrong and threatening their own liberties, and therefore could not be tolerated as a permanent institution.[57] Such favorable descriptions and judgments were clearly in difference from those of most of the general histories produced from the early 1930's to the late 1950's. But in view of their continued criticism of Garrison, however mild, their sympathy was still limited. Garrison's fanaticism or extremism proved still to be an annoyance to most of these authors. By and large, they followed in attitude and

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[55] Stampp and others, The National Experience, p. 254.

[56] Handlin, The History of the United States, p. 514.

[57] Stampp and Others, The National Experience, p. 253. Also see Ostrander, A Profile History of the United States, p. 193.

interpretation Dumond and Nye rather than the recent rehabilitating historians of the abolition movement.

This change from unsympathetic to sympathetic treatment of the abolitionists was also revealed by different editions of histories written by the same authors. Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic[58] could be used as an illustration. First published in 1930, this history went through six editions in the next thirty-nine years. In the first edition, the treatment of the abolitionists was basically favorable. The crusade was described as a humanitarian movement led by "humane and liberty-loving persons," seeking the abolition of slavery. Garrison was mildly criticized as a man of "contradiction," and an extremist, blind to the rights of slavemasters, insensitive to the color problem and exaggerating the cruelty of slavery.[59] In these respects, Morison and Commager presented a view of the

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58 (New York). The first edition of the book was published in 1930, the second in 1937, the third in 1942, the fourth in 1950, the fifth in 1962, the sixth and last in 1969. I could not obtain the second and third editions from the Michigan State University Library. In any case, a comparison of the editions in wording, the first edition was not too different from the fourth, the fifth from the sixth in content. The significant difference was between the first and sixth edition. The comparison in the text is basedon the difference between these two editions.

59 Morrison and Commager, The Growth of the American Republic, first edition, pp. 403-410. Quotations are taken from p. 407, and 405.

abolitionists similar to that of the nationalistic historians. But in their final judgment, they seemed to anticipate the revisionist historians in blaming the abolitionists for arousing sectional hatred. They concluded in the first edition:

> How, then, shall we estimate the abolitionists? Their sincerity and courage is no longer denied by friend or enemy; of their wisdom no enemy was ever convinced, and many friends are now doubtful. . . .
> Certain it is that they closed every avenue to emancipation save civil war; their means almost defeated their end. Abolition came in spite of the abolitionists rather than because of them; and in the worst way. But could it have come in any other way? Garrison broke a great conspiracy of silence. His indignant pity seared the Northern conscience with the image of a slave cowering under his master's lash - but at what cost in hatred, bloodshed, and uncharitableness![60]

The criticism is obvious. Garrison accused northern conscience against slavery, but at what a terrible price! And so far as actual emancipation is concerned, the high cost seemed meaningless for "abolition came in spite of the abolitionists rather than because of them." It is this opinion that put the authors nearer to the position of those who wrote general histories during the second thirty years of this century than to that of the writers of the first three decades.

Thirty-nine years later, a more favorable evaluation of the abolition agitation was set forth in the sixth edition of the book. The basic description of the

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60 Ibid., pp. 409-410.

abolitionists as true humanitarian reformers did not change. And criticism of Garrison remained intact. But the textual arrangements and the omissions and additions of words already resulted in a more favorable view in the sixth than in the first edition.[61] The more significant change, however, occurred in the final evaluation. In the sixth edition, the author raised the same question, "How, then, shall we estimate the abolitionists?" But they answered in a different way:

> It must be admitted that they fanned the passions which led to civil war; but it is fatuous to argue, as Southern apologists have done, that if they had kept silent, emancipation would have come peaceably. Abolition was an irresistible power in a world then awakening to new concepts of humanity. It could no more be kept down in Boston and Indianapolis than in London and Paris. . . .
>
> The trouble with the abolitionists, as we can see now, was this - they spent all their compassion on the slave and left none for the Southern white man who was equally involved in the system and could see no way to get rid of it. The cost of their agitation in hatred and bloodshed was immense; but in view of the Southern resistance to any amelioration of slavery, and Southern insistence on acquiring more slave territory and more buttresses to the system, it is doubtful whether emancipation could have come about in any other way than the worst way, civil war.[62]

They still deplored the immense cost of the abolitionists' agitation. But the suggestion of the futility of the cost

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61 Morison and Commager, The Growth of the American Republic, sixth edition, pp. 499-507.

62 Ibid., p. 507.

was gone. And they now came around to defend the abolition agitation by emphasizing that it was part and parcel of the irresistible power of awakened humanity sweeping all over the world, and that because of the slaveholders' intransigency there was really no other way to end slavery save the Civil War. In this opinion, the authors were in accord with most of the general history writers of the last decade or so.

In 1963, Patrick J. Groff examined eighteen high school texts published between 1950 and 1961, and came up with the opinion that these high school histories told "a decidedly slanted history of the abolitionists and their role in the emancipation of the American slave."[63] This conclusion held true not only for general histories of the 1950's but also for those published during a longer period. At least the popular or textbook histories appeared from the early 1930's to the late 1950's told largely a distorted story about the abolition movement. Authors of most of these histories were more or less pro-southern and anti-abolitionist. From such an attitude, it is probably natural that they suspected the effects of the abolition agitation. To them, the fanatical, irresponsible, and violent attacks on slavery and slaveholders killed the

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63 Patrick J. Groff, "The Abolitionist Movement in High School Texts," The Journal of Negro Education, XXXII (Winter, 1963), 43.

supposedly strong antislavery sentiment in the South, hardened Southerners' determination to defend their abused way of life, and thus made a reasonable solution of the issue of a dying slavery more difficult, if not impossible. The net result of the crusade was that of hindering rather than helping the abolition of slavery.

However, Groff's conclusion can not be applied to general histories written before the early 1930's and after the late 1950's. The abolitionists emerged from most of the histories of these two periods in a far more favorable shape. Most authors shared an antislavery and pro-abolitionist attitude in their treatment of the abolition movement. They denounced slavery; and no one believed its "natural death" was in sight by 1860. Nor did they take the southern antislavery sentiment very seriously. Indeed, some of them held the opinion that the growing southern pro-slavery intransigency convinced northern reformers of the necessity of a stronger measure to end slavery. Anyway, few of them were prepared to blame the abolitionists for the South's militant defense of slavery. Instead, they gave the abolitionists the credit of breaking the conspiracy of silence surrounding slavery, and arousing northern public opinion against slavery or its further expansion through the identification of the antislavery cause with the defense of civil rights against the encroachment of the slave power.

Thus, as a whole, the treatment of the abolition movement in survey histories seemed to have gone through three changes: from the sympathetic description of the first three decades of this century through the hostile treatment of the next thirty years to the favorable evaluation of the period after the late 1950's. But the changes in the treatment of one particular abolitionist, Garrison, have not been very clear. It is true that most authors of the first and third periods were less critical of Garrison than those of the second. But the changes were in degree rather than in substance. Few liked him, certainly no one explicitly defended or justified his radicalism or extremism. Garrison remains to be rescued from condemnation.

Probably this cannot be expected before the penetration into general histories of the attitude or spirit shown by the recent radical historians. Up until now, in any case, nowhere could be found in all the general histories examined the influence of the rehabilitating tendency now dominating the more specialized studies of the abolition movement. As for the opinions of other major historians of the abolition movement, the degree of their penetration varied greatly. Roughly speaking, the general history writers of the first period showed an attitude and presented an interpretation similar to those of the nationalist historians. During the second period, the revisionist view

became dominant from the mid-1930's on. Dumond and Nye seemed more influential than others during the last ten years. Donald was mentioned by only one writer who, for that matter, did not follow exactly his psychological interpretation. But so far as the internal division of the abolition concert and the distribution of praise and blame among the abolitionists themselves are concerned, Barnes proved to be the most influential. Ever since 1940, most of the survey history writers have accepted his dichotomy and his praise of the Weld-Tappan group at the expense of Garrison.

In conclusion, it may be said that the treatment of the abolition movement in general histories has undergone three changes. The views of the first two periods roughly coincided with the respective prevailing interpretation - the nationalist and the revisionist - of each age. This was not so in the third period. In spite of the fact that an unreservedly sympathetic reappraisal has been undertaken by more radical historians of the abolition movement in recent years, a rehabilitating treatment of the abolitionists, particularly of Garrison, has not yet filtered down into general histories. This fact seems to confirm the general belief that the interpretations of specialized studies on any subjects have to wait for a while before they are accepted, if indeed they are accepted at all, by writers of popular or textbook histories.

CONCLUSION

Despite the desirability of the ideal of objectivity in writing history, complete neutrality of historians is hard to achieve because of the very nature of historical study. Dealing with unrepeatable and unobservable events, the historian is forced to depend on his own judgment in selecting from incomplete and often conflicting material those which he deems significant, and in arranging them in such a way as he considers to be meaningful. In this process some preconceptions inevitably come into play. Such preconceptions may be personal convictions or the prevailing beliefs of particular ages. Historians may consciously try to guard their influences. But they are more often than not built so deeply into the subconsciousness that people usually are not aware of their existence. This is probably the reason why histories on the same subject often vary from age to age, and why no completely objective and "final history" has been written.

The development of abolition historiography seems to confirm this view of historical study. The interpretation of this controversial crusade against slavery has been in constant change ever since the trained historians came to

deal with it around the turn of the twentieth century. The availability of new material, the accumulation of scholarship, and the refinement of research tools have undoubtedly contributed to these changes. Without the discovery of Theodore Weld's private letters, Gilbert H. Barnes probably could not have written his book on the abolition movement in the way he did. And David Donald and Stanley Elkins were certainly benefitted by the development of psychology.

But the fact that different historians who used the same sources of material and the same research tools often arrived at different conclusions shows that there were other things involved. Perhaps personal backgrounds and convictions of individual historians were even more important in determining the way in which they approached the abolitionists. Thus Albert B. Hart and Jesse Macy with strong family ties to the western abolition movement, and Barnes with a resentment against eastern historians' treatment of the West produced studies of the abolition movement which were frankly partisan to the western group of abolitionists, while the southern background of the revisionist historians was not insignificant in their hostile treatment of the abolitionists. The concern of Dwight L. Dumond and Russell B. Nye with civil rights growing out of their liberalism was probably more important than any other factors in moving them to describe the

crusaders as fighters for the slaves' freedom and defenders of the freeman's liberties. And the Progressive historians' minimization of the significance of the moral issue of slavery in the sectional conflict grew largely out of their belief in the determining importance of economic forces in history.

However, personal backgrounds and beliefs of historians can not explain certain facts. In contrast to Hart, Macy, and Barnes, Frederick Jackson Turner, Charles A. Beard, and Vernon L. Parrington, all western historians accepted Garrison as the leader of the abolition movement, and Nye, another western historian, conceded the symbolic importance of Garrison. And the liberalism of Beard and Turner did not result in the same view of the crusaders as that of Dumond and Nye. Albert J. Beveridge, a Northerner coming from an area which was proud of its antislavery activities, gave an interpretation of the abolition movement similar to that of the revisionist historians. The personal factors can not account either for the changes of certain historians' views about the abolitionists, But above all there is the fact that during a given period, historians of the abolition movement often approached the subject in a similar attitude and judgment, and that their common view became the prevailing one in that age.

The last fact shows that the general climate of opinion or perspective of an age was probably more important

than other factors in influencing its historians to approach the abolitionists in a certain way. Anyway, there has been a close coincidence between the changes in the general outlook and changes in the interpretation of the abolition movement throughout the twentieth century. Thus, the nationalist historians who grew up during a period when public emphasis was on national unity and sectional reconciliation presented an interpretation of the abolition movement which approved its aim but criticized the radicals for their radicalism threatening the Union. The disillusionment with the First World War and the debunking mood of the 1920's and 1930's accounted at least partially for Barnes' basically ambivalent attitude, and largely for the revisionists' denunciation of the moralization and emotionization of ordinary issues by the abolition propagandists. When the general perspective moved to conservatism with a mistrust of reforms during the 1950's, there appeared the psychologist-historian who by seeking the motives of the abolitionists in their psychologist disturbances or by suggesting their aim to be the reduction of their own internal tensions, effectively minimized the significance of the abolitionists as true reformers. And finally, with the rise ofradicalism and mounting sympathy for the Negro's struggle for civil rights during the 1960's, the trend in abolition historiography shifted to a completely rehabilitating reappraisal of the abolition agitation which explicitly justified and defended radical abolitionism.

Whatever may have been the factors that changed the views of historians about the abolition movement, it is certain that its historical interpretation during the twentieth century have gone from the partial approval of the nationalist historians during the first three decades through the condemnation of the revisionist and psychologist historians of the period from the 1930's to the 1950's to the total justification of the rehabilitating historians of the last ten or so years. Broadly speaking, these changes in the specialized studies of the abolition movement have been reflected in popular and textbook histories except the rehabilitating trend of recent years which still remains yet to penetrate into general histories.

In view of the past interpretative changes and their close relationships to the preconceptions of the historians and of their ages, it is, indeed, very doubtful whether a "final history" can ever be written about this highly controversial subject of the abolition movement.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Since works on the abolition movement were already discussed in the text of this thesis, there is no need to comment on them once again. Monographes, biographies, and articles devoted to the abolition crusade and analyzed in the text are listed in alphabetical order of the names of authors at the end of this note. The following comments are confined to those works which have no direct relations to the abolition movement itself but helped this writer in understanding the various aspects of its changing interpretation. It is not presumed to be complete. In fact, it is highly selective in that only those works which were actually consulted in preparing this thesis are included.

A Note on Works Consulted

The ready guide to the historical literature on the abolition movement is Oscar Handlin, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Samuel Eliot Morison, Frederick Merk, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and Paul Herman Buck, Harvard Guide to American History (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), pp. 362-363. But the listing is far from adequate, being of no more than sixty-five titles. A fuller list can be found in "Suggestion for Additional

Reading" in Richard O. Curry, ed., The Abolitionists: Reformers or Fanatics? (New York, 1965), pp. 120-122. But the most complete bibliographies of the literature on the abolition movement up to the early 1960's are in Louis Filler, The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860 (New York, 1960), "Bibliography", pp. 281-303, and Russell B. Nye, Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860 (East Lansing, Mich., second ed., 1963), "Bibliography of Sources," pp. 319-330. No adequate compilation of writings after the early 1960's exists; but the footnotes in Merton L. Dillon, "The Abolitionists: A Decade of Historiography, 1959-1969," Journal of Southern History, XXXV (Nov., 1969), 500-522, provide an excellent listing of most of the studies of the abolition movement produced in the recent decade.

There seems no studies existing which traced the whole development of abolition historiography during the twentieth century. So far only two articles dealing with parts of it could be found. David Alan Williams in "William Llooyd Garrison, the Historians, and the Abolitionist Movement," Essex Institute Historical Collections, XCVIII (1962), 84-99, analyzed the historical treatment of Garrison in various studies. But his discussion was not extended to include the changing treatment of the whole abolition movement; nor did he try to explain why the historical view of Garrison changed through the times. Dillon's

article cited above emphasized the close relationship between the rehabilitating trend in abolition historiography in recent years and the growing sympathy toward the Negro civil rights movement. Although the study was confined to a very short period in the development of abolition historiography, nevertheless, it is of great help for the understanding of the current view of historians about the abolitionists. The only study of the changing treatment of the abolition movement in textbooks is Patrick J. Groff, "The Abolitionist Movement in High School Texts," The Journal of Negro Education, XXXII (Winter, 1963), 43-51. It covered high school texts published during a very short period, that from 1950 to 1961; but it indicated how badly were the abolitionists treated in textbook histories.

As a major part of the ante-bellum reform movement, historiographical writings about the changing interpretation of the movement as a whole often shed lights on the changing treatment of the abolitionists. In this respect, C.S. Griffin, The Ferment of Reform, 1830-1860 (New York, 1967), and David Brion Davis, ed., Ante-Bellum Reform (New York, 1967), "Introduction," pp. 1-10, are of particular help. They analyzed the changing interpretation of the reform movement in terms of background, motivation, and effects. But they, like Williams, also did not give reasons for these changes.

Because of the intimate relations of the abolition movement with the coming of the Civil War, writings about

Civil War historiography is especially useful to the study of the changing interpretations of the abolition movement. The best study of the development of Civil War historiography is Thomas J. Pressly. Americans Interpret Their Civil War (New York, 1954), which traced the changes in the interpretation of the Civil War from war times to the early 1950's and related these changes to those in the perspective of ages. Although not so broad in scope, other writings are also helpful. Charles W. Ramsdell, "The Changing Interpretation of the Civil War," Journal of Southern History, III (1933), 3-27, focused his attention on the signs of the rise of a new view of the Civil War which later was called "revisionist." Bernard DeVoto, "The Easy Chair", Harper's Magazine, Vol. 192 (Jan.-March, 1946), pp. 123-126, and 234-237, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "The Causes of the Civil War: A Note on Historical Sentimentalism," Partisan Review, XVI (Oct. 1949), 969-981, criticized the revisionist historians for their evasion of moral judgment from a different outlook of the age after the Second World War, while John S. Rosenberg, "Toward a New Civil War Revisionism," The American Scholar, XXXVIII (Spring, 1969), 250-272, suggested an outline for future investigation after a brief description of previous interpretations.

Historiographical studies of the writings on any historical subject are of course benefitted by works on general American historiography. In this field, there have

been many excellent studies. But only the following were consulted in writing this thesis. The most systematic treatment of changes in the writing of American history seems to be John Higham, History: The Development of Historical Studies in the United States (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1965) pp. 1-232, which traced the changes not only in the interpretation of the American past but also in the theory of writing history from the formative years to the present. William T. Hutchinson, ed., The Marcus W. Jernigan Essays in American Historiography (Chicago, 1937) and Harvey Wish, The American Historian: A Social-Intellectual History of the Writing of the American Past (New York, 1960), are good on individual leading historians. Robert Allen Skotheim, American Intellectual Histories and Historians (Princeton, N.J., 1966) traced the development of American intellectual history through an analysis of the personal idealogies of various historians and their different manners of treating historical ideas.

Besides these studies of the entire American historiography, there are those which dealt with the different schools of interpretation. The consulted writings on the Progressive historians included Charles Crouse, "The Emergence of Progressive History," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXVII (Jan.-March, 1966), 109-124, which briefly discussed the background of the rise and main characteristics of Progressive historiography; and Lee Benson, Turner

and Beard: American Historical Writing Reconsidered (New York, 1960) which was in essence a defense of the two Progressive historians against their critics. In an critical analysis, Richard Hofstadter in The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington (New York, 1968) discussed these three historians' experiences, ideological positions, and the development of their historical thinkings and interpretations of American history. The first historians to write about the consensus historians was John Higham who in a very influential article, "The Cult of 'American Consensus': Homogenizing Our History," Commentary, XXVII (Feb., 1959), 95-100, delineated the main characteristics of the historical writings of the 1950's. The essence of this article can also be found in his another essay, "Beyond Consensus: The Historian as Moral Critic," American Historical Review, LXVII (April, 1962), 609-625. Dwight W. Hoover, in "Some Comments on Recent United States Historiography," American Quarterly, XVII (Summer, 1965), 299-318, analyzed the writings of most of the leading historians of the 1950's and early 1960's to confirm Higham's opinion that historians of this period tended to minimize conflict and emphasize consensus in the American past. What Higham did to consensus historiography was done by Irwin Unger to the New-Left historians. In his article, "The 'New Left' and American History: Some Recent Trends in United States Historiography," American Historical Review, LXXII (July,

1967), 1237-1263, and his, ed., Beyond Liberalism: The New Left Views American History (Waltham, Mass., 1971), "Introduction," pp. xi-xvi, Unger discussed the factors which contributed to the emergence of the radical historians in recent years and their common view of American history.

In addition to those provided by the above cited studies, information on the backgrounds and beliefs of the various historians discussed in this thesis, and on the general outlook or perspectives of their ages were further obtained from other relevant works. Such ordinary biographical references as Who's Who in America, and Directory of American Scholars: A Biographical Directory (New York, 1969), Volume I, provides the basic informations on their backgrounds.

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Harvey Robinson, New History: Essays Illustrating the Modern Historical Outlook (New York, 1912), Charles A. Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," American Historical Review, XXXIX (1934), 219-229, and Carl Becker's three articles: "Some Aspects of the Influence of Social Problems Upon the Study and Writing of History," American Journal of Sociology, XVIII (March, 1913), 641-675, "Everyman His Own Historian," in Becker, Everyman His Own Historian: Essays on History and Politics (New York, 1935), pp. 233-266, and "What Are Historical Facts?" in Hans Meyehoff, ed., The Philosophy of History in Our Time (New York, 1939), pp. 120-137. Turner's theory of Frontier and section was set forth in his own essays the most important of which can be found in Ray Allen Billington, ed., Frontier and Section: Selected Essays of Frederick Jackson Turner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1961).

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progress of American democracy. Russell B. Nye in Midwestern Progressive Politics: A Historical Study of Its Origins and Development, 1870-1958 (East Lansing, Mich., 1959) sympathetically interpreted the Midwestern Progressivism as an agrarian movement against capitalism. In This Almost Chosen People: Essays in the History of American Ideas (East Lansing, Mich., 1966), he traced the gradual modification through the times of such basic ideas as progress, equality, individualism, and others from the beginning of the republic to the present.

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