
A GLOBAL HISTORY *of*
ANTI-SLAVERY POLITICS
in the NINETEENTH CENTURY



Edited by
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A Global History of Anti-slavery Politics in the Nineteenth Century

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Contents

<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	vii
Introduction: The Global Reach of Abolitionism in the Nineteenth Century <i>William Mulligan</i>	1
1 “Liberté, Indépendance”: Haitian Anti-slavery and National Independence <i>Julia Gaffield</i>	17
2 “A Most Promising Field for Future Usefulness”: The Church Missionary Society and the Liberated Africans of Sierra Leone <i>Maeve Ryan</i>	37
3 Debating Slavery and Empire: The United States, Britain and the World’s Anti-slavery Convention of 1840 <i>Maurice Bric</i>	59
4 The Political as Personal: Transatlantic Abolitionism c. 1833–67 <i>Simon Morgan</i>	78
5 Autocratic Abolitionists: Tsarist Russian Anti-slavery Campaigns <i>Megan Dean Farah</i>	97
6 Abolition and Anti-slavery in the Ottoman Empire: A Case to Answer? <i>Ehud R. Toledano</i>	117
7 Anti-slavery in Spain and Its Colonies, 1808–86 <i>Christopher Schmidt-Nowara</i>	137
8 The Anti-slave Trade Campaign in Europe, 1888–90 <i>William Mulligan</i>	149
9 The Invasion of the United States by an Englishman: E. D. Morel and the Anglo-American Intervention in the Congo <i>Charles Laderman</i>	171

10	The Slave Trade, Slavery, and Abolitionism: The Unfinished Debate in France <i>Françoise Vergès</i>	198
11	Transformations in the Law Concerning Slavery: Legacies of the Nineteenth Century Anti-slavery Movement <i>Andrea Nicholson</i>	214
	<i>Bibliography</i>	237
	<i>Index</i>	249

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Introduction: The Global Reach of Abolitionism in the Nineteenth Century

William Mulligan

In 1874 a slave, working as a pearl diver in the Persian Gulf, swam away from the shore and clambered onto a Royal Navy vessel. The fugitive believed that the boards of the naval vessel constituted “free soil” and, on this occasion, he was not disappointed.¹ That slaves in the Persian Gulf acted on the notion of “free soil” to achieve their liberty is just one of many demonstrations of the international connections that shaped abolitionist politics and practices in the nineteenth century. Abolitionism provided a tissue that connected high politics, popular associations, and the agency of the most oppressed individuals in changing social institutions, labour, economic and commercial relations, and international politics. The story of the exchange of these ideas across borders, the establishment of transnational networks, and the global legacy of anti-slavery for human rights and humanitarian politics today are the subjects of this collection of essays.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the institution in its different forms was firmly entrenched, despite some important blows, notably the overthrow of French rule and the establishment of a republic in Haiti. Defenders of slavery were forthright, supporting the institution on the grounds of economic efficiency, civilized practice, custom, and race. By the end of the century, slavery had been abolished in many parts of the world and was restricted to isolated areas, though brutal coercive labour regimes continued to exist. Supporters of slavery had been forced on to the defensive, their arguments wilting in the face of political, economic, and military pressure—in addition to justifications made on the basis of a variety of arguments, from the rights of man to the claims of civilization.

There already exists an exceptionally rich and often contentious historiography concerning the emergence, spread, and success of abolitionism. One argument has analysed the connections between economic change and the ending of slavery. The emergence of abolitionism coincided with the consolidation of a modern capitalist economy in the Atlantic world. Since the pioneering work of Eric Williams, historians have researched and refined the understanding of the relationship between capitalism and abolitionism.²

2 Introduction

While Williams's argument that the decline of plantation slavery owed much to economic interests within British society has been undermined, later work stressed the coincidence of abolitionist interests, capitalist economy, bourgeois values, and class politics. Brion Davis, for example, examined the economic interests of the Quaker abolitionists in a free labour market and concluded that the "anti-slavery movement ... reflected the needs and values of the emerging capitalist order".³ Historians of slavery in other regions of the world have also stressed the relationship between capitalist interests, free labour regimes, and the suppression of slavery. Writing about Africa in the late nineteenth century, Paul Lovejoy argued that "the modern industrial system and a slave-based social formation were incompatible ... The demise of slavery was inevitable in the context of [Africa's] absorption into a capitalist world economy."⁴ The precise relations between class interests, economic factors, and political concerns remains a source of debate, but, in general terms, one narrative locates the ending of slavery as part of a process of globalization, driven by the spread and consolidation of a global capitalist economy.

The other major line of analysis starts with the coincidence between the political and ideological revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century and the rise of abolitionism. Another great revisionist historian writing in the first half of the twentieth century, C. L. R. James, saw the Haitian Revolution as the true fulfilment of the declaration of the rights of man in 1789. Where Enlightenment writers simply delivered "wordy attacks" and British abolitionists were motivated by jealousy of French wealth in Haiti, the Black Jacobins, such as Toussaint L'Ouverture, realized the moral prescriptions of human equality in their revolt against slavery.⁵ In broad terms, this approach views the rise of abolitionism as an ideological revolution, driven variously by the rise of a new moral sensibility and the establishment and defence of rights. The logic of the language of "common humanity" and "the rights of man" had universalizing tendencies, which different groups used to expand their political space, freedom, and dignity. Historians disagree on the relative importance of moral arguments, empathy, and rights doctrines, as well as on the timing and triggers for these changes. The Enlightenment, the American, French, and Haitian revolutions, and crisis of empire in the late eighteenth century provide the different starting points.⁶ The jagged spread of these ideas through revolution, empire, and war over the rest of the long nineteenth century provides an over-arching explanation, rooted in political history, for the suppression of slavery.

Within these broad narratives, histories of abolitionism tend to concentrate on the national paradigm for several reasons. First, abolitionists had their most important impact within a national or imperial framework. Their greatest triumphs came when slavery was abolished within their own empires.⁷ These represent the most dramatic stories in the collapse of slave

systems. In addition they can be cast into established national narratives of parliamentary reform, revolution, and civil war, the quintessential motors of domestic political and social change. Because abolitionists formed pressure groups but rarely wielded power at the highest levels, it was extremely difficult for them to pressure their governments to take action against foreign slave-holding powers. When governments did take action, it was often limited to diplomatic entreaties. Second, whereas the history of slavery is the study of an economic institution and migration, the history of abolitionism is largely a study of ideas and popular politics. Phenomena which can be measured have dominated global history—trade, capital flows, and migration, for example—but it is more difficult to assess the spread of ideas across global networks. Historians have also adopted comparative approaches to the study of slavery, but less frequently to abolitionism in different societies.⁸

Abolition was an international project, as well as a domestic one. Commercial competition and concepts of national prestige within the international system are just the factors that shaped the global history of abolition. The subject requires a global perspective, just as slavery does. In 2001, David Brion Davis urged his colleagues working on slavery to look at the “big picture”. The study of slave systems, particularly in the United States, he argued, was too bound up with the borders of the nation-state, when slavery was a multinational phenomenon, sustained by transoceanic networks. Davis spoke of the importance of comparative and global history, by which he meant the web of interconnectedness. Although his article concentrated on slavery, he referred briefly to the opportunities for examining abolitionism in transnational frameworks: “the influence of the American Quakers on the British abolitionists, the influence of the British abolitionists on America, and of American abolitionists on Brazilian reformers”.⁹ While the study of slavery has been central to the new global history and its illustrious subsets, such as Atlantic history, until recently the history of abolitionism has received less attention from global history.

Perspectives drawn from global, transnational, and international history must be careful not to deracinate movements, ideas, and politics from their local context. Some scholars have registered concern that historians are liable to overinterpret fleeting connections between societies as evidence of networks that can explain major political and social change.¹⁰ Yet this does not mean that we should neglect the transnational links which forged abolitionism in the nineteenth century. The exchange of ideas, the moral pressure on governments and societies, the establishment of international networks, the development of new means of communication, and the possibility of one state intervening in another made abolition an international project. Abolitionists (and their opponents) were always aware of the international context—it has not been imposed by current scholarship. The clash between slavery and abolition was part of a wider process of social and political reform in the nineteenth century, driven partly by a competitive

international system. As states sought to preserve their position or advance their interests, they looked for successful models of reform elsewhere. Abolition of slavery also created a moral measure for a state's inclusion in international society, or at least its position in the pecking order—one that was defined by European notions of “humanity” and “civilization”. Finally, the economics of slavery and abolition were acted out on an international playing field. Slave-produced crops were often cheaper and more competitive than those produced by free labour, but abolitionist campaigners urged consumers to boycott morally suspect goods and governments to impose tariffs on them.

Historians have long known about these connections. After all, the spread of revolutionary ideas from the North American colonies and France has been a staple of historiography, while studies of the history of capitalism cannot but take international commerce into account. In recent years, however, a number of studies have concentrated on the formation of networks and the exchange of ideas as a means of assessing the history of abolitionism. For example, João Pedro Marques shows the importance of British diplomatic pressure on thinking in Portuguese society about slavery.¹¹ Edward Rugemer's study of the impact of the abolition of slavery in Britain's Caribbean colonies on the politics of slavery in the United States is an excellent example of how an international perspective can stimulate a well-tilled field of research.¹² He shows how abolitionists and defenders of slavery used examples of slave revolts and popular mobilization in the British Empire to bolster their campaigns within the United States. Hilary McDonald Beckles shows how slaves in the Caribbean heard, transformed, and criticized British abolitionists and their arguments. Slaves overheard gossip at the tables of the planters, they sang, and they exchanged information with other slaves in towns and markets.¹³

Three recent overviews of anti-slavery politics have also adopted international approaches. Brion Davis's *Inhuman Bondage* begins with the Amistad case—an illustration of the international implications of anti-slavery politics. In contrast to his earlier arguments, which stressed the coincidence of capitalist and abolitionist economic, political, and moral interests, Davis places more weight on the transformation of moral perceptions as the fundamental reason for the rise and spread of abolitionist ideas. He shows the connections of anti-slavery ideas and networks across time and space, from Frederick Douglass's paean to the Haitian Revolution at the Chicago World Fair to the impact of the American Civil War on the Brazilian abolitionist, José Ferreira de Menezes.¹⁴ Drescher's *Abolition* and Blackburn's *The American Crucible* both chart the transmission of ideas, the establishment of networks, and the international politics that drove processes of abolition in the nineteenth century. Where Drescher argues that western European, and especially British, notions of freedom provided the core justification for abolitionism, Blackburn stresses the agency of the slaves, particularly

those who adopted and re-worked French ideas about the rights of man. Where Drescher places emphasis on the popular moral pressure exerted by the mobilization of civil society as the key force behind the process of abolition, Blackburn underlines the importance of war and revolutionary upheaval in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Where Drescher concludes that slavery underpinned a vibrant economic system and that abolition was an act of econocide, Blackburn views abolition as part of a crisis of capitalism, resulting from unrestrained growth. Despite differences in interpretations, all three succeed in showing that international intellectual and institutional connections were an important element of abolitionist politics in the nineteenth century.

These three works also locate abolitionism within the history of human rights, spreading and contracting around the globe since the late eighteenth century, and an emerging field of historical research. Seymour Drescher ends his recent history of abolitionism with “the story of slavery’s reduction remains a model of comparative achievement for all who seek to expand the range of human rights”.¹⁵ “The modern notion of ‘human rights’ is a twentieth-century invention, but it resonates with the anti-slavery tradition in important ways”, claims Blackburn. “Indeed the historic travails of anti-slavery have great relevance for a world where the conditions needed for human flourishing are too often sadly inadequate or entirely absent.”¹⁶ Brion Davis uses the term incidentally, suggesting that American ideas of human rights in the early nineteenth century made slavery a “peculiar institution”. He ends on a positive note, arguing that abolition was a “willed achievement” that inspires “confidence in other movements for social change”.¹⁷ Meanwhile Laurent Dubois sees the significance of the Haitian Revolution thus: “It was a central part of the destruction of slavery in the Americas, and therefore a crucial moment in the history of democracy, one that laid the foundation for human rights everywhere. In this sense we are all descendants of the Haitian revolution, and responsible to these ancestors.”¹⁸

In her pathbreaking history of human rights, Lynn Hunt claims that once universal rights were on the political agenda, it became increasingly difficult to restrict claims to them. The granting of equal political rights to free blacks in 1792 and the abolition of slavery in 1794 were testimony to the power of the new rights talk. However, the French Revolution had also elevated the concept of the nation as the fundamental basis of domestic and international political action. This went against the grain of universal rights. In the nineteenth century, discussion of human rights was marginal and implementation of any human rights negligible, she argues. Only a few benevolent societies “kept the flame of universal human rights burning”, notably the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840.¹⁹

Historians of human rights, on the other hand, are sceptical that continuities existed between the anti-slavery movements of the nineteenth

century and the human rights movements of the late twentieth century. In a programmatic article, Kenneth Cmiel acknowledges the possible merit of viewing the transnational cooperation of anti-slavery movements as a bridge towards human rights activism in the 1940s, but he notes that rights are politically contingent and is therefore sceptical of longer-term continuities between the rights of man and human rights, via anti-slavery movements.²⁰ Mark Mazower argues that human rights derived from the failure of the minority rights regimes of the interwar period, leading to a regime, after the Second World War, based on rights enshrined in the individual.²¹ Stefan Ludwig Hoffmann believes that the concept of human rights “almost disappeared from political and legal discourse in the nineteenth century, while other concepts such as ‘civilization’, ‘nation’, ‘race’, and ‘class’ gained dominance”. The abolition of slavery was rooted in a civilizing mission that was bound up with and perhaps fatally compromised by its association with imperial expansion.²² The most trenchant dismissal of any relationship between human rights and abolitionism can be found in Samuel Moyn’s work. In a lively and provocative discussion, he argues that contemporary notions of human rights are centred on common humanity and negate the sovereignty of the state. He disputes efforts to locate the origins of human rights within the American and French revolutions, which, he claims, concentrated on forming citizens rather than protecting any imagined inherent rights. Finally he notes that anti-slavery campaigns were “almost never framed as rights issues”.²³

Michael Barnett in *Empire of Humanity* distinguishes between human rights and humanitarianism—human rights rely on a discourse of rights, humanitarianism on a discourse of needs; human rights are based on a legal code, humanitarianism on a moral code; human rights aim to end suffering, humanitarianism aims to keep people alive, responding to emergencies. He identifies the emergence of abolitionism in the late eighteenth century as the origins of the history of humanitarianism. In an age of rights, Enlightenment ideas about liberty, and evangelical revival, abolitionism emerged, deriving from and consolidating the idea of humanity as the basis for political action.²⁴

The essays in this volume locate their case studies within the context of transnational networks and cultural exchange, and the development of international politics and commerce in the classical era of globalization.²⁵ They cover anti-slavery politics in Europe, North and South America, Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Examining abolitionism in its international context enables historians to achieve a clearer understanding of how abolitionist ideas spread and were re-fashioned in different social contexts, how abolitionist movements built transnational networks, how the international system shaped and was shaped by anti-slavery ideas, and how the legacies of the suppression of slavery in the nineteenth century are articulated in present-day politics.²⁶

Justifying abolition

Jacques Maritain, a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Committee on the Theoretical Bases of Human Rights, noted in 1949 that “we agree about the rights but on condition that no one asks us why”. Charles Beitz makes much use of this observation to argue: “This conception of human rights as a public doctrine open to a variety of justifications is indispensable to a proper appreciation of its historical uniqueness.”²⁷ A similar comment could be applied to condemnations of slavery. The sources were so vast and diverse that it is impossible to identify a single intellectual key to explain the moral revolution in attitudes towards slavery. The porous quality of borders, to use Gaffield’s phrase, enabled the exchange of anti-slavery ideas. Ideas that emerged in one society had different reverberations when activists in another society adopted them.

The transmission of anti-slavery ideas between slaves and free abolitionists changed the context of resistance to slavery. Revolts, one of several strategies open to slaves to improve their living conditions, have been a feature of slave societies.²⁸ The resistance of one human to existing as the possession of another human is the most intimate, immediate, and enduring form of anti-slavery. From the late eighteenth century the scope for successful opposition to slavery widened. Rebellious slaves were able to locate their claims to freedom in a broad political spectrum of entitlements to rights, rights which other people recognized and which therefore provided points for cooperation and alliances. The rise of abolitionism around the world gave slaves a new political instrument in their struggle for freedom. Rights rhetoric underpinned the legitimacy of slaves’ resistance, whether collective military action or individual flight. Arguably the most significant anti-slavery moment of the long nineteenth century was the Haitian Revolution. Examining the international context of this rebellion, Julia Gaffield (Chapter 1) shows that figures such as Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henry Christophe crafted their language of rights to appeal to particular audiences. The assertion of rights was variously derived from common humanity, the rights of man, and God. Ehud Toledano (Chapter 6) shows how slaves in a variety of Muslim societies from North Africa and the Ottoman Empire to Indonesia sought to escape bondage by fleeing to American and European consulates. While slaves claimed freedom as a right, drawing on European and American abolitionist ideas, the success and failure of this strategy often depended on the attitude and political interests of the local consul or military officer.

Lynn Hunt has identified the shift in moral sensibilities in the eighteenth century, whereby empathy for another individual, based on notions of common humanity, provided the foundation for the universal claims of the rights of man. Empathy was closely associated with the condemnation of slavery, particularly the suffering slaves endured. William Mulligan (Chapter 8) shows how campaigners in the late 1880s forged empathetic

bonds between their audience and African slaves by telling stories that focussed on the plight of the individual slaves and the ripping apart of family bonds. The Congo Reform Association, the subject of Charles Laderman's contribution (Chapter 9), displayed pictures of victims of King Leopold II's regime in lantern lectures in Britain and the United States. The object of empathy was distant, located in a different continent in these examples. This raises the issue of whether it was easier to extend dignity and empathy to individuals when domestic stability and institutions were not at stake. In her essay on Russian abolitionism, Megan Dean (Chapter 5) demonstrates how the state could view empathy as a threat to domestic social institutions. Alexander Radischev, in his 1790 book *Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow*, had his narrator talk to serfs. The tsarist regime condemned Radischev to death for treason, a sentence commuted to exile to Siberia, where he committed suicide.

Anti-slavery ideals based on conceptions of the rights of man as opposed to a shared sense of common humanity emerged in the late eighteenth-century revolutions. Discussion of these rights was not confined to abolitionists in the two newly founded republics, the United States and France. In addition to the Haitian Revolution's invocation of the rights of man, other chapters show the dissemination of these ideas. Maurice Bric (Chapter 3) demonstrates that British abolitionists shared the rhetoric of the "universal rights of man" with their counterparts from the United States. Even the late twentieth-century term "human rights" made an occasional appearance in the nineteenth century, as the contributions by Bric, Mulligan, and Laderman show. Moreover, the assumptions underpinning conceptions of rights changed over the course of the century, so that by 1900 rights were often conflated with arguments based on common humanity and empathy. Dignity, rather than rights, provided a path to political and social liberty, though activists often failed (and did not need) to distinguish between arguments rights and empathy.

Andrea Nicholson (Chapter 11) locates the international legal debates on slavery in the growing prevalence of positive law at the expense of natural law. Lord Mansfield in his famous judgment in the *Somerset* case in 1772 argued that while slavery might have existed in the state of nature—and therefore was potentially justifiable in natural law—a positivist approach enabled society to shape laws to reflect society's moral purposes. Of course Mansfield was making a judgment specific to England, rather than one universally applicable, but the role of positive law offered a very different route to abolition than the natural rights articulated in the American and French revolutions.

Religious belief also provided the basis for attacking as well as justifying slavery. Maeve Ryan (Chapter 2) makes the telling observation that missionaries viewed slavery and the slave trade as a sin against God's moral order rather than a social and political question. This infused missionary

anti-slavery activities with an urgent moral agenda, but it also limited their support of freed slaves. The sins of a slave-owning society were more pressing than the suffering of slaves. These ideas were then refined, particularly by colonial administrators, who had to deal with social issues arising out of freeing slaves. Mulligan shows how Protestant and Catholic leaders in the 1880s argued that anti-slavery was a common Christian duty. Toledano argues that in Islamic societies there were considerable religious pressures to treat slaves well, but the *ulema* (scholars) used the same religious texts to justify slavery.

The intellectual association between the abolition of slavery, the expansion of civilization, and the moral justification of empire was one of the most striking features of the period. Bric notes that both Britain and the United States conceived themselves as moral empires, as well as political ones. This provided pressure to abolish slavery within the borders of these states. Abolitionism could also serve as a justification for the expansion of empire. Dean argues that Russian imperialists, often disingenuously, invoked anti-slavery and anti-slave trade measures as justifications for expansion in Central Asia. Likewise European powers claimed that their conquests in Africa were designed to stamp out the slave trade, though, as Laderman shows, these empires could also engage in the effective enslavement and murder of African workers on a vast scale.

Processes

All of these justifications for the abolition of slavery were also used, though with decreasing frequency, to support the continued existence of slavery. Rights could be restricted on any number of grounds, owners could assert their property rights, empathy could ease the suffering of slaves but did not necessarily entail their manumission, civilization and empire could (and often did) enshrine racial barriers, and the Bible and the Koran could be raided for passages that supported slavery. The international system shaped the political processes by which these arguments were interwoven into the fabric of abolitionist claims.²⁹

The abolition of slavery was part of a wider debate on security and geopolitics in the nineteenth century. Although abolition proceeded within the territorial bounds of the state, each act of abolition had international repercussions. As Gaffield shows, Dessalines and Christophe recognized that exporting anti-slavery abroad would bring down upon the new republic the wrath of its slave-holding neighbours. British colonial officials were equally concerned that Haiti would provide a model for slave revolts in their Caribbean colonies. On the other hand, figures such as Bolívar, as Christopher Schmidt-Nowara (Chapter 7) and Gaffield show, forged diplomatic relations with Haiti and asserted a common interest in the suppression of slavery. In turn, Schmidt-Nowara credits the American Civil War with triggering

the second wave of Spanish abolitionism. In Spain, Abraham Lincoln was revered as the emancipator rather than as the saviour of the union.

As the leading great powers abolished slavery within their own empires, abolitionist groups pressured their governments to end slavery elsewhere. Laderman illustrates how public pressure led the American and British governments to intervene eventually to end the atrocities in the Belgian Congo, where the claims of European imperialists that empire offered a path to civilization were cruelly mocked. The most important case of diplomatic intervention was European and especially British pressure on the Ottoman Empire, as Toledano shows. He argues that abolition there took place in the absence of an anti-slavery movement. While there were modernist scholars among the *ulema* in Egypt at the turn of the century, who were critical of aspects of the slavery system, they remained isolated in public debate. Instead the Ottoman state gradually suppressed the slave trade and then slavery in response to pressure from European great powers, which in turn were responding to popular anti-slavery associations within their own countries. In the late 1880s, this model of popular anti-slavery movements pressing European governments into action reached its highpoint. Mulligan argues that the Brussels Conference Act of 1890, by which the European powers, as well as the Ottoman Empire, the United States, and Persia, signed up to anti-slave trade measures, was a response to a multi-faceted campaign started in the summer of 1888 by French cardinal Lavignerie. While this led to interventions against slave traders in East Africa, the popular anti-slavery campaign was also imbricated with European imperial expansion. The claims of European imperialists that they were pursuing a civilizing mission were genuine in many cases but the results were often grotesque. In the Belgian Congo, King Leopold II instituted a brutal coercive labour scheme, which was widely denounced as slavery by critics in the early twentieth century. Public opprobrium, as Laderman suggests, was channelled through diplomatic pressure on the king and the Belgian government to reform.

In other cases, state-driven reform responded to a normative standard of civilization in the international system. While Cuban representatives could argue in 1866 that abolition would be “an attack on civilization”, it was more usual to regard the suppression of slavery as the standard behaviour of a civilized power. Great powers, especially after the American Civil War, increased their legitimacy if they conformed to standards of civilized practice. In Russia, this led to some interesting choices. In Central Asia, as Dean explains, Russian officials had little faith in the power of laws to change social practice. When Nikolai Petrovich Ignatiev went on a diplomatic mission to the khanates of Khiva and Bokhara in 1858, he was advised to negotiate for the release of enslaved British subjects but not enslaved Russians. In other words, the external display of Russia’s anti-slavery mission was more important than the emancipation of the tsar’s own subjects. The promotion of Russia as a civilized state, which had a legitimate imperial

mission in Central Asia and the Near East, went hand in hand with the abolition of serfdom and anti-slavery rhetoric.

These norms were articulated in a series of treaties and conventions. As Nicholson explains, international agreements from the Treaty of Vienna to the Brussels Convention reflected shifting conceptions of civilization. While William Scott declared in 1817 that all distinct states enjoyed “perfect equality”, the leading legal theorists of the later part of the century, Wheaton and Lorimer, made clear distinctions between civilization and barbarism as an organizing principle of international law and relations. In turn, this distinction may have impeded the pace of the suppression of the slave trade and slavery, as civilized states were less concerned about conferring rights and easing the suffering of those considered barbaric.

The revolutionary wars between the 1770s and 1820s provided an unintended impetus to the abolition of slavery. They created a political space from which slaves could benefit. The most notable example of the unintended consequences of warfare was the abolition in the colonies in the Spanish Empire. Schmidt-Nowara dates the beginning of the end of slavery from the French invasion of Spain in 1808, which prompted a crisis in relations between the metropole and colonial centres. In the struggle for the future of the empire, royalists and patriots appealed to slaves for support, promising freedom for those who joined the military. The traditional bargain of freedom in return for military service changed over the course of the wars for independence into a realization that wars had broken the constructed racial hierarchies sustaining slavery. Argentina, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela introduced laws that gradually abolished slavery by mid-century. This gradualism reflected the continued economic and social interests of the planter classes, which had led the independence struggle. War also provided an opportunity for the Royal Navy to implement the anti-slave trade laws by stopping and searching vessels. Once peace was established in 1815, Nicholson argues, more restrictive laws hampered the Royal Navy’s campaign.

The international political dimension was not confined to state action. Anti-slavery campaigns sought to build up international networks. The most notable example of this, as Bric describes, was the World Anti-Slavery Convention, which met in London in 1840. Moreover, he argues that the convention marked a new way of conducting international relations. The meeting was a challenge to conventional diplomacy as well as to slave-owners. More than 500 delegates from around Europe and North America gathered in London. Though the specific outcomes of the meeting were limited, it had important legacies. The declarations were cited time and again throughout the rest of the century. The networks between British and American anti-slavery campaigners were the densest. Simon Morgan (Chapter 4) points out how the networks were sustained through a range of contacts, rooted in middle-class cultures—the exchange of letters, the small

keepsakes, and the often lengthy visits to activists' homes. In addition, anti-slavery campaigners in the United States and Britain had several charismatic leaders, who underpinned the networks. In the early twentieth century, E. D. Morel, the leader of the Congo Reform Association, consciously established links with American campaigners. As Laderman shows, Morel recognized that an international network could amplify the voice of the independent national Congo Reform Associations.

In some instances, international networks were already in place. Here, connections between religious institutions, particularly missions, provided an important basis for international action. Missionaries were international actors by dint of necessity and habit. Their anti-slavery tracts and articles were translated. Ryan notes that the Church Missionary Society, although a British Protestant organization, drew many of its missionaries from Germany. While individual Catholics, such as Daniel O'Connell, were prominent anti-slavery campaigners, the Catholic Church was more reticent in its condemnation of slavery. This changed in the late 1880s, as Mulligan shows how Catholics in France, Belgium, Britain, and Germany supported Lavigerie's campaign against the land-based African slave trade.

Yet in an age when the claims of the nation-state were asserted ever more vigorously, the international dimension of anti-slavery campaigns could provoke considerable difficulties. Bric, Morgan, and Laderman illustrate how British and American anti-slavery campaigners were sensitive to each other's perceived and real slights on the national character. Charges that anti-slavery campaigners were betraying some putative national interest undermined their credibility. As Françoise Vergès (Chapter 10) notes, French governments regularly argued that British anti-slave trade measures were designed to cover the nefarious pursuit of hegemony over the highways of the world's oceans. Dean shows how some Russian journals criticized Britain of hypocrisy, of continuing to trade slaves under foreign flags, and of seeking to divert international attention away from the Irish question.

The claims of anti-slavery campaigners that they represented a universal moral code led to counter-claims by defenders of slavery. Again the case of the Ottoman Empire is highly significant. One defence offered by scholars was that slavery in the Muslim world was different from the systems of European and North American plantation slavery. This was undoubtedly the case, though as Toledano makes clear, the life of a slave in the Ottoman Empire remained fraught with difficulties and dangers. Conservative Muslim scholars claimed that anti-slavery measures were designed to weaken the bonds of Islamic societies, not to ameliorate the suffering of the slave. Many European and American officials who worked in Muslim societies came to support this view of slavery. These officials often had a political interest in portraying slavery in Muslim societies as comparatively benign as they had no wish to upset the local slave-holding elites, upon whom they depended. In the late nineteenth-century debates about the slave trade and slavery

in Africa, these arguments about the differences between plantation slave systems and the domestic slave system of Muslim societies were re-worked back into debates in Europe. In this way, European and American debates on abolition were shaped by African and Ottoman scholarship. The process of cultural exchange did not always flow from the metaphorical West to the East.

Legacies

As noted already, the debate about the relationship between anti-slavery politics and the development of human rights has recently attracted considerable attention. Human rights are contingent and changing; societies change their view on what constitutes a human right. The uncomfortable implication is that human rights can shrink as well as expand. That said, do the contributions in this volume support the contentions of historians such as Drescher, Dubois, and Blackburn that abolitionism in the nineteenth century is a significant chapter in the history of human rights?

In terms of their organizational characteristics, the anti-slavery movements of the nineteenth century have much in common with the human rights associations of the late twentieth century. While the British anti-slavery campaigns of the early nineteenth century were broad-based, popular movements, many of the other anti-slavery associations were elitist. Schmidt-Nowara and Vergès show that the Spanish and French associations were composed of middle-class elites. These associations, as well as the Congo Reform Association, used their contacts with political elites to lobby and promote anti-slavery measures. As Bric, Morgan, Laderman, and Mulligan demonstrate, anti-slavery campaigns were international as opposed to cosmopolitan. They made claims to universality, which was reflected in their interest in setting up international networks. Campaigns appealed to empathy in their audiences and benefitted from modern advertising techniques. Rather than recruiting celebrities to boost their profile as some humanitarian associations do now, anti-slavery campaigners, as Morgan shows, for example, were celebrities in their own right. On the other hand, these characteristics were common to a range of organizations in civil society—trade unions and militarist groups, for example—in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There are also significant differences in approaches between some nineteenth century anti-slavery movements and present-day human rights and humanitarian organizations. To take just one important example, Ryan notes that slavery was considered a sin, not a social or political issue, by missionaries.

The legacy and memory of anti-slavery politics in the nineteenth century has ambiguous consequences for contemporary human rights and humanitarian politics. Beyond academic discussions of genealogies of human rights, which can split and parse each phrase, present-day campaigners invoke a

relationship between the anti-slavery campaigns and rights talk. Whether academics approve or not, the link has been made. Yet public narratives are complex. Dean argues that one of the legacies of the Russian imperial civilizing mission and the consequent depiction of Central Asian societies as barbaric is the propensity to regard violence in these societies as a continuation of long-standing “barbaric” practices, rather than analyse the social and political grammar of this violence. Vergès offers a complex account of the ways in which the history of slavery and abolition have become part of contemporary French political debate. The history of abolition is presented in some texts as the product of French republicanism, marginalizing the agency of slaves and the pressures exerted by other states on France. This tends to re-inforce a “republican colour line”, with implications for human rights and debates on citizenship in contemporary France. When French president Nicolas Sarkozy in May 2011 paid tribute to the agency of slaves and their role in realizing the universality of the rights of man, the event alienated some blacks, who charged his government with “negrophobia” and political cynicism. On the other hand, there is growing public interest in the history of slavery and abolition, some of which has been stimulated by present-day debates about globalization, human rights regimes within and outside France, and empire.

Nicholson explores the connections between the nineteenth-century anti-slave trade and anti-slavery laws and present-day legislation on slavery and human rights. She argues that efforts to distinguish between “new” and “old” slavery has led to legal confusion, that the range of social practices covered by slavery has been inflated, and that “rights talk” since the Second World War proceeds from different social and political assumptions than those which informed the anti-slavery campaigns of the nineteenth century. International organizations, such as the United Nations, eschew nineteenth-century notions of civilization, which privileged the position of the great powers in ordering the global legal system. On the other hand, the abolition of slavery is prominent in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Twentieth-century international agreements, such as the League of Nations 1926 Convention, make explicit reference to nineteenth-century treaties, such as the Brussels Conference Act and the Treaty of Berlin. Continuity of legal references is not the same as historical continuity, but its importance lies in the perceived necessity of establishing a precedent, even an imagined one.

The ending of slavery in most parts of the world in the long nineteenth century reshaped the global economy and the world of work. It had important implications for international relations, war, and peace in the twentieth century.³⁰ Explaining anti-slavery politics requires an international, as well as a domestic, account.

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Notes

1. "Précis of correspondence relative to the reception of fugitive slaves on board Her Majesty's ships", 17 Feb. 1876, Liverpool Record Office, 920 DER (15) 30/3/4, p. 1.
2. Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994 edn).
3. For a review of the debate, see Thomas Bender, ed., *Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem of Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley, CA, 1992), p. 71.
4. Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 246.
5. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (London, 1938).
6. Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: The Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006).
7. Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1977); Lawrence C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802–1848* (Cambridge, 2000); John Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion Against the Slave Trade, 1787–1807* (London, 1988); Arthur S. Corwin, *Spain and the Abolition of Slavery in Cuba, 1817–1886* (Austin, TX, 1967).
8. See, for example, Seymour Drescher, *From Slavery to Freedom: Comparative Studies in the Rise and Fall of Atlantic Slavery* (New York, 1999); Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge, MA, 1987).
9. David Brion Davis, "Looking at slavery from broader perspectives", *American Historical Review*, 105, 2 (2000), pp. 452–67.
10. Dick Geary, "'Atlantic revolution' or local difficulty: aspects of revolt in Brazil, 1780–1880", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 56, 3 (2010), pp. 336–50.
11. João Pedro Marques, *The Sounds of Silence: Nineteenth Century Portugal and the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (Oxford, 2006).
12. Edward Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2008).
13. Hilary McDonald Beckles, "The Wilberforce song: how enslaved Caribbean blacks heard British abolitionists", *Parliamentary History*, 26, supplement (2007), pp. 113–26.
14. David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 157–9, 323.
15. Drescher, *Abolition*, p. 462; Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *The Global Color Line* (Cambridge, 2008), argue that the nineteenth century witnessed a shrinking of human rights due to the rise of "white male democracies" in North America and the South Pacific.
16. Blackburn, *American Crucible*, p. 26.
17. Brion Davis, *Inhuman bondage*, pp. 20, 331.

18. Dubois, *Avengers*, p. 7.
19. Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton & Co, 2008), pp. 160–6, 176–83, 206–12.
20. Kenneth Cmiel, “The recent history of human rights”, *American Historical Review*, 109, 1 (2004), pp. 117–35.
21. Mark Mazower, “The strange triumph of human rights, 1933-1950”, *Historical Journal*, 47, 2 (2004), pp. 379–98.
22. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, “Introduction”, in id., ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 1–9.
23. Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), pp. 1–43.
24. Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY, 2011), pp. 16–17, 32–64.
25. Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2009).
26. At the conference on which this volume is based, David Trim proposed a model of the process of abolition. Abolition started with the act of persuading people that the slave trade and slavery was wrong. Anti-slavery arguments were then translated into actions and laws, which variously stopped the slave trade, freed slaves, and prohibited slavery. These laws were enforced by diplomatic, military, and financial means. In addition, freed slaves required assistance to enable them to establish new social, political, and economic relationships. The final stage of abolition is remembrance. I would like to thank David Trim for supporting this project.
27. Charles R. Beitz, *The Idea of Human Rights* (Oxford, 2009), p. 21.
28. Seymour Drescher and Pieter Emmer, eds., *Who Abolished Slavery: A Debate with João Pedro Marques* (New York, 2010).
29. Peter Kolchin, “In defense of servitude: American proslavery and Russian proserfdom arguments”, *American Historical Review*, 85, 4 (1980), pp. 809–27.
30. See Drescher, *Abolition*.

1

“Liberté, Indépendance”: Haitian Anti-slavery and National Independence

Julia Gaffield

“From the moment that I realized that my compatriots had taken a vow to prefer death to servitude,” general in chief of the Armée indigène, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, wrote in his military journal at the end of the Haitian Revolution, “I promised to pursue with determination the French, our executioners.”¹ While the Haitian revolution had begun in 1791 with a coordinated slave uprising in the northern plain of Saint-Domingue, the battle only became a war for independence in 1802 when Napoleon’s army reinvaded the colony and sparked rumours of a reinstatement of slavery. Dessalines declared that to ensure the end of slavery, the island had to break away from the French Empire. In November 1803, the defeated French army set sail from the city of Cap Français and only left one small contingent of troops, who escaped to the city of Santo Domingo on the eastern side of the island. The coalition of former slaves and former free people of colour would now rule. “Put in my hands your sworn willingness to live free and independent,” Dessalines proclaimed on 1 January 1804 in the Haitian Declaration of Independence, “and to prefer death to all that would put you back under the yoke.”² Freedom for all citizens had been achieved by the victory in the war for independence. The country was renamed “Hayti”, and all “Haytians” would thereby, it was believed, be forever free from servitude.

Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, struggles for slave emancipation and battles against colonial rule often came together during wars of independence. In most contexts, however, the abolition of slavery came as a by-product of the main goal of political autonomy. Within this broader history, Haiti represents a unique case in that anti-slavery was, from the first, the driving force behind the struggle for independence. The centrality of anti-slavery in the formation of the Haitian state shaped the years after independence and the policies of the first three national leaders: Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Alexandre Pétion, and Henry Christophe. These leaders

ruled very different governments and initiated different policies, but all of them had to grapple with the constrained space that Haiti occupied in the early nineteenth century and each had to balance the contradictions created by ideologies of universal revolution within the limits of nationhood. The dilemma that confronted the Haitian leadership produced complex results, and the national projects of each leader as articulated on paper did not always reflect the realities of the Haitian state.

The early nineteenth-century Atlantic world was a time of great change but also one of continuity. The case of Haiti suggests that national and colonial leaders in the Atlantic world were forced to find ways to reconcile seemingly contradictory ideologies and movements. The Haitian Revolution challenged existing political and labour systems and posed new and complicated questions. Furthermore, the events after Haitian independence highlight the importance of the Caribbean context in terms of official policy and emphasize the interconnectedness of empires within the region. The geographic distance between the Caribbean and the colonies' European metropolises meant that colonial leaders were often left to negotiate treaties and direct policy without the guidance of political leaders in Europe, and the conversations between these colonial leaders shaped the trajectory of Haitian independence in important ways.

Haitian leaders presented their cause as a universal one, with implications for all oppressed peoples in the Americas; but their experiment in state formation and freedom took place in a constrained and circumscribed geopolitical space—one surrounded by empires committed to the maintenance of slavery. Slave-owning powers were desperate to prevent the spread of the slave revolution and attempted to find ways to quarantine what Haiti represented politically—not only independence but slave emancipation too. In response, Haitian leaders tried to reassure outside powers that they had no intention of spreading their slave revolution. They believed that if they maintained a boundary between universal freedom and the colonial slave societies of the Caribbean, then Haiti could survive in relative peace. This pairing of anti-slavery and anti-colonialism, therefore, both protected and contained the movement because the struggle to secure and defend national independence meant curtailing anti-slavery activism abroad. Twice, two years and a decade after independence, Alexandre Pétion briefly broke with this policy through his support of the anti-colonial revolutionaries Francisco de Miranda and Simón Bolívar. Even in these cases, however, it was Miranda and Bolívar who came to Haiti seeking support; the Haitian government itself did not extend its intervention beyond its own borders.

In fact, Haitian leaders created a semi-permeable border tailored to their national interests. They refused to confine Haitians to their territory but they also promised the international community that they would not export their revolution. They invited non-whites in the Caribbean and the United States to join the new nation and sometimes facilitated this migration with

funding for transportation. When it came to the immigration of white Europeans, and of course to foreign invasion, however, leaders closed off national borders and vowed to defend the country. This did not, however, rule out economic interactions with whites.³

Neighbouring states and empires, of course, had a very different set of interests, and broadly sought to contain the influence of Haiti. Yet the borders around the island of Haiti remained porous, and the movement of ideas and people could not be contained. That was partly true because neighbouring nations, while refusing to recognize Haitian independence, were nevertheless eager to take advantage of trade opportunities and to use Haiti to affect the balance of power in European warfare. The British government wanted to achieve both goals and attempted to secure a trade relationship that would, for all intents and purposes, contain Haitians within their borders. When this failed, the British settled on a policy of diplomatic non-recognition with limited economic engagement. But, despite the British government's attempts to delegitimize the Haitian state, some Haitian leaders forged personal and diplomatic relationships with the British abolitionist community. Advocates of the abolition of the slave trade and slavery had become a powerful force in the British Empire by the time Haiti became an independent nation, and these changes provided the space for unique relationships between the former slaves and former free people of colour and white British citizens. In 1804 the British government settled on a policy of diplomatic non-recognition with the hope of containing the dangers that the Haitian Revolution might inspire. However, the British abolitionist community actively and vocally supported the new Caribbean nation, even while its own government still officially imagined the island as a French colony.

Haitian Universalism

Dessalines and other revolutionary leaders announced to the world the principles upon which they would build the Haitian state. Their rhetoric highlights a perceived community of humanity that they pitted against the French. "Toward these men who do us justice," Dessalines, Henry Christophe, and Clervaux proclaimed in November 1803, "we will act as brothers." The three revolutionary heroes also called on the "God of Freeman" for protection. They condemned slavery and declared that the "tribunal of Providence . . . has not created men to see them groaning under a harsh and shameful servitude".⁴

An article in *The Times* echoed this sense of a common humanity that had been tainted by the institution of slavery. "Is it ordained that a degraded race of men", the article questioned, "shall be the only race who resent the cruel wrongs done to themselves and to humanity?"⁵ Though the British report maintained a racist tone, the parallels between such arguments and

the proclamations issued by the Haitian state suggest that the leaders of the new Caribbean nation were part of a larger discussion about humanity and the legitimacy or rightfulness of slavery.

The rhetoric of independent Haiti, however, was much more forceful. “Thus perish all tyrants over innocence”, Dessalines proclaimed in the solemn sermon of the Declaration of Independence, “all oppressors of mankind!”⁶ This anger and outrage was directed at the French and, as the Haitian state sought new political friendships in the Atlantic, it overlooked the British, American, Dutch, and Danish slave systems in order to form new economic partnerships. Political necessity narrowed the application of universal principles to the Haitian territory.

Indeed, these declarations of universality were situated within the borders of the nation. The characteristics proclaimed by state leaders quickly assumed the role of nationalistic rhetoric. Even as the nation divided in civil war in 1806, state leaders articulated the common goals that united all Haitians. Dessalines, Pétion, and Christophe all agreed on what it meant to be Haitian in the period following the Declaration of Independence.

Despite the civil war and the existence of two “national” governments between 1806 and 1820, Haitian leaders consistently argued that the country was composed of a unified national community based on the principles of anti-slavery and anti-colonialism. “Happily (General Christophe excepted),” Pétion wrote in December of 1806, “the cause of all Haitians is the same and despite the separation of the family, all know to appreciate that. There exists, despite the difference between Governments, an implicit and tacit alliance against all enemies of our liberty and our independence.” “For the defense of the territory,” he continued, “I do not recognize any difference of country, and my heart does not see any abstraction but Haiti.”⁷ The wars within the border, according to Pétion, were at a different level than either international encroachments or questions of slavery. Christophe expressed a similar sentiment as he reflected on the civil war in a letter to Thomas Clarkson. On 18 November 1816 he wrote:

They [the Haitians under Pétion’s command] are no more disposed to resume the yoke of slavery than are the inhabitants of the Northern, Eastern, or Western parts of the kingdom. It is a consolation to me to see that the great majority of Haitians have reached an understanding, and that a common danger has tacitly united us all, from one end of the island to the other, for we all abhor the French and their oppressive Government.⁸

In his analysis, Christophe easily made the transition from a rejection of slavery to national unity against the French—anti-slavery and anti-colonialism would still unite all Haitians. And both he and Pétion reaffirmed the abolition of slavery in the first article of their national constitutions.

“Slaves cannot exist on the territory of the Republic: slavery is forever abolished”, Pétion proclaimed in 1806, and “Every resident person in the territory of Haiti is free in full right”, Christophe declared in 1807.⁹

Universal Freedom within State Borders

While proclaiming universal freedom, the Haitian leaders were convinced that their anti-slavery movement hinged on its geographic containment on the island. Anti-slavery in Saint-Domingue/Haiti fused with anti-colonial ideology, and thereby made the boundaries of the nation the limits of the general freedom. But rather than confining Haitians to their territory, Dessalines assured the international community that his citizens would not instigate rebellion elsewhere in the Caribbean. In the Declaration of Independence, Dessalines proclaimed:

Let us take care however that we are not converted from our purpose, let our neighbours remain in Peace let them live quietly under the laws which they have made and us not go as incendiaries, erecting ourselves legislators of the Antilles, constituting our glory in disturbing the tranquility of the neighbouring islands.¹⁰

Dessalines and later leaders recognized the reach of their political authority; they would not extend their laws and impose their vision of universal freedom on others. They knew that they could not be “legislators of the Antilles”.

Both Christophe and Pétion repeated Dessalines’s promises not to instigate rebellion abroad. Christophe’s first constitution even contained a section entitled “Guarantee to Neighboring Colonies”. This included the article: “37: The nation of Haiti shall not in any way make conquests outside the Island, limiting itself to conserving its territory.”¹¹ The emphasis on territory and the borders of the island highlights the symbolic and political importance of the geographic space that Haitians had claimed as their own.

The Haitian economy, however, which remained structured around the plantation but shifted focus from sugar to coffee and cotton, required that international merchants purchased the agricultural crops that Haitians produced for export. Economic necessity forced the Haitian state to allow some contact with the outside world. On 23 June 1803, Dessalines sent a letter to the lieutenant-governor of Jamaica, notifying him of Saint-Domingue’s break with the French metropole and asking that British merchants come to the island for trade purposes.¹²

In response, the lieutenant-governor, George Nugent, sent two representatives to the island in August of 1803. He hoped to gain a sense of the affairs on the island and how the British should proceed with a trade agreement. A trade treaty, according to Nugent, could prevent the spread of the

revolution and could guarantee that the victorious insurgents would remain within the confines of the island. He wanted a semi-porous border across which British merchants could come and go but Haitians had to remain in their territory.¹³

These sentiments were based on three previous agreements that the British in Jamaica had signed with the former governor-general of Saint-Domingue, Toussaint Louverture, between 1798 and 1801.¹⁴ For these treaties as well as in a proposed treaty in 1804, the boundaries of the island were central to the British in establishing a trade agreement and a friendly relationship. For whatever economic or political advantages the British could gain by supporting the insurgents, they did not want freed men and women in Haiti to move outside their designated free soil. Just as Dessalines did not want the outside forces of colonialism and slavery to infiltrate the free state, Nugent did not want the slave revolution to spread to the British West Indies and thereby jeopardize the British state's ownership of those colonies.

Opening up a connection between Haiti and Jamaica, one composed of free soil and the other toiled by slaves, might bridge the distance between them; and the physical circulation of people necessarily meant the circulation of ideas. The enemies of abolitionism in Britain seized upon this danger. For instance, the 1st Earl of Liverpool, Charles Jenkinson, a staunch opponent of William Wilberforce's Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, reminded the British government in the summer of 1804 that extreme caution was required in establishing a relationship with Haiti. "To open a commercial intercourse between a nation of free negroes and colonies chiefly peopled by negroes who are necessarily held in a state of slavery," he wrote, "is certainly a subject of the most delicate and important consideration."¹⁵ But, while it might have been a tricky balancing act, many still imagined that it was possible; the contradictions could be overcome.

When the two agents despatched to Haiti by Nugent met with the general in chief, Dessalines, in August of 1803, they asked him, as a gesture of friendship, to allow the British temporary possession of the island of Tiburon and Môle Saint Nicholas on the southwest and northwest tips of the island for the duration of the Franco-British war. The agents suggested that this favour should be granted because the British had helped Dessalines's forces to expel the French army with the military blockades that they had set up in the principal ports of Saint-Domingue. It was, of course, in the British interest for the French to lose the war against the insurgent forces in Saint-Domingue, but victory for the former slaves and free people of colour might also be disastrous.

The two military bases at Tiburon and Môle Saint Nicholas would allow the British to supervise the internal affairs of the island and they could also intercept French ships that sailed through the Windward Passage that flowed between Haiti and Cuba. But Dessalines vehemently rejected this proposal. For him this reeked of European colonialism and the connection between

colonialism and slavery was clear. When the British asked Dessalines to temporarily cede them the two bases, the reported response was that

it was thirteen years since he had taken up arms in the cause of liberty. His only view was to restore peace to Saint Domingo, he was too well acquainted with the nature of the Blacks, that unless the Island was completely under their Government, he could not expect that event to take place.¹⁶

That is, Dessalines believed strongly that liberty could only be secured through complete territorial and political independence. It is unclear what he meant by the “nature of the blacks”. Perhaps it was a reference to the lived experiences that this population had endured before and during the revolution since the British had indeed attempted to reinstitute slavery in the territory that they occupied during the revolution.¹⁷

In this context, Dessalines initiated policies designed to protect the boundaries of the island from foreign encroachment. These were intended to ensure that the territory that he commanded would never support slavery or permit foreign landownership. “Whilst the last spark of life remains in me I shall keep my oath.” Dessalines proclaimed on 28 April 1804: “never again shall a colonist, or an European, set foot upon this territory with the title of master or proprietor. This resolution shall henceforth form the fundamental basis of our constitution.”¹⁸ And indeed, the oath became Article 12 in the national constitution that Dessalines published in May of 1805.¹⁹ This clause was included in all Haitian constitutions, except for Christophe’s two constitutions in 1807 and 1811, until the 1918 constitution written under the American Occupation, at which point the article was dropped. Placing land in the possession of whites was too close to both slavery and colonialism; in a slavery-free and independent Haiti, this could not be allowed.

Despite the fact that Dessalines refused to allow the British army to occupy Tiburon and Môle Saint-Nicholas, Nugent sent Edward Corbet, who had previously served as the British agent for affairs in Saint-Domingue, to the island to propose a trade agreement to Dessalines. The central goal of the proposed trade treaty was to limit Haitian maritime navigation. Furthermore, Nugent wanted to supervise foreign trade to the island and to do this he tried to limit the number of ports that would be open for trade. The British initially proposed that only nine ports to be open for international trade. Nugent hoped that by limiting the breaks in the boundary around the free state, he might be able to better contain the Haitians within their country and he could watch over the relationships between Haitians and other foreigners. Dessalines, in his counter to the British treaty, added eight more ports. For his part, he hoped to facilitate international trade. Two of the proposed ports, one initially acknowledged by the British (Santo Domingo) and the other added by Dessalines (Samaná), are in the eastern part of the island.²⁰

More than a year after the end of these negotiations, Dessalines reaffirmed these boundaries in his national constitution. He again included the port at Samaná within the national boundaries.²¹ Early Haitian leaders considered the entire island of Hispaniola to be under their authority. The region was contested in the early years after independence, however, since a French general escaped to the city of Santo Domingo with a few hundred troops and continued to claim French authority over the island.²² This small force made real the threat of a French re-invasion and shaped the ways in which Haitian leaders perceived the boundaries of their nation. The borders had to be defended, and military strategy and structure dominated the early Haitian government.²³

Edward Corbet visited Haiti twice in early 1804 but the two governors could not agree upon a treaty. Nugent sought to use an economic agreement as a way to patrol the Haitian borders and to limit the movement of Haitians outside the island. Dessalines rejected these challenges to his nation's sovereignty; in contrast, he wanted to promote international trade to the island and wanted his promises of non-intervention abroad to be taken seriously.

Dessalines refused to concede to the restrictive treaty that Nugent proposed. Instead he firmly asserted his country's sovereignty and reassured the British that he had no plans to disturb their Caribbean colonies. "The intention of my government", Dessalines explained in his final response to Nugent on 13 May 1804 "is solely to defend itself from the French government and their allies, to fight against oppression and to attempt nothing against the powers who are charitable enough to see the French government as treacherous, regicidal, and tyrannous."²⁴ This statement, while it may have been aimed at appeasing British anxieties over the spread of the rebellion, left the door open for an attack on the French and their allies in the Caribbean. Dessalines did not include these groups in his calls for friendship: "peace to our neighbors, but anathema to the French name".²⁵

The letters between Dessalines and Nugent highlight the difficult decision that Caribbean leaders had to make in the early nineteenth century. Each leader had to evaluate the interests of his government and act based on seemingly contradictory goals. For example, supporting Haitian independence terrified Jamaican planters and the Jamaican governor, but this decision helped the British Empire's war against France. This compromise, however, meant that Nugent attempted to place such severe restrictions on the movements of Haitians that Dessalines was not willing to concede to the proposed treaty.

Breaking the Borders

The leaders of Haiti in the early independence period did not wish to support or instigate revolution throughout the Caribbean, but some leaders cleverly expanded the reach of the revolution while containing it within the nation's

borders by allowing the territory that they commanded to become a haven for slaves aspiring to freedom. Dessalines sought to repatriate many of the ex-slaves whom French colonists had taken with them when they fled the island at different points in the revolution.²⁶

The Governor-General [of Haiti], considering that a large number of blacks and men of colour endure, in the United States, all sorts of deprivations, because they do not have the means to return to Haiti, decrees that each American ship captain will be reimbursed forty dollars for every individual that they return to the country.²⁷

Dessalines extended these invitations to blacks and people of colour in the French colonies of Martinique and Guadeloupe. It appears as though some merchants took advantage of these calls because the French chargé d'affaires, Louis-André Pichon, complained that merchants often had on board 50–60 men, “of which the majority are Blacks and people of color for whose return Dessalines has promised up to forty dollars per person”.²⁸

In addition to paying for the safe return of people he considered to be rightful Haitian citizens, during the trade negotiations, Dessalines demanded that Nugent in Jamaica returned all Haitians on British territory to the island. “The Governor of Jamaica”, Dessalines added to the treaty that Corbet proposed on his first trip to Haiti, “will return all of the people of the country who find themselves detained either on board H.B.M.’s [His Britannic Majesty’s] ships or in prisons in the islands belonging to Great Britain.”²⁹ The governor of Jamaica obliged, despite the fact that no treaty was signed.³⁰

The calls for non-whites to come and join the nation might raise questions about the promises by Haitian leaders not to instigate rebellion abroad since migrations to Haiti would detract from the slave populations of the islands or American states from which they fled. However, such migrants would only become free citizens once they reached Haitian territory; therefore, Haitian leaders could maintain that the revolution was still contained within the borders of the island.

Later leaders also enacted policies that would expand the number of people who benefitted from Haitian universalism. For example, in an 1816 revision of his 1806 constitution, Alexandre Pétion expanded this recruitment of new citizens to the free country to include “all Africans, Indians, and their descendant and blood relatives, born in the colonies or foreign lands”. The constitution declared that these individuals could “come to live in the Republic, [and] will be recognized as Haitian; but will only enjoy the rights of citizenship after a year’s residence”. This article, paired with the first article of the constitution—“slavery cannot exist in the territory of the Republic; it is abolished forever”—essentially turned Haiti into a haven for slaves in the Caribbean and elsewhere, if they could make it to the island.³¹ The national boundaries of Haiti, then, continued to limit and demarcate the confines of universal freedom.³² By setting foot on the soil (and staying for a year), any

non-white would become Haitian and would be declared free. Pétion's racial specificity reflects in some degree one of Jean-Jacques Dessalines's constitutional articles, which states: "all exception of color among the children of the same family, of which the head of state is the father, will henceforth cease to exist, all Haitians will not be known by any other generic appellation but black".³³

Rumours of Revolution Abroad

Despite the Haitian government's promises not to export their revolution, is there any evidence of Haitian involvement in instigating rebellion abroad? French studies scholar Deborah Jenson has recently focused on the complaints made by a former Saint-Dominguan colonist, Arnaud André Roberjot Lartigue, regarding an alleged inter-island revolutionary association involving emissaries sent by Dessalines. Lartigue had left Saint-Domingue in 1803 and assumed the position of *agent pour le gouvernement de Saint-Domingue à Saint Thomas*. As Jenson shows, Lartigue accused Dessalines and the Haitian government of sending emissaries to Saint-Thomas in the last four months of 1805 in order to form a "club". Their plan, as Lartigue described in an 1815 report, was "to execute the monstrous project of descending to Martinique and Guadeloupe, to assassinate all the inhabitants, to burn the cities, to raise up the blacks and people of color, free or enslaved, and to form fourteen regiments, to become masters of and to establish the independence of these colonies". Lartigue claimed that the plot demonstrated the necessity of preventing the migration of blacks or people of colour from Haiti in order to protect the remaining French colonies in the Caribbean.³⁴

The club formed by these alleged emissaries in Saint Thomas was disbanded and the people who were found guilty were deported. According to Lartigue's 1815 report, unable to get to Martinique and Guadeloupe, the emissaries decided to land in Trinidad, still intent on starting a revolt. However, the British governor of Trinidad, Thomas Hislop, discovered the new plan. Scholars have not come to a consensus as to whether these individuals were in fact emissaries sent by Dessalines and if they intended to instigate rebellion either in the French Caribbean islands or in Trinidad. "The supposed expedition sent in 1805 by Dessalines to Martinique and Trinidad", historian David Geggus argues, "seems fairly obviously based on a rumour spread by a French colonist." Jenson, in contrast, writes: "Where there is smoke, there is fire—and here there would seem to be an unthinkable amount of smoke for a purely rumored fire."³⁵

Lartigue had personal reasons to insist on how important his role was in protecting the French colonies, for some of his colleagues seem to have deeply doubted his abilities. Lartigue wrote to his superior in the city of Santo Domingo on 25 September 1805, at about the same time as the rumours of the conspiracy began to surface:

You told me, general [Ferrand], that in my capacity as agent I have not been, up until now, of any use; it is possible, general, that I have not been able to fulfil your wishes, despite the zeal with which I undertake the service in which I am in charge.³⁶

General Louis Ferrand's dismissive attitude towards Lartigue could have driven him to either fabricate or exaggerate the extent of a conspiracy against Martinique and Guadeloupe. He clearly remained rather desperate for support from French authorities, for just over a year later he wrote to a former Saint-Dominguan planter and the Council of State of the French Empire, Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, in Paris, begging for help in securing the payment of his salary from the governors of Martinique and Guadeloupe. In making this request, he used the conspiracy as evidence of the work that he was doing for all three French Caribbean colonies (including Saint-Domingue) and therefore for the entire empire. In this letter, however, he did not say anything about a secondary conspiracy in Trinidad, which only appeared in an 1815 publication of this letter; the discrepancy between these reports raises further questions about the veracity of his recounting of the events in the British island.³⁷ Here, as in several other well-known cases, it is difficult—maybe even impossible—to know for sure whether there was a real conspiracy. What is clear, however, is that Lartigue's reports of such plans played an important role in shaping perceptions of Haiti's influence on the Caribbean in the early independence period.³⁸

In a proclamation in April 1804, Dessalines openly declared his desire to assist the slaves of the French Caribbean islands, but in the same breath he claimed he was unable to do so. "Unfortunate people of Martinique, could I but fly to your assistance, and break your fetters!" he lamented, "Alas! An insurmountable barrier separates us." Nevertheless, he unabashedly encouraged enslaved people within the French Empire to follow his country's lead: "Perhaps a spark from the same fire which enflames us, will alight into your bosoms: perhaps, at the sound of this commotion, suddenly awakened from your lethargy, with arms in your hands, you will reclaim your sacred and imprescriptible [sic] rights."³⁹ But, at least officially, his support remained rhetorical. He may indeed have extended covert support for rebels in the Eastern Caribbean, but he did not provide direct government backing for such endeavours—despite his promises of "eternal hatred toward France".⁴⁰

South American Independence in Haitian Ports

Another moment in early independent Haiti in which Haitian leaders might have broken the boundaries between free and independent Haiti and the slave colonies of the Caribbean was in early 1806, when South American independence leader Francisco de Miranda arrived in Jacmel on the southern

coast of Haiti from the United States. Miranda had applied to the United States government for aid and support in 1789 and then again in 1805, but he was unsuccessful on both occasions.⁴¹ In 1805 he claimed to have received support from United States secretary of state James Madison, which enabled him to secure aid from a number of American merchants, but both the president, Thomas Jefferson, and Madison would later deny any approval of the mission.⁴² As a back-up plan to get support for his forthcoming expedition to Venezuela, Miranda turned to newly independent Haiti where he had connections with Haitian revolutionary leader and future president Alexandre Pétion. Miranda expected to bolster his military manpower with recruits from Haiti; the Spanish minister in the United States later claimed that Miranda was supposed to have received a large body of Spanish-speaking “mulattoes” from Haiti.⁴³ But Miranda’s crew was not allowed to land on Haitian soil because the Haitian state was wary of foreign troops on their shores. While docked at Jacmel, Miranda’s printers on board the ship produced 2,000 copies of five different texts, including his *Proclamation to the Inhabitants of South America*.⁴⁴ However, Miranda left Jacmel without having received the means necessary to launch his attack.

At this point, Miranda turned to the British for military aid. “You have represented to me”, Admiral Alexander Cochrane at Barbados responded to Miranda’s request for aid, “that in carrying into effect the Expedition under your command, you have met with some difficulty from the defection of the Force you expected to join at St. Domingo”.⁴⁵ The British sent ships and troops to aid Miranda and asked for trade privileges in return in the event that Miranda’s expedition was successful. On 8 August 1806, Miranda overconfidently reported to Vice Admiral James Richard Dacres at the Jamaica station that “we consider ourselves independent of Spain, and the Friends of Great Britain”.⁴⁶ Miranda was unsuccessful in his efforts to liberate South America from Spanish colonialism but his efforts were tireless. Miranda’s voyage to Haiti was one plan among many in which he tried to acquire the necessary support that he would need to overcome the Spanish. When this option failed, he quickly turned to the British to make the same demands.

Years later, a similar event transpired on Haiti’s shores when Simón Bolívar arrived to ask for aid from Alexandre Pétion. In 1815 a defeated Bolívar arrived at Aux Cayes, where he found friendship and military aid. It was in Haiti that he was able to organize the expedition that would re-ignite the fight for independence in South America.⁴⁷ On 8 February 1816, after his departure from Haiti, Bolívar wrote to Pétion and notified him that

in my proclamation to the inhabitants of Venezuela and in the decrees that I have to expedite for the *liberty of the slaves*, I do not know if I will be permitted to show the sentiments of my heart toward Your Excellency and to leave to posterity an irrevocable monument of your philanthropy.⁴⁸

He also wrote obsequiously that he wanted to name Pétion as the “author of our liberty”.⁴⁹ In response, Pétion rejected this title and asked that Bolívar proclaim the abolition of slavery, which would have created a new nation based on the same principles as Haiti: freedom and independence.⁵⁰ This request was not immediately enforced but Bolívar did liberate the 1,500 people that he had formerly kept as property.

Pétion wanted to support movements similar to those that had successfully occurred in Haiti. At the same time he was not prepared to help Bolívar until he came to Haiti’s shores. Both Miranda and Bolívar had been the ones to break the boundary of the free state. But only with Bolívar—when he was president of the south—was Pétion willing to provide support and ideological encouragement for the abolition of slavery as well as national independence.

British Abolitionists and the Haitian State

A final example of international connections relating to the expansion of the Haitian Revolution can be found in Henry Christophe and Alexandre Pétion’s relationships with the British abolitionist community. In 1811, Henry Christophe founded the Kingdom of Haiti in the northern region of the country during the civil war. During his rule as king, he turned to the British for ideological guidance, practical aid for infrastructure, and mediation between Haiti and France. Pétion also wrote to abolitionist leader William Wilberforce, the author of the Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, regarding a proposal to Robert Jenkinson, the 2nd Lord Liverpool, for a peace with France, one that had, as a last resort, an indemnity payment to France.

Pétion and Christophe could not collaborate during the civil war but both attempted to negotiate a peace with France through the mediation of the British abolitionist community, one in which Haitian independence would be recognized. Pétion claimed in a letter to Wilberforce and James Stephen, an abolitionist and member of parliament, that he was satisfied by the assurance that “the interests of the Haitian people were entrusted to the defenders of the sacred rights of humanity, of the African race, and the immortal authors of the abolition of the Slave Trade”. What were these sacred rights? He criticized those who acted “contrary to the immutable decrees of the creator that say that ‘all men are equal, that merit and virtue are the only distinctions that should exist between them’ ”.⁵¹ By emphasizing their common goal of universal freedom, Pétion and Christophe were able to use the British abolitionist community to negotiate Haitian sovereignty.

In his proposal to the French via the British abolitionist mediators, Pétion, in contrast with Christophe, was willing to pay an indemnity to the former colonial planters in exchange for French recognition of independence, but this was not his first option. He wrote:

Only in the case of absolute necessity, and only as the base of the treaty and that the indemnity would be regulated in Haiti on the knowledge of local circumstances of the country and in the common interests of both Haitians and of France, and would be under the powers of mediation of Great Britain.⁵²

Pétion respected individual property and so was willing to concede to an indemnity payment. However, this money would be calculated on actual data from the island rather than by an arbitrary number assigned by the French government. No treaty was signed between Pétion and the French.

While Christophe established close ties with British abolitionists, he still maintained that the Haitian state would respect the political systems in the neighbouring islands. "Since the first declaration of our Independence," he wrote to Clarkson on 18 November 1816, "the maxim of the government which preceded mine, as well as my own, has been not to interfere with the internal affairs of our neighbors." He too acknowledged the geographical boundaries of the freedom movement. "We should enjoy quietly within our frontiers," he continued in the same letter, "the liberty and peace which we have bought with our blood."⁵³ Dessalines made these claims to the international community at the moment of independence with the hope that the country would find peace and friendship in a world of colonialism and slavery. Over a decade later, Christophe was forced to make the same claims as he sought to create a relationship with the British. Even the British, at this point the most vocal supporters of the abolition of the slave trade and slavery, could not condone the Haitian Revolution because, they feared, they would lose the colonies as well; the case of Haiti had given credence to this fear.

Despite the fact that the British did not want to jeopardize their colonial system, Clarkson agreed to serve as an unofficial mediator on behalf of Christophe because Haiti and France had been locked in a military stalemate since the end of the Haitian Revolution. "Fully convinced of your zeal and your friendship of our person", Christophe wrote to Clarkson on November 20, 1819, "of your complete devotion to the cause of Haiti, which is that of justice and humanity, I have decided that there is no one in whom I could better place my confidence than in yourself, my worthy friend."⁵⁴ This friendship had been cultivated over the course of five years through letters sent across the Atlantic.

King Henry received financial support through his relationships with British abolitionists as well as diplomatic guidance from Clarkson. In return, British abolitionists sought the "chance to prove that Africans were not deficient or inhuman, merely underdeveloped, and therefore capable of benefitting from exposure to more advanced civilizations, in this case the British themselves".⁵⁵ This relationship suggests that the Haitian state under Christophe attempted to support a broader movement for the abolition of slavery than it had earlier in the century. However, the relationship also

reveals that Christophe was more concerned with internal aid and infrastructure development, while the abolitionist community abroad was the one to initiate the connections between the Haitian state and calls for general emancipation.

While the British had good reason to support Haiti in their ideological crusade against France and the slave trade, the Haitian state also needed British support. Indeed, Christophe wanted to use the British abolitionist community for publicity. He sought international contacts that would “recognize his achievements and publicly announce them to the world, and who would present his case to the European powers”.⁵⁶ Christophe’s “case” was the desire to obtain diplomatic recognition. However, he also used this common interest to try to create an ally for his fight against France. According to historian Karen Racine,

it was the constant French menace that first prompted Henry Christophe to contact William Wilberforce in 1814. Fearing that Napoleon’s defeat meant royalist France would attempt to regain Haiti, Henry Christophe had his Foreign Secretary, Julien Prévost, the Comte de Limonade, draft a message of friendship and congratulations to the British government.⁵⁷

This relationship was one between anti-slavery activists, but for Christophe it was also an anti-colonial relationship. The two goals were still part of the same strategy.

Julien Prévost, Christophe’s foreign secretary, would later draft instructions for Clarkson during his time as mediator between Haiti and France. Christophe sought a treaty that would guarantee the island’s independence; this could then be used to secure diplomatic recognition from other Atlantic countries and empires. In a letter to Clarkson on 20 November 1819, Prévost argued:

For sixteen years the subjects of all maritime and trading nations (France alone excepted) have carried on a commerce with Haiti. These activities and mutual interchanges are in fact equivalent to a tacit, if not a formal, recognition of our independence. Nothing then remains for the Haitian government but to see solemnized by treaties an independence which has already been implicitly recognized by the nations...⁵⁸

But to this end, the Haitian state required French recognition. In the instructions that Prévost sent to Clarkson, the first clause of the treaty highlighted the importance of national independence in this relationship: “1st—That His Christian Majesty, King of France and Navarre, recognize Haiti... as a free, sovereign, and independent state...”⁵⁹ The conjoining of freedom and independence in this statement highlights the continued importance

of anti-slavery and anti-colonialism in the country. And, while these statements might be interpreted to simply refer to anti-colonialism, Clarkson's response to this clause suggested that he too saw the connection between the two ideologies. "With respect to the grand preliminary article of the treaty", Clarkson responded to Christophe on 28 April 1920, "by which the entire Independence of Hayti would be made a *sine qua non* with France. We feel as if we were called upon to decode a case which would terminate *either in liberty or slavery*."⁶⁰ If France would not agree to the independence of Haiti and if it attempted to reassert colonial authority, the result would be a return to slavery.

Conclusion

On 21 January 1804, according to a British government emissary, a Haitian hymn was performed to honour the governor-general, Jean-Jacques Dessalines. It was printed by the Haitian government press and sent to the British. "From now on Jacque [sic] is the leader/he who rejected slavery", and the refrain closes the song: "under the good father, we are forever united/let us live, let us die his children/free, independent".⁶¹ The "children" of Dessalines, Haitians, were both free and independent—the two characteristics *together* defined what it meant to be Haitian. This status was assigned to individuals who had previously been subjected to legal bondage and political exclusion. According to state rhetoric, those individuals could be assured freedom from slavery because the Haitian Revolution had installed an independent government with the power to enact these policies.

Some 15 years after independence, Christophe wrote to Emperor Alexander of Russia and explained the rationale for Haiti's break from France. "To secure ourselves from the repetition of such unheard of barbarities and crimes," Christophe argued, "such injustice and perfidy, the people of Hayti in a general assembly proclaimed their Independence the 1st of January 1804!"⁶² This letter echoes a quotation from Voltaire's *Tancrède* that appeared on the front page of the *Gazette Politique et Commerciale D'Haïti* on 20 March 1805, beginning: "Injustice, in the end, produces independence."⁶³

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Notes

1. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, "Journal de Campagnes", The National Archives (TNA), London CO 137.
2. This is a translation provided by an unnamed British official that appears in the Admiralty Records from the Jamaica Station: "The General in Chief to the People of Hayti", TNA, ADM 1/254; An official French language copy reports: "Prête donc entre ses mains le serment de vivre libre et indépendant, et de préférer la mort à tous ce qui tendrait à te remettre sous le joug." "Liberté ou la Mort", TNA, CO 137/111, fo. 113.
3. A small number of whites were also allowed to remain in Haiti after independence and in Dessalines's 1805 constitution they were given full rights as citizens. "13. L'article precedent ne pourra produire aucun effet, tant à l'égard des femmes blanches qui sont naturalisées haïtiennes par le Gouvernement, qu'à l'égard des enfans nés ou à naître d'elles. Sont aussi compris dans les dispositions du present article, les allemands et polonaise naturalisés par le Gouvernement." "Constitution d'Haïti" 20 May 1805, http://www.modern-constitutions.de/nbu.php?page_id=8294b7496ae06609fa222b156332446b#Haiti, courtesy of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
4. "St. Domingo", Dessalines, Christophe, Clervaux, Done at the Head-quarters, Fort Dauphin, 20 Nov. 1803, in *The Times*, 6 Feb. 1804, p. 3.
5. *The Times*, 30 May 1804, p. 2.
6. "Affairs of St. Domingo", *The Times*, 23 Jul. 1804, p. 3.
7. Alexandre Pétion to Messieurs Wilberforce et Stephen, National Library of Jamaica, MS 692.
8. Henry Christophe to Thomas Clarkson, 18 Nov. 1816, in Earl Leslie Griggs and Clifford H. Prator, eds., *Henry Christophe and Thomas Clarkson: A Correspondence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1952), p. 100.
9. L'Instant de Pradine, *Recueil General des Lois et Actes du Gouvernement d'Haïti depuis la Proclamation de son Indépendance jusqu'à nos jours, Tome 1ere*, (Paris, 1886), p. 169; TNA, WO 1/79.
10. This is a translation provided by an unnamed British official that appears in the Admiralty Records from the Jamaica Station: "The General in Chief to the People of Hayti", TNA, ADM 1/254.
11. The other article in this section read: "36. Le Gouvernement d'Haïti manifeste au puissances qui ont des colonies dans son voisinage, sa résolution inébranlable de ne point troubler le régime par lequel elles sont gouvernées." TNA, WO 1/79; Pétion's constitution contains a similar article: "Art. 2. La République d'Haïti ne formera jamais aucune entreprise dans les vues de faire des conquêtes, ni de troubler la paix et le régime intérieur des îles étrangères." L'Instant de Pradine, *Recueil General*, p. 169.
12. Jean-Jacques Dessalines to George Nugent, 23 June 1803, National Library of Jamaica, MS 72, Box 2, 846N.
13. For a detailed analysis of these negotiations, see Julia Gaffield, "Haiti and Jamaica in the remaking of the early nineteenth-century Atlantic world", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 69, 3 (2012), pp. 583–614.
14. Conventions Secrètes [illegible] entre le Colonel Harcourt, Député Adjudant Général des Forces de la Majesté Britannique au nom de son Excellence l'Honorable Brigadier Général Maitland, commandant en chef les dites forces, et Mons. Falinger, Adjudant Général Chef de l'Etat Major de l'Armée Française

- au nom du Général Toussaint L'Ouverture, 31 Aug. 1798, Jamaican National Archives, 1B/5/3/21; "Copy of Articles agreed upon between Edward Corbet acting by the direction of Major General Nugent and Joseph Bunel acting in behalf of General Toussaint Louverture being a sequel to and explanation of the secret convention of l'Archaye between General Maitland and General Toussaint of 13th June, 1799", 16 Nov. 1801, British National Army Museum (BNAM), London 6807-183-1, p. 132; "Copy of Articles agreed upon between Edward Corbet and Joseph Bunel", 16 Nov. 1801, BNAM, 6807-183-1, p. 132; Philippe Girard's research suggests that this treaty was never finalized because a peace treaty between the British and French prevented the governor of Jamaica from signing this treaty. Philippe R. Girard, "Black Talleyrand: Toussaint Louverture's Diplomacy, 1798–1802", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 66, 1 (2009), pp. 120–1.
15. Lord Liverpool to unknown, undated [1804], TNA, CO 137/111, fo. 200.
 16. "Narrative of the proceedings of Captain Walker and Mr Hugh Cathcart, on their mission to the Brigand Chiefs from the Government of Jamaica", 27 Aug. 1803, National Library of Jamaica, MS 72, Box 2, 493N.
 17. For more on re-enslavement during the British occupation, see David Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793–1798* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 99, 109.
 18. "Affairs of St. Domingo", *The Times*, 23 Jul. 1804, p. 3.
 19. "Art. 12. Aucun blanc, quelle que soit sa nation, ne mettra le pied sur ce territoire, a titre de maitre ou de propriétaire; et ne pourra, a l'avenir, y acquérir aucune propriété." L'Instant de Pradine, *Recueil General*, p. 49; "Constitution d'Haïti" 20 May 1805, http://www.modern-constitutions.de/nbu.php?page_id=8294b7496ae06609fa222b156332446b#Haiti courtesy of American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
 20. "French copy of proposals made to general Dessalines for a commercial intercourse with his replies thereto", National Library of Jamaica, MS 72, Box 3, 741N.
 21. "18. Sont parties integrantes de l'Empire, les Iles ci-après designees: Samana, la Tortue, la Gonave, les Cayemites, l'Ile-à-Vache, la Saone, et autres Iles adjacentes", "Constitution d'Haïti" 20 May 1805, http://www.modern-constitutions.de/nbu.php?page_id=8294b7496ae06609fa222b156332446b#Haiti courtesy of American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
 22. Jean-François Brière, *Haïti et la France, 1804–1848: La rêve brisé* (Paris, 2008), p. 8.
 23. Julia Gaffield, "Complexities of imagining Haiti: a study of national constitutions, 1801–1807", *Journal of Social History*, 41, 1 (2007), p. 97.
 24. Jean-Jacques Dessalines to George Nugent, 13 May 1804, National Library of Jamaica, MS 72, Box 2, 628N.
 25. "Liberté ou la Mort", TNA, CO 137/111, fo. 113.
 26. On these issues see also: Ada Ferrer, "Haiti, free soil, and antislavery in the revolutionary Atlantic", *American Historical Review*, 117, 1 (2012), pp. 40–66.
 27. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, 14 Jan. 1804, quoted in Thomas Madiou, *Histoire D'Haïti* (Port-au-Prince, 1987), vii, p. 154.
 28. Léo Elisabeth, "Les relations entre les Petites Antilles françaises et Haïti", *Outre-Mer*, 90, 340–1 (2003), p. 179.
 29. "French copy of proposals made to general Dessalines for a commercial intercourse with his replies thereto", National Library of Jamaica, MS 72, Box 3, 741N.

30. George Nugent to Jean-Jacques Dessalines, 8 Mar. 1804, National Library of Jamaica, MS72, Box 3, 315N.
31. Richard B. Sheridan, "Jamaican slavery to Haitian freedom: the case of the black crew of the Pilot Boat, Deep Nine", *The Journal of Negro History*, 67, 4 (1982), p. 399; *Revision of the Constitution (1816)*, 6 Feb. 1816, http://www.modern-constitutions.de/nbu.php?page_id=8294b7496ae06609fa222b156332446b#Haiti, courtesy of Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.
32. For a discussion of how this article was applied, see Ferrer, "Haiti, free soil, and antislavery in the revolutionary Atlantic", pp. 44.
33. "Toute acception de couleur parmi les enfans d'une seule et meme famille, don't le chef de l'Etat est le père, devant nécessairement cesser, les haïtiens ne seront désormais connus que sous la denomination générique de noirs." "Constitution d'Haïti" 20 May 1805, http://www.modern-constitutions.de/nbu.php?page_id=8294b7496ae06609fa222b156332446b#Haiti courtesy of American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia. The Haitian state, according to this constitution, was black, free, and independent—all characteristics that challenged the Caribbean order. States were white, blacks were slaves, and Caribbean islands were colonies.
34. Deborah Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative. Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool, 2011), p. 162. The original document is Roberjot Lartigue, *Rapport de la conduit qu'a tenue M. Roberjot Lartigue au sujet de l'entreprise formée par Dessalines pour soulever la Martinique, la Guadeloupe et Marie Galante . . . du 26 Mai 1806* (Dubray, Imprimeur, Rue Ventadour, 1815), p. 1.
35. David Geggus, "The slaves and free coloreds of Martinique during the age of the French and Haitian revolutions: three moments of resistance", in Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman, eds., *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion* (Gainesville, FL, 1996), p. 296.
36. Arnaud André Roberjot Lartigue to Jean-Louis Ferrand, 25 Sept. 1805, Archives Nationales, Paris, F3-284.
37. Arnaud André Roberjot Lartigue to Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, 30 Nov. 1806, Archives Nationales, Paris, F3-284.
38. Jenson, *Beyond the slave narrative*, p. 176; Michael P. Johnson, "Denmark Vesey and his Co-conspirators", *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 58, 4 (2001), pp. 915–76; Winthrop D. Jordan, *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek: An Inquiry Into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1993).
39. "Affairs of St. Domingo", *The Times*, 23 Jul. 1804, p. 3.
40. "Liberté ou la Mort", TNA, CO 137/111, fo. 113.
41. Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, p. 177; Paul Verna, *Pétion y Bolívar: Cuarenta Años de Relaciones Haitiano-Venezolanas, 1790–183* (Caracas, 1969), pp. 92–102; and Karen Racine, *Francisco de Miranda, a Transatlantic Life in the Age of Revolution* (Wilmington, DE, 2003).
42. Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, p. 183; Karen Racine, *Francisco de Miranda*, p. 157.
43. Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, p. 182.
44. Racine, *Francisco de Miranda*, p. 160.
45. Alexandre Cochrane to Francisco de Miranda, 9 June 1806, TNA, ADM 1/256, fo. 212.
46. Francisco de Miranda to Vice Admiral Dacres, 8 Aug. 1806, TNA, ADM 1/256, fo. 217.
47. François Dalencourt, *Le Fondateur de la République D'Haïti par Alexandre Pétion* (Port-au-Prince, 1944), p. 322.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 322.
49. "L'auteur de notre liberté", quoted in *ibid.*, p. 322.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 322.
51. Alexandre Pétion to Messieurs Wilberforce and Stephen, circa 12 Dec. 1805, National Library of Jamaica, MS 692.
52. Alexandre Pétion to Messieurs Wilberforce and Stephen, circa 12 Dec. 1815, National Library of Jamaica, MS 692.
53. Christophe to Clarkson, 18 Nov. 1816, in Griggs and Prator, *Correspondence*, p. 98.
54. Christophe to Clarkson, 20 Nov. 1819, in *ibid.*, p. 168.
55. Karen Racine, "Britannia's bold brother: British cultural influence in Haiti during the reign of Henry Christophe (1811–1820)", *Journal of Caribbean History*, 33, 1&2 (1999), p. 129.
56. Griggs and Prator, *Correspondence*, p. 62.
57. Racine, "Britannia's Bold Brother", p. 128.
58. The Duke of Limonade to Thomas Clarkson, 20 Nov. 1819, in Griggs and Prator, *Correspondence*, p. 173.
59. The Duke of Limonade to Thomas Clarkson, 20 Nov. 1819, in *ibid.*, p. 175.
60. Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, 28 Apr. 1820, in *ibid.*, p. 196.
61. "Hymne Haytienne", noted by Edward Corbet as being performed on 21 Jan. 1804, TNA, CO 137/111, p. 81.
62. King Henry to the Emperor Alexander of Russia, 20 Mar. 1819, in Griggs and Prator, 134.
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2

“A Most Promising Field for Future Usefulness”: The Church Missionary Society and the Liberated Africans of Sierra Leone

Maeve Ryan

With the coming into force of the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Sierra Leone¹ assumed a substantially different role within the British Empire. No longer “simply a small struggling collection of unwanted black vagrants and intractable, independent-minded Nova Scotians and Maroons”, the settlement once known as Granville Sharp’s “Province of Freedom” became in 1808 a Crown colony, the base of operations for the Royal Navy’s West Africa Squadron, the seat of the Vice-Admiralty Court adjudicating captures (and, later, the Courts of Mixed Commission), and the depository for Africans liberated from the holds of slave ships.² The change in status caught the colony, and equally the humanitarians who had championed the Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, quite unprepared for the consequences. Even before the first Crown colony governor arrived to take over in July 1808, the first two slave ship prize captures had arrived in the harbour, with a combined human cargo of 167 enslaved Africans.³ These “recaptives” became the responsibility of the collector of customs pending their adjudication, liberation, and resettlement. Another 78 followed in the next seizure, followed by 230 the following year.⁴ In 1811 alone, arrivals numbered 1,991; by July 1814, the total number landed since 1808 was estimated at 5,925.⁵ All indications suggested that these numbers would continue to rise.⁶ Yet the question of how to manage such an influx into the small colony of Freetown was not addressed in any serious way for several years. The abolitionist humanitarians who agitated hard for the passage of the Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade did not apply their collective imagination of African suffering beyond the captives on the slave decks and so did not from the outset extend their efforts to the basic resettlement needs of the liberated slaves, nor consider the practicability or justice of the available disposal methods. Thus, in the absence of the sort of lobbying pressure

that had secured the bill, the repeated practical appeals of three successive governors of Sierra Leone—Thompson, Columbine, and Maxwell—for the sanction of a broader system of liberated African welfare assistance between 1808 and 1814 were ignored by a home government unable or unwilling to recognize an escalating humanitarian problem which was, ironically enough, entirely the by-product of Britain's "benevolent crotchet".⁷

When eventually, after eight years, the British government accepted responsibility for providing for the basic welfare of liberated Africans, it was in conjunction with the Church Missionary Society (CMS) that a system was devised. This chapter will explore how the partnership between the CMS and the Liberated African Department tackled the practical problems of liberating Africans: how to manage the short- and medium-term welfare needs of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of new arrivals, and—of far more interest to the missionaries—how to craft a Christianized post-slave society in Africa. The result could be considered an early experiment with a social welfare model designed to systematize mass resettlement over a period of years. The Liberated African Department provided through the superintendence of CMS missionaries a housing scheme for new arrivals, land allotments in purpose-built villages, daily food rations and supplies of clothing and home wares, along with near-universal access to basic education, medical treatment, and the colony's justice system. Yet however far ahead of its time this plan may appear when contrasted with, for example, the plight of the working classes of industrialized Europe, the Liberated African resettlement scheme was an experiment that ended, by the assessment of most contemporaries, in failure and disappointment, regardless that Sierra Leone's liberated African population thrived, integrated, and eventually came to dominate the economic and political life of the colony. This evaluation of the scheme as an utter failure indicates very clearly the real character of liberated African policy during these years: it was an uncomfortable marriage of paternalistic idealism and austere practicality—high-sounding moral ambitions fizzling out in fiscal disinterest and repeated calls for economy, an attempt at societal reshaping on a shoestring budget where the primary focus was not on resettling but on *recreating* the recaptive in the image of an idealized (and already long-forgotten) piously Christian British peasant farmer. This aim, which in the main was not even particularly tied to an economic profit motive, reveals a great deal about the underlying assumptions of contemporary humanitarianism and about the relationship between the main British Protestant missionary society in Sierra Leone and the abolition cause.

Slave trade suppression and its human consequences

The primary objective of the British Parliament's Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was to secure a mechanism for stopping, searching, and seizing illegal slave ships in territorial waters and on the high seas, and prosecuting

the resultant criminal actions in the nearest British Vice-Admiralty Court—an objective towards which 26 of the 27 legal clauses of the act were directed.⁸ One clause—the seventh of the act—related to the ships' human cargoes. This placed the responsibility on the British Crown to "receive, protect and provide for such Natives of Africa" as would be held as slaves on board confiscated ships.⁹ This protection was not optional, however. If the slave ship was held by the adjudicating court to have been seized legally under the jurisdiction of the act, both it and its cargo of slaves were "condemned as a Prize of War" and forfeited to the Crown "for the sole use of His Majesty, his heirs or successors". The framers of the act were careful to specify that this forfeiture of people-as-property would take place only for the purpose of superseding any pre-existing or future property claim. In other words, the British Crown claimed to assume ownership of the illegally transported slaves simply in order to prevent anyone else from ever owning them—"a not-slave-but-not-quite-free"¹⁰ status that Britain claimed as a kind of protective control. Although the act stipulated that liberated Africans "should in no case be liable to be sold, disposed of, treated or dealt with as Slaves" by the Crown or its subjects, a qualified form of ownership was conferred by the provision that designated "Officers Civil or Military" would have the authority to enlist liberated Africans into the armed forces or "to bind the same . . . as apprentices" to private citizens for up to 14 years.¹¹ Officially, all liberated Africans were to be dealt with in this way—enlisted or indentured as apprentices. For those obviously excluded from these two options through age, infirmity, or otherwise, no alternative was provided.

Under acting governor Ludlam, almost all of the first liberated African arrivals were enlisted or apprenticed in Freetown.¹² Yet by 1815, more than 6,000 had been liberated by the Vice-Admiralty Court, at least half of whom remained in the colony, forming by some estimates up to half of the population.¹³ Freetown's resources were strained to breaking point. Vagrant recaptives roamed the streets, foraging for basic subsistence.¹⁴ Missionaries deplored the ongoing state of poverty and ill health of the new arrivals, and the high rate of mortality, some dying of starvation on the streets of Freetown.¹⁵ It was soon apparent that limiting the liberated African disposal options to military enlistment or apprenticeship would be neither sufficient to deal with the influx nor appropriate to the condition of these individuals, many of whom were disembarked from the crowded, narrow holds of the slave ships patently unfit for either alternative. Quite apart from the psychological trauma inflicted during the process of capture and sale, up to half of the liberated Africans came ashore physically ill; epidemics of dysentery, ophthalmia, and smallpox were common. So too were physical injuries sustained by virtue of long months spent overcrowded in holds of on average 22 inches in height, pitching and rolling on the high seas with the crudely constructed planks of the slave decks constantly shifting, trapping, and occasionally severing the limbs of those unfortunate enough to

slip between the gaps. Robert Clarke, colonial surgeon, described the new arrivals as “deplorably emaciated” such “that the skin appears to be tensely stretched over, and tied down to the skeleton”.¹⁶

The expression of the countenance indicated suffering, moral and physical, of the most profound and agonizing nature . . . The belly is, as it were, tacked to the back, whilst the hip bones protrude, and give rise to foul sloughing and phagedenic ulcers . . . The squalor and extreme wretchedness of the figure is heightened, in many cases, by the party-coloured evacuations with which the body is besmeared. The legs refuse to perform their functions, and with difficulty support the emaciated, tottering and debilitated body.¹⁷

William Hamilton, a retired naval officer and former official of the Liberated African Department, described the most debilitated of the new arrivals as “nothing more than living skeletons” who “would be admirable subjects for the study of osteology”.¹⁸ As many as one-third died within weeks of their arrival in the colony.¹⁹ Many more were left with permanent physical disabilities or lingering psychological trauma.²⁰

Even for the liberated Africans in a comparative state of good health, those not suitable for enlistment found that there were simply not enough “prudent and humane masters and mistresses” from whom apprentices could “learn such trades, handicrafts, or employments as they may seem most fit for, or most likely to gain their livelihood by, when their apprenticeship shall expire”.²¹ As early as 1811, the liberated Africans constituted more than three-fifths of the colony’s population, including the surrounding Temne villages.²² Moreover, it soon became apparent that the lax superintendence of the Freetown authorities over the treatment of liberated African apprentices left the system wide open to abuse. In many cases, apprenticeship became a state little different to domestic slavery.²³ In ridding itself of financial responsibility for the upkeep of the able-bodied, the colonial government created a system whereby recaptive apprentices, usually children and youths, were viewed as assets, with appropriation and transfers of apprentices commonly effected by cash payment.²⁴ Upon taking up his post in 1808, the first of the Crown governors, Governor Thompson, found that of those first liberated Africans disposed of as apprentices (to the financial profit of the government) under his predecessor, Ludlam, 21 had fled their masters, and had been captured and thrown into irons in the town’s gaol, where they languished.²⁵ Thompson was incensed. He ordered the 21 apprentices to be released and threatened Ludlam with prosecution under the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, launching an attack on the hypocrisy of the humanitarians of the African Institution.²⁶ Furthermore, he declared all apprenticeships made prior to his governorship null and void.

In place of apprenticeship, Thompson proposed a scheme of settling the liberated Africans in outlying agricultural villages. The advantage of this system, as he outlined in some of his many despatches to the foreign secretary, was that it would solve the problem of resettling the liberated Africans safely and without fear of abuse, while in the same move creating a rural peasantry to provide foodstuffs for Freetown, which remained primarily a trading centre and a reservoir of skilled craftsmen dependent on the public works.²⁷ There is a strong possibility that Thompson's "idea" merely reflected an initiative taken by the ever-increasing numbers of liberated Africans to relocate themselves thus.²⁸ Nonetheless, it represents the first recognition on the part of a colonial governor of the need to plan ahead—in terms both of town planning and of resource allocation—for a population which would only grow in proportion to the success of the West Africa Squadron's efforts.

Thompson's plans—indeed all of his numerous despatches—were entirely ignored by Castlereagh and, in spite of Thompson's personal connections to Wilberforce and his associates, by the African Institution. He was recalled to London following the scandal of his accusations against Ludlam. His successor, Columbine, was under strict orders to cut expenditure. This included curtailing all public works as soon as ongoing projects were completed, a policy that caused considerable unemployment and distress in Freetown. During his short administration, Columbine also abandoned Thompson's policy of encouraging settlement in the peripheral villages and returned wholly to the apprenticeship-enlistment model, promoting "voluntary" enlistment of the able-bodied men and undertaking to apprentice the vast majority of those remaining under strict supervision of apprentice-masters ensured by regular weekly musters.²⁹ Still, many slipped though this system and, with no formal sanction, continued to form themselves into a ring of suburban settlements. Some vanished completely—either absconding upcountry or falling victim to the slave-trading kidnappers who loitered in the colony's backstreets.³⁰

Officially, the colonial government was neither responsible for providing assistance to these outlying village communities nor allowed to allocate resources in that direction. However, when Columbine's successor, Lieutenant-Colonel C. W. Maxwell, arrived in Freetown in July 1811, he discovered that 360 liberated Africans deemed unfit for military service or enlistment had been put on government rice rations, presumably by the agent nominated by Columbine as superintendent of "Captured Negroes", Kenneth Macaulay.³¹ Maxwell was anxious to reduce the burden on the colony's treasury, yet aware of the human need that underlay the expense and, moreover, the reality that those people left unprovided for upon liberation represented a substantial and growing population. On several occasions, Maxwell attempted to secure further financial resources from Britain to allow a properly managed, centrally funded rice-rationing programme to continue to support the most vulnerable. In this he was moderately successful in that

Earl Bathurst did not condemn outright the policy of rations for the disabled, although nor did he sanction any significant extension of resources for that purpose and was careful to specify that “the numbers of Persons so supplied” must be “reduce[d]” to “within the narrowest limits”.³² Nevertheless, by the end of Maxwell’s tenure in 1814, bills drawn “for the Subsistence and Maintenance, &c. of Captured Negroes” of over £11,000 were being reimbursed to colonial officers by a special Treasury grant.³³

Maxwell was less successful in securing approval for a policy of systematizing the ongoing trend of liberated African resettlement in suburban and rural villages. Bathurst was of the opinion that the slave trade was dead or dying as a result of the British Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade and that major planning initiatives were unnecessary. Maxwell therefore refrained from official action on liberated African resettlement, instead making a practice of “allowing” groups of liberated Africans to “found” villages on predetermined sites. Kissy Town was formed in this way in 1812, and Portuguese Town and Hogbrook (later renamed Regent) in 1813.³⁴

Earl Bathurst’s conviction that the slave trade was on the decline due to the proscriptive power of the Abolition Act was one shared by many leading abolitionists in Britain. A modified version of the act was passed by the British Parliament in 1811—by which date at least 1,200 slaves had been adjudicated free by the Sierra Leone Vice-Admiralty Court³⁵—the terms of which only tightened the enforcement mechanisms of the former act; it did nothing to modify the effective management of the liberated Africans. Still the metropolitan government refused to consider the connection between freeing slaves in an unfamiliar country and taking responsibility for their subsequent welfare.

It is not particularly surprising that a government preoccupied with an ongoing European war might be neglectful of the moral and commonsense appeals of its colonial administrators, however closely the issue in question might be related to a recent high-profile parliamentary triumph, such as the passage of the Abolition Act. More surprising is the degree of indifference demonstrated by the African Institution to whom the same appeals were also addressed.³⁶ The small group of influential men at the centre of the African Institution were some of the most high-profile—and vocally anti-slavery—members of the highly influential Clapham Sect, the leading lights of the humanitarian movement, whose lasting fame was founded upon their collective leadership of one of the first mass popular movements in defence of the fundamental right to liberty of other peoples. The influence of this group with regard to policymaking in Sierra Leone heightened rather than decreased during the war years because, as former governor under the Sierra Leone Company, Zachary Macaulay, put it in a letter to the then-acting governor Ludlam in 1807, the “Government will be disposed to adopt almost any plan which we may propose to them, with respect to Africa, provided we will but save them the trouble of thinking”.³⁷ The

African Institution had the ear of a secretary of state who knew and cared little about Sierra Leone and turned readily to those who did. Macaulay was, for example, asked to appoint officials to the colonial government of Sierra Leone. The number of such appointments throughout the first two decades of Sierra Leone's Crown colony status were numerous, including—to the African Institution's embarrassment—that of the scathingly critical Governor Thompson.³⁸ Macaulay even for a time administered in a freelance capacity the colony's finances.³⁹ Why then, with this degree of influence, did these self-professed humanitarians not engage with the plight of thousands of liberated Africans arriving in Sierra Leone in a “deplorable and emaciated state”, in the words of one witness “shocking in the extreme”,⁴⁰ for whom official support consisted of little more than two non-voluntary labour options?

The answer highlights the specific character and set of assumptions that underpinned the self-professed humanitarianism of the African Institution, the Clapham Sect, and the parliamentary pro-abolition movement generally. Humanitarian abolitionism at this level was an ideology incubated in the context of aristocratic privilege—one that blended elements of the Evangelical Revival with a strong conservative faith in the justice of a society organized as a hierarchical economic and political power structure. The humanitarians' lack of empathy or concern for the destitute recaptive was a logical extension of their fundamental conception of the abolitionist cause as a reform not of a primarily social evil but of vice and sin—a breach of divine law that forced the possessor of one soul to be held as the property of another. Images of the privations of the slave trade were used during the popular abolition campaign as emotive devices, yet the bodily sufferings of the slave were not the prime concern of abolitionists such as Granville Sharp, William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, and others. They did not consider poverty or deprivation as represented in the Gospels to be an ordeal to be avoided or an evil to be cured; quite the opposite.⁴¹ “The peace of mind which Religion offers indiscriminately to all ranks”, Wilberforce explained,

affords more true satisfaction than all the expensive pleasures that are beyond the poor man's reach . . . The poor have the advantage, that if their superiors enjoy more abundant comforts, they are also exposed to many temptations from which the inferior classes are happily exempted.⁴²

To this view it was not the business of Britain to elevate the liberated Africans from poverty but rather to stimulate in them the “Protestant ethic of the dignity of labour—the moral necessity of work”.⁴³

Little consideration appears to have been given to the abuses that might ensue in compelling liberated Africans into apprenticeships or enlistment. Nor, in a more basic sense, does the possibility appear to have been much entertained that the person apprenticed or enlisted might wish to refuse

such a fate.⁴⁴ The assumption was implicit in the African Institution's view that liberated Africans would integrate easily into a heterogeneous cultural environment hundreds or thousands of miles from their homelands and families, would marry (or remarry), and would learn English to overcome the practical difficulties of Freetown's more than 100 spoken languages. The humanitarian reformers' prime interest was less in facilitating that transition and more in using the opportunity of regular access to inculcate in all new arrivals the solid, hard-working British Protestant "habits of industry".⁴⁵ "Indolence", declared the Committee of the African Institution in 1807, "is a common characteristic of all uncivilized people . . . But indolence is a disease which it is the business of civilization to cure."⁴⁶ Apprenticeship or enlistment in His Majesty's forces were thus entirely logical means of disposal of liberated slaves; indeed, any other solution the colonial government might arrive at involving freely distributed food or other forms of support was entirely contrary to the principles by which the men of the African Institution conceived of Britain's role in stamping out the African slave trade.

When the African Institution and the British government were eventually mobilized to recognize and then address the practical problems of Freetown's swelling population, it was not the earthly deprivations of the liberated Africans that moved them; it was their lack of Christianity.⁴⁷ The result—a scheme conceived of and implemented by the Liberated African Department in conjunction with the CMS—could to some extent be considered an early experiment with state-funded mass resettlement on social welfare lines. Its planners' disappointment and disgust with the outcome a decade later reflects, however, the vast difference between the humanitarians' comprehension of the problem they took responsibility to solve and the solution arrived at on the ground.

Years of cooperation: The CMS and the Liberated African Department under Governor McCarthy

Governor Maxwell's successor, Charles McCarthy, was shocked by the state of the liberated African population in 1814.⁴⁸ Yet where previous governors had been overwhelmed by the scale of the supervisory challenge, McCarthy saw in the liberated Africans not an administrative problem to be overcome as cheaply as possible but a providential opportunity to transform whole communities. Equally, where some of his predecessors had tried and failed to secure explicit metropolitan acknowledgement of British responsibility to rehabilitate the Africans whom its Navy had freed, he secured over a ten-year period an unprecedented quantity of financial support from the home government for a comprehensive programme of direct support measures. The key difference between McCarthy and his predecessors, aside from force of personality, was strategy; he presented to Bathurst and the War and Colonial

Office the possibility of meeting the temporal needs of the liberated Africans through the spiritual ambitions (and resources) of the CMS.⁴⁹

Cooperation between the CMS and the colonial government pre-dated McCarthy's governorship. The CMS had had missionaries resident in Freetown since 1804 who—although the society was not particularly interested in Freetown as a mission field—taught in the government-sponsored school and filled the post of colonial chaplain. Freetown was a bridgehead for the CMS's real purpose: mission stations in the Susu country established to teach and preach in the vernacular, a project they initiated in March 1808 in the Rio Pongas area about 100 miles north of Freetown, where slave trading was widespread and extremely lucrative.⁵⁰ Once established there, the CMS gained the approval of the colonial government to remove groups of liberated African children to the north, where they were to be educated in return for day-to-day manual labour at the mission station.⁵¹ The CMS's initial lack of interest in Freetown reflected among other things the feeling among the society's committee in London that the Susu "heathen" represented a riper field of opportunities than the fiercely loyal Dissenter communities of the original Nova Scotian and Maroon settlers. However, under the governorship of Maxwell, relations between the missions and colonial government became increasingly cooperative, not least because the mission in the north was beset with internal and external conflicts and the CMS was beginning to see the need to relocate to within the protection of the colony.⁵² Education was the prime point of mutual interest: both Maxwell and the CMS missionaries recognized the potential benefits of a plan whereby the CMS would take over management of the colony's government-funded schools. Indeed, by 1814 a proposal endorsed by Maxwell for the CMS to take over all of Freetown's schools and to establish a "Christian Institution" had already been approved by the London committee of the CMS and sent to the secretary of state. The proposal was accepted in May 1815.⁵³

Governor McCarthy approved wholeheartedly of official collaboration with the CMS; more than anyone he recognized its potential to solve the greatest challenge facing the colonial administration at that time. From the outset, McCarthy engaged personally with the liberated African question. Through the newly instituted Liberated African Department,⁵⁴ he sought to systematize a workable resettlement and rationing programme in the suburban and rural villages. Once freed from the King's Yard after successful adjudication, the liberated Africans who had not been hospitalized or selected for apprenticeship, the public works, or voluntary enlistment were escorted to a designated village where they were supplied with clothing and various basic household items, such as pots, pails, tin dishes, drinking pots, spoons, mats, blankets and, for each of the men, a bill hook, cutlass and hoe.⁵⁵ McCarthy and Joseph Reffell of the Liberated African Department noticed that liberated Africans tended to recover their health and cheer faster

when located in villages with others of their “countryfolk”; thus the policy became to house new arrivals with such countrymen until such time as the women had been married and the men had cleared the plot of land allocated them, built themselves a house,⁵⁶ and planted and begun to reap a mature food crop.⁵⁷ In the meantime, they were provided with daily rations of rice, salt, and palm oil, with “those who are greatly emaciated” receiving an additional daily portion of fresh beef and vegetables.⁵⁸

McCarthy’s vision for the liberated Africans extended beyond feeding, clothing, and housing them; he sought to mould from these hundreds upon hundreds of shattered individual lives a coherent Sierra Leonean peasant community. His vision was as idealistic as it was paternalistic, yet it was at its root a fundamentally compassionate one. Although to the Colonial Office and CMS he presented his solution to the liberated African problem as the perfect synthesis of fiscal economy and imperial missionarism, in reality he took as little heed of both as he could manage and concentrated his energies on utilizing the resources he could secure for the immediate betterment, as he judged it, of the liberated Africans he saw daily.

McCarthy shared with the British elite humanitarians a fundamental appreciation for order and industry, and imagined the liberated African villages as physical manifestations of African “progress” under British tutelage. To this end, he requisitioned from Britain such items as weathercocks, church bells, and tower clocks (alongside “vast stores” of shoes, shoe brushes, blacking balls, ladies bonnets, and the like), and issued numerous directives that the rural villages be built according to the plans laid out, built in the image of English hamlets; regular streets with numbered houses and fences between properties, a marketplace, and a church at the heart of the community. Land was allocated to new arrivals not on the basis of its fertility but according to how its buildings would appear in relation to the rest of the village.⁵⁹ McCarthy envisaged each village as a permanent community of liberated African families tending individual agricultural plots for subsistence and sale, worshipping at the local church, sending the children of their Christian marriages to receive practical and religious education and waiting ready to welcome and integrate new arrivals. Key to this system, as McCarthy imagined it, was a staff of village superintendents to monitor progress and ensure order in each settlement. What stood in the way of this ideal becoming reality—what was already clearly lacking even in the Liberated African Department’s basic system of relocation and rationing in the first two years of McCarthy’s governorship—was sufficient personnel. This role McCarthy identified for the missionaries of the CMS.

In 1816, the CMS sent Reverend Edward Bickersteth to Sierra Leone as delegate to report on the state of the mission. McCarthy took the opportunity to impress upon him his conviction that the society’s attentions were better directed away from the dead weight of the Susu mission and towards Freetown’s liberated African population. This ever-increasing group,

he argued, was just the mission field that the CMS was looking for—a body of thousands of disrupted lives to which the CMS missionaries could have regular, unrestrained access without the dangers of ministering unprotected in the slave rivers. He therefore proposed that the society should close the Susu mission and extend its official role in the colony to provide superintendents and schoolteachers for each of seven newly created parishes. The missionary superintendent would represent in one individual the secular, religious, and judicial authority of the district, to whom the liberated Africans would look for guidance and example:

It is by [the superintendents] that the morals and manners of this new establishment will be formed; it will yield like wax to any impression they choose to give it: their responsibility is great; they will no doubt, under Divine Providence, act wisely. They will, by their example, –

“Allure to brighter worlds and lead the way;”

and in this world they will teach the people to be industrious, to be honest, and to be happy.⁶⁰

McCarthy made explicit the real and total power that the CMS missionaries would hold as representatives of central government at parish level:

It is nearly impossible for a Clergyman *residing* in the mountains with Captured Negroes to do much good, unless to that character he unites that of Magistrate & Superintendent:—by the authority of the two latter offices he can keep the uncivilized in due order and reward the industry of the well behaved.⁶¹

Bickersteth came to the same conclusion as McCarthy—that the Liberated African problem was the missionaries’ opportunity, to the potential benefit of Africa and Britain alike. In Sierra Leone, he declared in his report to the society:

there is a most extended field for every exertion. Recaptured negroes are continually brought in, who are in the most deplorable and wretched condition—naked, ignorant, weak, diseased; and in every form of wretchedness that can be imagined... Many of [the liberated Africans], alas! soon fall victims to the hard treatment which they had received on board the slave-ships: and many, if not most of the others, remain, for want of European assistance, in a deplorable state of ignorance, indolence, idolatry, licentiousness, and sin. *To remedy these evils it appears to be of the first importance, without delay to communicate that religious instruction, which, when truly received, will effectually arrest the progress of evil.*⁶²

Bickersteth's assessment of the problem and its likely remedy make clear the very great difference in how the CMS and the colonial government under McCarthy imagined the practical implementation of the cooperative plan. To Bickersteth and the CMS, the secular duties of the superintendent would be the access point for his "real" work of evangelizing the liberated Africans; for McCarthy, the villages' lack of Christianity was less of a concern than the fact that "none of them [had] raised a sufficient crop of Rice or Cassava" for their own subsistence that year.⁶³ CMS involvement was primarily, as he saw it, a means of securing the committed personnel required to administer a system that the Liberated African Department had failed to manage alone.

In 1816, Bathurst agreed to the scheme, as did the CMS committee.⁶⁴ That year the CMS sent out four missionaries, followed by two schoolteachers in 1817. The Susu mission was given up in the following year and the missionaries returned to Freetown with the children of the mission stations to occupy superintendents' posts in the villages of Leopold, Waterloo, and Kissy. In 1822 the CMS sent 13 more recruits to Sierra Leone. During this period, 12,765 liberated Africans were brought ashore at Freetown. Of these, 11,123 were resettled in the colony.⁶⁵

The total government expenditure recorded for Sierra Leone's liberated Africans in the period 1812–25 was £410,118, a figure better understood when compared with the total expenditure for the colony during the same period: £745,819.⁶⁶ From an outlay of £10,849 in 1815 to a peak of £59,629 in 1823, the average annual expenditure for liberated Africans under McCarthy and the CMS was £40,482.⁶⁷ A sizable proportion of this was spent on clothes and food rations for the new arrivals, most of whom continued to be fully supported for at least a year, many indefinitely. The other main cash outlay was building the physical infrastructure needed to support village and town administration—parish churches, residences for superintendents, and schoolhouses in every village—as well as new school buildings for Freetown, a hospital, and buildings for the fast-growing bureaucracy of the Liberated African Department. Supplies ordered from Britain for the Liberated African Department stores came under 400 heads and included the implements necessary for the agricultural and technical training programmes provided by McCarthy's colonial government for the youths and young men of the villages, including carpentry, masonry, shingle-making, and smithing.⁶⁸ For its part, the home government, once so unwilling to accept the expense of responsibility, demonstrated little ability or willingness to rein in McCarthy's enthusiastic spending. Blessed with an impressive ability to charm money from the Treasury, he continued to spend with practically unchecked abandon until his death in 1824. For its part, the CMS estimated that it spent £70,000 on the Sierra Leone mission between 1804 and 1824.⁶⁹

“The retreat from idealism”

The cooperative period lasted in something like the form imagined by McCarthy and Bickersteth until 1824, the year McCarthy was killed in conflict with the Asante at the Gold Coast. Four months after the governor's death the CMS requested to be relieved of the responsibility of superintending the Liberated African villages. Formal cooperation between the CMS and the Liberated African Department therefore ended, and thus also the CMS's involvement in the provision of welfare services.⁷⁰

It was not the death of McCarthy that precipitated the withdrawal; dissatisfaction on both sides had existed from the outset. By the end of 1823, the CMS committee was seriously considering its position in Sierra Leone. Although a large degree of success was evident from school attendance figures and from the outward manifestations of order in certain villages (such as Regent under the Reverend Johnson), the missionary superintendent scheme never achieved the religious, practical, and humanitarian ends imagined by its planners, at least not to the degree of productive, pastoral perfection envisaged by McCarthy, and certainly never to the level of Christian order and conspicuous virtue demanded by the missionaries. The CMS did not manage to fulfil its staffing promises for the 13 villages established by 1820. McCarthy was never satisfied that the CMS was fully committed to the liberated Africans, and the tone of his repeated requests for more missionaries and schoolteachers implies that he felt that the society was withholding resources.⁷¹ Of the missionaries whom the CMS did manage to recruit and send out, McCarthy was disappointed with the calibre of most. He considered a substantial proportion of them unfit for the tasks assigned to them, in particular because of the Germanic origins of most recruits and their insufficient mastery of the English language.⁷²

The missionaries for their part were seldom happy with the arrangement, at least those most strictly motivated by the desire to evangelize. As one, Gustav Nyländer, explained to Bickersteth in 1819, “neither I nor any of our missionaries, placed as superintendents to a Captured Negro Town, are in our right sphere as missionaries”.⁷³ The latter role required them to “devote their time and talents to their ministry; but here we are encumbered with everything connected to our situations as *Superintendents of public works, clearing and repairing Roads, imprisoning and punishing—settling disputes and quarrels between people*”.⁷⁴ These essential services, felt Nyländer, should be provided by a secular agent, for they distracted from the missionaries' true purpose. Another long-standing Sierra Leone missionary, Renner, wrote in 1820 that “many a time one is almost worn out with settling the different palavers amongst a rude people, and one gets almost out to humour to attend school-keeping”.⁷⁵ Wenzel, missionary at Kissy, complained that his role as justice of the peace gave him “more people to attend Wednesday in

settling their quarrels, than on the Lord's Day when I preach". The consequence, he found, was that "when I have to tell them they are wrong, they will immediately stay away from the Lord's Day".⁷⁶ Reverend C. F. L. Haensel, the first principal of Fourah Bay College, later commented that the system of missionary superintendence under McCarthy had "been the occasion of secularizing the minds of the society's servants and drawing them off from fishing for men's souls to fishing for the governor's applause".⁷⁷

Most of all, the liberated Africans themselves were a source of intense frustration to the missionaries. Many local cultural forms persisted openly and covertly in the villages, including polygamy. Burial customs, including heavy drinking and late night drumming and dancing, continued regardless of missionaries' entreaties. Respect for *gri-gri* persisted in parallel with villagers' outward demonstrations of Christian observation. Moreover, many newcomers exhibited an independence of spirit that belied the home government's perception of the liberated Africans as "so utterly ignorant and helpless that it is absolutely necessary, with a view to their own welfare, to treat them in some measure as children".⁷⁸ Resisting pressure from the superintendents to settle in individual family units on the plot to which they had been assigned, many chose to remain with their countrypeople indefinitely. Groups of liberated Africans frequently retreated from the villages to form their own settlements, some out of a desire to settle in locations more agriculturally sensible than the aesthetically minded Europeans had selected; many to escape the watchful eye and interference of government and missionary. Many returned to Freetown to follow the example of the Nova Scotians and Maroons and to seek their fortunes in petty trade.⁷⁹ The liberated Africans did not, as McCarthy had predicted, "yield like wax" to European culture and values, forming orderly rural communities overlooked by the ticking clock of the parish church tower; the stores left rotting in Freetown, totally useless in the Sierra Leonean climate, were a testament to the chimerical nature of this vision.

In the end, it was the unhealthiness of the climate that precipitated the CMS withdrawal from cooperation with the Liberated African Department. A yellow fever epidemic in 1823 carried off 12 of the 28 Europeans active in the mission; by 1826, of the 79 missionaries, wives, and schoolmasters sent to Sierra Leone since 1804, only 14 remained in service—the majority of the others were dead.⁸⁰ The CMS agreed to maintain parish ministers in the parishes of Sierra Leone and to retain overall charge of Freetown's schools, but handed over full superintendence of the villages, including the village schools, to the Liberated African Department.⁸¹

Under Governor Turner and his successor, Sir Neil Campbell, the systems for dealing with the liberated African newcomers were designed with extreme austerity in mind. The budget for daily support of the destitute was slashed, then slashed again. Only the very elderly and the very young remained on government support after 1825.⁸² Under Campbell, food

rations and physical supplies to the newcomers ceased entirely, replaced by a daily allowance for men of 3d. for the first six months, reduced to 2d. in 1829, then 1½d. in 1836.⁸³ Women were rationed for three months or until they were married, whichever came first. All children were distributed among the inhabitants of Freetown and the villages under the apprenticeship system, to remain bound until the age of 15, whereupon they were to provide for themselves. Free schooling was limited to three or four years' duration between the ages of 10 or 11 and 14.⁸⁴ Dixon Denham, the assistant superintendent of the Liberated African Department, sent out in 1827 to assess the post-CMS working of the resettlement programme, lamented the consequences of Campbell's "Plan of January 1st", particularly the "demoralization . . . among the young Branches of the Liberated Africans" resulting from the closure of schools and distribution of the children as apprentices. Denham recognized the vulnerability of the liberated African children to exploitation and abuse under this scheme and reported to the secretary of state that "the elder girls, instead of being married, and settled in the Villages from the schools, have after a short time left their adopted parents, from ill treatment, or neglect, and are living in a state of prostitution, in Free Town".⁸⁵ The CMS came to regret the terms of its agreement of 1824; by 1830, it was seeking to re-establish full control over all of the parish schools it had relinquished. Throughout, the rate of liberated African arrivals into the colony remained high, peaking by some estimates at 8,652 individuals in 1837 alone.⁸⁶ The resettlement scheme, now managed entirely by the Liberated African Department, depended increasingly upon established Liberated African overseers in the villages, whose diminished role of bookkeeping reflected a fundamental disengagement with the idea of maintaining intensive influence on the lives and lifestyle choices of the villagers.⁸⁷

Yet unlike its reversal on the colony's schooling system, the CMS did not seek after 1824 to re-establish any relationship of responsibility with the resettlement programme. Cooperation between the CMS and the Liberated African Department had only occurred in the first place because of a fortuitous coincidence of the governor's and the CMS's interests and personalities; it had not been born spontaneously of the society's desire to assist in liberated African rehabilitation. The CMS had been at a juncture in 1816, searching for a new bridgehead into West Africa as a result of tensions in the Rio Pongas caused by the escalating operations of the anti-slave trade squadron and tensions between the missionaries themselves. Like McCarthy, Bickersteth saw in 1816 an opportunity to create perfect community units, yielding "like wax" to the influence of the superintendent, suiting the ultimate CMS objective. Sierra Leone, he reported then, "is evidently a most promising field for future usefulness. The Recaptured Negroes . . . are most advantageously situated for the communication to them of the truths of the Gospel. No time, therefore, must be lost in sending to them Christian Instructors."⁸⁸ The focus of the missionary superintendence

plan as it was imagined in London was on acquiring access to the liberated Africans; the objective to “improve” them, not restore them. Thus, the stubborn endurance in the villages of African culture and social norms blinded the CMS to the successes they (in conjunction with the Liberated African Department) had had in ameliorating the condition of the thousands of liberated African men, women, and children resettled in Sierra Leone between 1816 and 1824. The experiment was regarded by the society as an outright failure.

Conclusion

The British legislative abolition of the West African slave trade can be considered as one of the key events in the history of humanitarian intervention. Still it is important to evaluate this and related interventions with a very clear sense of the values attached to contemporary humanitarianism. To consider the CMS–Liberated African Department village resettlement programme as “humanitarian” in any modern-day sense is extremely problematic. On the one hand, there existed what appears on the surface to have been an attempt at something extremely progressive—a system of food rationing appropriate to the health of the individual, allotments of agricultural land, family housing, regular supplies of clothing, provision for child and adult education including agricultural and technical training, access to medical treatment, and recourse to a judicial system, all at government expense. Yet underlying this was a basically coercive form of paternalism. The liberated Africans presented both colonial and metropolitan governments with a complex series of administrative and population-management problems. Although the compassion and interest shown towards the ongoing welfare of the traumatized new arrivals appear to have varied markedly from governor to governor, the baseline position adopted towards the liberated African was one of finding the simplest and most cost-effective disposal avenue. Fixed periods of manual labour on public works, at mission stations and tending village plots were not a matter of choice. On the one hand, the “recaptive” was free; on the other, they were expected to submit to apprenticeship, enlistment, marriage, or manual labour as the superintendents of the Liberated African Department and the CMS saw fit.⁸⁹ Liberated Africans recruited “voluntarily” to the armed forces in the King’s Yard were seldom given any clear sense of the commitment into which they were entering.⁹⁰ Apprenticeship depended upon the goodwill of the host family to feed and care for their charges, and allow them free time to attend school; very often apprentices were virtually domestic slaves. Never mustered once between 1819 and 1829, an unknowable number of these children are believed to have died as a result of ill treatment and neglect, or to have been traded upcountry as slaves by complicit inhabitants of Freetown, themselves former slaves.⁹¹

The manner in which the CMS came into cooperation with the Liberated African Department between 1816 and 1824 demonstrates very clearly that the society did not perceive the liberated African question primarily as a moral or humanitarian one. The humanitarian obligations undertaken provided a means of preparing the ground for the more important work of evangelizing, primarily through education. The missionaries' subsequent complaints about the practical realities of implementing this system reveal that welfare administration, from the CMS point of view, was a means to an end, a series of practical tasks that more than anything distracted from the primary objective. In 1856 an abridged copy of the memoirs of W. A. B. Johnson, CMS missionary superintendent of Regent village between 1816 and 1823, entitled *Africa's Mountain Valley*—a work that sold in its thousands—described Sierra Leone as “England’s noblest trophy” and represented the liberated Africans’ experiences of being “liberated” into the colony thus:

In . . . the beautiful harbor [sic] of Sierra Leone, . . . thousands of liberated slaves stood again upon their native shore, and found that the white man, and freedom, and Africa, had received them! Numbers indeed were living skeletons only; numbers were maimed, never again to stand erect; in others the cruelty of the oppressor had darkened reason’s light for ever upon earth; and others expired in the friendly arms that bore them to the hospital; but thousands lived to rejoice!⁹²

Some 40 years previously, the CMS had deemed Sierra Leone “a most promising field for future usefulness”.⁹³ Even after the passage of almost half a decade, Johnson’s writings still present the prospect of evangelizing the liberated Africans as the most important obligation of the process of freeing them:

And now we look upon Sierra Leone as one great nursery-ground, planted by England from no less than forty African nations, the tree of freedom flourishing in the midst, all peaceful and secure. England’s crown adopts it, England’s statesmen legislate for it, England’s laws regulate it, England’s sword forgets its scabbard, guarding the high seas round it. But yet its plants were wild, their fruits were bitter—sin and death! England desired that they should bloom for immortality, and yield fruit unto everlasting life; but for this they must be grafted with a heavenly scion.⁹⁴

The CMS committee’s initial enthusiasm for a cooperative venture with the Liberated African administration, and its subsequent bitter disappointment, reflect the many flaws inherent in their assumptions about African malleability. Moreover, this reveals the failure of the humanitarians in London to comprehend that in intervening to liberate enslaved Africans, planting them

on territory avowedly free from slavery was just the beginning of the process. The individuals sent out by the CMS were ill-prepared for taking temporal, judicial, and educational responsibility for whole villages. The persistence of African traditions and the inability of either the missionaries or the government to control their movements, associations, and lifestyle choices was a constant source of irritation and frustration that filtered into general public opinion regarding Sierra Leone. This, alongside depressing reports about European mortality in the “White Man’s Grave”, escalating expenditure and the still-growing slave trade, brought British opinion regarding the usefulness and virtue of the Sierra Leone experiment to a nadir in the late 1820s and early 1830s.

Notes

1. The British term for slave trade refugees was “recaptives”, reflecting—with unintended irony, it would appear—their double experience of capture as slaves and “recapture” and disposal by British authorities. Other terms used included “captured Negroes” and “liberated Africans”. See John Peterson, *Province of Freedom: A History of Sierra Leone, 1787–1870* (London, 1969); Manon L. Spitzer, “The Settlement of Liberated Africans in the Mountain Villages of the Sierra Leone Colony, 1808–1841” (Unpublished MA thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1969); Richard Meyer-Heiselberg, *Notes from Liberated African Department in the Archives at Fourah Bay College Freetown, Sierra Leone* (Uppsala, 1967); Roseanne M. Adderley, “New Negroes from Africa”: *Slave Trade Abolition and Free African Settlement in the Nineteenth-Century Caribbean* (Indiana, 2006); Daniel Stephen, “A History of the Settlement of Liberated Africans in the Colony of Sierra Leone during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century” (unpublished MA thesis, University of Durham, 1962); Stiv Jakobsson, *Am I Not A Man and A Brother? British Missions and the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery in West African and the West Indies, 1786–1838* (Lund, 1972). Christopher Fyfe’s encyclopaedic 1962 *A History of Sierra Leone* touches from time to time on details relevant to the liberated African narrative, although this is by no means the central focus of his work.
2. Spitzer, “Liberated Africans”, p. 29; Tara Helfman, “The Court of Vice Admiralty at Sierra Leone and the Abolition of the West African Slave Trade”, *Yale Law Journal*, 115, 1122 (2006), pp. 1122–56; Christopher Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade: The Suppression of the African Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1968); L. M. Bethell, “The Mixed Commissions for the Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century”, *Journal of African History*, 7, 1 (1966), pp. 79–93. The terms “Nova Scotians” and “Maroons” refer to the two dominant groups of Freetown’s early settlers, Nova Scotia and Jamaica.
3. Peterson, *Province of Freedom* p. 47. The first Vice-Admiralty Court adjudication was in November 1808. Johnson U. J. Asiegbu, *Slavery and the Politics of Liberation, 1787–1861: A Study of Liberated African Emigration and British Anti-Slavery Policy* (London, 1969), p. 24 and Appendix VII.
4. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, p. 107. Spitzer gives the total number of Africans liberated in Freetown for 1808 and 1809 as 358. Spitzer, “Liberated African”, Appendix I.
5. List of Captured Negroes, 24th Dec. 1810 – 24th Dec. 1811, TNA, CO 267/31.

6. The end of the European wars brought about a revival of shipping that included the slave trade, while peacetime simultaneously nullified the Royal Navy's legal right to stop and search shipping. Governor Maxwell was aware of this reality, as was CMS missionary Leopold Butscher, whose experiences working in Susu country to the north influenced his reports on the strong economic foundations of slave trading in West Africa. Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, pp. 58, 66–7.
7. John Bright, 24 Apr. 1849, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 104, p. 787.
8. "An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade", 47 Geo.III.c.36, sess. I, 25 Mar. 1807, *The Statutes of the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland: 1807–1869* (London, 1807–1869). Adderley, *New Negroes*, pp. 25–6.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid. "Apprenticeship" referred to indentured labour, although with a professed emphasis on teaching trades and skills for the future benefit of the apprentice.
12. Ludlam to Hamilton, 10 May 1808, National Archives of Sierra Leone (hereafter "NASL"), Local Letters 1808–1811; Thompson to Castlereagh, 2 Aug. 1808 TNA, CO 267/24.
13. Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, p. 60; Spitzer, "Liberated Africans", Appendix I; Jakobsson, *Am I Not...?* p. 173.
14. Spitzer, "Liberated Africans", p. 35.
15. Nyländer to Pratt, 7 Dec. 1810, CMS Archive (CMS), CA1/E2/42. The CMS missionary Gustav Nyländer was disturbed by the depths of poverty and suffering, the like of which he had never seen. He established a relief committee to collect funds, of which Governor Columbine was a supporter, both as its patron and with financial gifts. Jakobsson, *Am I Not...?* p. 176.
16. Robert Clarke, quoted in Rev. Samuel Walker, *The Church of England Mission in Sierra Leone* (London, 1847), p. xxxiv.
17. Ibid.
18. William Hamilton, "Sierra Leone and the Liberated Africans", *The Colonial Magazine and Commercial-Maritime Journal*, 6 (Sept.–Dec. 1841), pp. 328, 334.
19. Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, pp. 256–7; F. W. Butt-Thompson, *Sierra Leone in History and Tradition* (London, 1926), p. 160.
20. Maria Louisa Charlesworth, *Africa's Mountain Valley, or The Church of Regent's Town, West Africa* (London, 1856), p. 13.
21. *Abstract of Acts of Parliament for Abolishing the Slave Trade* quoted in Asiegbu, *Slavery and the Politics of Liberation*, p. 27, n. 1.
22. Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, p. 60.
23. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, pp. 182, 251; Stephen, "A History of the Settlement of Liberated Africans", pp. 30–33; Philip Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780–1850* (London, 1965), pp. 274–5; *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*, "Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of the Colony of Sierra Leone, Part I" 1826–27 (312) VII.52–55, (hereafter "1827 Report of Commissioners of Inquiry.").
24. Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, p. 52.
25. Ibid.
26. Thompson to Castlereagh, 2 Aug. 1808, TNA, CO 267/24; Thompson to Castlereagh, 31 Dec. 1808, CO 267/24; Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, pp. 106–9.
27. Thompson to Castlereagh, 2 Nov. 1808, TNA, CO 267/24.
28. Thompson to Castlereagh, 7 Mar. 1809, TNA, CO 267/25; Thompson to Castlereagh, 1 Jan. 1810, TNA, CO 267/27.

29. Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, pp. 54–57.
30. Numerous cases of absconding and kidnapping appear in the volumes of Local Letters, Court Records, Liberated African Department Letterbooks and Governors' Despatches from 1808 right up to mid-century, NASL. See also Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, pp. 183–4, 270–2; Stephen, "A History of the Settlement of Liberated Africans", p. 31.
31. Maxwell to Liverpool, 7 May 1812, TNA, CO 267/34. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, p. 115.
32. Earl Bathurst to Governor Maxwell, 26 Oct. 1812, TNA, CO 267/30.
33. *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*, "Papers relating to captured Negroes at Sierra Leone", 1813–1814, (354) XII.337; "Finance accounts of Great Britain, for the year ended 5 Jan. 1814", 1813–14 (77) X.225.
34. Spitzer, "Liberated Africans", p. 34.
35. List of Captured Negroes on hand 31 Dec. 1810, and those received, enlisted, apprenticed etc. up to 31 Dec. 1811, TNA CO 267/31; Disposal of Captured Negroes received in the colony of Sierra Leone during the year 1812, TNA CO 267/35. Spitzer offers a higher total of 2,314 as the number liberated by the end of 1811. Spitzer, "Liberated Africans", Appendix I. The unreliability of assessing liberated African numbers by court records alone is noted in the 1827 Report of Commissioners of Inquiry, p. 22.
36. The African Institution was founded in the aftermath of the Sierra Leone Company's wind-down, ostensibly to assist agricultural and educational development in Sierra Leone. Its leadership and elite support base compromised essentially the same core group of individuals and their associates, including William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Thomas Babington, Zachary Macaulay, Henry Thornton, Joseph Hardcastle, John Venn, Lord Teignmouth, James Stephen, and Granville Sharp.
37. Macaulay to Ludlam, 4 Nov. 1807 printed in Z. Macaulay, *A Letter to his Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, President of the African Institution*, 2nd ed. (London, 1815). On the relationship between the African Institution and the British government, see Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, p. 105.
38. Wilberforce to Castlereagh, 19 Jan. 1808, TNA, CO 267/25.
39. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, p. 105.
40. Superintendent of the Liberated African Department, Dec. 1828, quoted in Asiegbu, *Slavery and the Politics of Liberation*, p. 24.
41. Spitzer, "Liberated Africans", p. 17; John Galbraith, "The Humanitarian impulse to imperialism", Robin W. Winks, ed., *British Imperialism: Gold, God, Glory* (New York, 1963) p. 72.
42. Spitzer, "Liberated Africans", p. 16.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
44. Robert Thorpe, *Letter to William Wilberforce, Vice-President of the African Institution*, pp. 23–6; 1827 Report of Commissioners of Inquiry, p. 54.
45. A favourite term used contemporarily by missionaries, traders, government officials, humanitarians, and others in relation to the "improvement" of West Africans (e.g. R. W. Hay to Commissioners of Inquiry, 18 Jan. 1826, *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*, "Papers related to liberated Africans located in the colony of Sierra Leone", 1826 (389) XXVI.371).
46. [African Institution], *Rules and Regulations of the African Institution formed on the 14th of April 1807* (London, 1807), pp. 27–8.
47. Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, p. 61.

48. McCarthy to Bathurst, 31 May 1816, NASL, Governor's Despatches to Secretary of State.
49. The CMS was founded in 1799 as the "Society for Missions to Africa and the East."
50. Jakobsson, *Am I Not . . . ?* pp. 122–66.
51. Jakobsson, *Am I Not . . . ?* pp. 140–1, 151–3. The CMS missionaries at the Rio Pongas also engaged for a time in the practice of "redeeming" children—that is, buying them out of slavery for the purposes of filling the mission school or "African seminary" and fulfilling the labour requirements of the mission station (*Proceedings of the CMS*, 1810 (London, 1810), p. 66.) Supporters of the CMS were invited to pay £10 for the redemption of one child, in return for which the benefactor would have the right to name them. Redemption was officially discontinued in 1813, although the practice continued intermittently in the field for some time thereafter. Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, p. 70; Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, p. 127. See also *Proceedings of the CMS*, 1815, pp. 541–8.
52. Jakobsson, *Am I Not . . . ?* pp. 146–66.
53. Maxwell to Bathurst, 23 Dec. 1814, TNA, CO 267/38. Pratt to Butscher, CMS, 16 May 1815, CA1/E4.
54. Referred to as the Captured Negro Department until 1822.
55. 1827 Report of Commissioners of Inquiry, p. 27.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
57. Reffell to village superintendents, 15 Aug. 1822, NASL, Liberated African Department Letterbook 1820–26.
58. 1827 Report of Commissioners of Inquiry, p. 27.
59. 1827 Report of Commissioners of Inquiry, pp. 27, 56–8; Hamilton, "Sierra Leone and the Liberated Africans", 7, p. 218; Spitzer, "Liberated Africans", p. 46.
60. Quoted in Spitzer, "Liberated Africans", p. 38. Emphasis mine.
61. McCarthy to Pratt and Bickersteth, 26 Nov. 1819, CMS, CA1/E8/74.
62. Bickersteth, quoted in Walker, *Church of England*, pp. 3–4. The italics are mine.
63. McCarthy to Bathurst, 31 May 1816, TNA, CO 267/42.
64. *Ibid.*
65. General Return of Slaves received into the Colony of Sierra Leone from 5 Jan. 1814 to 4 Jan. 1824, dated 10 Jan. 1825, TNA, CO 267/65.
66. Abstract Statement of the Expenditure in the Colony of Sierra Leone from the Year 1812 to 1825, TNA, CO 267/91; CO 267/46. Jakobsson, *Am I Not . . . ?* p. 206.
67. Abstract Statement of Expenditure in Sierra Leone, 1812–15, Commission of Inquiry, 1827, Evidence No. 1A, TNA, CO 267/91.
68. 1827 Report of Commissioners of Inquiry, p. 63.
69. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, p. 154.
70. Although commissioners in 1827 found that for want of suitable replacements, several missionaries had remained in their former functions.
71. McCarthy to Pratt, 29 June 1817, CA1/E6; McCarthy to Bickersteth, 20 June 1818, CMS, CA1/E7.
72. McCarthy to Bathurst, 14 Jan. 1822, TNA, CO267/56. Most of the CMS missionaries during this period were of German origin. 1827 Report of Commissioners, p. 64. Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, p. 100. McCarthy to Bathurst, 1 Apr. 1817, TNA, CO267/45.
73. Nyländer to Bickersteth, 3 March 1819, CA1/E7A/30; Nyländer report, 6 June 1819, Quarterly Meeting, CMS, CA1/E8/16.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Quoted in Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, p. 133.

76. Wenzel to Pratt, 22 Jul. 1816, CMS, CA1/E5/144 and 17 Oct. 1816, CA1/E5A/6.
77. Haensel to Pearson, 24 Nov. 1831, CMS, CA1/0108a/49.
78. 1827 Report of Commissioners, p. 54.
79. D. A. Coker to Ricketts, Waterloo 12 Aug. 1829, Local Letters Received 1823–29, NASL; Cole to Jones, 27 May 1830 and Cole to Gerber, 4 Nov. 1830, Liberated African Department Letterbook 1830–31, NASL; Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, pp. 167, 170–1, 186, 234–5; Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, pp. 102–3, 234–7.
80. Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, p. 63.
81. Bathurst to Pratt, 9 June 1824, TNA, CO268/20.
82. Turner to Bathurst, 18 Sept. 1825, TNA, CO267/66; Cole to village superintendents, 22 Oct. 1824, NASL, Liberated African Department Letterbook 1820–26.
83. Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, p.155, n. 8.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
85. Denham to Hay, 25 Apr. 1827, 4 Jul. 1827, TNA, CO267/83; Denham to Hay, 10 May 1828, TNA, CO323/151; Denham to Hay, 27 Aug. 1827, NASL, Liberated African Department Letterbook 1817–28.
86. Spitzer, “Liberated Africans”, Appendix I.
87. Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, pp. 158–61.
88. Bickersteth Report, *Missionary register*, No. 4, p. 403.
89. This was the expectation of those administering the system; this is not to suggest that it was the reality, nor to imply that there existed no African agency in resisting the will of the colonial government. The failure of the Liberated African villages to conform to British ideals is to no small degree testament to the endurance of a strong sense of individual and community agency among those resettled in Sierra Leone.
90. Denham to Lumley, 30 Sept. 1827, Liberated African Dept. Letterbook, 1827–8, NASL; Robert Thorpe, *Letter to William Wilberforce, Vice-President of the African Institution*, p. 23.
91. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, pp. 182–3; Stephen, “A History of the Settlement of Liberated Africans”, p. 31.
92. Charlesworth, *Africa’s Mountain Valley*, pp. 13–17.
93. Bickersteth Report, *Missionary Register*, No. 4, p. 403.
94. Charlesworth, *Africa’s Mountain Valley*, pp. 13–15.

3

Debating Slavery and Empire: The United States, Britain and the World's Anti-slavery Convention of 1840

Maurice Bric

Since the time of John Winthrop, some Americans have regarded themselves as blessed by Providence to develop an inspirational “city on a hill”. The promotion of the United States as an “asylum for liberty” reflects this mentality and especially during the nineteenth century led to an expressed interest in leading humankind towards a new “land of Canaan” on the shores of the western Atlantic.¹ This is not to suggest that Britain saw itself as the Old World antithesis of the United States. Britain too had been “singularly blessed by Providence”.² Moreover, as the two countries put the Anglo-American Revolution behind them, neither was willing to shed their assumed roles as “the standard bearers of human liberation” even if these aspirations were restricted in obvious ways.³ In the United States, the constitution did not empower African-Americans, indigenous peoples, or women at the federal level, while more generally, early-national Americans had only vague notions about “national” identity.⁴ In Britain, Catholic Emancipation (1829) and the reforms of 1832 also had their limits.⁵ However, even within such limits, these initiatives confronted some of the underlying assumptions of the British polity. Moreover, as Linda Colley points out, they gave “more orthodox Britons” a platform “to rebut American pretensions to superior freedoms” and to assert that, especially after the collapse of the Napoleonic regime, Britain still saw itself as the bellwether of “progress”.⁶ This became clear during the debates on the abolition of slavery which were also used by the two countries to emphasise that their respective societies represented the better way.⁷

In political terms, while much of the relevant debate was driven by the British Parliament and the United States Congress, it was also pursued in less conventional ways. The growing influence of the public sphere had been a feature of Anglo-American politics for a number of years. As Simon P. Newman observes of late eighteenth-century America,

what had made popular political culture so very important in the 1790s was the way in which ordinary Americans propelled the politics of the street into the mainstream of American politics, thereby renegotiating the political relationship between rulers and ruled by forever changing the very way in which Americans experienced and participated in politics.⁸

In Britain and Ireland, the parallel campaigns to repeal the Test and Corporation acts (achieved for Protestant Dissenters in 1828) and to secure Catholic Emancipation (1829) displayed a similar use of public pressure groups to pursue their goals outside as well as inside Parliament. Indeed, the evolution of such a dynamic phenomenon suggested a certain lack of faith that Parliament could resolve the relevant issues at all. As such, the mass movements of “popular” politics could continue to be the moral arbiter of the good of all of the people, whoever they were, wherever they lived, whatever their grievances were, and whether or not they could vote. The Irish Catholic leader Daniel O’Connell understood this and that if Parliament was compromised in this regard, the people might reject it altogether as a “corrupt” place, or construct an alternative system of authority. Indeed, Parliament’s failure to address fundamental social and agrarian grievances in Ireland had already led to the appearance of popular protest movements there with their own system of “constitutions”, “laws”, procedures, and “armies”, which “combined” to articulate another and, for many, a more congenial system of moral authority.⁹

Contemporary America spawned comparable networks—and for similar reasons. However, although abolitionism, for example, was not usually driven by the type of violence that characterized protest in early nineteenth-century Ireland, it challenged a Congress which seemed neither willing nor able to address slavery. As a result, some congressmen saw the movement as intruding on their own role as elected legislators, and this was reflected in Congress’s decision in 1835 to adopt a “gag rule” on anti-slavery petitions. However, at least as the Whigs saw it, Congress was also “depriv[ing] the people of this country of rights most sacredly guaranteed by the Constitution” and, by extension, it had discredited its utility as an altruistic catalyst for reform. Indeed, William Freehling suggests that the “gag rule” so compromised the ability of Congress to address slavery that it made civil war unavoidable in the United States.¹⁰ In 1829 O’Connell issued similar warnings to convince a hesitant Duke of Wellington to support Catholic Emancipation, although in doing so he was less moved by a sense of the apocalypse than by a concern to promote what Charles Tilly calls the “parliamentarianization” of the people and by doing so to underline the integrity of Parliament as well as its ability to consider all causes.¹¹

The reformist credentials of Congress and Parliament could also be tested on international forums. At the time (post-war negotiations apart), international gatherings were rarely convened to discuss matters of contemporary

concern. At best they were regarded as a criticism of individual nations about how they were addressing such issues. At worst they smacked of a type of conspiracy which might undermine the integrity of the state, as had been the case during the 1790s, for example, when the international discourse of “republican brotherhood” was often seen less as an altruism to promote “universal liberty” than as a threat to established institutions.¹² If an issue crossed international boundaries, conventional wisdom advised that diplomats should address it: that was their *raison d’être*. Even allowing for the importance of “informal” as well as “formal” networks within the re-emerging British Empire, international discussions were not for others, however well-motivated or informed they might be.¹³

It was against this background that the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention met in London in June 1840 to focus on an issue which greatly concerned both Britain and the United States. It would also reflect on the covert debate within the Anglo-American world about who would be the more effective leader in resolving the issue. In 1834, a year after Parliament had passed its own Emancipation Act for its colonies in the West Indies, *The Abolitionist* observed in its very first issue that

The people of England stand on a proud eminence... They can now consistently bring the moral influence with which they are invested, to bear on those nations which may still persist in perpetrating a similar crime, and demand in the name of... outraged humanity, the universal recognition of the rights of man.¹⁴

This was a challenge which might be dismissed or debated. Either way, the convention was the place to deal with it although, as it did so, the language was variously drawn from Christianity, imperialism and the debates on the efficiency of free labour.

Over its nine sitting days, the convention attracted more than 500 delegates, the majority from the United States and Britain, as well as some 5,000 casual visitors.¹⁵ It was an impressive gathering not least because it brought together eminent reformers who had long been “familiar and dear” to one another.¹⁶ These included Daniel O’Connell, who represented abolitionist societies in Dublin and Glasgow, a number of other MPs, and leading reformers, such as Joseph Sturge (Birmingham and Glasgow), William Lloyd Garrison (Massachusetts), and Lucretia Mott from Philadelphia. While on one level their meeting would highlight issues of human rights in objective and detailed terms, on another it would seek to formulate an international process “to deliberate on the best means of promoting the interests of the Slave; of obtaining his immediate and unconditional freedom; and, by every pacific measure, to hasten the utter extinction of the Slave-Trade” throughout the world.¹⁷ As one contemporary newspaper put it,

For the first time the universe of nations . . . met by their delegates to represent the universe of man . . . The principle of unrestricted, universal, all-comprehensive benevolence, had brought them together, to strengthen each other in the support and diffusion of human rights.¹⁸

While slavery was recognized as an issue which transcended national boundaries, it was inevitable that the convention would challenge how it was being addressed at the national level. Since Britain had been encouraging multilateral action to suppress the slave trade, whereas the United States preferred to act on its own, it was also inevitable that motions at the convention would be sensitive. Yet the overall case was put by William Ellery Channing, the United States' leading Unitarian preacher at the time:

this is the first instance of the meeting of the friends of humanity from different countries, for purely philanthropic purposes. I see in it the sign of a new era . . . Great men, as they are called, have seldom been moved by a higher impulse, than a narrow, unjust patriotism. It is time, that the principles of universal justice and love should be recognized as the lawful sovereigns of the world.¹⁹

To this extent, the convention suggests that at least as defined by this issue, the "pursuit of modernity" should not remain the preserve of any one nation, however admired its past, however benign its process of re-invention, and however presumptuous it might be about its future. As the relevant debates unfolded, a number of issues obliged delegates to defend their own countries, as well as their respective records on reform in general and on slavery in particular. As a result, the convention had to deal with tensions between delegates of differing national origin, as well as how these should be balanced with the commitment to the universal character of those humanitarian issues which had brought them to London in the first place.

As the convention opened in the Masonic Hall on 12 June 1840, the status of female delegates threatened to paralyse the proceedings. This became an issue after the organisers, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS), indicated that they would not recognize the credentials of eight women who had been mandated to represent anti-slavery societies in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. While some accepted that women were playing influential roles in the abolitionist movement, most did not agree that they should have a wider representational or "public character". Thomas Clarkson, the venerable president of the convention, made the counter-argument that the role of women in civic society had been changing. Within the Society of Friends, for example, women were believed

to have adequate capacity, and to be capable of great usefulness[;] they [Quakers] have admitted them to a share in the administration of almost all the offices which belong to their religious discipline; so

that, independent of their private, they have a public character, like the men . . . No distinction is made as to the powers of usefulness between the men and women of this society.²⁰

Such views were not widely shared in Britain. In the United States, they had already caused an acrimonious split in the anti-slavery movement, pitting more radical abolitionists in Boston and Philadelphia against their more conservative colleagues in New York. When in May 1839 the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) elected four women to its executive committee, New York's Lewis Tappan suggested that this was "contrary to the usages of civilized society". He then proceeded to establish his own American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (AFASS) in April 1840 to focus exclusively on the abolition of slavery rather than advocate civil and political rights for women.²¹

While the AASS was disenchanted by the ways in which it was being restricted in the United States, it looked to the London convention to present reform in broader terms. It was to be disappointed here also. As Garrison later put it to the Glasgow Emancipation Society, the BFASS had wrongly decided that to admit women as full delegates would be "contrary to the usages, and repugnant to the principles and feelings of British Abolitionists, and of all others throughout the civilized world, with the exception of a handful in this country".²² For Philadelphia's Sarah Pugh, president of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society and one of those who were not recognized, it would have suggested that women could be "coequals [with men] in the advocacy of universal liberty". For the BFASS, making public speeches, and representing or voting for what was best for society, was not part of their "sphere".²³

After the BFASS decision, as the female delegates and their supporters withdrew to the hall's outlying galleries to "observe" the proceedings of the convention, the place of Britain as an actor in advancing reform had been compromised by a pride in its own prejudices.²⁴ In contrast, although O'Connell had initially harboured some misgivings about seating the female delegates, he soon became an active supporter. Writing to Lucretia Mott in September 1840, he explained why: "the American ladies have persevered in our holy cause, amidst difficulties and dangers, with the zeal of confessors, and the firmness of martyrs".²⁵ However, Captain Wauchope RN (Carlisle) made a point that was shared by many British delegates:

the [American] ladies . . . do not fully comprehend the feelings of this country on the subject . . . our American friends are violating the feelings of the country in which they are now assembled.

The London convention did not confront these underlying assumptions of contemporary social and political behaviour. As a result, for some it reduced

the role of Britain as a benevolent reference for reform to one which was being driven by the narrower character of its own polity. It is also clear that as Duncan S. Bell suggests, “theories of progress became more triumphalist and less capable of accommodating cultural difference”, not least when slavery came to be discussed on the floor of the Masonic Hall.²⁶

While the debates about slavery were not unfamiliar, they were presented with new force. In general terms, it was argued that wherever it was allowed to exist, slavery ignored the humanity of the individual, invaded human rights and liberties, enforced unremunerated labour, and subjected people to arbitrary use. In short, it forced the slave “off the common level of humanity... [and did] not allow him to stand in the same relation to society as others, nor to live under the same laws”. Slavery was also “sinful” and violated the “sacredness” of “man” whom God had created in His own image. As Reverend Benjamin Godwin, a Baptist minister from Bradford and author of *Lectures on Slavery* (1830), put it,

There is something sacred about man—he is God’s creature, stamped with his image, and endowed with his immortality; and to deprive such a being of the rights of humanity, to reduce him as far as possible to the level of the brute creation, and thus to stunt his intellectual growth, obstruct his social sympathies, depress his lofty aspirations, and stand between him and the very end of his being, is not only to insult our Master by wronging his creatures, but is to invade his prerogative, by the assumption of dominion and authority which belong to Him alone.

Put in these terms, Godwin argued that slavery was incompatible with Christianity and that as a result, if the convention’s delegates were true to their own Christianity, they must denounce slavery.²⁷ As Reverend John Angell James, a well-known Congregational preacher from Birmingham, maintained during the same debate, this was all the more important because slavery was essentially “a moral question”. Thus, while the convention initially focused on slavery as an issue of political and humanitarian concern, its debates inevitably led it to question how Christian churches could act as disinterested arbiters of what was honourable and moral in society at large if they were not willing to condemn slavery.²⁸ Godwin and James were also concerned that if these churches did not embrace reform, it might encourage a type of secularized rhetoric which would undermine what for them was the essential basis of contemporary morality—Christianity—and consign it to irrelevance outside its own walls. To this extent, whether intended or not, the debates of the convention went beyond their stated concerns and inadvertently became a yardstick by which some churches might be presented as being “more Christian” and—by extension—“more moral” than others.²⁹

Especially after the Emancipation Act was passed in 1833, most English churchmen saw themselves on the side of the angels—unlike some churches

in the United States, which were presented as being a “bulwark” for slavery.³⁰ As a result, the convention was urged to agree that anybody who tolerated slavery—for whatever reason—should be expelled from their respective churches. Given the international environment in which they were meeting, it was ironic that in reply, American delegates were sometimes forced to defend themselves as Americans and to suggest that in certain parts of their country, slavery had often provided a benevolent support for African-Americans who might otherwise have been neglected. In their view, to argue otherwise was to display an ignorance of other places and other churches. William Dawes (Ohio) may have had this in mind when he observed that “so far as the question before you relates to *my country*, it imposes the necessity of defining what Christianity is”.³¹ Although some delegates complained that they were weary from theological discussion, they realized that it did raise a fundamental question: why was the convention taking it upon itself to judge who was the more “moral”? The extended point was even more unsettling: on what basis was the convention presuming to dictate to individual churches? While such concerns were shared by some British delegates, many Americans felt that they were being patronized from the moral high ground of a country that had recently abolished slavery in the West Indies. To some controversy and personal recrimination, George Bradburn (Massachusetts), among others, also suggested that while British abolitionists said one thing in Britain, they

left their abolitionism at home going to America; or have been induced by their brethren on the other side of the water [America], to keep quiet on the subject . . . you cannot, therefore, I am sorry to say, boast that the hands of your own clergy are free from the stain of slavery.³²

Although the convention decided to “recommend” rather than “dictate” that slavery was sinful and inconsistent with Christianity, the debate left a sour taste in many American mouths.³³

In legal and constitutional terms, slavery was more plainly presented as a “foul blot” on the United States. While apologists argued that slavery was constitutionally a matter for each individual state and not for Congress, their opponents pointed to the District of Columbia (over which Congress had jurisdiction), which not only contained several thousand slaves but also allowed slave trafficking to continue. Even if one accepted that slaves were a type of property and, as such, beyond legislative interference, convention delegates also argued that Congress could control the movement of slaves by virtue of its stated powers to regulate interstate commerce.³⁴ A more subtle point was made by Daniel O’Connell. He recalled how, in 1839, Congress (under the influence of southern planters) had demanded compensation from Britain after Bermuda refused to repatriate American slaves who had been shipwrecked there. For O’Connell the point was clear. As slavery was

no longer legal in the West Indies, the American slaves had been emancipated “by force of English law” in Bermuda. As a result, the question of compensation did not arise:

a property in man... is inconsistent with, not only all constitutional law—and [the American]... constitution above all—but with the external principles of justice... There is now no such thing known to the British law as that one might have a property in his fellow-man... it was totally inconsistent with our laws.³⁵

By “external principles of justice”, O’Connell meant what in later generations would become more familiar: that there were certain matters which transcended national jurisdictions and, on this point, Britain rather than the United States was setting the agenda. Reflecting Justice Joseph Story’s decision in *The United States v. La Jeune Eugénie* (1822), he also maintained that “Those who uphold slavery are not men as we are, they are not honest as we are.”³⁶ More dramatically, O’Connell had already made a similar point when he accused Andrew Stevenson, the United States minister in London (1833–41), of being a “slavebreeder”. Although O’Connell was challenged to a duel as a result of his reflections on Stevenson’s personal honour, his views on the minister were beyond the personal. On 15 June 1840, he told the convention that he would

denounce and anathematize them [“Americans”] as slave-holders, and hold them up to the scorn of all civilized Europe... I would [urge] that the Government of this country would determine to have no dealings with him [Stevenson], and to tell the United States of America that they must send no more slave-holding negotiators here.

A few years earlier, he had made his point in even more provocative terms. O’Connell suggested that as a slave-owner, Stevenson was “not within the pale of civilization or Christianity”.³⁷ There spoke a man who, for all his criticisms of the British Empire, still saw it as the template of progress and the epitome of a renewed civilization.

The convention also discussed how slavery and abolitionism were presented in the printed media. Inevitably, the southern states of America attracted predictable charges that publications and plays which were critical of slavery were censored there. While this was often true, the convention suggested that British publications were more benign and that, as a result, they might be used to counter the inhospitality of such American editors. This point was especially directed towards liberal periodicals, such as the *Edinburgh Review*, which were encouraged to promote themselves among American readers. Because such publications were supported by subscription and, as such, would have committed and regular readers, the argument was

that they would have an independence to publish what they wanted without being censored in the manner of American newspapers. The president of the AASS, Henry B. Stanton (New York City), also noted the popularity of British novelists in the United States and argued that such writers should “saturate their literature with abolition principles”. As a result, British publications would enable abolitionism to “reach the ears of men whom the voice of the Abolitionists cannot reach”. However, the wider point was also clear: that in any event, it was “the duty of British Abolitionists, individually as well as collectively”, to engage with the debate on slavery in the United States and, by doing so, to educate ordinary Americans to save themselves from themselves.³⁸ No less than in the area of religion, in literature Britain usually viewed itself on the side of the righteous.

This belief was highlighted after slavery was abolished in the West Indies in 1833. While emancipation had its critics—even at the convention—on 19 June 1840, O’Connell suggested that “when emancipation was granted, massacre, there was none; outrage, there was none; violation of property, there was none; no mischief, no evil, no injury to a human being; peace, quiet, contentment, religious feeling, morality, were the consequences of that great measure”. While this point may have been made more with Ireland than the West Indies in mind, for the purpose of the debate at the convention, O’Connell was touting emancipation as “a great and majestic act... of the utmost value to humanity” which had been achieved without bloodshed or challenge to the established body politic. A resolution put to the convention on 15 June 1840 made the wider point: “the successful results of the West India experiment... [should] spread before the American public evidence of the deep indignation of the civilized world against a slaveholding republic.”³⁹ As a result, the United States was encouraged not only to emulate Britain in abolishing slavery but, by doing so, to become a more “civilized” place in the process.

For many British abolitionists, one indication of a “civilized” culture was free labour and its presumed role in ensuring a more productive economy. The links between economic efficiency and “civilization” were long established as underpinning the theory of empire. Set in this context, the debate about the productivity of free as opposed to slave labour had become part of the wider rhetoric of re-inventing empire in the nineteenth century and of casting those who disagreed with the former as the neanderthals—the contemporary equivalents of the “barbarians” of Tudor and Stuart writing on the subject. In this connection, Christopher L. Brown’s observation is *a propos*: while British abolitionists may have accepted that slavery was morally wrong, “The real burden lay in rethinking the relationship between empire and coerced labor, disassociating the institution of slavery from prevailing assumptions about the purposes of empire, and developing practical, attainable, compelling alternatives.”⁴⁰ Although Brown’s comment relates to the “first” empire, the stated challenge was no less true in formulating

the “second”. However, as a catalyst for such reflections, the debate on free labour was more contentious as indeed it became in subsequent historiography.⁴¹

While to varying degrees all of the delegates at the convention regarded slavery as unacceptable in any event, their Committee on Free Labour reported on 19 June 1840 that an economy which was driven by free rather than slave labour was more “beneficial”, profitable and efficient. Among others, David Turnbull, an honorary corresponding member who had visited Cuba in 1839, argued that

by identifying the interest of the labourer with that of the proprietor of the soil, that the West India colonies are hereafter to be rendered far more prosperous and productive, under a system of voluntary labour, than ever they have been under the influence of the lash. The negro would be inspired by a feeling of a common interest, to promote the prosperity or his master, and would thus himself become strongly and sincerely attached to the soil.⁴²

Put in purely economic terms, some delegates disagreed, not least those Americans who understood that the dramatic growth of the cotton industry had cemented slavery as a foundation of their southern states. However, there was also disagreement among British delegates, especially when it came to the type of argument which George Thompson (Edinburgh and Glasgow) had made during the earlier debate on shunning slaveholding Christians: “Slavery has been denounced by thousands, and yet the slaveholders have continued to forge fetters, and rivet them on the limbs of those within their power. Let us quit then the world of abstraction, and come to plain practical terms and purposes.” Thus, as he saw it, the convention should boycott all goods that were produced by slave labour or, at the very least, urge that punitive import duties should be placed on them.⁴³

However, in arguing that “supplanting slave-grown cotton in the European market, [would] lead to the extinction of American slavery,” there were also less altruistic motives at work if only because a stated preference for goods produced in India would inevitably promote the British economy at the expense of that of the southern states of America. Thus, the leading American abolitionist, Wendell Phillips (Massachusetts), observed that

if we can put into the market an article that will drive the American cotton out, we shall uproot the firmest foundations of the slave system in America. In regard to our northern states . . . it was the unprofitableness of slavery, and not principle, that led to its gradual extinction.⁴⁴

However, Phillips’ remark—and in particular his reference to the northern states of his own country—is a reminder that such reflections were not

exclusively British. They also suggested the ways in which the respective economic interests of the northern and southern states were promoted abroad, especially in Britain. Minister Andrew Stevenson was later taken to task on this very point. At an anti-Corn Law meeting, he had presumed to support the laws which were, as one correspondent put it,

against the interests of the northern States, in advocating a tariff on grain which virtually excludes that staple of northern produce from the English market! While patriotic men of all parties, in this country, have been looking anxiously forward to the repeal of those laws, and calculating, in that event, on the proper adjustment of the balance of trade with England by the increased exportation of northern grain, they unexpectedly meet a fierce and powerful opponent in the representative of the U. S. in England... [who wants only] to increase the comparative importance of the southern States by depressing the northern.⁴⁵

However, something had to be put in place of United States cotton. The answer lay in Indian-grown cotton, which, it was argued, was of higher quality and could be grown more cheaply than its American equivalent.

As some delegates made this point in shamelessly selfish terms, the riposte was also of a type. For example, on 20 June 1840, Seth Sprague, a leading Methodist abolitionist from Massachusetts and a member of the legislature of that state, told the convention that

It is natural enough and right enough, that the British public should seek their own aggrandisement; but as abolitionists, you will gain no credit in America for this movement. It will be thrown in our teeth, that we have chimed in here with the British nation and the East India Company... I am an American citizen; that country I love, and to it I owe allegiance.

Others were disheartened by the intrusion of "patriotism" into their debates as well as by the apparent stress on economic concerns, so that, as Reverend John Keep (Ohio) saw it, the convention had "in some degree lost sight of the majesty of moral influence, and have thereby given undue weight to commercial and political views". However, while it was all very well to articulate what one delegate called "the high ground of principle", the debate about free labour brought together a number of factors.⁴⁶ Whether a boycott should be implemented for economic rather than for moral reasons was less important than the presumption that it would undermine slavery—in India and its dependencies, as well as in the United States.

The convention also highlighted a number of other issues which were relevant to the ongoing debate about empire. First, it was argued that if American produce was to be excluded from Britain, Indian cotton could

provide for the empire's needs and that, in any event, this would underpin the empire's growing prosperity. The potential for the produce of the empire in Britain and its satellites would be enough to convince British-based merchants and investors (especially in Liverpool and Manchester) to cease trading in slaves and slave-produced goods.⁴⁷ Second, given that many of Britain's external commercial links continued to be shaped by what had been put in place before 1776, some delegates wondered why these older networks in general and American cotton in particular should continue to be given preferential access to British markets after the United States had chosen to leave the British Empire in 1783.⁴⁸ Given the looming importance of India, these believed that Britain need not draw on raw materials from the United States to drive its textile industry. It now had those resources—raw as well as finished—within its own empire, and these could be used for both the economic and the social advancement of its peoples.⁴⁹ Third, it was argued that re-fashioned commercial networks would also lead to the demise of slavery in the East Indies. To this extent, humanitarianism would happily coincide with capitalism. It would also characterize the Second British Empire in a peculiarly altruistic way while the United States would remain burdened by its past and imprisoned by its history. As O'Connell put it, "the flag of our queen [should] wave over none but freemen".⁵⁰

Although O'Connell's views on slavery were well known, he was less successful in bringing Irish-Americans to his point of view. He had given a powerful address on the opening day of the convention. However, James Fuller, a Bristol-born Quaker who had emigrated to the United States, suggested that O'Connell

could do more to put down slavery in America than the Convention can effect. Some of our Irish brethren there, are the principal supporters of slavery, and if he would issue an address to them we should soon have powerful coadjutors. I hope he will do something of that kind.

As a matter of fact, for at least 15 years, O'Connell had been speaking out against American slavery as "a high crime against Heaven".⁵¹ He had also contributed to the debates about slavery and apprenticeship in the West Indies, and famously announced to the convention that he would "recognize no American as a fellow-man, except those who belong to Anti-Slavery Societies". These speeches had been applauded and celebrated. After all, as Bradburn put it, "the world is his country; all mankind are his countrymen". However, O'Connell's perceived failure to bring Irish-American opinion with him was often seen as a sign of reticence to confront his cousins on the other side of the Atlantic. Should this continue, at least as Fuller saw it, it would compromise the ability of the convention to implement its findings. As a result, O'Connell felt obliged to tell the convention on its very first day that before they adjourned, he would have prepared an appropriate address to

Irish-America and would seek the opinions of Fuller and other American delegates on it. Five days later, Richard Allen (Dublin) re-inforced the potential importance of his offer: "If the Convention aids us in disseminating a right anti-slavery spirit in Ireland, it will exercise a powerful influence in assisting our American friends in abolishing slavery."⁵²

When O'Connell's *Address from the People of Ireland to their Countrymen and Countrywomen in America* was eventually drawn up, it was signed by some 60,000 people. It also left nobody in any doubt that O'Connell regarded slavery as "the most tremendous invasion of the natural, inalienable rights of man" and that "the star-spangled banner . . . [was] stained with the deep, foul blot of human blood". Irish-Americans were greatly offended by such remarks about their adopted country and, over the following three years, most of them withdrew their support for O'Connell's campaign to repeal the Act of Union between Britain and Ireland. It was not that they disagreed with Repeal. However, they believed that their actions or attitudes should not be dictated by agencies outside the United States. If Repealers in Ireland were not happy with this, their American colleagues would—and eventually did—withdraw their support from them. This was not an expression of pique. John Tucker of Boston's Repeal Association made the relevant point in November 1843: "Irish-Americans were ruled neither from Rome nor home."⁵³ While Tucker's observation was motivated by domestic circumstances in the United States, it was also a prescient challenge from a diaspora which had long spanned the Anglo-American world, the changing nature of which was not fully appreciated at the convention; neither were the ways in which this diaspora would ultimately transform the "informal" cultures of the polity on both sides of the Atlantic. As a reality, no less than with Anglo-America, and the supposed universality of its traditions to the contrary, the convention had provoked what many already knew: that Irish-America was the sum of two halves.

As the convention moved to its conclusion, for some Americans, the debates had already suggested that their country had become an "unchristian" place and, as such, one which no longer possessed the moral mettle to mediate, much less to inspire, the course of human progress. The convention had reflected on the country of the United States rather than on the issue of slavery. As a result, nobody should have been surprised that some Americans felt that they had been "placed in circumstances most deeply humiliating; we have been obliged to contrast American shame with British glory . . . [and] to speak of the *vices*, not the *virtues* of the country". After all, as Bradburn reminded his audience, "Americans, like those of other nations, have their national pride, and their national prejudices." Moreover, there was a sense that

Those who have spoken upon the affairs of America, have dwelt on the dark side of the picture . . . But there is also a bright side of the picture.

There has been a great change brought about in the public sentiment of America relative to slavery.

While Reverend Elon Galusha (American Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention, New York) admitted that slavery was “the most odious” aspect of the “American character”, it was only part of the story. In any event, he suggested that the convention should have concerns other than making “indecorous” criticisms of the United States. Moreover, most Americans felt that Britain was far from being virtuous in this matter and pointed to the continuing existence of slavery in the East Indies. While on 13 June 1840 William Adam addressed the circumstances of slavery in a separate paper to the convention, Phillips was not alone in believing that the BFASS had downplayed this particular chapter of slavery and that it had kept it “sedulously back, and carefully excluded from the place and space which its importance demanded . . . thus reducing the meeting to pupillage”.⁵⁴

The jockeying between British and American delegates to become the leading voices of abolitionism was also revealed in the discussions about where their next meeting should be held. Given what had already transpired at the convention, this was a sensitive issue. Although Fuller stated that delegates who attended the convention had done so “without distinction of country”, it was clear from what had already transpired that this was not always appreciated. It was also reflected in the suggestion that American delegates should meet as a separate group to consider whether the next convention should be held in the United States.⁵⁵ Although such a proposal was widely canvassed, the decision to hold the next meeting in London effectively ended the possibility that the convention would produce a “plan of co-operation among all the abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic”. This was underlined by the decision of the convention that its representations to foreign governments should be processed through the British Foreign Office on the grounds that it would be “presumptuous” for the convention itself to do so. Moreover, although the delegates had agreed addresses to Ali Pacha, it also asked Lord Palmerston to use his “high authority for connecting the overthrow of slavery with the consolidation of peace” and, in particular, to use “the friendly interposition of Great Britain” with the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁶

Such procedures effectively ended any hope that the convention would evolve at one remove from the British government and, as such, as a non-national platform to promote the abolition of slavery. O’Connell might have satisfied himself that in Britain “Abolitionists were in safety, and more honoured for their exertions by the good . . . But far different was it with their friends in America; there they were vilified and insulted.”⁵⁷ However, as Phillips ruefully put it, the convention

[had] persisted in giving an exclusively *English* character to the meeting, and interpreting the terms of their invitation by English usages . . . we

[had] come to an *English* meeting—[and] he [would] wholly refuse to have a *World's* Convention measured by an English yardstick.⁵⁸

Its refusal to include a formal protest about the failure to seat female delegates underlined this. As a result, Bradburn suggested that it was a misnomer to describe their meeting as a “World’s Convention”. Was it right, he continued,

to set up the customs and habits, not to say prejudices, of Englishmen, as a standard, for the government . . . of Americans and of persons belonging to several other independent nations?⁵⁹

Thus, while the convention had given some of the leading reformers of the day the chance to reflect on the moral basis of progress, it had been tainted by the virus of nationalism. However, it had also challenged the pretensions of both the celebrated American republic and the reinvented British Empire to be a “new Rome”. To the extent that during the 1840s this challenge would provoke as much difference as agreement, the convention proved to be more than a mere meeting of like-minded individuals.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to William Mulligan, Christopher Prior, and, in particular, to my former colleague, David Noel Doyle, for their critical comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

Notes

1. Oscar Handlin, ed., *American Principles and Issues: The National Purpose* (New York, 1961), p. 33; Marilyn C. Baseler, *‘Asylum for Mankind’: America 1607–1800* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), p. 318; Maurice J. Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia and the Re-Invention of America, 1760–1800* (Dublin, 2008), p. 22.
2. Cited in John P. Halsted, *The Second British Empire: Trade, Philanthropy, and Good Government, 1820–1890* (Westport, CT, 2000), p. 22; Maxine Berg, “Progress and providence in early nineteenth-century political economy”, *Social History* 15, 3 (1990), pp. 365–75.
3. Matthew Mason, “The battle of the slaveholding liberators: Great Britain, the United States, and slavery in the early nineteenth century”, *William and Mary Quarterly (WMQ)*, 3rd Series, 69, 3 (2002), p. 665; see Ronald Hyam’s argument that at this time the history of Britain “as an imperial power can only be written in the light of the challenge of the United States”, *Britain’s Imperial Century, 1815–1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (London, 1993), p. 2.
4. John Murrin, “A roof without walls: The dilemma of American national identity”, in Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein and Edward C. Carter II, eds, *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1987), pp. 333–48.

5. Martin McElroy, "The impact of the parliamentary elections (Ireland) Act (1829) on the Irish Electorate, c1829-32," in Alan Blackstock and Eoin Magennis, eds., *Politics and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland 1750-1850* (Belfast, 2007), p. 25; John A. Phillips and Charles Wetherell, "The First Reform Act of 1832 and the political modernization of England", *American Historical Review*, 100, 2 (1995), pp. 411-36.
6. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London, 1994), pp. 354, 324-63; David Eastwood, "The age of uncertainty: Britain in the early-nineteenth century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 8 (1998), p. 105; Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago, 1979); Robin W. Winks, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Historiography* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 6-9.
7. Andrew Porter, *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999).
8. Simon P. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street* (Philadelphia, PA, 1997), p. 192; Bric, *Re-Invention of America*, chapters 4 and 5.
9. James S. Donnelly, Jr., *Captain Rock* (Madison, WI and Cork, 2010).
10. William Freehling, *Road to Disunion* (New York, 1990). The Whig comment is quoted from Johann N. Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners: Democracy and Civil Society in Early National Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA, 2008), p. 168.
11. Charles Tilly, "Parliamentarianization of popular culture in Great Britain, 1758-1834", *Theory and Society*, 26, 2/3 (1997), pp. 245-73; Paul A. Pickering, "And your petitioners &c': chartist petitioning in popular politics, 1838-48", *English Historical Review*, 116, 466 (2001), pp. 368-88, especially 374-5.
12. Bric, *Re-Invention of America*, pp. 222-43; Seymour Drescher, "Whose abolition? Popular pressure and the ending of the British slave trade", *Past and Present*, 143 (1994), p. 140.
13. Andrew Porter, "Introduction," in *Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, pp. 8-9.
14. Quoted in Howard Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery 1833-1870* (London, 1972), p. 25; Colley, *Britons*, pp. 324, 356-58; Srividhya Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade: The Rhetoric of British National Identity, 1759-1815* (Burlington, VT, 2009).
15. Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (New York, 2009), p. 267; Douglas H. Maynard, "The world's anti-slavery convention of 1840", *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 47, 3 (1960), pp. 452-71; Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists, An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh, 1974); Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery*, pp. 85-92.
16. Wendell Phillips to [Oliver] Johnson, Jun. 1840, as published in the *National Anti Slavery Standard* (NASS), 30 Jul. 1840.
17. *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention, Called by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and Held in London from Friday, June 12th, to Tuesday, June 23rd, 1840* (London, 1841), p. 31, hereafter cited as *Proceedings*. Most delegates had been elected by their individual societies, although some were also affiliated on a dual basis. A smaller number represented various churches (all non-conformist) or attended the convention as invited "experts". This allowed for the recognition of 16 MPs, as well as others who had written about or observed slavery at first hand in various parts of the world. Whatever the basis on which they attended the convention, speakers have been identified as such in this paper.
18. The *Leicester Mercury* (June 1840) is quoted from the NASS, 6 Aug. 1840.

19. Channing to James G. Birney (New York City), dated Boston, 26 Apr. 1840, as published in *Proceedings*, 97.
20. Quoted in "The Woman Question in England" in *NASS*, 6 Aug. 1840; Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery* (London, 1992); Kathryn Kish Sklar, "'Women who speak for an entire nation': American and British women compared at the world anti-slavery convention, London, 1840", *Pacific Historical Review*, 59 (1990), pp. 467–8.
21. *The Religious Monitor*, 17 (Philadelphia, PA, 1840–41), p. 88. His comment was listed among four reasons he gave for withdrawing from the AASS after Abbey Kelly was elected to its committee. For the place of women in contemporary American society, see Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism* (Chicago, 1989), pp. 39–77; Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830* (Baltimore, MD, 1976), pp. 3–18.
22. *NASS*, 10 Sept. 1840.
23. *NASS*, 22 Oct. 1840. Ira V. Brown, "Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833–1840", *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 102, 2 (1978), pp. 143–66; Edward T. James, ed., *Notable American Women, 1697–1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1971), ii, pp. 91–2.
24. Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 154–77; Maurice J. Bric, "Daniel O'Connell and the debate on anti-slavery, 1820–50," in Tom Dunne and Laurence M. Geary, eds., *History an the Public Sphere: Essays in Honour of John A. Murphy* (Cork, 2005), pp. 75–6.
25. Bric, "Daniel O'Connell and the debate on anti-slavery", pp. 75–6; Jacqueline Van Voris, ed., "Daniel O'Connell and women's rights, one letter", *Eire-Ireland*, 17, 3 (1982), pp. 35–9.
26. *Proceedings*, p. 40; D. S. Bell, "Empire and international relations in Victorian political thought", *The Historical Journal*, 49, 1 (2006), p. 284.
27. *Proceedings*, pp. 49, 51.
28. *Proceedings*, p. 70. Linking Christianity with "morality", Clarkson had also argued on the opening day of the convention that "planters in the southern parts of the United States... [have no] sense of religion"; *Ibid.*, 3.
29. Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795–1865* (New York, 1988); G. C. Lillibridge, *Beacon of Freedom* (New York, 1961). I am grateful to David Noel Doyle for this reference.
30. James Birney, *The American Churches: The Bulwarks of American Slavery* (London, 1840); Maynard, "Anti-Slavery Convention", p. 470; Larry B. Tise, *Pro-Slavery: A History of the Defence of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athena, GA, 1987), pp. 116–20, 124–79.
31. *Proceedings*, p. 69.
32. *Proceedings*, p. 133. Garrison made similar comments at the second anniversary meeting of the BFASS on 24 Jun. 1840 (*NASS*, 30 Jul. 1840), as did O'Connell; see his letter to Lucretia Mott, London, 20 Jun. 1840, as published in *The Liberator*, 4 Sept. 1840.
33. *Proceedings*, p. 58 and pp. 47–76.
34. *Proceedings*, p. 117.
35. *Proceedings*, pp. 109 (Birney) and 112 (O'Connell). Angela Murphy, *American Slavery: Irish Freedom: Abolition, Immigrant Citizenship and the Transatlantic Movement for Irish Repeal* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2010), pp. 38–9, 236, n. 8.
36. *Proceedings*, p. 115. In *The United States v. La Jeune Eugénie*, Story refused to allow compensation for a slaver which had been seized off the coast of Africa in 1819

despite the fact that the vessel had been registered in Gaudaloupe and had been sailing under the French flag at the time. Story drew on the arguments of natural law to conclude that slavery was "a breach of all the moral duties, of all the maxims of justice, mercy and humanity, and of the admitted rights which Christian nations now hold sacred in their intercourse with each other." He also stated: "the African slave trade was contrary to the Law of Nations, and that unless the municipal law of France [had] authorized it, the owner of a French ship could not, in American courts, vindicate any title to the ownership of such ship, if engaged in the slave trade". Although Chief Justice Marshall overruled Story's decision in 1825 on the basis that the custom and "law of the country where it is used" had precedence, Story's opinion had great influence on legal argument on slavery, even if most judges continued to be very conservative on the issue; see H. L. Pohlman, ed., *The Political Thought and the American Judiciary* (Amherst, 1993), pp. 26–9; W. W. Story, *Life and Letters of Joseph Story* (Boston, MA, 1851), p. 431; William M. Wiecek, "Slavery and abolition before the supreme court, 1820–1860", *The Journal of American History*, 65, 1 (1978), pp. 34–59. I am grateful to David Noel Doyle for bringing this case to my attention.

37. *Proceedings*, p. 117, NASS, 30 Jul. 1840. See also Howard Temperley, "The O'Connell-Stevenson *Contretemps*: a reflection of the Anglo-American slavery issue", *Journal of Negro History (JNH)*, 47 (1962), pp. 217–33.
38. *Proceedings*, pp. 121, 126. For allegations of censorship, see Stanton's comments in *Proceedings*, pp. 124–6 and Robert Trendel, "The expurgation of antislavery materials by American presses," *JNH*, 58 (3) (July 1973), p. 286.
39. *Proceedings*, pp. 381, 11. The final quotation is from the proposed resolution on literature in *ibid.*, 121.
40. Christopher Brown, "Empire without slaves: British concepts of emancipation in the age of the American revolution", *WMQ*, 56, 2 (1999), p. 275. For early-modern writing on "barbarianism" in the context of empire, see Nicholas P. Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America", *ibid.*, 30, 4 (1973), pp. 575–98.
41. Christopher Brown, "British slavery and British politics: a perspective and prospectus", in Edward E. Baptist and Stephanie M. H. Camp, eds., *New Studies in the History of American Slavery* (Athens, GA, 2006), pp. 275–94.
42. *Proceedings*, p. 162; Howard Temperley, "People and parliament: the rhetoric of the British slave trade," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 20 (4) (Spring 1990), p. 562 *et passim*, and David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780–1860* (London, 1991).
43. *Proceedings*, pp. 107–8 (Birney) and 73 (Thompson). Simon Morgan, "The anti-corn law league and British anti-slavery in transatlantic perspective, 1838–1846", *Historical Journal*, 52, 1 (2009), pp. 87–107; C. Duncan Rice, "'Humanity sold for sugar': the British abolitionist response to free trade in slave-grown sugar", *ibid.*, 13 (1970), pp. 402–18; Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (Oxford, 2002) and *From Slavery to Freedom: Comparative Studies in the Rise and Fall of Atlantic Slavery* (New York, 1999), pp. 379–444. For a view that such a boycott would not always realize its intended aims, see the contribution of Robert R. R. Moore (Dublin) who suggested to the convention that it would be unduly expensive for persons of "moderate means"; see *Proceedings*, p. 443.
44. *Proceedings*, p. 398 (proposed resolution of the Convention's Free Labour Committee in *Proceedings*), 414 (Phillips). Carol Faulkner, "The roots of the evil: free

- produce and radical antislavery, 1820–1860," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 273 (Fall 2007), pp. 377–405.
45. "Our Minister in England", *NASS*, 13 Dec. 1840.
 46. *Proceedings*, pp. 420, 139, 418 and 259 (Rev. Alexander Harvey, Relief Synod of Scotland).
 47. *Proceedings*, pp. 414–6; Roger Anstey and P. E. H. Hair, eds., *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade and Abolition* (Liverpool, 1976).
 48. P. J. Cain, "Economics and empire: the metropolitan context," in Andrew Porter, ed., *Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, p. 38.
 49. Kenneth Charlton, "The State of Ireland in the 1820s: James Cropper's plan", *Irish Historical Studies* 17, 67 (1971), pp. 320–39; David Brion Davis, "James Cropper and the British anti-Slavery Movement, 1823–1833," *Journal of Negro History*, 46, 3 (1961), p. 159.
 50. *NASS*, 30 Jul. 1840; *Proceedings*, pp. 382, 424–7.
 51. *Proceedings*, p. 13; Bric, "Daniel O'Connell and the debate on anti-slavery", p. 70. The most recent treatment of this subject is Murphy, *American Slavery: Irish Freedom*.
 52. *Proceedings*, pp. 115, 15, 13, 265; James Fuller, "To the emigrants of Ireland", *NASS*, 21 Apr. 1842.
 53. *Proceedings*, p. 115; Bric, "Daniel O'Connell and the debate on anti-slavery", pp. 77–8, 81.
 54. *Proceedings*, pp. 114 (Galusha), 557 (Bradburn), 114 (Galusha), 120 (Galusha), "Letter from Wendell Phillips," *NASS*, 30 Jul. 1840.
 55. *Proceedings*, p. 554.
 56. *Proceedings*, pp. 554 (Fuller), 553 (Rev. Henry Grew, Pennsylvania), 203 (Dr. John Bowring, Exeter), 435 (undated letter from the convention to Palmerston); Paul Michael Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France, 1818–1848* (New York, 2000).
 57. *Proceedings*, p. 116; C. Duncan Rice, "The anti-slavery mission of George Thompson to the United States, 1834–1837", *Journal of American Studies*, 2 (1968), pp. 13–31.
 58. "Letter from Wendell Phillips", *NASS*, 30 Jul. 1840.
 59. *Proceedings*, p. 29; *NASS*, 6 Aug. 1840.

4

The Political as Personal: Transatlantic Abolitionism c. 1833–67

Simon Morgan

For veteran anti-slavery campaigner Mary Anne Rawson, 8 July 1877 was

a red-letter day as people say—It quite did me good to look on so beautiful a countenance—The only thing that spoiled my pleasure (besides the shortness of the visit which made us feel rather hurried) was the feeling that it was rather selfish not to give more persons the great treat of seeing him.¹

But who was the hero who elicited such girlish raptures from this dignified Quaker lady? Three days later, Mary wrote an even more enthusiastic letter to Charlotte Wilson: “I can think of nothing but dear, good, noble Mr Garrison—the finest specimen of the human race that ever came before me. I feel quite bewitched—How true are all Miss Martineau’s words about him, in the note I return with thanks”.² Ten years after Garrison had last visited Britain, to celebrate the emancipation of America’s slaves, his magnetism had clearly not faded.

This chapter concerns the role of charismatic personalities such as Garrison in the construction and maintenance of a transatlantic anti-slavery movement from 1833 to 1865. This was the period when, in the wake of the nominal emancipation of Britain’s colonial slaves in 1833 and the subsequent abandonment of “apprenticeship” in 1838, British abolitionists began to focus their attention on international matters. The continuance of the Atlantic slave trade and the persistence of plantation slavery in the United States were at the top of their agenda. However, without a limited domestic goal to aim for, the movement was in danger of disintegration. Three national societies were founded between 1838 and 1839: Joseph Pease’s British India Society; Thomas Fowell Buxton’s Colonization Society; and the BFASS dominated by Joseph Sturge.³ Meanwhile, it was increasingly difficult to maintain interest among the broader anti-slavery public who had supported petitioning campaigns against slavery in the past but were

increasingly distracted by the social, economic, and political crises which characterized the years from 1837 to 1848. In the absence of any major national figure to unite around, many looked to the nascent anti-slavery movement in the United States, inspired by the heroic example of men like Garrison, who faced daily dangers advocating a cause almost as unpopular in the northern states as in slavery's southern citadel.⁴ These very real dangers were brought home to British audiences by the experiences of George Thompson, arguably the only truly charismatic figure produced by British anti-slavery after 1833, who was driven out of the United States by threats to his life in 1835.⁵

This chapter explores the contribution of the politics of personality to the maintenance of interest in the anti-slavery cause in Britain, particularly after 1838. It focuses on William Lloyd Garrison, the combative leader of the AASS; Frederick Douglass, the eloquent and dignified freed slave and later the leading figure in the Rochester Anti-Slavery Society; and the visit of novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1853.⁶ This is not to say that these three were the only transatlantic anti-slavery visitors during this period: on the contrary, a steady flow of anti-slavery campaigners moved between Britain and the United States at this time, augmented by an influx of black refugees following the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1851, which enforced the return of runaway slaves to their masters.⁷ However, these figures not only made the biggest impression on anti-slavery campaigners, they also became the focus of intense public interest. Garrison in particular proved both a magnetic and a divisive personality, and subsequent visitors were often defined by whether they were for or against him.

The first part of the chapter explores the ways in which Garrison used the resources at his disposal, including abolitionist networks, association with existing anti-slavery "personalities", oratory, the press, and visual media, to build his reputation in Britain as a pre-eminent American abolitionist. The second part explores the means by which Garrison and other leaders maintained their British followings through the anti-slavery press, the maintenance of epistolary networks and the use of go-betweens and proxies who could carry news of their doings to British friends and supporters. The final part assesses the impact of the dependence on charismatic personalities on the fortunes of post-emancipation abolitionism in Britain. It concludes that while such charismatic figures were central to maintaining the transatlantic networks which provided vital moral and financial support to American abolitionism, they were only rarely able to reach out beyond a small core of committed abolitionists to stir the general public in Britain itself. Moreover, the presence of Garrison in particular exposed British and Irish audiences to the schisms that rent the American anti-slavery movement. Garrison's own emphasis on "moral suasion" belied the vicious and caustic rhetoric used in his newspaper, the *Liberator*, which almost as frequently decried the compromises of fellow abolitionists as it did the evils of slavery itself. His

castigation of the American constitution as a document saturated with the blood of slaves led him to reject the efforts of the Liberty and Free Soil parties to develop a constitutional political solution to slavery; his insistence on according women equal status in the movement led to accusations of introducing extraneous matter into the campaign; while his uncompromising assaults on churches and ministers who refused to take a public stand against slavery fuelled allegations of infidelity. The latter issue dogged him for much of the 1840s and 1850s, hampering his acceptance by the often socially and religiously conservative constituencies of British anti-slavery. Instead, his influence exacerbated the fissures within British abolitionism and contributed to its decline as a vehicle of moral reform politics.

Building a reputation

It should not be surprising that the nascent anti-slavery movement in the United States looked to its successful precursor in Britain for inspiration and assistance, nor that those who desired to make a name for themselves in its service were eager to associate themselves with the aura of the great heroes of British abolitionism, such as William Wilberforce, Thomas Fowell Buxton, Granville Sharp, and Thomas Clarkson. This was certainly one of William Lloyd Garrison's aims on his first visit to Britain and Ireland in 1833. Ostensibly, his mission was to raise funds for the New England Anti-Slavery Society for Negro Education, an institution for free blacks, but there is little doubt that his main aim was to establish a reputation among British audiences as a leading American abolitionist, a position that would also bolster his claims to primacy back home.⁸ On arrival he lost little time in picking a very public and prolonged fight with Elliott Cresson, the agent of the American Colonization Society, which aimed to "repatriate" ex-slaves to Liberia, himself in Britain on a fundraising tour.⁹ With a watchful eye on how his activities would be reported in the United States, Garrison was also keen to associate himself with figures from the heroic age of British abolitionism, securing Wilberforce's signature to a remonstrance against colonization shortly before the great man's death, and being among the mourners at his funeral.¹⁰ Thomas Clarkson was more reticent, rightly perceiving Garrison as a potentially disruptive element, but the connection with Wilberforce did no harm to Garrison's reputation in the United States while, according to one biographer, the trip helped to create the impression in Britain that he was the pre-eminent leader of American abolitionism.¹¹

Of particular value to cementing Garrison's British reputation were the contacts he made among the rising generation of abolitionists, including George Donisthorpe Thompson, at that time making his name as a charismatic anti-slavery lecturer with a particular appeal to female audiences. Garrison came to play a key role in establishing Thompson as a major international hero of abolition, inviting him to the United States in 1834, where

he embarked on the tumultuous lecture tour from which he would barely escape with his life.¹² Further visits in 1840 and 1846 allowed Garrison to consolidate these connections and to establish new ones among families of advanced opinion, including Joseph Pease of Darlington, founder of the British India Society, and his daughter Elizabeth; radical Quaker journalists William and Mary Howitt; the Estlins of Bristol; the Allens of Cork; the Webbs of Dublin; and the Smeals of Glasgow.¹³ These families wielded significant influence in the anti-slavery organizations of their respective towns and, as we shall see, often worked hard to bring them to a pro-Garrison position in disputes between Garrison's AASS, and the rival AFASS. The latter was established in 1839 by Arthur and Lewis Tappan after a dispute with Garrison, and was supported by the Quaker-dominated BFASS. The AFASS shunned Garrison over his condemnation of American churches and his militant stance on promoting the equality of women, a major controversy at the World Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840, and its agents did much to try to discredit him in Britain.¹⁴ Indeed, in the same letter to Charlotte Wilson cited above, Mary Anne Rawson confessed that she had not dared speak to Garrison at the 1840 convention due to the stern and reserved demeanour he adopted during the dispute.

As suggested by Rawson's letters, Garrison was gifted with a presence which belied the balding, bespectacled, and rather bookish figure of contemporary portraits. His sincerity, humour, oratory, and charm won him a fiercely loyal following in Britain and Ireland, though his outspokenness prevented him from ever attaining the kind of national acclaim that greeted Harriet Beecher Stowe on her first visit to Britain in 1853.¹⁵ The same attributes, together with his flair for controversy, drew accusations from opponents that his interest in the anti-slavery movement was primarily due to the opportunity it gave him to court notoriety. The truth is probably somewhere in between, and one of his principal biographers has painted a picture of him as both driven and egotistical, prone to alienating himself from close friends and colleagues, and liable to spend as much time fighting his enemies within the movement as working for the abolition of slavery itself.¹⁶ The paradox is summed up by American poet John Whittier's declamatory ode to Garrison. The poem begins by outlining the standard delineations of heroic masculinity:

CHAMPION of those who groan beneath
 Oppression's iron hand:
 In view of penury, hate, and death,
 I see thee fearless stand.
 Still bearing up thy lofty brow,
 In the steadfast strength of truth,
 In manhood sealing well the vow
 And promise of thy youth.

However, it continues:

They tell me thou art rash and vain
 A searcher after fame;
 That thou art striving but to gain
 A long-enduring name.¹⁷

The poet naturally proceeds to absolve Garrison of these charges, but the early history of Garrison's involvement in the movement suggests they contained more than a grain of truth.

Garrison's visits to Britain in 1840 and 1846 bore out Clarkson's fears that he would prove a divisive figure. His protest at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840 is too well known to warrant further rehearsal, but Garrison's aspirations to be the complete reformer ensured that he continued to court controversy long after the conference came to an end, particularly through his flirtations with Chartists and other radicals. His propensity to go tilting at every reforming windmill that presented itself did nothing to assuage the fears of those who wanted to focus on the abolition of slavery to the exclusion of all else, and also limited his broader popular appeal. What cannot be doubted is his energy. Between 31 July and 4 November 1846, when he finally departed from Liverpool, Garrison travelled the length and breadth of the country, addressing anti-slavery meetings, cultivating old friendships, and establishing new contacts. On this occasion, one of the aims of Garrison's visit was the establishment of the Anti-Slavery League, which would provide a permanent transatlantic organization, aimed at bringing together the fractured British and American abolitionist movements under a single umbrella. According to Richard Webb, the proposal for such a league originated with Thompson early in 1846.¹⁸ The title was a deliberate *homage* to the Anti-Corn Law League, then on the brink of triumph.¹⁹ Thompson had been active as a lecturer for the League since 1841, when it had effectively absorbed Joseph Pease's British India Society, and he naturally wished to capitalize on its success. The new league was founded in London on 10 August 1846.²⁰ Like its namesake, it was intended as an umbrella under which all abolitionists could unite. As Garrison explained to his wife, Helen, "Our Anti-Slavery League will soon enrol a multitude of noble men and women on its list of members; and *all* our anti-slavery coadjutors in the U.S. must become members of it also."²¹ Unfortunately, his optimism was misplaced. The tone of this letter, with its triumphal "must", suggests one reason why: many American abolitionists would find it impossible to reconcile themselves with such an obviously Garrisonian society. Moreover, it did little to bridge the divisions within British anti-slavery, its title providing an uncomfortable reminder of damaging controversies between the BFASS and the Anti-Corn Law League over import duties on slave-grown sugar.²²

As a result, while the intensive speaking tours undertaken by Garrison, Thompson, Henry C. Wright, and Frederick Douglass in the autumn of 1846 succeeded in establishing a number of auxiliary societies, they struggled to spread the movement beyond Garrisonian strongholds such as Bristol and Glasgow. To gain traction, the Americans spent much of their energy attacking apostates and heretics. These included the Free Church of Scotland, already under sustained assault from Douglass for accepting southern donations after its secession from the established kirk in 1843 (Douglass ran the campaign under the slogan "Send Back the Money"), and the Evangelical Alliance, an Anglo-American conference being held in London to establish closer transatlantic links between evangelical churches.²³ The Alliance's failure to make a clear decision over whether to commune with American churches that refused to condemn slavery brought down the wrath of the abolitionists; the League wasted no time calling a meeting to attack it.²⁴ Although it succeeded in throwing the Alliance conference into disarray, such episodes reinforced the abolitionists' wider image as aggressive and divisive, lending credence to the charge that Garrison's attacks on pro-slavery churches masked a deeper infidelity.

Rather than becoming a robust transatlantic umbrella organization that could focus anti-slavery opinion and lead to greater coordination of effort, the Anti-Slavery League failed even to become an effective auxiliary to Garrison's AASS. Once Garrison and Douglass had sailed for the United States, the League was left dependent on the whims of its founding genius, George Thompson, who even before Garrison had set foot on dry land again was busy with a completely different agitation relating to the dethroned Rajah of Satara, part of a parallel interest in the reform of the Indian government.²⁵ Thompson's tendency apparently to pick up and drop campaigns as the mood took him later prompted Richard Cobden to complain that "owing to his desultory idle habits of mind, he seems incapable of more than a sudden impulse, & then after a brilliant speech or letter he falls back into apathy & quiescence".²⁶ In reality, Thompson's precarious financial situation meant that he inevitably ended up juggling more agitations than he had time for. This lack of focus cost the League dear. When the Bristol and Clifton Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society wrote to Thompson requesting further information about the League, he failed to respond and the society took no further action.²⁷ As a result, the society's valuable services were denied to the Garrisonians for a further five years, and the seeds were perhaps sown of Mary Estlin's later contempt for Thompson.²⁸

Maintaining networks and projecting influence

Clearly, Garrison could not spend all of his time in Britain, having his hands full in the United States delivering lectures and editing the *Liberator*. His visits to Britain in 1833, 1840, and 1846 were brief, especially when compared

with those of Frederick Douglass, who spent significant amounts of time in the country in 1845–7 and 1859–60.²⁹ The failure of the Anti-Slavery League to take on anything more than an intermittent existence meant a continued reliance on more informal networks to maintain British interest in the cause of the American slave. That interest was increasingly important from a financial point of view, as the AASS increasingly relied on the proceeds of its annual bazaar to fund its activities.³⁰ This section explores the means by which anti-slavery personalities maintained those networks and spread their reputations *in absentia* through personal correspondence, the use of proxies, and the circulation of printed material and personal artefacts.

The importance of epistolary networks for the cohesion of transatlantic abolitionism has long been appreciated.³¹ Garrison in particular relied on correspondence with his British supporters to maintain and extend his influence. Such letters freely mixed anti-slavery news and political opinion with humorous anecdotes and intimate domestic detail, collapsing any *a priori* assumptions the modern reader may have regarding the distinction between public and private, personal and political.³² In particular, they reveal the tremendous *emotional* benefit Garrison received from these transatlantic connections: as important at times in sustaining his own personal efforts in the cause as the British and Irish interest were more generally in generating political pressure and financial support. There is no doubt that during Garrison's sojourns in Britain the households of friends like Richard D. Webb and Elizabeth Pease provided substitutes for the domestic circle he left behind him in the United States, and letters helped to sustain something of the emotional intensity of that attachment at a distance. His letters to Elizabeth Pease of Darlington (later Elizabeth Pease Nichol of Edinburgh) are a notable part of his correspondence, which reveal the mutually affectionate and supportive nature of their relationship. Pease was one of the first people Garrison wrote to when he made landfall at Halifax, Nova Scotia, on 15 November 1846, and in a gushing letter he assured her that his long periods of seasickness "were happily solaced by thinking of my visit to Feethams". His raptures were such that there is something almost guilty in tone about the subsequent paragraph about the joy of approaching his "cherished home" and the blessing of returning to "an affectionate and loving wife". He concludes:

I pray you, dear E., to let me hear from you, as often as convenient. I feel much solicitude on the score of your health, and long to hear of your complete restoration. I am determined not to abandon the hope (smile as you will,) of one day seeing you in Boston, and under my roof!³³

It was a wish oft repeated over the duration of their friendship, but one never to be granted. Instead, Garrison took solace in memory and an intensely romantic imagination:

so vivid are my recollections of my late visit,—so much do I live in the spirit-world,—that at times I find it difficult to persuade myself that I am not still with you all, even in body as well as in mind. As for your own dear domicil [*sic*] . . . it seems as if at any moment I could knock at your door, walk into the parlor, take you by the hand, and enter into social conversation with you.³⁴

So smitten was Garrison that he even named his baby daughter after Pease as a permanent reminder of his absent friend, though tragically Lizzy Pease Garrison lived only 16 months.³⁵

Garrison's letters were no less important to Pease, helping to keep her allegiance firm in the face of pressure exerted by members of her family, concerned at her links with a supposed infidel, particularly after her father's death in 1846. Indeed, when he visited Sheffield in 1846, Garrison complained that he was being kept away from Pease by some of her relatives who were "hand-in-glove with the Broad-street Committee" of the BFASS.³⁶ Given the importance of family as a basis for female public subjectivities in this period, such emotional support would have been extremely valuable to Pease in maintaining this independent stand.³⁷

As well as letters, Garrison provided his British and Irish friends with copies of the *Liberator*, enabling them to keep abreast of developments in the United States and keeping them in touch with the views and activities of their hero. Manchester-based abolitionist Frederick W. Chesson, who later married George Thompson's daughter and went on to edit the Cobdenite *Morning Star*, recorded in his diary receiving copies of the *Liberator* during the 1850s, on one occasion mentioning reading it in bed.³⁸ Individuals such as black abolitionist William P. Powell became important conduits for arranging the distribution of American anti-slavery literature in Britain.³⁹ In return, British and Irish correspondents provided Garrison with bulletins on the British political scene, with those by solicitor William Ashurst of Muswell Hill published in the *Liberator* under the pseudonym Edward Search.⁴⁰

The networks Garrison established on his visits were sustained and extended by the visits of his American supporters, such as John Collins, Parker Pillsbury, the Weston sisters, and Sarah Pugh. Given the highly factionalized nature of American anti-slavery, these visitors often functioned as proxies for the leaders of the faction they represented, and partly for this reason Garrison always tried to maintain a presence in Britain. When Henry C. Wright informed him of his intention to return to the United States in 1847, Garrison was concerned that "there will be left behind no American representative of the anti-slavery cause".⁴¹ It was with mixed feelings that he learned the following year that Maria Weston Chapman, his ablest lieutenant, intended to remove her family to Europe for the benefit of her children's education.⁴² Garrison was alive to the advantages of having such an active anti-slavery campaigner on the other side of the

Atlantic, particularly given the importance of women as supporters of the Boston anti-slavery bazaar, though he lamented the huge gap it created in his own emotional support network at home.⁴³ Chapman's return in 1855 was welcomed by Garrison as "almost like a resurrection from the dead".⁴⁴ However, there were clear material benefits to her sojourn: for example, her visit to Bristol in 1851 helped Mary Estlin to steer the Bristol and Clifton Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society away from the BFASS and into a more openly Garrisonian position. Chapman and her entourage were thoroughly grilled about the rival American societies on the evenings of 11 and 16 September, in the process putting across their views of Lewis Tappan's dishonesty and the paltry influence of the AFASS in the United States which had been "obtruded" on the British public as the principal American anti-slavery organization by the machinations of the BFASS. On 16 October, after much deliberation, the society officially dissolved its connections to the BFASS having previously pledged its support to the Boston bazaar.⁴⁵

Arguably even more effective were the proselytizing activities of Julia Griffiths, British admirer of Frederick Douglass and subject of much speculation at the time and since.⁴⁶ After the latter's public split with Garrison, which saw him move to Rochester and set up the *North Star* as a rival to Garrison's *Liberator*, Griffiths travelled through Britain in the mid-1850s setting up female anti-slavery societies in support of Douglass's new Rochester Anti-Slavery Society. In the West Riding of Yorkshire alone she helped create societies in Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham, Wakefield, Halifax, and Huddersfield. These drew in philanthropic women such as Mary Anne Rawson, already an experienced abolitionist, who became president of the Sheffield society.⁴⁷ Griffiths's efforts seem to have been much more effective than those of the Garrisonians. While Chapman succeeded in converting the Bristol and Clifton Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, she was thwarted in her efforts to found a female Garrisonian society in Leeds in 1851. A similar attempt by Sarah Pugh two years later succeeded only after great difficulty. The resulting Leeds Anti-Slavery Association has attracted attention for being Britain's only mixed-sex anti-slavery society. However, as Clare Midgley points out, Pugh's letters to Mary Estlin prove that this was actually the result of a failed attempt to create a ladies' society along more traditional lines.⁴⁸

The intense relationships Douglass formed with white female supporters such as Griffiths and Otilie Assing are extreme examples of the intense emotional response that charismatic abolitionists elicited from their supporters, particularly (though not uniquely) among the women who were such a mainstay of the anti-slavery movement in this period.⁴⁹ The power of this emotional charge is demonstrated by the value placed not only on personal interaction with anti-slavery leaders but, by extension, with portraits, autographs, and even physical objects with which they had been in contact. Such items were clearly part of the gift economy of transatlantic abolitionism,

helping to cement ties of friendship and factional loyalty. Before he set sail for England in 1833, Garrison sat for a portrait which was then reproduced as an engraving and copies of which were sold to his admirers, claiming, perhaps a trifle disingenuously, that “This sticking up one’s face in print-shops, to be the ‘observed of all observers,’ is hardly consistent with genuine modesty, but I can in no other way get rid of the importunities of those who would pluck out their eyes to give me.”⁵⁰ The advent of the daguerreotype, an early form of photograph, in 1839 made it easier to obtain and exchange images of friends, and the transatlantic abolitionists were not slow to avail themselves of this new technology. It has been argued that daguerreotypes and film photographs are “indexical” objects, having a physical link to an absent individual they depict via the light captured in the chemical process by which they are created.⁵¹ As such they carried an intense emotional charge, particularly for those, like Garrison, blessed with a keen imagination and romantic sensibility. It is clear that the images he collected of his British and Irish friends were a key emotional support to him during their absence, as demonstrated by a whimsical letter written to Richard D. Webb in 1847:

Your Daguerreotype likeness is before me, and it gives me great comfort. It is amazingly like you, only it does not talk audibly . . . I have the ability to talk to *it*, but what is the use of talking where one gets no response? I would much rather that the original were under my roof, but I place a high value on this imitation.⁵²

Garrison proceeded to tell Webb that the portrait was “very much liked by your unseen and personally unknown friends”, hinting at the importance of such images in strengthening the imaginative and emotional ties between supporters of the cause who had never even met and who may well never do so. Finally, neatly demonstrating the reciprocal nature of such gifts, Garrison concluded the discussion of portraits by telling Webb:

I have spoken to Mrs Chapman, to have hers taken for you; and she is willing to do so. You shall have it ere long; and I mean to procure for you, also, one of Wendell Phillips, another of Edmund Quincy, another of Francis Jackson, another of Abby Kelley Foster &c. There—what do you say to that?

As with modern-day celebrity memorabilia, the emotional importance placed on such items was easily translated into cash value. Autographs, locks of hair, and other relics associated with famous reformers and abolitionists became prized items for the various anti-slavery bazaars, such as those in Boston and Rochester, which became so vital for the financial wellbeing of the movement in the United States. Such items were highly portable and easy to transport across the ocean, hence their popularity with British

reformers wanting to demonstrate their support for the cause by donating items for the bazaar. Given the distances involved, the relics of British reformers had an additional rarity value on the other side of the Atlantic. Take, for example, the correspondence between John B. Estlin of Bristol and Samuel May regarding a number of locks from the head of the deceased Indian reformer Rammohan Roy, destined for the Boston bazaar in 1844, while a similar letter from Elizabeth Pease to Maria Weston Chapman contained ten autographs of Daniel O'Connell, liberator of Ireland's Catholics and ardent abolitionist.⁵³ Once again, the indexical nature of such objects is readily apparent. An idea of the almost supernatural charge associated with objects that had been in contact with adored public figures, particularly by women, is revealed in a letter from American abolitionists Ann and Wendell Phillips to Maria Weston Chapman, when the pair were visiting Britain in 1839. After describing goods personally selected by George Thompson for the Boston bazaar, the author (probably Ann) continued: "Think, you will see & touch the things *he* has handled".⁵⁴ Of course, British abolitionists were no less interested in their American heroes. In 1859, John Brown's ill-fated raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, created a demand for memorabilia that led William Powell to request Samuel May junior send him "Three Copies of the best got up book of the Martyr Jho. Brown and a dozen of his portraits".⁵⁵

Abolitionists as celebrities

The anti-slavery movement was not unique in giving rise to such an intense adoration of its charismatic leaders.⁵⁶ Indeed, this was symptomatic of a broader contemporary culture of hero-worship given intellectual legitimacy, though not actually precipitated, by the publication of Thomas Carlyle's lectures *On Heroes and Hero Worship* in 1841.⁵⁷ In turn this was intimately related to what could accurately be described as a nascent celebrity culture.⁵⁸ This culture relied on the influence of modern media, particularly the spread of print culture, to carry news and likenesses of famous individuals across continents and oceans in response to demand from a public eager for information about public figures of all kinds. Abolitionists such as Garrison populated its fringes, lacking the mass popular appeal of more romantic figures, such as Lajos Kossuth or Giuseppe Garibaldi, but capable as we have seen of enthusing the narrower anti-slavery public. One of the first concerted efforts to bring Garrison and other American abolitionists to wider public notice in Britain was an article by Harriet Martineau, the British journalist and author who first encountered Garrison during her American tour of 1835. She witnessed the mob that had attempted to tar and feather Garrison in Boston, and later met him in person. It was Martineau's account of being "bewitched" by her first encounter with the great man which so resonated with Mary Rawson over 40 years later.⁵⁹ Martineau published a brief history of American abolitionism, with sketches of its main

protagonists, in the *Westminster Review*, republished in Boston as *The Martyr Age of the United States*, with an English edition following in 1840.⁶⁰ As John Bright later recalled at a public breakfast in Garrison's honour, "the paper introduced to the English public the great names which were appearing on the scene in connection with this cause in America".⁶¹ When Garrison visited Britain in 1846, another woman journalist, Mary Howitt, penned a biographical sketch from details dictated by Garrison himself, published alongside an engraved portrait in the *People's Journal* to gain publicity for the Anti-Slavery League.⁶² It is possible to argue that the tendency of many abolitionists towards evangelicalism rendered them more susceptible to such an intense emotional response to those they perceived in a very real sense as the instruments of God's will. That this is by no means an exaggeration may be demonstrated by Howitt's biography. In a letter to her sister, Howitt claimed:

I did not say all I felt, because I feared many readers would think me extravagant. To my mind there is no impropriety in comparing to Christ men who have striven to follow His example. All do not see it so, and as we write for the many, I have been content to mention facts and leave them to speak for themselves.⁶³

These "facts" included the resonance of Garrison setting up his first printing press in an "upper room", prompting the observation that "even the very apostles preached and promulgated Christianity itself in 'small upper chambers'", while her description of the assault on Garrison in Boston included the following passage:

His non-resistant principles were now put to the test. One of his friends rushed forward armed in his defence. "My dear brother," said this good Christian hero, "you know not what spirit you are of. This is the trial of our faith. Shall we give blow for blow, and draw sword against sword? God forbid! If my life be taken the cause of emancipation will not suffer. God reigns, and his omnipotence will at length be victorious."⁶⁴

There is a clear, if implicit, affinity between this rather theatrical description and the gospel accounts of the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, especially the passage from Matthew 26:51–53:

And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?⁶⁵

Beyond Howitt's spiritual response to Garrison, the biography represented a clear attempt to extend the latter's appeal beyond a narrow group of the converted to a broader public. In part this may have been motivated by jealousy of his protégé Douglass, who's autobiographical *Narrative* had become a minor literary sensation, and who had been lionized, particularly in Ireland and Edinburgh, since his arrival the previous year.⁶⁶ Garrison was clearly stung by the accusation of his American opponent Henry Clapp, also touring Britain at the time, that he had not met a dozen persons who knew Garrison by name. In September, Garrison gleefully reported to Helen:

it must be very galling to the spirit and painful to the eyes of Mr Clapp to see my portrait in the *People's Journal* staring him in the face in every corner in London, and handbills daily distributed to the passing multitude, reading thus: "A Portrait, by H. Anelay, and a Memoir by Mary Howitt, of William Lloyd Garrison, is contained in No. 37 of the *People's Journal*".⁶⁷

In truth, despite Mary Howitt's assertion that "we write for the many", the circulation of the *People's Journal* was limited, and it would soon fold: though forgivable, Garrison's exaggeration speaks volumes about his own insecurities at this time.

Despite Douglass's novelty as an escaped slave who was also a gifted author and orator, it could be argued that the anti-slavery campaigners did not become major celebrities in the wider sense, at least until Garrison's triumphal post-emancipation visit to Britain in 1867. The obvious exception to this was Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), became the literary sensation of the decade. Like Garrison before her, Stowe was originally invited to Britain by a Glasgow abolitionist society (Scottish abolitionism was in a far healthier state than its counterpart to the south), but there the resemblance ended.⁶⁸ As predicted by publisher Richard Bentley, she was lionized "from John O'Groats to Lands' [sic] End", and her brother, Charles Beecher, claimed that her reception outdid even that of Jenny Lind, whom he had seen in the United States.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Stowe was the exception rather than the rule when it came to transatlantic abolitionists. Her reputation when she arrived in Britain was primarily literary, placing her in a longer tradition of internationally famous visiting writers. Moreover, she was untainted by previous involvement with the American anti-slavery movement, with its frequent fratricidal disputes, and did not mind upholding the contemporary fiction of separate spheres: speaking only to ostensibly "private" all-female gatherings, in contrast to the women who had attempted to sit as delegates at the 1840 convention. Although the characterization of such events as "private" is debatable, her speeches were not published, limiting the opportunities for Stowe to become embroiled in controversy and perhaps allowing her to remain a more unifying figure than Garrison had ever been. Finally, when she travelled south to

England, after a brief stay in Birmingham with Joseph Sturge, she was quickly appropriated by the establishment in the form of the Queen's confidante the Duchess of Sutherland and the evangelical Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, who used her visit to launch a conservatively worded anti-slavery Address from the Women of Great Britain to the Women of the United States.⁷⁰ Again, this was in marked contrast to Douglass and Garrison, who had flirted with radical reformers when in Britain, had addressed a meeting of moral force Chartists, and included the author of the People's Charter, William Lovett, on the committee of their Anti-Slavery League.⁷¹

Stowe's arrival had been heralded by the appearance of popular biographies and the widespread distribution of portrait prints, which, despite their apparently poor quality, allowed even boys in the street to recognize her when she toured Edinburgh.⁷² However, even this enthusiasm was not enough to arrest the decline of popular anti-slavery in Britain during the 1850s. The difficulties were demonstrated by the failure of the Anti-Slavery League, which revealed the limitations of a dependence on personality politics in the absence of both a strong, centralized umbrella organization and a definite domestic target against which popular pressure could be mobilized.⁷³ Although Thompson continued to record sporadic Anti-Slavery League meetings in his diary after Garrison and Douglass had returned to the United States, the impetus had gone, and once Thompson began to devote his energies to his other obsession, the reform of the Indian government, the organization effectively became moribund.⁷⁴

Thereafter Thompson made periodic attempts to revive the idea of a transnational anti-slavery organization, with the establishment of the North of England Anti-Slavery and India Reform League (1854), and the moderately more successful London Emancipation Committee (1859), which provided a link between visiting Garrisonians and British abolitionists.⁷⁵ However, these societies also suffered from over-reliance on Thompson. Take the conference of the new League in autumn 1854. Although Frederick Chesson was primarily responsible for its organization, it is clear from his diaries that Thompson was the controlling genius who had the final say over the wording of resolutions and who exerted his influence through a constant stream of correspondence.⁷⁶ The new organization's title, combining as it did Thompson's two favourite causes, suggested that it was effectively little more than an extension of Thompson's own ego: its chances of becoming a successful pressure group based on popular mobilization were slim.

Conclusion

The links between American abolitionists and the British anti-slavery movement could be a source of weakness as well as strength. Abolitionists who criticized the hypocrisy of the American constitution to foreign audiences could be painted as disloyal or sycophantic, while the poverty of Britain's

urban slums made it easy to write off British humanitarians as deeply hypocritical. However, the benefits clearly outweighed such considerations. Britain's abolition of the slave trade and subsequent emancipation of the country's own slaves provided a potential role-model for the United States to follow, while its anti-slavery campaigners carried a tremendous moral authority, both collectively and individually. Individuals benefitted emotionally from the support they received, and black abolitionists in particular found Britain a welcome haven from the persecution and institutionalized racism they experienced at home, particularly after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. More prosaically, American abolitionist societies also gained financially from the relationship, through the goods that were remitted to the various bazaars and later through direct fundraising.

For the historian, transatlantic anti-slavery represents an interesting case study of a transnational humanitarian movement, involving cooperation between private individuals, most of whom, with the exception of a few paid lecturers and journalists, gave their time on a voluntary basis. Like many Victorian reform movements it was highly decentralized, with the basic unit of organization being the township or congregation. Efforts to set up national organizations, such as the AASS, the AFASS and the BFASS, were only ever partially successful and none succeeded in becoming the sole voice of anti-slavery opinion in its own country. Given these difficulties, it is unsurprising that efforts to create permanent transatlantic organizations failed. The international anti-slavery conferences held in London in 1840 and 1843 had the unfortunate effect of highlighting abolitionism's divisions, first over the equality of women and then over free trade. Anti-slavery therefore remained factionalized and personal, with charismatic figures such as Garrison, Douglass, and Thompson to the fore. This chapter has explored the various strategies by which this disparate movement cohered and the role of leading personalities in those strategies as foci for emotional attachment and sustenance: styled by contemporary students of political celebrity the "mobilisation of affect".⁷⁷ Like spontaneous transnational movements of more recent times, the problems of communicating over great distances and across national boundaries were ameliorated by taking advantage of technological advances: cheaper and more efficient postal systems, new media such as daguerreotypes (replaced by the *carte-de-visite* photograph by the end of the 1850s), more efficient steam-ships which reduced the Atlantic crossing to less than a fortnight, and cheap print. In the absence of more stable formal institutions, such technologies facilitated the projection of the charismatic authority of leaders like Garrison and Douglass to their followers overseas, whether via images and relics or the representations of proxies, who themselves became nodal points in the personal support networks that held abolitionism together.

Unfortunately, reliance on charismatic figures did not enhance the broader appeal of transatlantic abolitionism in Britain and Ireland beyond

its core constituency. Some authors have argued that the factional rivalries of the 1840s created a healthy competition that stirred men and women to action.⁷⁸ The truth is that the often violent language of Garrison, Douglass, and their followers, together with their reluctance to confine themselves to anti-slavery, weakened their appeal in the eyes of respectable opinion formers. It took a non-partisan figure such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, along with her famous literary creation, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, briefly to unite the British public against slavery once more. However, this enthusiasm did not long outlast Stowe's physical presence, and any consensus over slavery was clearly fractured by the effects of the American Civil War on abolitionism during the 1860s. In the absence of strong organizational roots there were clear limits to the politics of personality.

Notes

1. M. A. Rawson to Henry Wilson, 9 Jul. 1877. Sheffield City Archives, Rawson Papers MD 5693, fos. 6–8.
2. M. A. Rawson to Charlotte Wilson, 12 Jul. 1877. Rawson Papers MD 5693, fos. 9–10. Rawson refers to the account of Garrison in Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel*, 3 vols. (London, 1838), III, pp. 250–9, at p. 258.
3. J. H. Bell, *British Folks and British India Fifty Years Ago: Portraits of Joseph Pease and His Contemporaries* (Manchester, 1891); Howard Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery 1833–1870* (Aylesbury, 1972); Alex Tyrrell, *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain* (London, 1987), pp. 91–2.
4. For Garrison, Walter M. Merrill, *Against Wind and Tide: A Biography of William Lloyd Garrison* (Cambridge, MA, 1963); Henry Mayer, *All On Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York and London, 1998).
5. There is no full-length biography of Thompson. For a brief sketch, see W. A. S. Hewins, "Thompson, George Donisthorpe (1804–1878)", rev. Matthew Lee, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); for further information, C. Duncan Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists, 1833–1861* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1981), pp. 55–7; Janette Martin, "Popular Political Oratory and Itinerant Lecturing in Yorkshire and the North East in the Age of Chartism, 1837–1860" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2010), pp. 221, 228–33.
6. For Douglass, Philip S. Foner, *Frederick Douglass: A Biography* (New York, 1964); William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York, 1991).
7. R. J. M. Blackett, *Building an Anti-Slavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830–1860* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1983).
8. Merrill, *Against Wind and Tide*, Chapter 6; Mayer, *All On Fire*, Chapter 8.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 69–72; Betty Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Antislavery Cooperation* (Urbana, IL, 1972), pp. 209–19.
10. Mayer, *All On Fire*, pp. 157–9, 163.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 161–3; Merrill, *Against Wind and Tide*, pp. 72–3.
12. For Thompson's visit to the United States, Rice, *Scots Abolitionists*, pp. 67–75.
13. Merrill, *Against Wind and Tide*, pp. 169–72; Amice Lee, *Laurels and Rosemary: The Life of William and Mary Howitt* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 121–2.
14. See Maurice Bric's contribution (Chapter 3) to this volume.
15. Described in Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*, 2 vols. (Boston, MA and New York, 1854).

16. Merrill, *Against Wind and Tide*. Mayer's self-consciously "revisionist" account in *All On Fire* rescues Garrison from some of these charges and focuses on the political rather than the psychological origins of Garrison's many disputes.
17. John Greenleaf Whittier, "To William Lloyd Garrison", in *Anti-Slavery Poems: Songs of Labor and Reform* (London, 1889), pp. 9–10.
18. R. D. Webb to Maria Weston Chapman, 26 Feb. 1846, reprinted in Claire Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh, 1974), pp. 253–4.
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26. Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 4 Nov. 1857, British Library Add. MS 43722 fos. 281–2. Reprinted in Anthony Howe and Simon Morgan, eds., *The Letters of Richard Cobden, 1854–1859* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 351–2.
27. Minutes of the Bristol and Clifton Auxilliary Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, 5 Nov. 1846 and 4 Feb. 1847. Dr Williams's Library, Estlin Papers 24.120.
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29. For Douglass's visits, William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York, 1991), chapters 11–12.
30. See D. G. Hansen, *Strained Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society* (Amherst, MA, 1993), Chapter 6.
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54. Ann and Wendell Phillips to Maria Weston Chapman, 30 Jul. 1839, reprinted in Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, p. 77. Original emphasis.
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62. *People's Journal*, 2 (Jul.–Dec. 1846), pp. 142–5, 164–5, 179–80, 185–7.
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65. Wording from the King James Version: <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/k/kjv/index.html>> accessed 5 March 2011. Although her Unitarianism rendered her relatively immune to evangelical impulses, Martineau's account also responded to Garrison's spiritualism: Mayer, *All On Fire*, pp. 208–9.
66. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, p. 136.
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71. William Lovett, *Life and Struggles of William Lovett* (London, 1967; first edition 1876), pp. 267–8.
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74. In 1847 Thompson recorded public meetings relating to the League on 2, 5, 23 Feb., 12 Oct., a considerable reduction of activity from the previous year. Diaries of George Thompson, REAS 7/2.
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5

Autocratic Abolitionists: Tsarist Russian Anti-slavery Campaigns

Megan Dean Farah

The history of anti-slavery politics in nineteenth-century Russia is intimately connected with the evolution of the Russian autocracy. The country's history of abolitionism differs from the majority of other national case studies because the Russian autocracy did not permit an independent abolitionist movement or the establishment of related international networks. The drive to abolish serfdom in Russia and to eradicate the slave trade in the Caucasus and Central Asia came directly from the autocracy itself. Nineteenth-century Russian rulers carefully conferred rights upon subjects, fearing disorder associated with initiatives from below. Even though the autocracy restricted independent political movements in Russia, serfdom inspired heated debates among generations of educated Russians. These debates later furthered the patriotic fervour of Russian conservatives, who would champion the country's obligation to liberate slaves across its expanding empire in the late nineteenth century.

Nineteenth-century Russian abolitionism stands out because Russia negotiated multiple, conflicting systems of bondage. Serfdom and slavery existed side by side in the Russian Empire, yet the autocracy also used serfs to liberate slaves. Serfdom thrived in Russia's European provinces until Tsar Alexander II abolished it in 1861. Moscow had established a legal foundation for serfdom in 1649 as a means of re-inforcing state control over the population and natural resources in Russia's heartland. As Russia expanded through the middle of the nineteenth century, it relied upon its serf military to conquer new lands, while extending serfdom into many borderlands as a means to integrate them into the empire. Slavery persisted in Russia's southern borderlands, the Caucasus and Central Asia, in spite of the autocracy's aggressive anti-slavery campaigns, which it used to justify imperial expansion. While the slave trade in the Caucasus and Central Asia had functioned for centuries as aspects of inter-regional diplomacy and warfare, Russia's anti-slavery campaigns reflected new understandings of these practices. Anti-slavery campaigns enhanced Russia's self-image and inspired

international audiences. Although it presented its anti-slavery campaigns in the Caucasus in the early nineteenth century as a demonstration of enlightened rule, the campaigns helped the state retain an indigenous labour force. Slavery likewise persisted in Central Asia notwithstanding late nineteenth-century Russian efforts to liberate slaves in the khanates. The Great Game rivalry between Russia and Britain brought greater publicity to the former's anti-slavery campaigns in Central Asia, hastening the end of the autocracy's control over the anti-slavery rhetoric that it had used so successfully to its geopolitical advantage for the last century.

Evolution of serfdom in Russia

The fact that the institution of serfdom had evolved over time to become a mainstay of Russian social order, rather than being part of Russian life from time immemorial, enabled serfdom's critics to consider its abolition. In comparison with the development of feudalism in Western Europe, the legal codification of serfdom in Russia, in 1649, evolved late. A complex system of social control, serfdom bound the peasants to the land and to the nobles. In turn, the nobles were bound to the tsar, who granted them ownership of the land and peasants. These bonds enabled the state to mobilize Russia's resources and strengthen its central authority. Prior to serfdom's codification, peasants lived under the protection of wealthier landowners. They moved from place to place in search of seasonal labour and political protection. This held particularly true after the 25-year Livonian War in the sixteenth century and the series of peasant wars that followed in the seventeenth century, which displaced the Russian peasantry from regions vital to the state. By tying peasants to the land, serfdom strengthened Russian control over its war-torn territories. It was easier to collect taxes if peasants stayed put. The state also relied upon serfs to serve as army conscripts. Serfdom enabled the state to build a large standing army, with which it successfully defended and conquered new lands up until the mid-nineteenth century.¹

Imperial Russian expansion and the spread of serfdom went hand in hand. Peasants constituted nearly 90 per cent of the Russian population from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. With the exception of state and church peasants, most became serfs. This meant most Russians were serfs until the nineteenth century, when the state began reclassifying the tens of thousands of military conscripts as state peasants. By 1857, however, there were still an estimated 6.7 million male serfs in Russia. As the Russian Empire expanded to Siberia, Ukraine, and into the non-Russian borderlands, serfdom followed. Many families moved to the newly incorporated territories in search of more land. The state forcibly resettled others in order to establish military colonies on the frontier.²

Serfdom in Russia took many forms; it was a malleable rather than a fixed institution. Some families owned tens of thousands of serfs. Others claimed

a handful. Some serfs belonged to absentee landlords, mostly nobles who lived in Moscow, St. Petersburg or abroad but owned extensive tracts of lands in the provinces. These serfs often lived and worked in family units. They were obliged to pay their masters a yearly tax (*obrok*) but otherwise faced few restrictions. Working on other estates for months at a time was permitted. Other serfs belonged to resident landlords. They ate in an estate-wide kitchen, rather than at the family hearth, and paid their masters with regular labour (*barshchina*). Travel was forbidden. While serfs of absentee landlords were freer than those with resident landlords, material circumstances varied more according to regional climates and yearly weather patterns. Initially, peasant migrants to Russia's borderlands enjoyed fewer obligations than their counterparts in the heartland. However, as the state strengthened its rule of outlying regions during the nineteenth century, these advantages diminished.³ Countering common misperceptions of serfdom as synonymous with starvation, one historian has documented the ample calories consumed in one Southern Russian serf community.⁴ All this suggests that serfdom varied widely. It was a system of conscripted labour and social control but not inevitably of brutal oppression.

The institution of serfdom changed considerably over its 200-year history. In order for the state to sharpen its control over the population, it reshaped social categories and privileges relating to serfdom. In the seventeenth century, it granted both nobles and wealthy merchants the right to own serfs. By the eighteenth century, only nobles were permitted to do so. Although Peter the Great recognized the state must monitor serfdom carefully lest its abuses spiral out of control, he expanded the institution.⁵ Still, in the eighteenth century, free peasants could agree to short-term contracts as slaves, regaining their freedom at the contract's end. By the nineteenth century, most serfs lived under their masters for perpetuity. The yearly tax that serfs paid rose to a third of their income.⁶ In 1827, serfs were barred from higher education. Until then, some had been educated alongside their masters in noble homes and even in European universities. Others received training as ballet dancers and orchestral musicians, and performed for their masters' amusement.⁷ Still others became wealthy entrepreneurs and industrialists in Russia. While in theory serfs could pay for their freedom, in practice legal freedom was difficult to achieve. Serfs may have led very different lives, facing different restraints and opportunities, but they all remained the property of another man.

The emancipation of serfs in Russia

Despite the impermanent and malleable nature of serfdom, the institution had become the backbone of imperial Russian social order; abolishing it was not a simple task. The country's tsars and educated public discussed serf emancipation for a century before Alexander II abolished it on 19 February

1861. Every Russian autocrat from Catherine II onwards aspired to abolish serfdom but struggled to find an alternative means of maintaining social obligations within and among different social classes and of fostering loyalty to the crown.

According to Richard Wortman, the Russian monarchy sustained its absolute authority through a shifting series of “scenarios of power”. These representations reconfigured the relationship between the tsar, the nobles, and the serfs. Catherine II (1762–96) projected her authority in terms of her love for the nobility.⁸ She also engaged nobles in a lavish court culture that extended to imperial outposts in Russia’s newly conquered territories, where she encouraged nobles to represent her state. Alexander I (1801–25) expressed his steadfast bond of friendship with the nobles. He aimed to depersonalize the union between tsar and nobles and to provide formal training for imperial Russia’s growing bureaucracy.⁹ Nicholas I (1825–55) emphasized military power, duty, and loyalty to the dynasty. If his scenario of power included love, it was love tinged with fear. His distancing approach, combined with the fact that officials had developed their own bureaucratic worldview distinct from Nicholas I’s personal rule, strained relations between the two.¹⁰ Alexander II (1855–81) continued Nicholas I’s dynastic emphasis but reverted to a scenario of love. When he emancipated the serfs, he lauded nobles for their sacrifice on behalf of the tsar and all of Russia.¹¹ Each of these scenarios shifted the careful balance between the tsar and the nobles, which tsarist scrutiny of serfdom threatened to undermine.

Known as the empress who brought the Enlightenment to Russia, Catherine II objected to serfdom on moral grounds but was not prepared to take political action to change it. One historian has summed up her attitude to the Enlightenment concisely by observing that for Russia it “meant not the remaking of social and political rule, but the pursuit of personal perfectibility”.¹² In 1768, Catherine II convened a legislative commission, where nobles discussed how to reform serfdom. She recognized that the status quo meant financial loss: state revenues declined when serfs fled landlords who abused and overtaxed them. Yet she prevented the legislative commission from voting on any reforms.¹³ Serfs remained valuable as property that the empress used to reward the elite: in the 1780s she incorporated Ukraine, which had enjoyed relative autonomy as a hetmanate within the empire since 1654, into the Russian provincial administration. This meant subjecting Ukraine to Russian taxes.¹⁴ In May 1783 she declared Ukrainian peasants must be enserfed “in order to ensure the certain and exact receipt of state revenues”. This decree also helped to compensate the Cossack elite, who felt the loss of Ukrainian autonomy most sorely.¹⁵

In this light, it is no surprise that Catherine II punished Alexander Radischev, the first Russian writer to publicly condemn serfdom as a threat to natural liberty. In *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, which he published in 1790, his narrator commits the radical act of alighting from his

private carriage in order to talk to serfs across the countryside.¹⁶ He details his encounters with serfs of varying fates. By portraying the landowners' exploitation of serfs, Radishchev led readers to conclude that serfdom threatened the moral integrity of Russian society. The court condemned him to death for treason but the empress, in keeping with her desire to maintain personal relationships with the nobles, commuted his sentence to ten years of exile in Siberia. Radishchev never recovered. Despairing of his moral obligation to reform Russia and his political inability to do so, he committed suicide. His death put Catherine II's attitudes toward the abolition of serfdom in stark relief. Even though she shared Radishchev's moral perspective, she rejected his attempts at political action: Russia would only abolish serfdom by tsarist decree.

Alexander I encouraged his council to analyse ways to abolish serfdom. First the council suggested gradually phasing it out. In 1803, Alexander I's advisor, Speranskii, drafted a law permitting peasant villages to buy freedom and land from consenting landowners. This enabled serf-owners to opt out of the system voluntarily. Next Speranskii advocated guaranteeing serfs' right to a free trial, independent of inferring landowners.¹⁷ In 1816, Alexander I emancipated serfs in the Baltics, where German and Polish nobles ruled over ethnic Russian serfs. Russian nationalists supported this regional approach because they saw the ethnic difference between landowners and serfs in the Baltics as evidence that fellow Russians were unfairly oppressed. While the council intended this experiment in the Baltics as a model for the rest of the empire, they took no further steps under Alexander I.

The tsar's efforts to abolish serfdom encountered resistance among the nobles and even some advisors. Many feared that abolishing serfdom would destroy their livelihood. In his 1812 *Memoir on Old and New Russia*, state historian Nicholas Karamzin argued that serfdom uplifted Russia's peasants, who lacked the moral and economic wherewithal to fend for themselves. The tsar must protect his weakest subjects. Abolishing serfdom would thrust Russia into chaos.¹⁸ Karamzin's caution slowed Alexander I's reforms and long influenced the framing of serfdom debates in Russia.

Under Nicholas I, the state felt even more intensely the imperative of abolishing serfdom, although it made little progress toward this goal. It feared that altering the status quo would encourage the masses to rebel. The Decembrist Uprising of 1825 had confirmed this fear. When young Russian officers returned from liberating Napoleonic France, they plotted to remake Russia into a constitutional monarchy like the enlightened European powers they admired. Both tsarism and serfdom, the Decembrist Manifesto declared, must be abolished.¹⁹

The autocracy defeated the Decembrists, but the revolutions that struck Europe in 1830 and 1848 perpetuated the state's anxieties. As Wortman points out, once the Prussian and Austrian monarchs responded to the

“springtime of Peoples” by conceding to a limited representative government, Russia became the last major power in Europe to maintain an absolute monarchy based upon serfdom.²⁰ This furthered the educated public’s perceptions of Russia as “backward”. Yet the tsar and many educated Russians remained sceptical about going forward. They understood the European model of historical development as evolving from a feudal social order to a more democratic and capitalist system, but they feared the latter would lead to revolution. In 1837, Count P. D. Kiselev, the first minister of state domains, commented that the state would benefit greatly from emancipating the serfs but must proceed with “the greatest caution” since its reforms would impact 25 million “morally weak” souls.²¹ The tsar suffered political paralysis because he worried that both abolishing serfdom and a failure to do so could trigger turmoil powerful enough to destroy his state.

By the end of Nicholas I’s reign, many educated Russians firmly opposed serfdom and, to the autocracy’s discontent, had become more active in their search for political alternatives. Russian intellectuals had divided themselves into two camps of nationalist thought. Westernizers insisted that Russia must abolish serfdom in order to become an enlightened civilization. Slavophiles argued that Russia should ignore the west and return to its roots instead. Serfdom had evolved into an unwieldy system over time, but Slavophiles believed that at its heart, serfdom had preserved the peasant commune, a traditional non-capitalist form of social organization among Russian peasants, upon which Russia’s future survival depended. These nationalist debates carried over from Russia’s literary salons to inspire political action among the middling classes of landed gentry, who convened Gentry Assemblies. Fearful that these assemblies would get out of hand, the autocracy aimed at limiting their influence.²²

The prospect of peasant revolt and the empowerment of the Gentry Assemblies prompted the autocracy to accelerate reforms after the defeat of Russia’s serf army in the Crimean War (1853–6). In March 1856, Alexander II told the Moscow nobility that serfdom was evil and that the emancipation of the serfs must come from above, not from below.²³ Serfdom’s supporters had long argued that the institution strengthened the military. Russia’s defeat in the Crimea proved otherwise, severely undercutting the country’s morale and underscoring popular perceptions of its economic and technological backwardness. In fact, Russia’s economy grew and technology advanced in the nineteenth century, but serf labour could not bridge the gap between European and Russian development. This was the pivotal moment, when Russia feared the prospect of maintaining serfdom more than the prospect of reform.

The state began a new era of political instability after Alexander II’s 1861 emancipation of the serfs retired a 200-year-old system of social order without preparing an adequate alternative. Outrage brewed among noble serf-owners and peasants alike. After losing property and policing power,

nobles could not compel former serfs to work their lands. Historians have long assumed that noble losses did not benefit former serfs. The state required peasants to pay crippling redemption payments for 49 years in order to buy enough cultivatable land from the landowners. Until they paid redemption in full, the peasants had even less access to land than they had under serfdom. Serfs' modest economic gains led to losses during the post-emancipation era. More recently, Steven L. Hoch has cast doubt on the validity of the data on redemption payments, suggesting that emancipated serfs may in fact have paid "a fair if not below market price". Emancipated serfs may actually have become "autonomous peasant family farmer[s]" more resistant to the introduction of a "capitalist-wage labor economy" than previously thought.²⁴ Nevertheless, while Alexander II represented the emancipation of serfdom as a gesture of goodwill towards the people and an act of noble sacrifice, he could not sustain that myth. The emancipation had not only weakened the standing of serf-owners but it continued to subject the peasantry to separate administrative oversight and legal obligations.²⁵ This set the stage for decades of political instability.

Expanding the Russian Empire

At the same time as Russia was undergoing tremendous social changes at home, the Russian Empire continued to expand by promoting its image as an enlightened world power and settling new lands with serf and peasant colonies. Under Catherine II the country's forces extended the border south, into the Caucasus and west, into Poland. Her successors expanded eastward into Central Asia and the Far East. In order to consolidate their control, officials enserfed local populations and forcibly resettled serfs to these territories. They even accepted peasant runaways, who settled on the frontier, as a means of strengthening imperial power. By the second half of the nineteenth century, serfs and peasants had migrated to the left bank of Ukraine, Southern Ukraine, spread across the North Caucasus region known as the Kuban, across the South Caucasus, and Central Asia, and were increasingly encroaching on the Pacific Far East. The population of peasants in these borderlands reached 3 million, or 6 per cent of the overall Russian peasantry.²⁶

In addition to sharing the empress's ambition for imperial expansion, her successors adopted her methods of inclusion. Catherine II incorporated new territory by co-opting local elites and assimilating them into her western-influenced imperial Russian culture. She celebrated the multinational character of the Russian Empire more publicly as her reign progressed by including "Asiatic" noblemen in formal ceremonies and publicizing her travels throughout the newly conquered territories.²⁷ Even though Nicholas I shifted his scenario of power to emphasize patriotic duty and the Russian nation over imperial Russian multi-ethnicity, his officials continued

co-opting local elites. After Nicholas, Alexander II reverted to a more public celebration of Russian diversity by including representatives of the Bashkir, Cherkess, Tatar, Armenian, Georgian, Cossack, and Central Asian communities in his coronation procession.²⁸ These gestures of inclusion and recognition strengthened Russia's hand in consolidating imperial rule over vast lands and vastly different cultures.²⁹

Russia's anti-slavery campaigns in the Caucasus and Central Asia fitted neatly within the Catherine-inspired tradition of extending imperial rule through the rhetoric of conferring rights upon subjects. In addition to including foreign elites in its monarchical ceremonies, Russia granted inhabitants of the Caucasus and Central Asia the right to abandon their barbaric traditions and to be included in its civilized empire. The slave trade, along with nomadism, epitomized the Asiatic barbarism Russia claimed it was destined to abolish. That Russia included and bestowed rights upon the inhabitants of new territories after forcibly conquering them was entirely consistent with its autocratic politics.

While Catherine II promoted her own autocratic abolitionism, she and Russian elites were well aware of the liberal intellectual trends contributing to the movement abroad. She had increased cultural contact between Russians and the British, expanding opportunities for Russian subjects to learn about British abolitionism first hand. By the 1770s, the Russian nobility travelled regularly to Britain for university study, grand tours, and diplomatic and military tours, among other endeavours.³⁰ Many Russians who enrolled at British universities were members of Russia's Free Economic Society, an organization Catherine II had encouraged to study agricultural reform.³¹ Freemasonry, originally founded in Britain, also attracted numerous Russian devotees, including Karamzin, who visited England in 1790. These exchanges familiarized educated Russians with abolitionist politics in Britain and furthered the autocracy's resolve to curb the movement's rise at home.

The government-controlled Russian press downplayed abolitionism as an independent political movement in Britain, casting the British state's attempts to address anti-slavery as failed and hypocritical gestures. Reporting on the British parliamentary debates leading up to the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade of 1807, the Russian journal *Messenger of Europe* reprinted General Tarleton's pro-slavery speeches but reduced abolitionist William Wilberforce to one line.³² In 1810 the *Messenger* wrote that in spite of the British ban on slave trading, British merchant ships still carried West African slaves to the United States by sailing under Spanish flags.³³ It declared abolitionism was a ruse designed to legitimate Britain's bullying of other countries that challenged British economic domination. Taking the moral high ground when it came to abolishing the trade of African slaves abroad, the *Messenger* claimed, enabled Britain to divert international attention from its repression of Irish Catholics at home.³⁴

Imperial Russia's anti-slavery campaign in the Caucasus

Imperial Russian officials' ignorance of the causes and scope of the slave trade in the Caucasus led government officers to view the region as a *tabula rasa* awaiting their imperial design. They did not reflect upon the Caucasus' millennium-long tradition of trading slaves, which served as a form of diplomacy on the frontier zone of competing empires. In the eighteenth century, Georgia, one of the oldest monarchies in the Caucasus, survived as a weak decentralized state composed of smaller kingdoms that existed as tributary states of the Ottoman and Persian empires. Raiding from neighbouring tribes, the most common means of waging war in the Caucasus, had halved eastern Georgia's population by the century's end. Ironically, when Georgian nobles paid neighbouring Ottomans tribute in slaves in exchange for military protection, such tribute being the most effective means of engaging diplomacy in the Caucasus, they weakened their standing even more. Yet they found few alternatives.

Since it was difficult to grow and store crops, let alone mine natural resources, in a territory frequently subject to siege, people represented Georgia's most plentiful and precious commodity. Ottomans highly valued men, women, and children captured in the Georgian countryside as beautiful and capable slaves. These slaves were also socially acceptable: Ottoman customs permitted Muslims to trade in slaves as long as they did not share the trader's religion. Slaves from Georgia were all assumed to be Christian, even though many practiced Muslim and pagan traditions. Merchants also sold natives into slavery at the Caucasus' Black Sea ports in exchange for such valuables as wax, salt, rum, fur, lumber, and European manufactured goods.³⁵ Deeply embedded in the social life of the Caucasus, the slave trade would not be easily abolished.

Originally Russia did not impose its desire to abolish the slave trade on the Caucasus; calls for Russian assistance came from within. In June 1768, Solomon, King of Western Georgia, appealed to Catherine II, "the universal mother of all Orthodox Christian countries", to help defend his kingdom from the Ottoman by rescuing his enslaved subjects from Ottoman lands and supplying his troops with arms.³⁶ In September 1769, Erekle II, King of Eastern Georgia, asked Catherine II if Russian troops, who were already in Georgia in preparation for another war against the Ottomans, would repatriate his enslaved subjects from the eastern Ottoman Empire.³⁷ Too weak to protect their subjects from raiding, Georgia's kings lacked the authority to convince Georgian nobles to stop paying human tribute to the Ottomans. Nor could they propose to the merchants an alternative means of making money. The most compelling diplomatic argument that Georgia's kings could make to enlist Catherine II's support was that religious solidarity obliged Orthodox Christian Russia to defend Orthodox Christian Georgia from its Muslim Ottoman oppressors.

The Russian empress did not immediately heed the Georgian kings' calls. Over time, however, the slave trade shaped Georgian diplomacy on two fronts: human tributes furthered Georgian–Ottoman diplomacy and calls to abolish human tributes intensified Georgian–Russian relations. Ultimately, Russia used the Georgian kings' pleas to stop the flow of Georgian slaves to Ottoman land as part of its pretext to depose the kings and incorporate the frontier into its empire. The tsar proclaimed Russia's "merciful relationship with [its] co-religionists", promising his "beloved new subjects... all rights, liberties, advantages, and privileges enjoyed by hereditary Russian subjects".³⁸ Annexation went far beyond the patronage that the Georgian kings had envisioned.

Georgia's annexation to Russia was part of a gradual shifting of imperial powers on the frontier. During the eighteenth century, Russia had fought three wars against the Ottomans and continued numerous incursions into Persia. Russian diplomats championed Russia's role as the liberator of Georgian slaves from the Ottoman yoke for over a quarter century, before they formally annexed Georgia to the Russian Empire in 1801. This was the perfect opportunity to force the waning Ottoman and Persian empires from a region tied to Russian and British mercantile interests in Central Asia and India. Russia and Britain fancied the Black Sea and the Caucasus as a corridor for expanding global trade. By the late eighteenth century, therefore, Georgia and the Caucasus had become a highly internationalized arena in which imperial Russia maintained a strong formal and informal presence.

Late eighteenth-century Russian peace treaties with the Ottomans and the Georgians reveal that Russia was more committed to taking over its imperial competitors' territory and expanding its own trade than defending the rights of Georgian slaves in particular. The 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji, marking Russian victory over the Ottomans, asserted the right of Russian merchant ships to sail from the Black Sea through the straits of the Bosphorous. Not until articles XXII and XXV did the treaty call for the end of tributes of children from Georgia and stipulate that all prisoners of war and other slaves must be permitted to return home without ransom. In the 1783 Treaty of Georgievsk, Russia replaced Persia as the formal protector of Eastern Georgia. Catherine II pledged to Georgian King Erekle II that his country would no longer need to pay tributes of Georgian subjects to other empires. When the Ottomans retaliated against this Russo-Georgian alliance by raiding Georgia, seizing even more slaves, Russia did little to defend its newly proclaimed protectorate.³⁹

The Russian campaign to abolish the slave trade in the Caucasus resonated with Russians and Europeans as a great humanitarian cause that provided an excuse for Russia to extend its imperial rule. Some historians have suggested that Russians were uniquely responsive to the call to abolish the slave trade because so many of them had themselves been taken captive by nomads

or were sold as slaves in the Ottoman Empire and Central Asia.⁴⁰ However, the popularity of the campaign may be attributed both to lived and vicarious experience. Stories of the Caucasus' beautiful Christian maidens held captive in Ottoman harems were a staple of nineteenth-century Russian literature and European travelogues.⁴¹ Such narratives had mass appeal but never grasped the complexity of the Caucasus slave trade, which they explained as an example of oriental despotism rather than as a carefully plotted technique of warfare and regional diplomacy.

Following Alexander I's deposition of the Georgian monarchy, and installation of Russian military authority over Georgia in 1801, Russian rulers prioritized stemming the outmigration of people and bringing the Georgian nobility under their control. Stopping the slave trade was less a humanitarian gesture than an essential defence for Russia to maintain a sufficient labour force in the country. There is no indication that Russian rulers considered how Georgian kings had negotiated the slave trade with local nobles in the past. Although initially Russian policy started with a diplomatic approach to abolishing the slave trade, the limits of diplomacy pushed imperial officials to use military force. But no military solution could completely resolve the problems that imperial officials faced either. Trying to abolish the slave trade, therefore, compelled officials to reconfigure the very foundations of Georgian culture. They did so by redistributing noble wealth and by promoting law in the state. Imperial Russian officials gave the illusion of reviving eighteenth-century Georgian legal codes.⁴² In fact, their reliance on law in managing Georgian nobles' affairs represented a break from Georgia's past.

Not all imperial Russian officials in the Caucasus agreed that enforcing Russia's anti-slavery policy would serve their best interests in the region. They concurred that the slave trade was reprehensible but since Russians did not initiate the practice, they should not intervene in the natural order.⁴³ Some expected the slave trade would decline spontaneously as Georgians voluntarily embraced the diversified economic partnerships that the Russians would offer them.⁴⁴ Pragmatists argued that the military should treat the slaves as another taxable commodity like salt. If it could not profit from the slaves' labour, at least it could profit from their sale.⁴⁵ The majority agreed that when soldiers intercepted a human trafficking ring, they should be required to return all slaves to supervised homes run by natives or colonial officials. Slave children too young to remember their families would be put to work in Orthodox orphanages. Realists admitted that the military could not eliminate the problem—at least not until officers could call themselves "complete owners of the mountains".⁴⁶

By the 1850s, imperial Russian rule had diminished, although not entirely eradicated, the Caucasus slave trade. Of all the approaches imperial Russia had taken, its efforts at reshaping Georgian culture proved most successful. By mid-century the Georgian nobles represented "a self-conscious estate

with a new sense of purpose".⁴⁷ Most had transferred their loyalty to the Russian Empire and shared the intellectual interests and political tendencies of their Russian counterparts. Older noble practices of paying tribute in slaves in exchange for Ottoman protection had mostly died out.

The persistence of the slave trade in the Caucasus was a reminder that the nobles were not solely responsible for the custom. The most challenging groups to manage were the mountain tribes, whom imperial forces struggled to prevent from raiding Russia's military encampments and peasant communities in Georgia's valleys. The Russian military waged war against the mountain tribes, including the Chechens, the Avars, and the Circassians, for nearly 50 years before formally concluding the Caucasian War in 1864. Russian forces oversaw the forced resettlement of nearly 0.5 million Circassians from the Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire at the war's end.⁴⁸ Recorded incidents of slave trading in the Caucasus dropped precipitously after the exodus of Circassians from the region. This episode merits more systematic scholarly scrutiny than it has received to date. However, the irony that the Russian Empire could proclaim such a humanitarian triumph as abolishing the Caucasus slave trade only by forcibly expelling an entire ethnic group continues to attract considerable attention.⁴⁹ Confident that after the expulsion of the Circassians the Caucasus was at last firmly under imperial rule, Russia shifted its attention to Central Asia, where it would similarly bestow civilization upon locals by abolishing slavery and enforcing a firm social order.

Imperial Russian anti-slavery campaigns in Central Asia

Like Russia's campaign in the Caucasus, calls to abolish the slave trade in Central Asia served as a central justification of imperial Russian conquest. However, the campaign resonated more in the new time and place. While the Caucasus and Central Asia were both highly international arenas subject to inter-imperial competition, Russia prioritized expanding into Central Asia much later than the Caucasus, in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the British had already developed a much stronger on-the-ground presence in neighbouring India and Afghanistan. Russia feared that inaction would lead the British Empire to encroach directly on Russia's borders. At the time of Russian intervention in the Caucasus, British merchant ships sailed periodically in and out of Black Sea ports, and British officers monitored trade through a chain of consulates throughout the greater Caucasus, but the British foothold in the region was more limited. This difference in the inter-imperial penetration of the two frontiers is significant because it underscores how Russia's anti-slavery campaign in Central Asia was actually a product of Great Game rivalry, according to which the two empires competed with one another to dominate Central Asia. Russia's claims to liberate the oppressed were not new, but Russia amplified these claims because of the

presence of British officers and journalists, who were attuned to the threat of Russian expansion in Central Asia.

Like the slave trade in the Caucasus, that in Khiva and Bukhara served as a means of inter-regional diplomacy and warfare. Central Asians were only allowed to enslave people who belonged to different religions, so slaves tended to descend from Hindu or Shia Iranian traditions. In addition to being given as tribute or gifts, slaves could be, and often were, sold as part of a commodity exchange. According to Scott Levi, until the eighteenth century the Delhi Sultanate regularly delivered Hindu slaves to Central Asian slave markets as part of Delhi's efforts to curry favour with Khiva and Bukhara and shore up its own state.⁵⁰ By the eighteenth century, however, Central Asian slave markets drew fewer slaves from India and more from Persia and Russia. Levi explains the shifting ethnic mix of Central Asian slaves in light of geopolitics. The waning central authority of the Mughals meant that the empire sent fewer Indian slaves to Central Asia. The growing interest of Russian and Persian rulers in Central Asia increased the circulation of Russian and Persian subjects there. After the Russians first invaded but failed to conquer Khiva in 1717, Central Asian rulers enjoyed a surplus of Russian captives. Nadir Shah's conquest of Khiva in 1740 also led to the enslavement of many Persian soldiers in the khanate. One eyewitness account from 1813 made no reference to Hindu slaves at all, but estimated that Khiva was home to 3,000 Russian and 30,000 Persian captives.⁵¹

By the nineteenth century the slave trade in Central Asia evolved from a market where young male slaves were sold to foreign militaries to one where young women slaves were vended to local elites. Central Asia's slave military market fell apart as the Safavids and Ottomans adopted regular military forces. However, slaves continued to supply agricultural and domestic labour. Because the Khanates considered the offspring of slave women and free Central Asians to be their fathers' legitimate heirs, the slave population did not reproduce itself in Central Asia. This meant a perpetual demand for new slaves from abroad. According to Hopkins, Orthodox Christian Russian slaves in Central Asia were "the most visible enslaved religious group" only because the Russian government used their captivity "for political and propaganda purposes". Most Central Asian slaves were Persian pilgrims and peasants from Khorasan.⁵²

During the nineteenth century, Russia and Britain played out their Great Game rivalry to extend imperial rule over Central Asia by campaigning to release hostages from captivity in Khiva and Bukhara. As early as 1815 the *Messenger of Europe* reported that more than 15,000 Russian captives awaited rescue in Khiva.⁵³ In 1819, Captain Nikolai Muraviev travelled to Khiva to gather intelligence and to free the slaves. The local tribes, he recorded in his travelogue, were "really robbers by trade" who barely collected their harvest before going "plundering" and selling their captives for a handsome price at the Khiva slave market.⁵⁴ In 1834, Nicholas I ordered officials to

confiscate the wares of all Khivan merchants visiting Nizhnyi Novgorod, one of Russia's largest market towns, before exiling them to Siberia. He claimed to be retaliating against Central Asians' enslavement of Russian peasants although he had more immediate commercial interests in preventing the Khivan merchants from competing with Russian merchants in Central Asia.⁵⁵ In 1839 the military governor of the Russian province of Orenburg, Vasilii Alekseevich Perovskii, launched a military invasion of the Khanate of Khiva in response to the British launching of the first Anglo-Afghan War. Perovskii publicly championed his mission to free Russian slaves, but he also sought to protect Russia's borders. Shortly thereafter, the British Foreign Office sent James Abbott, a 20-year veteran of Afghanistan, to undermine Russia's pretext for war by negotiating the release of Russian hostages with the Khivan Khan. Notwithstanding British intervention, poor planning compelled Perovskii to retreat to Orenburg. Abbott successfully journeyed to Khiva disguised as an Afghan tribesman before travelling north, without the costume, to St. Petersburg, where he presented his efforts to the tsar.⁵⁶ The officers' escapades did little to resolve the Great Game rivalry, but they did ensure that future generations would remember the officers' anti-slavery campaigning as an integral part of imperial competition in Central Asia.

As evangelical ethics increasingly influenced British abolitionism in the 1830s, the British embraced Russian anti-slavery rhetoric more literally than they had in the past and more exactly than Russian officials themselves did. Whereas previous generations of British recognized that slavery varied from place to place, arguing that the institution was not uniformly immoral, British evangelicals "fiercely denounced slavery in all its manifestations".⁵⁷ In contrast, Russian administrators in Central Asia understood anti-slavery rhetoric as one facet of a negotiable system of colonial rule that blended law, religion, and custom. According to Robert D. Crews, Russian administrators in Central Asia doubted "law's civilizing capacity". Although Russian propaganda claimed to end the slave trade, authorities saw first hand that this was untrue.⁵⁸ Russian administrators may have lacked both the ability and the zeal to implement the state's anti-slavery rhetoric, but they employed it nonetheless because it garnered support among British abolitionists for Russian expansion in the region.

In this context, it is not surprising that when Nikolai Petrovich Ignatiev embarked upon a mission to Khiva and Bukhara in 1858, he made no effort to liberate Russian slaves. He knew Russian diplomatic rhetoric well: he had negotiated the terms of Russia's Crimean War defeat in 1856. His superiors advised him not to bother with Russian captives. They recommended granting asylum only to Indian captives since this action would impress British subjects with imperial Russia's beneficence.⁵⁹

The negotiability of Russian anti-slavery policy is consistent with the mottled legal framework that the foremost Russian theorist of international law,

F. F. Martens, used to describe Russian involvement in Central Asia. As “non-Christian and uncivilized” polities, the Central Asian khanates should have been subject to extraterritorial rule, which meant that Russian law, rather than local law, applied to all Russian subjects in the region. Although consulates’ main obligation was to “protect the empire’s commercial interests abroad”, consulates were also designed as “the last refuge of the unfortunate in foreign countries”. Accordingly, they must “protect the rights and interests of their fellow subjects in foreign lands”.⁶⁰ However, in the absence of official consulates in Central Asian khanates, and lacking any officially recognized diplomatic counterparts, the Russian governor-general of Turkestan and the British head of the East India Company pursued their own ad hoc diplomacy.⁶¹

Although Martens declared that the Khivan emir’s failure to end the steppe nomads’ seizure of Russians as slaves legally justified Russian invasion, he did not take up anti-slavery politics directly as a subject of international law.⁶² His silence implies that Martens shared the common Russian view of slavery as shorthand for Asiatic barbarism and anti-slavery campaigning as a laudable extension of the civilizing mission. Russia and Britain must “forget their impassioned prejudices”, he argued, so that the rival empires could jointly bring true civilization to Central Asia.⁶³ He thus presented international law as a means for Europe, including Russia, to further its civilizing mission, rather than as an end, a detailed code of conduct that all states must rigorously uphold.

Russia continued to express its civilizing mission in Asia through its anti-slavery rhetoric, inconsistent though it was. After claiming Khiva as a Russian protectorate in 1873, Russia heavily publicized its military’s liberation of 30,000 slaves. There was considerable truth to this assertion. Thousands of Qajar subjects went home to Iran after Russia released them from Khivan captivity. Yet as journalist J. A. MacGahan noted, Russia buried the abolition of slavery in Khiva deep in a long list of territorial and commercial claims.⁶⁴ American diplomat Eugene Schuyler reported that the number of slaves had actually increased since the signing of the treaty. Russian rule had merely created a black market for their trade.⁶⁵ In spite of their dissatisfaction with imperial Russia’s inaccurate self-promotion, Russia’s detractors widely perpetuated the association of the empire with the liberation of slaves.

This association of Russia with anti-slavery travelled far. In 1873, Timothy Shay Arthur wrote in *Arthur’s Illustrated Home Magazine*, a successful middle-brow publication out of Philadelphia, that Russia’s conquest of Khiva did indeed “have an important effect upon civilization”. The Khivan slave trade had been far worse than American slavery, he argued. The former was inherently more violent, a product of oriental despotism. Having already established its civilized status by emancipating serfs at home, Arthur waxed, Russia would now share its emancipatory powers for the good of all.⁶⁶

Whereas Anglophone writers of the pre-emancipation era had not hesitated to point out the hypocrisy of a serf empire claiming to liberate the oppressed, Arthur could link Russia's recent emancipation of the serfs with its even more recent liberation of Central Asian slaves as evidence that the autocracy could serve as a transformative and enlightened world power. His commentary shows that he fundamentally misunderstood autocratic politics. The tsars' overarching power, whether one chose to represent oneself in terms of romantic love, loyalty, or friendship, was in their ability to inspire awe in their subjects. Although the autocracy appeared to bestow rights upon the people, the tsars intended these gestures to deepen the populace's gratitude, not to lessen their own absolute authority. Arthur's misunderstanding of Russia put him in good company. In the 1870s, few politically engaged readers grasped how determined the autocracy was to prevent international political movements from influencing Russia's educated public. Educated Russians also underestimated the autocracy's resolve to limit their involvement in imperial rule.

By the late nineteenth century, international media attention widened the scope of Russian abolitionist claims beyond the autocracy's control. In 1876, J. A. MacGahan, who had first covered the Russian invasion of Central Asia, redirected his readers' attention to the Balkans, regaling them with lurid descriptions of Muslims enslaving Christian women in Bulgaria. This imagery rallied support for the oppressed from the British Liberal leader William Gladstone to conservative intellectuals in Russia.⁶⁷ MacGahan's work especially fed the geopolitical ambitions of the latter. Russia's conservative press published translations of his Bulgarian coverage to build popular support for the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–8. This move put conservatives increasingly at odds with the autocracy. Russia's War Ministry did not want another war with the Ottoman Empire because it feared the Russian Empire could not sustain another morale-crushing defeat.⁶⁸ Undaunted, the country's conservative "Panslavic" advocates argued that after having eliminated the slave trade in the Caucasus and Central Asia and abolishing serfdom in its heartland, Russia was uniquely positioned to liberate the oppressed.⁶⁹ The autocracy had successfully promoted its anti-slavery campaigns to extend its imperial rule and limit the development of liberal politics in Russia. In the process, however, it helped produce a conservative political movement that drew from the same mythology of slave emancipation. Russia's anti-slavery rhetoric proved even more malleable than the autocracy had intended. The time had come for the autocracy to devise a new scenario of power.

Conclusion

Unlike abolition movements in many other countries, imperial Russian abolitionism emerged as an integral part of the autocracy's strategy to maintain absolute power in spite of rapidly changing social and economic times.

By spearheading abolitionism in Russia, the autocracy sought to prevent independent abolitionist movements and related international networks from undermining its authority. At home, after a century of struggle, the autocracy's fears of technological and economic inefficiency compelled it to put serfdom to rest. Abroad, the persistence of the slave trade in both the Caucasus and Central Asia served as a symbol of the regions' low civilizational status and justified imperial Russian conquest. The Russian autocracy claimed that the abolition of slavery would uplift the regions, but its call to establish an enlightened social order more directly served to legitimate its imperial standing among global powers. For those who scrutinized Russia's actions, it was clear that the empire's use of force to stop the slave trade undermined the state's humanitarian claims. However, its anti-slavery rhetoric still achieved remarkable successes, garnering Russia the admiration of anti-slavery advocates across the globe. It stimulated the imagination of abolitionists, who would inspire later attempts to codify international law at the same time as it shaped the expression of Russia's conservative nationalists.

Russian strategies of imperial expansion, its anti-slavery rhetoric, and its reliance on force may be seen as carrying, in different permutations, beyond the imperial period to the revolution and even the present day. The autocracy's campaign to emancipate the serfs and liberate the slaves inspired new generations of Russian political activists, who appropriated the rhetoric of the state for their own revolutionary aims. From revolutionaries' proclamations to defend the rights of the working class to the Communist International's call to mobilize the third world, the rhetoric of emancipation brought Russia worldwide acclaim. In other ways, Russian rhetoric about Asiatic barbarism and the use of force remains with us today. The captive-taking that persists in the Russian Caucasus, especially Daghestan, re-inforces old imperial Russian misconceptions of the Caucasus as belonging to a lower civilizational status than Russia. International media coverage of kidnapping, now as in the past, rarely considers the act as an expression of inter-regional diplomacy from a weakened power. It is far less mentally taxing to frame hostage-taking as a barbaric act, which legitimates a forceful response from the Russian military. Unfortunately, violence has become the most self-perpetuating of the many legacies that one could carry forward from the history of imperial Russian expansion, while the glimmer of idealism in Russian abolitionism has faded from historical memory.

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6

Abolition and Anti-slavery in the Ottoman Empire: A Case to Answer?

Ehud R. Toledano

Introduction

One of the main points of departure of the analysis offered in this chapter is that the suppression of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery were a type of social, economic, political, and even cultural reform. A necessary precondition for introducing a policy of reform is a broad-based recognition that something is either morally wrong or not working, and hence in need of being repaired. This is, however, not a sufficient condition; one needs also the will, the support, the tools, and the perseverance to push through effective change. Whereas in non-western societies, reform has often been initiated by rulers and governments—that is, “top down”, public support, or at least the lack of strong and committed opposition, was also required. In Europe and the United States from the eighteenth century onwards, many changes—including the abolition of slavery—originated in the “marketplace of ideas” and fed on public debate and grass-roots organization in an emerging civil society.

In the Ottoman Middle East and North Africa, reformers needed to test the views of the public, and unless they were keen and determined, would fail and have to withdraw their programmes. To initiate and sustain an abolitionist policy, or at least to be able to carry out the suppression of the slave trade in Africans, Ottoman government reformers had to rely on outside pressure. Thus, the abolition of slavery offers one of the classic cases of the relation between ideas and sociopolitical action both in the Atlantic and in the Indian Ocean worlds. For long, intellectual historians—and not a few others—have taken for granted that ideas have a direct impact on politics and society, and that they are the prime motivation for human action. With the rise of social history in the 1960s and 1970s, and the later emergence of cultural history from the 1990s, political and intellectual history have steadily declined. Scholars have been searching for explanations of human behaviour in practice rather than in thought, and the lure of *Ideengeschichte* has dramatically waned, even for intellectual historians.

While social scientists continue to believe that formative texts play a role in generating and directing social and political movements, the precise effect seems to elude us still. Exactly how ideas that were forged in the minds of luminaries are translated into the slogans that move people to take to the street, to organize, and to change realities remains in need of definitive resolution. However, a great deal has been done towards understanding the nexus between thought and action, or the mechanism of production and the dissemination, as well as the reception—both active and passive—of seminal ideas. The opposition to human enslavement and the political struggle against it seem to have been born in the minds and writings of pioneering individuals, passed through the construction of organizations and networks, and culminated in the legal and political act of abolition.

Firmly grounded in the Atlantic tradition of abolitionism, the model of “idea-into-action” is predicated upon the necessary condition of launching “persuasive action” and winning “the battle of ideas”. Here it is essential to separate the debate over enslavement itself from that about the slave trade, as in both the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean worlds the cruelty and high mortality of the traffic made suppression desirable and attainable. This was certainly the case with the Ottoman Empire during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Once the first attempts by the British to persuade the sultan and his ministers to abolish slavery were rebuffed around 1840, London’s efforts were redirected towards the slave trade.¹ What followed in the rest of the century was an ongoing campaign to set up treaties to prohibit the slave trade from Africa and the Caucasus. Success was registered only on the African traffic with the prohibition edict promulgated by the sultan in 1857.

However, the British achievement was not obtained as a result of successful persuasion. In fact, there was almost no “marketplace of ideas”, and the decision to prohibit the slave trade from Africa was extracted from the Ottoman government as a result of sustained pressure through diplomatic channels. Yes, humanitarian arguments were used in the discourse deployed vis-à-vis Ottoman decision makers, but vezirs and provincial governors did not have to face public demands from their constituencies. In other words, the suppression of the slave trade from Africa into the Ottoman Empire depended on government-to-government negotiations and was not predicated upon an ideological switch to anti-slavery, nor did the gradual abolition of slavery issue from it.

Rather, the Ottoman case progressed from the prohibition of the African slave trade to reluctant and lagging enforcement. The Ottomans refused to yield to British pressures regarding the traffic from the Caucasus and derailed any attempt to interfere with it. So, in a sense, a reticent government agreed to cooperate with an abolitionist foreign power and grant the British monitoring and intercession capacities on Ottoman soil. Through the network of foreign, mainly British, consulates and consulates-general, the overt

and covert passage of enslaved Africans was closely followed, reported to London, and then redirected to the Ottoman authorities. Diplomatic representations were made in Istanbul and provincial capitals such as Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, and Tripoli, with demands to investigate, capture illegally smuggled persons, manumit the enslaved, and punish the traffickers.

British consuls and agents were aided by European missionaries, conscientious travellers, and correspondents of the BFASS.² Those people, who were committed to anti-slavery, reported on violations of the Ottoman prohibition by Ottoman subjects, documented cases in their diaries, and published stories in British and other European newspapers. An active abolitionist community with an interest in the Ottoman Empire did exist, but it operated outside the empire and rarely engaged, let alone recruited, Ottoman interlocutors and supporters. Moreover, contrary to other situations where abolitionists would encounter both opposition from enslavers and support from pro-abolition groups, the foreign monitors in the Middle East and North Africa were surrounded by a hostile environment that tried to obstruct their efforts, conceal information, and even physically attack them. Well into the last decades of the nineteenth century, Ottoman elite public opinion, in general, rejected western abolitionist rhetoric and the notion that Ottoman enslavement was wrong, inhuman, or immoral. That view, writ large, was also shared by the public in general, so that enslavement, and the traffic that sustained it—although to a somewhat lesser degree—continued to be socially shielded and nourished.

Another major distinction between the process of abolition in the Atlantic world and in the Ottoman Empire is the relative weight of state and private action to effect the abolition of enslavement and/or the suppression of the slave trade. Whereas in almost all cases referring to abolition in the Atlantic world the role of the private clearly outweighed the importance of state action, it was overwhelmingly the reverse in the Ottoman Empire. Since anti-slavery did not spring from an ideological or religious movement, and because there was no real debate in the marketplace of ideas, what we now would call civil society was not a real factor in producing the suppression of the slave trade from Africa into the Ottoman Empire. As already mentioned, the abolition of enslavement was taken off the table as unrealistic. After the Ottoman government was persuaded on humanitarian grounds to prohibit the slave trade in Africans, and as it unenthusiastically consented to allowing the British to assist in enforcing the prohibition, the Sublime Porte also had to deal with the consequences. That is, when illegally smuggled enslaved Africans were seized either by the British or the Ottomans, they had to be manumitted and cared for.

The Ottoman authorities were keenly aware of the vulnerability of such women and men in a society where attachment to a patron—in a household, an estate, an industrial project, or a government institution—was essential to avoid being pushed to the social margins and put in harm's way.³ Thus,

the formerly enslaved person became what would now be called a “ward of the state”, and the government acted to place them in gainful employment that would re-attach them to a protecting patron. Such jobs were often in the army for the men and in elite households for the women. But the government did more than that, as it created “halfway houses”, or hostels as they were called, which lodged and fed freed men and women until they could be re-placed. In other cases, groups of manumitted persons were settled in south-western Anatolian villages, provided with tools and other means to start cultivation, and helped towards productive life in agricultural communities.

At the same time, the Ottoman authorities also moved gradually to improve the condition of those persons who remained in bondage. The major military-administrative-legal reforms—introduced between the 1830s and 1880s and known as the *Tanzimat*—repositioned the state vis-à-vis the sultan’s subjects in many important ways.⁴ Before the reforms, and following Islamic law on enslavement, the state sided with the enslavers and backed their proprietary rights. Absconding slaves were pursued and returned to their owners, and different laws and penalties applied to unfree persons, leaving much to the discretion of the enslavers. As a result of the *Tanzimat*, the state interjected itself into the enslaver–enslaved relationship and assumed the role of protector of the enslaved. From 1845, in criminal matters, enslaved persons were to be tried in court as free men and women. As with regard to other weak and marginalized groups—the poor, the sick, the unemployed, to name a few—the *Tanzimat* state assumed the role of what might be called the “nanny” or patron state.

The argument I wish to make in this chapter is, therefore, that in the Ottoman Empire, abolition—or rather suppression—occurred without anti-slavery. That is, the African slave trade was prohibited by the Sublime Porte as a result of sustained British pressure and due to the undeniable inhumanity which the traffic demonstrably and so obviously caused.

At the same time, an anti-slavery debate as we know it in the Atlantic context never reached a *mass critique* in the Ottoman public sphere. There were a few individuals who expressed disapproval of enslavement, but, even towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century, no organized abolitionist lobby emerged, and Ottoman opponents of slavery were not present in any “abolitionist spaces”, where “abolitionist spatial practices” occurred.⁵ In other words, the Ottoman anti-slavery discourse was fairly limited and uninfluential in pushing forth abolition. The reasons for this will be elaborated further below.

The debate around Islamic anti-slavery and abolition

There seems to be wall-to-wall agreement among scholars that enslavement *per se* did not create any significant discomfort in Ottoman and other Islamic societies, nor did it give rise to any dissonance in their thinking or

self-perception. One dissenting view, however, belongs to William Gervase Clarence-Smith, whose highly problematic book *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* appeared in 2006.⁶ In a nutshell, he is trying to reverse the argument: he is not disputing the fact that, in practice, abolition occurred in “Islam” (or Islamic societies, as he should have written) only very late—that is after the rise of nation-states in Muslim-majority countries. Muslim writers, he contends, “often display intense unease that Islam accepted slavery for so long, without any mass movement emerging to advocate abolition”.⁷ However, as he is keen to absolve Islamic law and religious thought of the blemish of legitimating enslavement, he needs to argue that there existed anti-slavery discourse among Muslim thinkers and theologians, and that the formative texts of Islam contain seeds of opposition to human bondage. Clarence-Smith does admit, nonetheless, that all that failed to affect the “social realities of servitude”.⁸

This argument is indeed a tall order, given the fact—which Clarence-Smith acknowledges—that slavery lingered on in some Islamic societies even after secular laws had been enacted to abolish it because the practice was socioreligiously acceptable. But he actually goes even further to state that “Islamic abolitionism”, whatever that is, was not a response to western pressures but rather “home-grown” and rooted in classical Muslim scriptures.⁹ The author of *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* allows himself to interpret Islamic sources and assert that “the foundations of slavery in the original texts were weak”, and that “slavery . . . was the clearest negation of a socially egalitarian vision of the faith”. He then reaches the unfounded conclusion that “a permanent tension between religious belief and social reality” existed, and that “many of the faithful” were embarrassed by slavery. This supposedly gave rise to a “rich diversity of debates and interpretations”. One would be hard pressed to find any substantial, serious evidence to support such claims; needless to say, had that been true, the sources would be replete with cases of rulers and slaveholding elites being constantly admonished by outraged *ulema* and their mass followers.

In other words, and just to recap, the scholarly consensus on this is that it was the lack of moral condemnation of enslavement, due in large part to Islamic sanction and legalization, that produced the absence of any mobilization against slavery. The very fact that one can easily find traces of anti-slavery thinking in Islamic scripture—as one surely can in scriptures of any other major religion—does not, in and of itself, challenge the fact that all major exegetic traditions within Islam actually followed the opposite course and defended enslavement. Nor can those few anti-slavery traces mitigate the historical reality that social practice in all Muslim societies accepted enslavement and retained it long after it had been rejected by most other societies.

It is certainly true that Islam, as a system of belief, meaning, and law, sought from its inception to mitigate enslavement and limit its scope, but practice and custom prevailed, and the very existence of human bondage

was never seriously challenged. In modern times, however, the reverse occurred: governments in Muslim-majority countries—bowing to European pressure or acting to serve their own interests—worked to stop the slave trade and gradually phased out enslavement. At the same time, literal, conservative interpreters of Islamic law and dogma continued to support the practice as divinely sanctioned. These were the dominant force within elite thinking in all Muslim-majority countries; anti-slavery voices were few and far between. In fact, that historical actuality was precisely the reverse of what Clarence-Smith claims.

Some historians might find it worthwhile to study lone abolitionist voices in an otherwise solid anti-abolition discourse. But then, some historians would always insist that the unrepresentative is important in and of itself, regardless of its social and political significance. Even the scant evidence that exists on Islamic abolitionism¹⁰ points to the poverty and marginality of the debate. One needs to migrate to the Indian sub-continent in the late nineteenth century in order to find the first outspoken anti-slavery texts. Even then, these come from the likes of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), clearly reacting to British abolitionist rhetoric. We then have to leap well into the second quarter of the twentieth century in search of writings by non-*ulema*, acting outside the realm of the Holy Law (Turkish *Şeriat*, Arabic *Shari'a*) and Islamic traditions.

The leading reformers in the core societies of the Middle East and North Africa, including Turkey and Iran, were not terribly interested in revising accepted views on enslavement. Even someone like Clarence-Smith, keen on locating any shred of abolitionism in that discourse, is hard pressed to find serious abolitionist traces in those circles—by his own account, even Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida seem to fall short of the mark. What he calls “metamorphosis” with regard to enslavement in Southeast Asia occurred in the mind of one, Abdallah b. Nabitan, “an Arab resident in Java”, in the early 1930s.¹¹ With due respect to the few individuals who managed in the last third of the twentieth century (!) to walk the tight rope between respect for age-old Islamic dogma and a feeble, ambivalent condemnation of enslavement, it is still hard to be positively impressed by the significance of their contribution. Much more remarkable was the perseverance of most thinkers who opposed them, doggedly clinging to this or that verse in the Qur'an, to this or that interpretation of tradition (*hadith*).

Here, the work of Amal Ghazal is quite pertinent.¹² She examines the debate over slavery between the Salafi modernists and the traditionalist conservatives at the turn of the twentieth century. She shows how the modernists among the *ulema* in Egypt—men like Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, and the Syrian-born Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi—tried to change Islamic law and thinking by innovative reinterpretation of the scriptures (Arabic *ijtihad*). They were vehemently opposed by the majority of jurists and theologians, who clung to the literal understanding of the formative texts of

Islam (Arabic *taqlid*). The modernists were willing to recognize the value of European civilization and, therefore, went through some self-criticism with regard to enslavement. To the conservatives, “Europe was a wholesale evil; assimilating aspects of its modernity was to make a deal with the devil”, asserts Ghazal.¹³ They believed that attempts to interfere with the legality of slavery in Islamic societies stemmed from the west’s desire to weaken Islam and deprive it of the large number of converts produced through the slave trade.

Such pro-slavery advocates brought up some incredible arguments in defence of the institution and the practice. One was that bondage is economically, socially, and spiritually beneficial to the enslaved. The Muslim identity of the enslaved was all-important, dwarfing their identity as unfree; conversion was a God-sent blessing to those heathens, and a “ladder for spiritual and social satisfaction”, in Ghazal’s words.¹⁴ Government and court-enforced manumission was, thus, a curse that only worsened the lot of freed slaves. The basic concept of one of the leading anti-abolitionists, Yusuf al-Nabhani, was that God, “in his great knowledge about the affairs of the world”, allowed Muslims to own slaves “for reasons that might not be known to human beings”. To social conservatives and theological-legal literalists, the overriding argument was that, in Ghazal’s words, “[n]o previous interpretation of the *Qur’an* or the *hadith* had proposed abolition”, and based on the principle of uncompromisingly adhering to tradition, slavery “could not be reconsidered in light of a different historical context.”¹⁵

In fairness, and for the sake of giving credit to the few anti-slavery advocates in the Ottoman-Arab Middle East, let us briefly point out their brave efforts. Ghazal rightly believes that both modernists and conservatives were responding to “European criticism of slavery in Muslim societies and of the alleged role that the *Shari’a* had played in perpetuating and legitimizing slavery.”¹⁶ That is, there was no self-generating abolitionist discourse in Islamic societies to speak of, in contrast to what Clarence-Smith argues. Among conservatives, the response to western abolitionism was defensive and apologetic, seeing conspiracy to defeat Islam in every anti-slavery campaign. Islamic reformists, on the other hand, embraced the western human rights discourse and tried to anchor it in a developing and evolving reinterpretation of the scriptures and the law.¹⁷ Thus, for example, al-Kawakibi, who migrated to Egypt and was active there in the reformist group, condemned the Ottoman government for dragging its feet regarding the suppression of the slave trade and urged European powers to step up pressure on the Ottomans to stop what remained of the traffic.

He cites what is widely believed to have been the learned view of the renowned modernist authority Muhammad Abduh.¹⁸ In a detailed and reasoned opinion, Abduh comes down on the side of abolition, but he too recognizes that, given the Islamic legal and theological sanction that shields slavery, only a gradualist approach would be effective. His idea was to work

from the notion of Islamic humanism and build upon the mechanisms of manumission deployed and encouraged by Muslim law. Understanding that without sustained foreign, European pressure the Ottomans and other Muslim rulers would not act decisively to uproot slavery, he urged western nations to exert their influence and make specific abolitionist demands on such rulers. His most prominent disciple, Rashid Rida, added another argument: "Had Muslims and their rulers . . . followed the rules of the *shari'a*," he asserted, "slavery would have been abolished in the first century of Islam."¹⁹ Absolving Islam of the sin of slavery, he puts the blame at the doorstep of Muslims.

An almost completely opposite position to that espoused by Clarence-Smith's on the debate about Islamic abolition and anti-slavery is advocated by Madeline C. Zilfi, whose book *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire* takes a harsh and highly critical view of Ottoman and Islamic enslavement.²⁰ She points to the earliest attempt to abolish slavery in Tunisia, where the Ottoman governor-general, Ahmet Bey, outlawed enslavement in 1846. Despite *ulema* support, *à la longue* the prohibition was ineffective, and the practice resurfaced later and persisted well after the Bey's reign in that Ottoman province.²¹

Zilfi believes that slavery was inextricably intertwined with the very foundation of the Ottoman Empire as a Muslim, *Şariat*-bound entity, with the *ulema* as the guardians of that state-religion nexus and the interpreters of the Holy Law. Rightly observing that neither an abolitionist movement nor an anti-slavery discourse emerged in the Ottoman Empire, she turns to explain the intransigence of the imperial establishment over enslavement. The legal distinction between slave and free, she argues, was fundamental to *ulema* thinking and worldview, but higher-ranking members of that group were also personally implicated in slave-owning, often on an excessive scale.²² Thus, the pro-slavery stance of that key group of political and social actors in Ottoman societies was predicated on a vested socioeconomic interest in opposing abolition, in addition to a religious and legal justification.

Zilfi goes beyond the attitude of the *ulema* in explaining the resilience of Ottoman enslavement. Arguably overstating the foundational role of slavery within the Ottoman sociopolitical structure, she asserts that large groups of people benefitted economically from slavery and the slave trade—for example, "drovers, dealers, and the infrastructure of slave transport".²³ These groups "joined forces with the theological and cultural opposition in standing against abolition". To this she adds the vocal and often violent opposition to the suppression of the slave trade in the slaving ports of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, asserting that the Istanbul elites could not ignore them even if they themselves were less adamant in their support of enslavement and the traffic. At that, the issue became a litmus test of religious authority and political legitimacy. Zilfi is correct in stressing that, ultimately, "Ottoman dynastic legitimacy rested on its Islamic character."

Since enslavement was sanctioned by Islamic law and dogma, and figured in the life of the Prophet, overt rejection of it would have played into the hands of the *Tanzimat* critics, and of those who opposed the sultans and grand vezirs who led the reforms.

Anti-*Tanzimat* groups among the elite and the populace framed their opposition to abolition in terms of defending the sanctity of the family and the household, conflating the domains of religion and tradition; the ordained right was also presented as a necessity.²⁴ Arguments were put forth to the effect that only the intimacy enabled by the bond of enslavement could provide the needs of the Ottoman family, ensuring trust, unflagging loyalty, and the continuous social—and often also biological—reproduction of the elite household. Regardless of such rationales, Zilfi concludes, manumission was seen as a threat to the sociocultural and sociopolitical hierarchy in Ottoman society, which privileged the imperial elite. Still, households to which these observations pertained constituted only a small minority in Ottoman societies, with no more than 8 per cent of those in Istanbul having live-in servants—not all enslaved—in the nineteenth century.

In stark contradistinction to the language deployed by Clarence-Smith, who looks for traces, signs, hints of abolitionism or anti-slavery in Islamic societies, Zilfi uses the term “anti-abolitionism” to describe the type of discourse that prevailed in Ottoman elite circles. Furthermore, in tandem with the research and scholarship on enslavement and abolition in the Ottoman Empire and other Muslim-majority countries,²⁵ she shows that the main obstacle to abolition was the grounding of enslavement in Islamic soci-olegal and sociocultural tradition. Identifying enslavement as anchoring the Ottoman social order, she maintains that the enslaving elite defended the institution by linking it to “the moral authority of Islam and tradition”.²⁶ This, again, flies in the face of Clarence-Smith’s main line of argument—that is, that “Islam” was actually where the seeds of abolition resided and that anti-slavery began with the work of religious scholars and activists who objected to the dissonance created between scripture and practice.

Here it is worthwhile adding Hakan Erdem’s interesting and authoritative evaluation of Ottoman abolitionism and anti-slavery. His study looks at enslavement during the *Tanzimat* period, but also goes well beyond it into the period of the Young Turks from 1908, ending his account with the empire’s demise.²⁷ His contribution is important in a number of ways, but most of all in conveying a clear sense, gleaned from the sources, that Ottoman efforts to bring an end to enslavement lacked conviction and sincerity. Instead, they were more often a ploy to achieve another end, or serve another interest, than a reflection of genuine and honest commitment to abolitionism. Erdem points out the fact that all the leading *Tanzimat* reformers, including grand vezirs such as Reşit, Ali, and Fuat Paşas, owned slaves, and in many cases married enslaved Circassian women. Even

the most open advocate of anti-slavery, Grand Vezir Midhat Paşa, who pushed for abolitionist legislation in 1877—and was circumvented by Sultan Abdülhamit II—was himself implicated in the practice. He purchased his own wife, and in 1879, when governor-general of Syria, allegedly bought two Circassian women and sent them as a gift to an official whose influence he needed to court.²⁸

How, one may ask, could these men, who were a product of a slavery-saturated system, be expected to repudiate it and commit themselves to ending it? Only naturally, they agreed to limit certain aspects of the institution in order to retain the support of the British government, on which much of their foreign policy depended. So, they first separated slavery from the slave trade, then the slave trade in Africans from the traffic in Circassians. While they would not allow the British to challenge the legality of slavery itself, they did agree to prohibit the slave trade. Whereas they consented to outlaw the traffic in Africans, they refused to do the same with regard to the slave trade in Circassians, which fed the harem system and reproduced the governing elite household. Striking a cynical note, which conveys his doubts about the sincerity of the motivation behind the prohibition in the aftermath of the Crimean War and growing Ottoman dependence on Britain and France, Erdem writes: “One is left wondering what would have been the outcome if the Ottoman elite had the custom of inter-marriage with the blacks instead of the Circassians.”²⁹

Erdem points out that even the Young Turks, who were keen to project a liberal, modern, western-leaning image of their regime, could only improve on the previous administration by prohibiting the slave trade also in Circassians.³⁰ Concerned to cut public expenditure, they reduced the size of the imperial household and drastically cut the number of eunuchs; but they, too, did not feel they could tamper with the legality of enslavement itself. The reason for this, he asserts, in agreement with the scholarly consensus on the issue, was the protective umbrella bestowed upon enslavement by Islamic sanction and law. Although they revoked the established notion that “in the House of Islam, freedom is the basic principle” (Ottoman Turkish, *Dar-ül İslam’da hürriyet asl olmasıyla*), the young Turk government had to yield to the *Şeyhülislam’s* insistence that “slavery as an abstract, legal status (*rük*) was inviolable”.³¹ This meant that “wholesale abolition”, in Erdem’s words, would not be a viable option.

As for the Zilfi versus Clarence-Smith polarity on the issue of anti-slavery in Ottoman and Islamic societies, this chapter takes a position close, though not identical, to the views put forth by Zilfi. In the following pages, I shall try to explain the absence of any serious abolitionist movement or anti-slavery discourse in the Ottoman Empire and other Muslim-majority countries in the modern era. Rather than looking for blame, the discussion will centre on the perception of enslavement in Islamic societies and the role slavery played in them.

The meaning and implications of non-abolitionism

It has already been established in the literature that, while there were certainly some anti-slavery voices in Islamic societies in the last two centuries, these were too weak to produce serious, influential abolitionist movements. The few arguments that have been put forth to the contrary are mostly ahistorical, apologetic, defensive, and fed by a political agenda that has little to do with a scholarly study of history. But the very existence of Islamic non- or anti-abolition calls for an explanation. Enslavement and the entire system that supported it have got themselves a bad name from the nineteenth century to the present; in tandem, the fight to abolish slavery and the anti-slavery discourse have attained a privileged position as embodying the common good. In more recent times, the human rights discourse has added anti-slavery to its agenda and extended its status as the yardstick by which governments, states, societies, and cultures are morally judged. Hence, those who retained slavery until late, had no strong abolitionist movements, and even equivocated on the legitimacy of human bondage, fell short of the mark; they have consequently incurred strong criticism and outright condemnation.

In the rhetoric that still pervades the international community, torn as it is between Huntington's clash of civilizations and Fukuyama's end of history, Muslims—as individuals and as communities—often find themselves on the defensive. This trend has increased dramatically since the 9/11 terror attacks of 2001; it has been countermanded by a campaign to stop what is called “Islamophobia”. Muslims had not only to offer explanations for the dismal human rights record of many Muslim-majority countries, but also to exonerate a past of enslavement, and very late and often partial abolition, both anchored in Islamic scriptures and backed by the defenders of the faith—the *ulema*. Partly, this was done in a manner that harks back to the apologetic polemics of the nineteenth century, when Atlantic abolitionism was emerging and anti-slavery campaigns were beginning to target Islamic states such as the Ottoman Empire.

The Islamic apologia regarding enslavement dates back to the early European attempts to conduce the Ottoman government to abolish slavery.³² One may characterize the counter-arguments produced by Ottoman defenders of human bondage as denial. Since the main points in this debate have already been discussed some three decades ago, there is no reason to repeat them in this chapter. Suffice it here to reiterate that the main thrust of the Ottoman—and by extension also the Islamic—position was that there was no comparison between the then and later pervasive model of enslavement—that is, Atlantic plantation slavery, and bondage in Islamic societies. Although there were many exceptions to the rule, the “Atlantic model” conjured up in the minds of people an extreme image of mostly male, African, agricultural, gang-driven, unfree labour, a form of

dehumanized domination of rich white men over marginalized, enslaved black persons. This, the Ottoman and Islamic apologists argued, could not be farther from the realities experienced by enslaved men and women in Islamic societies.

It is therefore quite interesting to look at the case of the Moro Muslim societies of the southern Philippines when, at the turn of the twentieth century, post-emancipation American imperialism crossed the path of local enslavement.³³ Michael Salman cites Governor William Howard Taft, later President of the United States, in his annual report of October 1901, as he describes slavery among the Moros in the provinces of Sulu and Mindanao³⁴:

Slavery was “widespread among the Moros, but . . . in an extremely mild form” . . . Most [slaves] were “treated kindly,” could earn money to redeem themselves, and they could not be distinguished from their masters by a “casual observer.” At bottom, “Moro slaves were, on the whole, so well satisfied in their present lot that if they were all set free the majority of them would promptly return to their old masters and voluntarily take up their old life again.”

Although Taft distanced himself from a pro-slavery stance, he advocated gradual abolition—which he believed would take a generation—for fear of arousing violent opposition from the local Moro population.

American administrators on the ground in the southern Philippines were directly impressed by how deeply engrained and relentlessly entrenched slavery was in those Muslim communities. In one case of harbouring fugitive slaves in 1902, their owner, the Sultan of Sulu, protested strongly to the commander of the Jolo port town Colonel William Wallace.³⁵ His arguments in defence of his proprietary rights asserted that the seven family members in question were his slaves since their birth, and that they belonged to him “according to Moro law, custom and the Mohammedan religion”. He added that “to have this property taken away from us would mean a great [pecuniary, ERT] loss”. Salman rightly observes that the statement clearly shows how deep the commitment to the institution ran in Sulu, as it was “mediated through law, custom, and religion”, while also having high economic value. Americans had to constantly ask themselves how far they could safely go towards protecting runaway slaves and promoting emancipation, while still managing to keep the peace and retain the goodwill of the local population.

Thus, the United States government in both the Philippines and Washington was faced with the same problem that abolitionists in Europe had to deal with when launching anti-slavery campaigns that targeted Islamic societies such as the Ottoman Empire. In order to maintain a mild policy of gradual abolition, American colonial officials needed to espouse and convey a mild image of Muslim enslavement, as Taft’s report clearly shows.³⁶ As Michael Salman aptly describes it, American officials from the

secretary of war to the military officers and civil administrators on the ground justified their gradualist approach, and their reluctance to take more decisive action against Moro enslavement, by accepting the view that it was incomparable to the American version of plantation slavery with which they were familiar at home. Impressed by the seeming absence of the racial element, as by the enslaved–enslaver proximity in the domestic situation, these officials reached a typically “Ottoman” conclusion: “The *mild character* of the so-called slavery among the Sulus [my italics]”, observed a senior US cabinet member, did not change the anti-slavery position of his government but rather the methods applied to effect it.³⁷

The French experience with enslavement in the Sahara oases of Algeria was quite similar, although their administrators—compared with the American ones—had fewer compunctions about turning a blind eye to realities in order to secure local cooperation with their rule.³⁸ Stationed in Constantine as division commandant during the 1890s, General de la Roque was keen to ensure that French expansion into the hinterland was favourably received by the tribal societies of the oases. He conducted meetings with their leaders and came to realize how important slavery was to them economically and socially. Aware of the abolitionist policy of the French government, such leaders demanded that there be no interference with their customs regarding enslavement and stressed that the issue of master–slave relations was “of the utmost importance to us”.³⁹

In 1894, the governor-general agreed to de la Roque’s request to confirm that France “will respect the . . . relations between masters and slaves” of the Ouled Mokhtar in the area of Tidikelt.⁴⁰ In 1896, another leader, ben Kouider, negotiated with the same official and tried to convince him that servile realities in that region did not fall under the definition of slavery as conceived by the 1848 French abolition. There is no slave market, he argued, no sales of persons take place, and they are merely “Negroes . . . [who are] nearly all born in the area . . . have houses, villages . . . [and] work for us.” The attempt to convey a benign image of servitude was belied by the fact that ben Kouider actually came to Constantine to retrieve his own slaves who ran away. Once again, the enslaved themselves, through their actions, here by absconding with stolen camels to the French-controlled north for their freedom, proved that slavery was not a mild, voluntary labour arrangement but real bondage.

However, unlike the American officials in the Philippines, or the officials of the Ottoman *Tanzimat*-state, the French governor-general chose to return the enslaved fugitives to ben Kouider, from whom they had escaped. Benjamin Claude Brower points out that although this high-ranking representative of France in Algeria knew that his order to send back the enslaved men “violated the spirit of the 1848 abolition”, he justified his decision by arguing that the runaways were “after all only thieves”.⁴¹ He adds that the Saharan notables, who served as the primary informants of the French, had “a vested interest in misrepresenting social realities”.⁴² At the same time, the

colonial officials “often shared the same goals as the slave owners”—that is, an interest in entrenching French rule and minimizing points of friction and tension with the local population. How complex the French interest was is amply demonstrated by the fact that—simultaneously—some colonial officers tried rather to court the slaves by offering protection and jobs to runaways. This they did in order to gain their support for French expansion into yet unconquered areas, such as the Gourara.⁴³

The so-called mild nature of Muslim enslavement was as far from realities in the Muslim parts of the Philippines or in the Algero-Sahara as it was in the Ottoman Empire. The struggle between runaway slaves and their masters, Salman argues, was “inexplicable within the official colonial image of ‘mild slavery’”.⁴⁴ However, the need to keep the Muslims in the south in check while the war of conquest still continued in the north conduced American officials towards a cleansed concept of Moro enslavement. Within that concept, the harsh realities of being enslaved were “screened out”, or redefined as “familiar tensions within acceptable norms of hierarchy, subordination, and servitude”. A midway solution for the Americans on the ground was to harbour enslaved fugitives and offer compensation to the owners for manumission. In the Ottoman Empire, too, the issue of absconding was truly revealing of the way enslaved persons viewed the “mildness” of bondage. Displaying also other means of resistance, violent and non-violent, enslaved Ottomans convinced the *Tanzimat*-state to come to their rescue and ameliorate their condition through manumission and social protection.⁴⁵

However, on the polemics level, when Muslim writers defended enslavement in their societies, they sought to project a totally different image of the realities enslaved persons had to cope with.⁴⁶ They emphasized domestic, household, mainly female slavery as the predominant form of bondage, and depicted that as being “part of the family”, a benign mode of belonging to a patron, the head of the household, one of a number of ways that attached people to those social-political-economic units. The practice of concubinage, common in elite households, was portrayed as an intimate arrangement that enabled enslaved women to join good Muslim families and be integrated, together with their offspring, into secure and respectable households. That realities for the enslaved were far from being “mild” has been amply documented and cogently argued.⁴⁷ However, Muslim defenders of slavery not only denied any resemblance between the Atlantic model and Islamic realities but even rejected the use of the term “slavery” in reference to their societies. The wall they thus erected served them to repel foreign pressures as violation of the privacy and intimacy of the Muslim family. It also effectively prevented the emergence of any home-grown abolitionist movement and stifled any anti-slavery discourse.

In a way, this is surprising, since the debate and struggle over abolition in the Atlantic world revolved around the crucial issue of status—legal and

social. The moral right of human beings to live in freedom and not be owned by another person was at the heart of it all. Yet in Islamic societies it seems that the issue has almost been lost, with the following questions taking centre stage: the nature of bondage (that is, how mild or harsh it is); the treatment of enslaved persons; the rescue of “uncivilized people” from paganism and delivering to them “the light of Islam”; and how much enslavement forms part of a legitimate patronage system. Although the presumption of freedom (*al-asl huwwa 'l-hurriyya*) was the basic principle in scripture and law right from the early, formative days of the new religion, ways have always been too easily found to skirt and interpret it away, so that slavery would persist. To resolve that apparent incongruity, scholars of Islamic enslavement have offered several explanations, ranging from the structural to the sociocultural and economic.

Clarence-Smith goes for a grand structural stroke. He believes that, at least in part, the geographic position of “Islam across the great arid zone of the Old World provided the environmental conditions that produced opposition to the penetration of new ideas.”⁴⁸ His other explanation is that “a certain reluctance to let go of slavery also stems from a broader salience of traditionalism and literalism, in a faith which often perceives itself as singled out for persecution by a triumphant West”. These are, of course, huge arguments, too large for a modest historian to deconstruct or vindicate on the basis of empiric data; the time and space dimensions are simply too large to seriously debate the issue. Instead, it is easier to point out that many Islamic societies are not part of the great arid zone, nor do many others share similar environmental conditions. Indeed, not a few Islamic societies have shown themselves during various periods of their history to welcome, internalize, digest, and improve on new ideas. In fact, by absorbing new scientific and philosophical ideas, such Muslim societies preserved ancient European traditions and rescued them from oblivion.

Rejecting innovations because of traditionalism and literalism is a more current accusation that is levelled against Muslim and other non-western societies, but it, too, is way too broad to be properly and effectively addressed by inductive historians. The argument is fairly frequently made with regard to pastoralist and even village communities in remote and out-of-the-way regions, but it is quite problematic when applied to urban centres such as Istanbul and other major Ottoman cities. Those contained highly diverse populations with a fascinating religious and ethnic mixture, often quite cosmopolitan, and in many cases hosting European and Asian merchant communities. To speak of such cities in the nineteenth century—that is, when they had to embrace or reject anti-slavery—as traditional and literal is, shall we say, a tad misleading. As for the issue of the Islamic faith feeling persecuted by a successful and rising west, Muslim states such as the Ottoman Empire certainly felt besieged by European military might, technological prowess, and economic power, but they never accepted that the

west had any moral, ethical, cultural, or religious superiority over Islamic values and social norms.

So, we are still left with the need to explain why serious anti-slavery discourse or abolitionist movements never emerged in the socioculturally sophisticated urban centres of the Ottoman Middle East and North Africa, or for that matter elsewhere in the Islamic world. As we have already seen, Zilfi believes that slavery was a fundamental institution in Ottoman society, deeply entrenched in its social, political, and economic fabric. She is therefore hardly surprised to see how strong the resistance to abolition was in the empire. Enslavement, she writes, “was culturally and institutionally integral to both state and society”, and the ruling elites, like in the United States, were the main enslavers.⁴⁹ Hence, “its legitimacy was defended and its demise resisted, at least in some quarters, until the empire’s end”. So, in other words, the reason for the absence of Ottoman abolitionism lies in the vested interest that major elements in Ottoman societies had in the retention of slavery. Zilfi thus places herself at the opposite pole to Clarence-Smith’s; whereas he is arguing for outside, determinist factors, she favours an internal, sociopolitical and economic explanation.

The Tunisian scholar Abdelhamid Larguèche is closer to Zilfi’s position, as he asserts that Ottoman-Tunisian enslavement survived for so long because it was a constitutive part of the elite lifestyle.⁵⁰ Indeed, there can hardly be any doubt that among the elites of the imperial capital, as among the Ottoman-local elites that imitated their lifestyle, ownership of enslaved persons was an important status symbol and a conspicuous stratifier of elite households empirewide. The ubiquity of enslaved servants in these households—as opposed to the more than 90 per cent of the population who did not acquire them—was a means to convey opulence to one’s social peers, and harem slavery, including the limited and prestigious employment of eunuchs, facilitated the gender segregation that marked and re-inforced the hierarchical order of Ottoman households. In stressing the role of slavery as mainly a sociocultural resource in Ottoman societies, Larguèche plays down the economic value that is central to Zilfi’s argument. This will allow me in the remaining section of this chapter to restate—with some updated nuances—my earlier explanation⁵¹ of the abolitionist void in Ottoman and Islamic societies.

Conclusion

The very question of abolition is a problematic aspect to pursue as part of the history of enslavement in Islamic societies and has always been difficult to investigate. Much of the well-known polemics pitted a self-righteous, enlightened-liberal Occident against a denial-ridden, defensive, and apologetic Orient. One discourse was moralizing, patronizing, fault-finding, while the other was seeking to redefine the very notion of bondage and to recast

the issues as value-free sociocultural difference. Unfortunately, no real dialogue between the two discourses evolved since much was believed to be at stake—the very reputation of civilizations as humane and virtuous versus inhumane and barbaric. It is not the “facts” themselves that should be unearthed; rather, all sides need to face the evidence and own up to the implications of what the sources tell us. Lamentably, as long as the disputes are inextricably bound to religious and national sentiments, not much will be gained by researching anti-slavery across cultural-religious barriers.

So what do we have thus far? It is fairly clear that, despite some exceptional and brave voices, Islamic societies did not produce either an anti-slavery debate or abolitionist movements. Enslavement disappeared from the Middle East and North Africa, and the Muslim-majority countries beyond only very late in modern history, in some cases even after the middle of the twentieth century. The debates that did take place around the legitimacy of slavery were triggered and nourished by European abolitionist pressures and an anti-slavery moral challenge. The strong legal and religious sanction enjoyed by enslavement in Islamic societies stifled the emergence of any serious self-generated, internally produced anti-slavery thought and action. But why, one may legitimately ask, were not the *ulema*—the moral and legal leaders—the ones to act like their Christian counterparts, who actually spearheaded anti-slavery and abolitionism in the Atlantic world?

In trying to answer this complex question, we must not fall into the trap of arguing that Christianity is somehow morally superior to Islam, a notion that is not only highly polemical but also impossible to establish in historical terms. Instead, we should look for sociocultural explanations that address both the types of enslavement that were practised in Islamic societies and the ways by which elites in those societies were implicated in slavery, as individuals and as groups. Therein lay the difference between enslavement in the Atlantic world on the one hand and slavery in the Muslim societies of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean worlds on the other.⁵² To illustrate these points, I shall use the case of enslavement in the Ottoman Empire, which offers the most detailed and best-researched area of Islamic slavery studies to date.

Unlike Atlantic world societies, where enslavement of Africans prevailed from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, in the societies of the Ottoman Empire and the Indian Ocean world, Africans were not the only enslaved people. Plantation slavery existed in the empire only until the seventeenth century, although agricultural bondage was practised in certain regions in the second half of the nineteenth century, mainly in Egypt, and among the Circassians who were forced by the Russians out of the Caucasus and into the Ottoman Empire. However, by and large, the most common form of Ottoman enslavement was domestic, with both Africans and Circassians serving in elite households. Beyond performing the usual services required of enslaved Africans women in such households, Circassian

and Georgian women were also used as concubines and often absorbed into the family through child bearing—with or without marriage. Although some African women, too, were integrated via concubinage, Ottoman and Ottoman-local elite reproduction through enslaved Circassian women was far more common.

In the age of Atlantic world abolition, the Ottoman sultans and leading members of their governing elite were more often than not children of enslaved women from the Caucasus, and much of the domestic work in their households was performed by enslaved African women. Thus the race and gender complexity of Ottoman slavery created a unique entanglement: the very men who were expected to oppose and abolish it were not merely involved in it, which was also the case in the Atlantic world, but also the biological and social product of that servile system. Their response to European abolitionist pressures was therefore ambiguous and self-contradictory. Elsewhere I have called it a bifurcated view that yielded a split-up reaction; it worked on both the group and individual levels in the manner discussed hereafter.⁵³

When the demand to abolish all types of enslavement was put forth, the Ottoman elite response was that *kul/harem* slavery—or military-administrative elite bondage—was not really a form of slavery but rather a recruitment, socialization, and reproduction system that did not carry any of the features or the stigma associated with Atlantic enslavement. At the same time, state officeholders and intellectuals would admit that the enslavement of Africans and their forced transportation into the empire constituted a humanitarian problem, inflicting hardships and high mortality on the enslaved. Because the suppression of the slave trade in Africans was an uncompromising British demand, the Ottomans were willing to prohibit that traffic in 1857, and later even allowed European powers—albeit reluctantly—to monitor compliance inland and enforce the prohibition at sea.

Domestically, the Ottoman imperial elite were prepared to acknowledge only that a mild and socially benign form of African enslavement existed, removed though it was, they maintained, from the Atlantic modes of slavery. However, the administration insisted that it was impossible to abolish the practice outright or immediately, as this would generate strong opposition from conservative *ulema* and slaveholding groups. Rather, they argued, slavery would gradually disappear by stopping further supplies from reaching the Ottoman market, and through the Islamic mechanism of pious manumission. In the west, however, this dual approach was not acceptable, and European abolitionists rejected the distinction made between different types of enslaved persons; Ottoman gradualism, though, was seen as a pragmatic compromise solution to that lingering, aching problem.

When all is said and done, then, we are left with an overwhelmingly socio-cultural explanation for the absence of abolitionism and anti-slavery in the

Ottoman Empire. Even if we accept Zilfi's argument that slavery played a greater economic role than had previously been thought, still it would be a real stretch to see its contribution to Ottoman societies as primarily economic. In a way, we may have been posing the wrong question all along. Perhaps the proper question should have been: why did western abolitionists and their governments expect the Ottomans—and other Islamic ruling elites—to abolish an institution that not only appeared to have been different from enslavement in the Atlantic world but also was so deeply engrained in the social fabric of the Ottoman elite household and the society of which it was such a central and constitutive element? The conflicting views of the Other, the unrealistic expectation from that Other, and the deep convictions on both sides, all form the story of non-abolition, or perhaps even anti-abolition, in the Ottoman Middle East and North Africa.

Notes

1. For British attempts to intervene against Ottoman enslavement, see Ehud R. Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade and Its Suppression, 1840–1890* (Princeton, NJ, 1982), pp. 91–147, 193–237, 249–78.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 268–78.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 240–8.
4. Ehud R. Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (New Haven, CT and London, 2007), pp. 108–52.
5. For example, the case of the Atlantic abolitionist movement, as reflected in a recent CFP: Special issue of the *Journal of Atlantic Studies* (Spring, 2011) on the topic “Abolitionist Places”, posted to *H-SLAVERY*, 20 Jan. 2010 by Martha Schoolman.
6. William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (London, 2006). See my review article that covers the book: Ehud R. Toledano, “Enslavement and abolition in Muslim societies”, *Journal of African History*, 48 (2007), pp. 481–5.
7. Clarence-Smith, *Islam*, p. 1. For “Muslim writers” he cites two examples of works dated 1998 and 2000.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 195–218.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 211–15.
12. Amal N. Ghazal, “Debating slavery and abolition in the Arab Middle East”, in Behnaz A. Mirzai, Ismael Musah Montana and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Slavery, Islam and Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ, 2009), pp. 139–54.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
14. Quotes in this paragraph are from *ibid.*, p. 143.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 146–50.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 146–8.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
20. Madeline Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design of Difference* (New York, 2010).

21. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 222–3.
23. Quotes in this paragraph are from *ibid.*, p. 224.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 225–6.
25. See Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, and Y. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800–1909* (New York, 1996).
26. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
27. Erdem, *Slavery*, pp. 125–88.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 128–32.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 147–51.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 150, and also p. 188.
32. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, pp. 126 ff.; Zilfi, *Women*, pp. 97–8.
33. This is dealt with perceptibly and convincingly by Michael Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines* (Berkeley, CA, 2001), pp. 59–119.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 77–8.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 79–81.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 83–8.
38. Benjamin Claude Brower, “The servile populations of the Algerian Sahara, 1850–1900”, in Mirzai, Montana and Lovejoy, eds., *Slavery*, pp. 169–91, especially 174–85.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
45. Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 112–34.
47. Most recently, this has been done by Zilfi, *Women*. My own views of the actual nature of Ottoman and Islamic enslavement have evolved from a more lenient assessment to a position close to Zilfi’s, as already published in 2007, in Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 2007.
48. Clarence-Smith, *Islam*, p. 219.
49. Zilfi, *Women*, p. 100.
50. *L’abolition de l’esclavage en Tunisie à travers les archives, 1841–1846* (Tunis: Alif, Société tunisienne d’étude du XVIIIème siècle, 1990), pp. 37 ff.
51. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, pp. 126–34.
52. For more on the latter, see Ehud R. Toledano, ed., *African Communities in Asia and the Mediterranean: Identities between Integration and Conflict* (Trenton, NJ, 2011).
53. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, pp. 112–34.

7

Anti-slavery in Spain and Its Colonies, 1808–86

Christopher Schmidt-Nowara

The French overthrow of the Spanish monarchy in 1808 set the stage for the first major challenges to colonial slavery in Spanish America. These challenges came not through pressure from an organized abolitionist movement, like the British one that had forced the suppression of the slave traffic in the same era, but from a combination of political and social changes put in motion by warfare in the colonies. Though there were formal expressions of abolitionism by Spaniards and Americans during this revolutionary crisis, the most important actors were slaves, who responded to the call for troops in the colonies by enlisting in both royalist and patriot armies in exchange for their freedom. Thus, in Venezuela, New Granada, Peru, and the River Plate colonies, protracted warfare effectively crippled slavery.¹

Slavery did not, however, disappear from the Spanish world. Though Spain had lost the majority of its overseas empire by the 1820s, it retained two American colonies, Cuba and Puerto Rico, which were undergoing plantation revolutions. Cuba would become the largest plantation society in Spain's colonial history, as the slave trade continued to flow to the island until its final suppression in 1867. Much of the slave traffic was carried out illegally, as Spain had signed a treaty in 1817 with Britain to bring it to a close. Given the centrality of Cuba's plantation complex to Spanish colonial fortunes, metropolitan officials, merchants, and planters conspired to keep the slave trade alive and well.²

Though Spaniards had voiced opposition to the Cuban slave trade during the resistance to French rule between 1808 and 1814, expressions of anti-slavery were more muted from the 1820s until the 1860s. One reason for this apparent lack of concern was the commitment of Spanish political and economic elites to protecting and benefitting from slave trafficking and plantation slavery.³ Nonetheless, attacks on slavery and the traffic did surface in this period, both in Spain and in the colonies. Slave rebellions like the Aponte Rebellion of 1812 or the Conspiracy of La Escalera of 1843 in Cuba were persistent features of colonial society. In Spain, Barcelona was a

centre of agitation because of its contentious class politics and its elite's close connections to the colonial slave complex.⁴

What brought anti-slavery and abolitionism to life was, once again, war. Civil war and slave emancipation in the United States shook the geopolitics of slavery in the Americas. American abolitionist propaganda found a surprisingly avid reception in Spain during this period, leading ultimately to the formation of the Spanish Abolitionist Society in 1865. Though the Society had moderate ambitions at the beginning—effective suppression of the slave trade and the gradual, compensated abolition of slavery—it acquired more radical goals, immediate abolition, in response to the outbreak of anti-colonial rebellions in Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1868. The Cuban uprising took hold in the eastern end of the island and disrupted slavery throughout the colony. In response to the uprising and to the spread of abolitionism in the metropole, the Spanish government initiated a gradual emancipation process that would culminate with the abolition of Puerto Rican slavery in 1873 and the abolition of Cuban slavery in 1886. The government leaned heavily towards the interests of slave-owners, though the actions of slaves and abolitionists in the colonies often pushed the impact of the laws far beyond the intentions of officials and planters.

Slavery and the slave trade in the late Spanish Empire

African slavery was practically as old as Spain's Atlantic empire. Since the late Middle Ages the Iberians had explored, conquered, settled, and set up trading posts in the eastern Atlantic. The Portuguese were at the fore, settling Madeira, the Cape Verde Islands, the Azores, and, in the sixteenth century, São Tomé. They also established factories along the west coast of Africa and, beginning in the mid-fifteenth century, pioneered the slave trade to their insular possessions and to the Iberian Peninsula. The Castilians also had Atlantic ambitions, centred on conquering and settling the Canary Islands. However, at this early date, the two Iberian colonizing powers diverged. In the Treaty of Alcaçovas of 1479, Portugal recognized Castilian control of the Canaries, while Castile ceded exploration and settlement of the African coast to the Portuguese. This agreement that would shape the development of slavery in the Americas, as the Portuguese forged a close connection to Africa, with profound consequences for Brazil, while the Spanish remained aloof from the slave trade until a very late period.

During the early process of colonization in the Caribbean and Tierra Firme, the Spanish settlers sought to enslave the indigenous population but they also requested of the Crown permission to import African slaves beginning in the early sixteenth century. The Crown acceded but placed significant controls over the slave trade to the Spanish Indies. Instead of free trade, it set quotas for the number of slaves who could be carried to the colonies, and farmed out licences and monopoly contracts (the *asiento*) to foreign

merchants. In the late sixteenth century, the Portuguese were granted the *asiento* when Spain's Philip II also became the ruler of Portugal. This period (1580–1640) witnessed a surge in the number of slaves brought to the Spanish colonies, principally to Mexico and Peru, the great centres of Spain's American empire.⁵

Though slave trafficking and slavery were important to the Spanish Empire, they were less important to the fortunes of empire than the domination of the indigenous population, which formed the backbone of the mining industry. Slaves filled many positions in the colonial economies, as agricultural labourers, soldiers, skilled workers, and domestic servants, but they were peripheral to the major extractive industries. Moreover, from the era of conquest until the later eighteenth century, the plantation was a minor institution in colonial Spanish America, a sharp contrast to the Portuguese, British, and French colonial empires that relied primarily on slave-worked plantations as their sources of wealth.

This imperial division changed in the late eighteenth century when Caribbean planters and the Spanish monarchy sought to develop plantation agriculture.⁶ Cacao planters in Venezuela, and sugar and coffee planters in Cuba and Louisiana saw the possibility of expanding the plantation frontier but ran up against the Spanish policy of a controlled, regulated slave trade. They demanded more slaves and the Crown was more receptive to their interests. The Seven Years War had exposed weaknesses in Spain's American empire (the British capture of Havana in 1762) and, as part of their efforts to rejuvenate imperial defences, the Spanish Bourbons improved fortifications, raised more troops, and expanded the naval forces. To pay for these reforms, the Bourbons tentatively deregulated aspects of the imperial economy, though, when it came to the slave trade, they were bolder. In 1789 they removed the restrictions on the slave trade so that any ship could enter Havana or other Caribbean ports if it was carrying slaves. Spanish and American traders could also mount slaving expeditions to Africa or buy slaves in neighbouring colonies, such as Jamaica. Slavery and plantations expanded dramatically in the Spanish Caribbean, nowhere more than in Cuba, which between the late eighteenth century and the suppression of the slave trade in 1867 received almost 800,000 enslaved Africans. With this bountiful supply of enslaved workers, Cuban and Spanish planters pushed the frontiers of sugar cultivation deep into the hinterlands of Havana and throughout the west-central areas of the island.⁷

Slavery, revolution, and retrenchment

Yet even as the Spanish Empire committed to slavery and the plantation economy, anti-slavery burst onto the scene, destroying slavery in many parts of the empire as Americans struggled for their independence in the early nineteenth century.

The event that triggered the demise of slavery and colonialism in much of Spanish America was the overthrow of the Spanish monarchy by the French in 1808. The Spanish ruler Charles IV and his heir, Ferdinand, capitulated to Napoleon Bonaparte in 1808 but other Spaniards resisted the new rulers. The country was submerged in a violent resistance to the occupying force between 1808 and 1814 as Spanish patriots gathered first in Seville and then in Cádiz to form a new government in the monarch's absence.⁸

At Cádiz, peninsular and American delegates drafted a constitution, which was ratified in 1812. This sought to redefine the relationship between the peninsula and the overseas colonies, transforming the latter into provinces of a global Spanish nation. But events in the colonies quickly demonstrated the limits of this undertaking. The liquidation of the Bourbon monarchy threw the colonial political order into turmoil, which the Cádiz constitution only exacerbated. Buenos Aires, Caracas, Cartagena, and other colonial centres formed governing assemblies in the belief that in the monarch's absence, self-governing municipalities assumed political power. As the opportunities for compromise between Cádiz and the American *juntas* receded, many Spanish American patriots saw this as the moment to fight for independence, making decisions that unintentionally led to slavery's destruction in most of the colonies.

The Caracas junta's rupture from Spain showed that as in other Atlantic revolutions, the fate of slavery would figure in the independence struggle in Spanish South America. Upon receiving news of the captivity of the Bourbon rulers, Caracas elites declared their opposition to the French and formed a local junta that would govern in the absence of the legitimate monarch. Within the governing coalition were strong advocates of independence, including Simón Bolívar, a wealthy planter from an old Creole family, who ultimately prevailed upon their colleagues to declare Venezuela's independence in 1811. The Venezuelan constitution of that year spoke directly to the question of slavery and reflected the interests of the dominant economic and social groups. Among its provisions was a distinction between active and passive citizens. Only those possessing substantial property would enjoy the vote. The new regime declared the slave trade abolished—the hope of receiving recognition from Britain dictated the necessity of such a ban—but took no action against slavery itself. Thus, while enshrining liberty, the first champions of Venezuelan independence understood that only some would exercise it fully: those with property, often in slaves.⁹

But the oligarchs' ambitions consistently foundered against the changing social reality of colonies at war. The independence wars threatened the interests of slaveholders throughout Spanish America because they gave enslaved people opportunities for liberation. The most important development was war itself. Spain struck back at colonial rebels after the restoration of the Bourbon monarch Ferdinand VII in 1814, temporarily reconquering Chile, Peru, New Granada, and Venezuela. As warfare spread, so did the need for

troops on both sides, giving slaves significant leverage that would upset the edifice of colonial slavery.¹⁰

Royalist and patriotic forces mobilized slaves to fight on their sides during the years of warfare on the South American continent. Royalists could draw on old precedents by promising freedom in exchange for a term of military service. Such a compromise recognized the basic legitimacy of slavery in Spanish America, while also honouring the mechanisms for acquiring freedom enshrined in Spanish law. Patriot armies resorted to the same tactic. Many of the leaders, like Bolívar in Venezuela, were slave-owners who hoped to maintain the status quo. But patriot armies found it impossible to defend the persistence of slavery in the context of liberal and republican aspirations and the breakdown of traditional forms of order. As the liberators fought back against Spain and gradually achieved independence in the 1820s, they had to acknowledge that years of warfare, and demands for liberation and equality from the slaves and free blacks serving in the military, had weakened slavery and colonial-era racial hierarchies. Political leaders drafted constitutions that did away with the explicit discrimination and segregation that Spain's 1812 constitution upheld. Colour and lineage would no longer be criteria for active citizenship. The new states also suppressed the slave trade (under great pressure from Britain) and passed emancipation laws. Even though these laws in the main Spanish American slaveholding countries—Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru—were of a decidedly gradual nature and would not end slavery until mid-century, they nonetheless differed significantly from Spain's commitment to slave trafficking and slaveholding.

Abolition became a political issue after independence. Liberal parties attacked slavery as a relic of Spanish rule. In regions such as Cauca in Colombia, abolitionism was a way to attract electoral support among free blacks. A Liberal Party leader observed that "the slaves who lose their chains bring to society gratitude for the government that has lifted the yoke off them".¹¹ Such alliances reflected how the wars for independence had changed attitudes towards slavery in Spanish American societies. These were not slaveholding republics like the United States but republics committed to "racial harmony", as a recent study of independent Colombia has shown. After independence, slaveholders held onto their property as best they could but they could not convince the majority that slavery was still legitimate.¹²

Spanish colonialism survived in Cuba and Puerto Rico; so did slavery. Expressions of anti-slavery sentiment had circulated in Spain during the resistance to the French occupation and the drafting of the 1812 constitution in Cádiz. But the heavy weight of opinion, and wealth, in Havana, and the new influence of Spanish slave traders and commercial interests, dampened any opposition before it could take hold.

During the Spanish American revolutions and in the aftermath of independence, planters and slavers in Cuba and Puerto Rico continued to

construct productive plantation economies. In 1817 the restored monarchy of Ferdinand VII reached an accord to ban the slave trade to its colonies by 1820. However, the treaty had little effect on the flow of slaves, as Cuba imported more than at any other time in the 1820s and 1830s.¹³

Moreover, with the loss of the mainland American colonies, Spaniards constructed a new relationship with the remaining insular possessions.¹⁴ They asserted greater political control through the office of the captain general. In the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Creoles had exercised considerable influence locally and in Madrid. By the 1820s they found their influence on the wane. The greater metropolitan presence was also felt in various aspects of the plantation economy. Spanish merchants dominated trade and credit. They also became major slavers, using their access to the captain general in Havana to organize the now illegal traffic. Finally, immigrants from Spain, such as the well-known Basque slaver Julián Zulueta, became major *hacendados* in their own right.

In addition to greater Spanish control, the islands, especially Cuba, underwent major economic changes based not only on the steady importation of enslaved workers but also on large investments in modern technology that expanded the sugar frontier. By the 1830s, steam-driven mills for grinding sugar cane were to be found on many plantations. Planters would continue to invest in industrial equipment so that they could process and refine sugar on a massive scale. To carry suitable amounts of cane, they also constructed a network of railways that connected the fields to the mill and the plantations to the major ports and markets. Cubans and Spaniards opened more territory to cultivation and plantations of enormous scale.¹⁵

Resistance to the plantation complex took many forms but it was generally unable to impede the progress of the planters and their allies. The Aponte Rebellion of 1812 in Cuba joined slaves and free blacks who felt the loss of freedom in the developing plantation society. In Spain, anti-slavery tracts by enlightened Spaniards, such as Joseph Blanco White and Isidoro de Antillón, circulated in the 1810s and 1820s. Revolutionaries and Protestants in Barcelona kept alive connections with British abolitionists in the 1830s and 1840s. Yet these protests against the new colonial order in the Caribbean had little effect on the slave trade and the spread of plantations, as the colonial and metropolitan elite and the government remained firmly committed and willing to use great force to quell any opposition.

Anti-slavery and abolition, 1865–86

The American Civil War and slave emancipation had a major effect on slavery, and anti-slavery, in the Hispanic world. One consequence was the formation of a significant anti-slavery movement in Spain. Within Spanish political circles, the American Civil War became a rallying point for domestic opposition to the monarchy of Isabel II and its increasingly dictatorial

political allies. Among those liberals and republicans in opposition, there was widespread admiration for the republican Abraham Lincoln and sympathy for the goal of abolishing slavery. Indeed, from the beginning, Spanish advocates believed the north would triumph sooner by immediately abolishing slavery. A recent study of the image of the president in Spain has found that Lincoln the emancipator was more revered than Lincoln the saviour of the union.¹⁶

This outburst of support for Lincoln and anti-slavery in newspapers, poems, and banquets was not completely unprecedented. Already in the 1850s, American anti-slavery was finding a warm welcome in Spain, including *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the most frequently translated work in the nineteenth century, and one also pirated and adapted to other media, such as the theatre.¹⁷ At the end of the civil war in 1865, Spanish and Puerto Rican liberals and republicans founded the Spanish Abolitionist Society, which consciously adopted Anglo-American forms of organization and agitation, including public meetings, petition campaigns, regional chapters, and an ample presence in print through a periodical, *El Abolicionista Español*, and numerous pamphlets and collections of essays and poems about slavery. From its founding until the abolition of Cuban slavery in 1886, the anti-slavery movement would play a significant role in pressing the Spanish colonial state to bring Antillean slavery to an end, though its influence waxed and waned during those two decades.¹⁸

Among its founders were Puerto Rican reformers active in Madrid. In Puerto Rico, the sugar economy had stagnated at mid-century and the slave population had actually declined, a set of circumstances quite different from those in Cuba, where sugar and slavery were still on the rise. Some Puerto Ricans thus actively advocated for abolition as the best way to modernize the colony's economy.¹⁹

In Madrid they found a network of reformers, mostly lawyers, engineers, and university professors, and many involved in the left-of-centre monarchical and republican parties, who had also formed associations dedicated to various causes, including free trade, education for women, and workers' rights. Among these associations were the Free Society of Political Economy and the Association for Tariff Reform, which took the British free trader Richard Cobden and his style of agitation as exemplars.²⁰ This Madrid model of association and publicity, inspired by British ideas and institutions, provided the vehicle for abolitionism in its initial incarnation.²¹

It soon became clear that even a moderate abolitionist movement was going to provoke opposition. At the end of the American Civil War, the Spanish government convened a consultative body to advise it on reforms in the colonies, including slavery and labour. The representatives from Puerto Rico, who were all abolitionists, terrified their Cuban counterparts by demanding immediate abolition in Puerto Rico. The Cubans, who were closely connected to the planter elite, recoiled from such a plan, fearing

what it might mean for their own homeland. As one of the Cuban representatives wrote to a planter, “The Puerto Ricans’ motion has put us in a compromised situation. If we remain silent, some will interpret it as acquiescence to immediate abolition which in Cuba would be more than absurd and cruel; it would be a direct attack on civilization and the homeland.”²²

The Cubans had the support of the Spanish state, which wanted to control abolition to as great a degree as possible. However, what neither the planter class nor the government reckoned with was a series of uprisings in the colonies and the metropole that radically altered the political landscape. In Cuba and Puerto Rico, discontented small planters and other groups led rebellions against Spanish rule in the fall of 1868. The colonial regime suppressed the Puerto Rican rising quickly but the Cuban one took root in the more remote eastern provinces of the island. Though it did not directly undermine slavery on the great western sugar plantations, it did throw slavery into question. As had happened in Spanish America in the 1810s and 1820s, slaves in the combat zones fled to the insurgent forces in search of liberation. Their initiatives turned the rebellion against slavery and forced the hand of the Spanish government.²³ Moreover, the government was now quite different. An uprising in the peninsula in September of 1868 had forced the Bourbon ruler, Isabel II, to flee into exile. In her stead was a provisional government that included liberal parties, some with republican aspirations. Many abolitionists who had worked on the fringes of political power before 1868 now found themselves at the centre. Abolitionism was suddenly on the rise.

The initial response of Spain’s revolutionary government was to pass a gradual emancipation law in 1870, the Moret Law, which took its name from the minister of overseas provinces (*ministro de ultramar*), Segismundo Moret y Prendergast, a young lawyer who was active in Madrid reformist circles before 1868 and was a member of the Spanish Abolitionist Society. The gradualist law was meant to appease Cuban planters who still relied on enslaved labour on their sugar plantations. It liberated the elderly and the newborn, though the latter had to serve their mother’s owner until reaching adulthood. Many slaves did achieve freedom through the law but many remained bound to plantations. In the event, the government faced opposition from recalcitrant Cuban planters and their peninsular allies, who feared any disruption of the colonial market. For instance, a lobbying group for Catalan business interests that opposed abolition predicted ruin for Catalonia should the revolutionary government act against slavery. Slave emancipation “would be the death knell for those distant and rich countries as an integral part of the national territory, and thus as consumer markets for the majority of the goods produced in this Principality as well as for its shipping”.²⁴ Conversely, abolitionists criticized their erstwhile colleague Moret for being too timid. In their view, the rebellion in Cuba was a crisis that could be resolved only by immediately abolishing slavery and

thus winning the loyalty of the freed slaves. The most prominent abolitionist of the era, the lawyer Rafael María de Labra (who was born in Cuba but raised and educated in Madrid), early on declared: “slavery has died in our Antilles”. Immediate abolition would recognize that reality and forge a new bond between the metropole and the colonial populace.²⁵

Abolitionists and conservative defenders of colonial slavery squared off in the peninsula during the revolutionary regime (1868–74). They both organized public rallies and parades, orchestrated large petition campaigns that gathered thousands of signatures to pressure the Spanish Cortes, and published newspapers, pamphlets, and broadsheets to influence opinion, not only in Madrid but also in major economic and political centres, such as Barcelona and Seville, and in smaller cities with close ties to the colonial economy, like Santander in Cantabria and Vilanova y la Geltrú in Catalonia. The abolitionist groups, many of whose members were in key governmental positions during these years, gained a significant victory when the government abolished Puerto Rican slavery in 1873 (though freed slaves had to sign three-year contracts, postponing full freedom until 1876). Conservatives, however, headed off further action against Cuban slavery. In 1874, Spanish generals deposed the revolutionary government, and in 1875, in cooperation with major political figures on the Spanish right, they oversaw the restoration of the Bourbons in the person of Isabel II’s son, Alfonso XII.

The political climate that had facilitated a radical abolitionist movement in Spain was now over but abolitionism did not disappear from the scene. The Cuban Rebellion wore on until 1878. One of the measures that the victorious Spanish general, Arsenio Martínez Campos, agreed to was the liberation of those slaves who had fought in the conflict. In Spain, the restored monarchy passed a new law for Cuba in 1880 that reached more deeply into slave society, unintentionally empowering many enslaved men and women to take advantage of the new measures to denounce their owners’ abuses and to claim freedom for themselves or family members. So quickly did slavery decline that the Cortes abolished it in 1886, two years earlier than planned in the 1880 law.²⁶ Spanish abolitionists took part in these decisions, though their ability to organize and to speak freely in the press suffered in the early years of the Restoration. By the 1880s, though, they were once more making parliamentary speeches, holding rallies, publishing their newspaper, and printing pamphlets that denounced abuses by Cuban planters.²⁷ After emancipation, many remained active in colonial politics and some, most notably Labra, advocated equal political and civil rights for ex-slaves in the colonies.

Conclusions

Anti-slavery in the Hispanic world arose from a colonial setting that differed in important ways from that of the British. When the Society for

Effecting the Suppression of the Slave Trade began agitating in Britain in 1787, British shipping was a dominant force in the transatlantic slave trade and the West Indian colonies were great centres of plantation production. In contrast, the Spanish Empire since the sixteenth century had relied on the coercion of indigenous workers in its mining centres in Mexico and Peru. African slavery was important in the Spanish colonies but plantation production was minimal, especially when compared with the British, French, and Portuguese regimes. Moreover, since the era of colonization, the Spanish monarchy had relied on foreign slavers, including British slavers, for much of the eighteenth century, to provide captives to its colonies. This situation was reversed over the next 20 years. Britain suppressed the slave trade to its colonies, while Spain for the first time removed its traditional controls and unleashed Spanish and American slavers on the coasts of Africa and the slave societies of the Caribbean. As a consequence, Cuba became a thriving plantation society, worked by hundreds of thousands of enslaved labourers.

But even as slavery became more central to Spanish colonial fortunes, anti-slavery gained ground, not in the form of abolitionist societies but through the actions of slaves during the wars of independence in Spanish America in the 1810s and 1820s. Flight from slavery, demands for freedom, political necessity, and pressure from the British government and the Royal Navy produced a wave of abolition laws in Spanish America soon after independence. Though these laws were gradual, there was no going back to the era of colonial slavery.

Anti-colonial warfare also decisively shaped the course of abolition and anti-slavery later in the century in what remained of the Spanish Empire. This time, an outpouring of anti-slavery (and pro-slavery) sentiment and a well-organized abolitionist movement (and anti-abolitionist movement) in the metropole responded to and interacted with colonial initiatives. What had changed? Most significantly, slavery itself had changed, becoming more entrenched and pervasive in the last American colonies. When Spaniards read translations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, they could imagine similar scenarios on the plantations of Cuba and responded with equal outrage. Such was not necessarily the case at the end of the eighteenth century when British anti-slavery arose because the plantation was still a peripheral institution in the Spanish colonies and foreigners, not Spaniards, controlled the slave trade. But in the 1860s, Spaniards such as Julián Zulueta and the Marquis of Manzanedo were the most notorious slave traders to Cuba, while the sugar plantation was at the centre of Spain's colonial empire. In mobilizing to agitate against colonial slavery, Spanish and Antillean abolitionists borrowed significantly from their Anglo-American counterparts in their strategies of organization and rhetoric, and their public interventions. Nonetheless, they were acting within and upon a distinct political and economic situation. Rebellion in Cuba in 1868 struck a blow against slavery. The abolitionists recognized the crisis that the rebellion had opened up and proposed immediate

action not only to free the slaves of Cuba and Puerto Rico but also to retain the islands as the last remnants of Spain's American empire.

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Notes

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8

The Anti-slave Trade Campaign in Europe, 1888–90

William Mulligan

The Brussels Conference Act of 1890 is a footnote in nineteenth-century imperial history. Its proclaimed aims—to eradicate the slave trade, to prohibit the importation of arms, and to regulate the consumption of liquor in Africa—seem either cynical or naïve when viewed in the context of the violent wars, brutal labour regimes, and economic exploitation which characterized the European conquest of Africa. Given that its promises and spirit were honoured more in the breach than in the observance, the gathering of the diplomats from Europe, the United States, and leading Muslim powers in Brussels in late 1889 and 1890 appears to have been little more than a talking shop. Yet the event in Brussels was significant in that it was the first diplomatic meeting of the major European powers devoted solely to the suppression of the slave trade. Diplomats recognized that the conference had a different character to the other great diplomatic set-pieces of the late nineteenth century: the Congress of Berlin in 1878 and the conference on the partition of Africa in Berlin in 1884/5.¹ The Brussels Conference resulted from a brief, but intense, popular anti-slave trade campaign in Europe in 1888 and 1889. Its legacy in putting anti-slavery issues on the international political agenda was evident in the 1926 League of Nations Slavery Convention, which noted that the “signatories of the General Act of the Brussels Conference declared that they were equally animated by the firm desire to put an end to the traffic in African slaves”.

Despite its relevance to issues as wide-ranging as imperial, religious, labour, and intellectual history, historians have largely ignored the event. The only full-length study of the Brussels Conference, by Suzanne Miers, argues that the event and its origins were shaped primarily by a narrow national interest. Governments paid lip-service to humanitarian goals in order to legitimize their imperial aims. Miers pays little attention to the popular anti-slavery campaign set in motion by the French cardinal and founder of the White Fathers missionary order, Lavigerie.² Francois Renault, himself a priest in the White Fathers Order, wrote a two-volume

biography of Lavigerie, the second part of which was devoted to the anti-slavery campaign in 1888 and 1889. He showed how Lavigerie's initial, though admittedly hazy, concept of an international crusade foundered as national anti-slavery groups and governments asserted their primacy. Although he succeeded in stimulating anti-slavery activities throughout Europe, the French cleric had become an outsider by the time the diplomats gathered in Brussels in November 1889.³ In his survey of abolitionism, Seymour Drescher argued that popular pressure on European governments was essential to the suppression of the slave trade and slavery in Africa. The Brussels Conference, he concluded, "minted anti-slavery as the gold standard of Western civilization".⁴

In an era of aggressive nationalism and racism, it was remarkable that there was sufficient common ground around Europe to sustain an anti-slavery campaign, leading to an international conference.⁵ The popular campaign in the late 1880s showed how different European religious, national, and political cultures could coalesce around an anti-slavery agenda.⁶ European empires shared a self-proclaimed civilizing mission, which was threatened by non-European societies, notably the Muslim powers in Africa, such as the Mahdi, the Senoussi, and Arab slave traders. It goes without saying that European empires violated their own norms, but one of the legacies of the anti-slavery campaign of the late 1880s was to bequeath a language and values against which the behaviour of European empires could be measured and found wanting. In an era when increasingly rigid conceptions of race shaped European attitudes to African and Asian societies, a language of common humanity informed the anti-slavery campaign. While Miers and Renault have stressed the primacy of the national in the anti-slavery campaigns of the late 1880s, national politics could exist alongside and sustain a transnational debate, which stressed a variety of common Christian, humanitarian, and racist beliefs. The leading figures in the anti-slavery campaign believed deeply in their own nation's particular mission, but they were also prepared to cooperate with anti-slavery groups in other countries. National movements provided the building blocks for an international campaign. Their efforts also utilized pre-existing networks of associations and formed new ones. These associations operated at a national level and cooperated at an international level, providing an institutional basis and shared vocabulary, which led to the establishment of the diplomatic conference in Brussels in 1889 and 1890. Without the pressure of the popular movement, European governments would have taken little or no concerted action to suppress the slave trade.

While there was almost unanimity that European powers had a moral duty to suppress the slave trade, there was less agreement on the means of achieving this goal. Although many leading abolitionists argued that the humanitarian goal of ending the slave trade required humanitarian and peaceful means, others considered the use of violence to be justified.

Undoubtedly the anti-slave trade campaign provided an alibi for imperial expansion. Yet it is worth considering the extent to which genuinely held humanitarian conviction could lead to violent intervention. While there has been renewed interest in the cultural assumptions, such as race and gender, shaping the European imperial encounter with African and Asian societies, historians have yet to excavate the relationship between the civilizing mission and violence.⁷ Instead of viewing violence and humanitarianism as polar opposites, an examination of the anti-slave trade campaign in the late 1880s demonstrates the existence of a small, but influential, group of “violent humanitarians”.⁸

* * *

The surge in popular support in Britain, France, and Germany for anti-slave trade politics in the late 1880s was rooted in their specific national and imperial circumstances. The success of Lavigerie’s campaign depended in large part on the resonance of anti-slavery issues with other popular preoccupations, such as missionary activities, geographic exploration, colonial expansion, and commercial interests. In contrast to the anti-slavery movement in Britain in the 1830s and 1840s, the coalition that supported Lavigerie in the late 1880s drew on very diverse interests, for which anti-slavery themes acted as a conceptual umbrella. One of Lavigerie’s most significant achievements was to give these disparate national, confessional, and commercial interests a wider European context, which, in turn, increased the resonance of anti-slave trade politics among the leading colonial powers. The relationship between abolitionist ideals and other concerns was both symbiotic and contingent. This allowed the anti-slave trade issue to seize the popular imagination briefly, if intensely, in late 1888 and 1889, but it did not provide the basis for a sustained, popular movement.

Britain had a long-standing tradition of anti-slavery campaigns, which provided the institutional basis and moral language for the movement in 1888. Before Lavigerie’s visit to London, the Anti-Slavery Society (ASS) tended to flit from issue to issue. As a tightly knit interest group, this worked well, but it could not capture popular opinion, and contemporaries believed that the anti-slavery movement in general was on the wane. Increasingly the Society focussed its concerns on the slave trade in Africa.⁹ For example, it petitioned Lord Salisbury, the prime minister, to place a steamship on Lake Nyasa and to support British consular efforts in East Africa. Committee members were perturbed by African converts’ continued ownership of slaves, which undermined the argument that Christianity had the moral power to eradicate slavery. In fact, conversion strategies had tolerated and worked with the grain of social institutions throughout Africa, including slave ownership. Missionaries had argued that conversion to Christianity would provide the moral basis for the abolition of slavery.

This would constitute the moral force of the word rather than the use of military means. By the late 1880s, these hopes had foundered. Charles Allen, secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, sent Edward Benson, the archbishop of Canterbury, a memorandum in October 1887. Drawing on resolutions passed by the World's Anti-Slavery Conventions of 1840 and 1843, which stated that slavery was "intrinsicly opposed to all natural justice and genuine Christianity", the Anti-Slavery Society urged Anglican missionary groups not to receive slaveholders as full members of the church.¹⁰ Benson sent the memorandum to the Church Missionary Society, which took more than nine months to conclude that the issue "demands constant circumspection and delicate treatment".¹¹ Yet the Anti-Slavery Society found little popular interest in these issues and failed to make any significant progress. By the summer of 1888, members wondered whether it would need to amalgamate with the Aborigines Protection Society in order to invigorate its purpose.¹²

The roots of the anti-slavery movement in Germany were very different. For a start there was no anti-slavery society in the Kaiserreich in early 1888. Popular anti-slavery was located largely in the nascent German colonial movement, Protestant missionary groups, and the Catholic milieu, though for different reasons. The German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, had engaged briefly with the colonial movement in 1884 and 1885, but it lacked a popular base. In 1888, popular interest in African affairs in Germany centred mainly on whether Emin Pacha, a German convert to Islam and explorer in central Africa, was still alive. Henry Stanley had launched an expedition to find him but he too was apparently lost and presumed dead. Initially the Emin Pacha Relief Expedition projects were unrelated to anti-slavery policy. In cities around Germany, local dignitaries set up Emin Pacha committees.¹³ Only in the autumn of 1888 did the German Colonial Society fuse Emin Pacha as a symbol of European civilization with the wider anti-slavery movement. These committees, along with established Catholic networks in the Rhineland, provided the basis for a more widespread anti-slavery campaign from October 1888. For Catholics, participation in colonial projects demonstrated their loyalty to the Reich, following the bitterness of the *Kulturkampf*.

In France, as in Germany, anti-slavery issues were largely irrelevant to colonial, missionary, and popular politics in the late 1880s.¹⁴ Indeed, the anti-slavery movement had been much more elitist in France than in Britain.¹⁵ The conflict between the Catholic church and the Third Republic provided a significant context for the rise of anti-slavery politics in France. "Every step made by the European mind", wrote Victor Hugo, "has been in spite of it [the Catholic Church]. Its history is written in the annals of human progress, but it is written on the reverse side."¹⁶ Empire provided, Daughton argues, a space within which the church and republican state had to, and did, cooperate. The civilizing mission, in its Christian and liberal variants,

enabled both sides to accommodate each other's values and interests, albeit uneasily. For Lavigerie, slavery was an impediment to his missionaries, an affront to Christian values, and a political opportunity to reconcile church and state. By championing the anti-slavery cause, the church could pose as modern and a defender of human liberty.¹⁷

The only common trace of anti-slavery sentiment across Western Europe in 1888 was restrained joy at the abolition of slavery in Brazil.¹⁸ Its significance lay in the fact that Brazil was the last Christian country to abolish slavery, giving an impetus and edge to the association of Christian progress and abolitionism. "The abolition of slavery in Brazil, so peacefully and triumphantly obtained, is the crowning stone of that great edifice built up by Christian Nations, as a perpetual memorial of the equal rights of men, of whatever colour or nation", declared the Anti-Slavery Society in its congratulatory address to Joaquim Nabuco, the Brazilian abolitionist. "It is with feelings of thankfulness and satisfaction that the committee see the last blot on the escutcheon of Christianity wiped out for ever by this noble action of Brazil."¹⁹ Abolition in Brazil was taken as a sign of the perpetual progress inscribed in Christian and European culture. On this reading, Christian and European societies had the moral, economic, and political resources to end the slave trade and slavery without external intervention; other societies did not. Slavery was now an institution, which existed beyond Christian borders. The world was divided, on this reading, into a progressive, Christian, and European part and an uncivilized, barbaric part, characterized by the existence of slavery and the slave trade. The implication was that slavery was an essential element of non-Christian cultures, which could only be eradicated by the spread of Christian and European values. Lavigerie saw an opportunity to craft a more ambitious anti-slavery message. Rather than merely congratulating the Brazilian bishops, he urged Pope Leo XIII to direct the attention of European Catholics to the persistence of slavery in Africa.²⁰

Lavigerie, and not the pope, took the leading role in instigating a campaign throughout Western Europe. The British campaigner Horace Waller recognized the "impetus" which Lavigerie gave to the popularity of the anti-slavery movement, and the opportunity for developing and creating international networks.²¹ A charismatic figure, the French cardinal spoke in Paris, London, and Brussels. In each city he crafted his message to the local audience, while locating his message in the wider context of Christian and European progress, which in turn connected with various colonial projects. His speech at Saint-Sulpice in Paris on 1 July 1888 set the broad outlines, which dominated the popular debates over the coming months. He began by exposing the horrors of the slave trade in Africa. He did not shy away from depicting the suffering of slaves in great detail, seeking to elicit the empathy of his audience for African men, women, and children. He combined inflated statistics about the number of deaths resulting from the slave trade with individual stories. He claimed that 2 million Africans died each

year in treks to captivity. The slavers had cut the hands and feet off one woman, leaving her to be eaten by hyenas. Another pregnant woman was shot in the stomach in the presence of a priest, who then administered the last rites. Speakers considered these stories to be important as they made the distant suffering more relevant to their European audiences. Having painted this picture of the African slave trade, he then called for the revival of chivalric orders to defend the weak and oppressed. In one version of the speech, printed in *Le Temps*, his call was directed at Christians and non-Christians alike to join in the defence of humanity.²²

His speeches in London and Brussels developed the themes of shared sympathy, Christian and European duty, and the right to intervene in Africa. At the Prince's Hall in London, Lavigerie—joined on the platform by Cardinal Manning, the Archbishop of Westminster; Waller; Bishop Smythies, bishop of Zanzibar and East Africa; and members of the Anti-Slavery Society—spoke in French but placed his campaign in a British context. While the slave trade had existed from time immemorial, no other nation, he assured his audience, had done more than Britain to suppress it "since that the memorable day when under a tree at Holwood, Mr Wilberforce gave to Mr Pitt the famous pledge which he so nobly afterwards redeemed". He reiterated the duty of the strong to help the weak and the legitimacy of intervention on the grounds of "human law". Moreover, "it was the bounden duty of the nations of Europe", he declared, "who have partitioned out Africa amongst themselves, to undertake the work at once; should the Governments refuse it must be done by the people". Lord Granville, the former Liberal foreign secretary, who chaired the meeting, noted that despite confessional, national, and political differences, "they all agreed that slavery and the slave trade were contrary to the law of natural and revealed religion, and hateful in the sight of God". "Liberty", "justice", and "humanity" provided the political vocabulary which united the different strands of the nascent anti-slave trade campaign.²³ In Brussels at the Church of Saint Gudule, Lavigerie argued that modern Belgians had a duty to join the anti-slave trade crusade, just as their forefathers, such as Godfrey of Bouillon, had gone on crusade in the Middle Ages.²⁴

Lavigerie did not visit Germany, on the grounds that the presence of a French Catholic cardinal would hinder the anti-slave trade campaign in the Reich. News crossed borders easily, making it impossible for either German Catholics or the German Colonial Association to ignore Lavigerie's message. The *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* noted the speed of the transmission of ideas, though it warned of the dangers of Lavigerie's calls for a modern crusading order. While Carl Peters claimed that the German explorer Colonel Wissmann had spoken about similar themes to the Royal Geographical Society in London in June 1888 and therefore paved the way for Lavigerie's successful campaign, it was the French cardinal who stimulated this anti-slave trade campaign in Britain. Lavigerie's speech was reported in

regional newspapers in Liverpool, Aberdeen, Leeds, Glasgow, Dublin, and Birmingham, while only the *Leeds Mercury* carried a short notice about Wissmann's arrival in Britain. By August 1889 the German Anti-Slavery Society claimed to have 551 local committees.²⁵

The popular debate in Britain, France, Germany, and, to a lesser extent, Belgium, coalesced around a number of common themes and identities—common humanity, Christianity, Europeanness—that transcended national and confessional boundaries. These identities were both inclusive and exclusive in that they bound Europeans and Africans but also excluded certain groups, such as Muslims and Arabs. The universal claims of common humanity went hand in hand with hierarchical relations. European Christians were the self-proclaimed defenders of common humanity, acting on behalf of weak and ignorant African societies against brutal slave traders, often synonymous with Muslims and Arabs. Therefore the universal claims of liberalism legitimized violent humanitarianism. The public in each country were well informed about the progress of the anti-slave trade campaign in other countries. Competitive humanitarianism between different national and confessional groups helped to stimulate the anti-slave trade campaign across Western Europe.

It should be noted that the extension of abolition to Africa was not self-evident. A version of cultural relativism, commercial benefit, and political interest suggested a policy of non-interference in the social institution of slavery and the slave trade. Statesmen, scholars, and businessmen were among those who argued that slavery was essential to the fabric of African society. Joseph Chailley, a French expert on international law and founder of the Institut Colonial International in 1893, lamented that the anti-slavery campaigners were confused and had little understanding of African society.²⁶ Others warned that the abolition of slavery had led to economic collapse on previous occasions and would do so again, owing to labour shortages.²⁷ There were also political restraints, as governments feared alienating local potentates by suppressing the slave trade. Salisbury showed some energy in negotiating an anti-slave trade convention with Turkey, but in his private letters to the ambassador in Constantinople, Austen Layard, he only occasionally referred to anti-slavery policy, generally tacking on a single sentence at the end.²⁸ He was cautious about abolishing slavery in Zanzibar, fearing it would provoke a Muslim revolt against Britain in Africa and India.²⁹

As Lynn Hunt has pointed out for the eighteenth century, the emergence of a new sensibility, of pity and sympathy for other humans, was an essential element in the development of ideas about human rights. An appeal to a common humanity had been central to the emotional purchase of Lavigerie on his audiences. The creation of a sympathetic connection between the European audience and the African slave was much more important than abstract notions of rights. Jules Simon, the French republican, organized a meeting at the Sorbonne in February 1889, during which he underlined the

emotional impact of stories about the African slave trade, which enabled Europeans to connect with the campaign. The article reported that Simon made a “superb oration”, describing a raid on an African village by Muslim slave traders and the subsequent trek to captivity, during which the slaves died from thirst, hunger, and exhaustion. He deployed the image of a mother carrying her newly born on the verge of collapse, at which point the Arab slave trader descended from his camel to shoot the infant.³⁰ At the conference in Brussels, Lord Vivian displayed the slave fork to his fellow diplomats. “His Lordship fairly horrified his listeners with a full description of this terrible instrument of torture”, noted the *Northern Echo*, “and the ‘object lesson’ was probably more efficacious than any eloquence could have been.”³¹ The slave fork was a staple part of many anti-slavery meetings. It was part of a conscious effort to appeal to European sensibilities. At a meeting of the Leeds Young Man Christian Association, Captain E. Stubbs of the Royal Navy illustrated his lecture “by means of views shown on a screen by the limelight, and these brought vividly before the audience the horrors of the trade both as seen during the journey from the centre of Africa to the coast and on board the slave ships and dhows”.³²

The concept of a shared humanity provided the broadest possible basis for the anti-slave trade campaign. In its appeal in late September 1888, the French Anti-Slavery Society declared: “Our cause is that on which all men with a heart agree. In effect it is simply the cause of justice and humanity, without any other view for any party or interest.”³³ The claims of humanity were considered to stand beyond the realm of political conflict. French charges that Britain planned to exploit the right of search to assert its maritime supremacy were dismissed on the grounds that the Brussels Conference had a purely humanitarian purpose. Allen argued that the campaign “has resulted in the present gathering on a purely humanitarian basis and I trust that the non-political character of the conference will be maintained”.³⁴ In its editorial a few days later, the *Birmingham Daily Post* argued that “the cause of humanity will be hopeless if to the inevitable obstacles [in Africa] there are added any which arise from national jealousies or from a mistaken sense of dignity”.³⁵ During the Reichstag debates over military measures in East Africa to suppress a revolt, allegedly started by Arab slave traders against German rule, Count Julius von Mirbach, a Conservative deputy, declared the humanitarian goals of the expedition, as opposed to the support of German business interests and the German East Africa Company, to be of overriding importance.³⁶

Only in a few instances was the anti-slave trade campaign located in the traditions of the French Revolution and the rights of man. Unsurprisingly, French republicans saw the suppression of slavery as the culmination of a process begun in the late eighteenth century. The French Revolution, argued Simon, rendered the signal service that no law could infringe liberty and therefore no man could enjoy property rights to the body of

another human being.³⁷ Yet explicit references to the rights of man and the French Revolution were rare and even proved divisive. When, for example, the French government refused to cooperate with the Anglo-German naval blockade, the *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* offered a withering assessment of French humanitarian claims: “In view of the centenary celebrations of the Revolution, which will occur next year, this refusal of the French is a peculiar illustration of their claim to march at the head of civilisation, a claim never acknowledged by us and asserted by them with less and less justice.”³⁸

The language of common humanity owed more to the sensibility for human suffering that had emerged in the late eighteenth century than to the political rights, which were embodied in the declaration of the rights of man during the French Revolution. When, for example, Buxton used the phrase “the rights and liberties of man”, he did not specify exactly what these rights and liberties were.³⁹ Nor did other anti-slave trade campaigners. These rights were implicit in their criticism of slavery and the slave trade. In the context of the relationship between the abolitionist movement in the nineteenth century and the development of human rights, those rights were limited to certain social and economic rights—the right to one’s own labour, the right to undisturbed family life, and freedom from violent and unjust attack. Slavery and the slave trade disrupted these rights by depriving people of earnings from their labour, dividing families, and inflicting arbitrary and illegal pain. Campaigning for the right of “common humanity” under the guise of the anti-slave trade banner did not extend to granting political rights, which had been associated with the rights of man, as articulated in the American and French revolutions.

There was a violent and exclusive edge to this notion of common humanity. Groups that did not uphold the values of common humanity, which had been professed by self-anointed advocates in Europe, were liable to punishment. In November 1889 the Anti-Slavery Society pressed the Brussels Conference to declare slave traders pirates, who could be punished under international law as “enemies of the human race”. In an editorial supportive of German military intervention in East Africa, the *Manchester Guardian* declared:

In the face of a widespread cancer like this it is time for the European powers to forget any possible rivalries, and to endeavour that any resources they are disposed to expend upon Central Africa shall be devoted to the furtherance of a common end, and to the cause of mercy and humanity.⁴⁰

There was scepticism about some humanitarian claims, however, especially those made by Bismarck and other German politicians about the Reich’s civilizing mission in East Africa. In November 1888, Lord Salisbury agreed that the Royal Navy would support the German naval blockade in East Africa, which aimed to cut off the supply of arms to those fighting

against the newly arrived German colonists. His attempt to frame this support for Germany as part of a common humanitarian enterprise was given little credence in the provincial and liberal press in Britain. The *Pall Mall Gazette* noted that “very few will believe that this acceptance of German cooperation is as innocent as it appears to be”, while the *Western Mail* mocked the idea that Bismarck was a “disinterested champion of humanity”.⁴¹

Humanity in this iteration was located in a Christian and European heritage. Given the prominence of missionary groups and the Catholic church in the campaign, the Christian dimension was at the forefront in each country. It enabled Protestant and Catholic anti-slavery campaigners to agree on the Christian imperative and duty underlying the suppression of the slave trade. In Germany, where confessional differences between Protestant and Catholic Churches were especially deep following the *Kulturkampf*, the anti-slave trade campaign offered a moment of Christian unity. The leader of the Catholic Centre Party, Ludwig Windhorst, set aside his qualms about German commercial interests in East Africa to support the anti-slavery campaign and demonstrate the loyalty of German Catholics to the Reich.⁴² The editor of *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, a paper hostile to the Catholic church, considered the anti-slave trade meeting in the Bavarian capital a symbol of the “brilliant unanimity of all parties and confessions” in support of “one of the most important demands of humanity”.⁴³ The heart of the German anti-slave trade movement was in the Rhineland and centred on Cologne. On 27 October, the Catholic archbishop of Cologne, Krementz, organized a meeting in the suburb of Gürzenich, attended by local notables from both confessions. The Protestant businessman Eugen Langen opened proceedings, while Oskar Hamm, an important figure in trying to reconcile the two confessions, spoke at length.⁴⁴ While the German Colonial Society in the Rhineland was largely Protestant, a number of important Catholics were also members. Both confessions retained their own institutional identities while cooperating on the anti-slave trade campaign.⁴⁵ In Britain the confessional divide between Protestant and Catholic was less significant, though the presence of Church of England bishops at Lavigerie’s speech in London was carefully choreographed, a sign both of Christian unity and Protestant concern that the Catholic church might steal its anti-slave trade clothing.⁴⁶

Christian unity was also sustained by depicting the anti-slave trade campaign as a struggle between Christian and Muslim values.⁴⁷ The *Standard* recognized the differences between slave systems in Muslim and Christian societies, but insisted nonetheless that there was a fundamental controversy between the two religions over “whether human beings shall make slaves of their fellow creatures”.⁴⁸ Adolf Stoecker, court chaplain, Christian socialist, and anti-Semite, told the Reichstag that the question of slavery in North and Central Africa represented a broader conflict between the

Muslim and the Christian worldview...Gentlemen, Africa is not the only place where this is the case. In other countries—I am thinking of Sumatra—Muslim and Christian outposts face each other. Therefore it is about whether the crescent or Christendom will triumph. Therefore I believe that we should not forget the religious background, the Christian principle, which we represent, and the Muslim principle, which is represented by the enemy.⁴⁹

Carl Peters lamented the obstacles, which Muslim Arabs placed in the way of Christian cultural progress in Africa.⁵⁰ Following the Reichstag's vote of 2 million marks for Wissmann's expedition to East Africa, *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* claimed that it was Germany's duty to cooperate with "other Christian powers in the struggle with these irreconcilable enemies of Christendom and European civilisation".⁵¹ Others had a more nuanced view, shaped in part by political and commercial interests. Charles Allen and other members of the pacifistically inclined Anti-Slavery Society feared that the violent language directed at Muslims would lead to military confrontation.⁵² The Ottoman government rejected Lavigerie's criticism of the Muslim religion, pointed to Christian complicity in slavery and the slave trade, and claimed that Islam was better suited than Christianity to the project of civilizing African societies.⁵³

While the language of Christian cooperation was essential in forging a sense of unity at the outset of the campaign, suspicions between the confessions persisted. No new anti-slavery society emerged to provide an institutional link between the two confessions. The Anti-Slavery Committee, founded to fund an anti-slavery expedition led by Wissmann, was dominated by Protestant businessmen and state officials, while Catholics tended to use their own organizations, such as the *Afrikaverein deutscher Katholiken*, to generate support for the anti-slave trade campaign.⁵⁴ The language of Christian unity was undermined when one or other confession was perceived as exploiting the anti-slave trade campaign for their own ends. In particular, Protestant missionary associations feared the Catholic church would marginalize them. The confessional divide came to the fore when Lavigerie tried to organize a conference in Lucerne, which would have been dominated by Catholic anti-slavery groups. While the Anti-Slavery Society was willing to participate, Waller considered the event to be "awkwardly arranged", while the German Colonial Society criticised Lavigerie for exploiting the anti-slave trade campaign to promote narrow Catholic and French interests.⁵⁵ In Germany, following Wissmann's praise of Catholic missionaries, leading Protestant writers, such as Theodor Brecht and Gustav Warnecke, derided the claims of the Catholic church to leadership of the anti-slavery movement. Brecht argued that only the Protestant churches had the capacity to fulfil the ambitions of the abolitionist movement. The Catholic church (and the French revolutionary tradition, for that matter)

had inherent tyrannical and enslaving interests, according to these German Protestant critics.⁵⁶ In France the subscriptions lists for the Anti-Slavery Society were dominated by the Catholic elite, though members of the secular associations with colonial interests, such as the Society of Geography of Paris, were represented.⁵⁷

In the context of intense imperial rivalries, one of the most striking features of the anti-slave trade campaign was its claim to being a European project.⁵⁸ The Europeanization of the campaign was closely related to its Christian dimension but it had its own vocabulary and logic. Hamm claimed that no other “international and interconfessional issue” had attracted so much popular enthusiasm among the “peoples of Europe” since the Crusades.⁵⁹ This Europeanization of the anti-slave trade campaign was rooted in the perceived fragility and vulnerability of the European presence in the colonies, the implied duties of a colonial great power, and the desire to minimize friction. “The slave trade will never be finally rooted out unless and until the traders are made to realise that they are enemies of mankind”, wrote the editor of the *Daily News*, “who will be hunted down and exterminated wherever they are found. But to produce this state of things requires European cooperation.”⁶⁰ To a certain extent this call for European unity was an implied criticism of French unwillingness to cooperate in previous anti-slave trade agreements. Disunity accentuated the challenges of conducting an effective campaign against slave traders. Distance, climate, and scarce resources made European governments aware of the vulnerability of their presence in Africa.⁶¹ Welcoming the decision of the great powers to hold their conference in Brussels, the *Scotsman* editorial noted that in the past, Britain had assumed the sole burden of the “humanitarian mission”. “It is fitting”, the editorial argued,

that at this period in Africa's history those nations directly concerned in her welfare should confer together for the purpose of determining concerted action for the suppression of the slave trade and the introduction of European influence into the heart of that Continent . . . The slave traders are a common enemy, whom all should unite in suppressing.⁶²

The identification of great power status and the civilizing mission was accentuated in the German debate. In contrast to their counterparts in Britain and France, German colonial enthusiasts had to justify their world power ambitions. The moral language of the anti-slavery campaign could be used to garb material interests, though many genuinely believed the moral justification implicit in the civilizing mission. Even opponents of colonial expansion could not deny the patriotic duty of Germany's “cultural mission” in East Africa, argued the *Kölnische Zeitung* on the occasion of the founding of the Cologne branch of the German Colonial Society.⁶³ In the course of the Reichstag debates, speakers articulated the assumption that great powers and

especially those occupying parts of Africa were expected to undertake the civilizing mission. National prestige and Germany's identity as a great power were at stake. Civilized powers not only abolished slavery in their own territories but also worked to suppress it beyond their own jurisdiction. On this reading, unification was the precursor to the German nation playing a full role in the spread of European civilization. Windthorst argued:

I think that the suppression of the slave trade and slave hunting is such a major and important interest for all peoples that we can not stand by idly given the position we have achieved, and if we did we would come into direct conflict with the voters who sent us here.

The German Colonial Society adopted a similar argument in its appeal for support for the anti-slave trade: "We count on all who have a sense of patriotism to promote Germany's position in this world humanitarian movement, befitting its status among the world powers."⁶⁴

In some analysis the moral duty of the civilizing mission was rooted in past European sins. Campaigners with close affiliations to church and missionary associations, such as Friedrich Fabri and John Kennaway, tended to emphasize Europe's "sinful" past. Suppressing the slave trade in Africa would constitute a form of repentance.⁶⁵ Edouard Dupont, the Belgian botanist, also articulated this notion of redemption, arguing that the suppression of the slave trade was an "act of reparation" for Europe's participation in slavery for over four centuries.⁶⁶

Socialist parties in Europe were sceptical of the anti-slave trade campaign. First, they considered the campaign a ruse to unite people behind imperial expansion. The SPD deputy, Adolf Sabar, for example, acknowledged that Lavigerie was right to emphasize the "human empathy and human rights" as the justification for anti-slave trade measures, but he opposed the implications for the extension of Europe's presence in Africa.⁶⁷ A second reason lay in the focus of socialists, trade unions, and others on the difficult living conditions of workers in Europe's cities. In the summer of 1889, Buxton was more preoccupied with a strike among dockers in East London than with the anti-slavery campaign.⁶⁸ The term "slavery" was sometimes used to describe the condition of the worker in Europe.⁶⁹ Improving conditions in cities and factories had priority over diverting scarce resources to empire, even for what many socialists considered a good cause—the suppression of the slave trade.

Lavigerie was successful in stimulating a European anti-slave trade campaign, but his vision of the revival of chivalric orders, who would fight the slave traders in Africa, came to nought. The expeditions that formed owed more to national interests than chivalric lore.⁷⁰ While there was widespread agreement about the need to end the slave trade, the means of achieving this goal remained contentious. For a start, the relationship between the humanitarian end of suppressing the slave trade and the possible use of violence

to achieve this end was troubling to many in the anti-slavery movement. Moreover, it was the norm that the state controlled the means of legitimate violence, both at home and abroad. This monopoly had been re-inforced by the wars of unification and the primacy of the nation state. However, transnational mercenary groups continued to exist, albeit at the margins of military affairs.⁷¹ In Africa, European explorers and companies formed private militias to defend their interests and embark on territorial expansion. While Lavigerie looked to the crusading orders as an example, contemporary military organizations offered templates for armed intervention.

Verney Lovett Cameron and Wissmann were the two strongest advocates of using private militias to suppress the slave trade in Africa. While Wissmann succeeded in raising a private force, Cameron's efforts to do the same in Britain came to nought. He had served with the Royal Navy and led an expedition to find Livingstone in 1874. During that expedition he had written to the then foreign secretary, Lord Derby, calling for armed intervention against slave traders based in the interior of Africa.⁷² In August 1888, having heard Wissmann's speech to the Royal Geographical Society and Lavigerie's at Prince's Hall, Cameron set about trying to establish a militia. Infused with a sense of adventure, personal guilt, and sympathy for the victims of the slave trade, he made speeches in Liverpool and Oxford to raise interest and funds for his militia.⁷³ He found support for his plans for armed intervention from Frederick Lugard, then working on behalf of the British East Africa Company and stationed on Lake Nyasa. "I think this is a time when all argument should cease", Cameron wrote, "and everyone who has sympathy for gallantry and bravery should aid in every possible way to prevent Lake Nyassa from falling into the hands of the slave traders."⁷⁴ In Liverpool, Cameron had toned down his appeal, simply calling on everybody "to do something, if it was only to pray that the curse of slavery in Africa might be put an end to".

The presence of the archbishop of Liverpool and other leading religious figures from the city restrained Cameron. The Anti-Slavery Society and missionary groups were alarmed at his plans for a militia. The abolition of slavery "cannot be compelled by external force" noted John Kennaway in his speech at the Convocation of Canterbury. Instead he called for the support of "such peaceful enterprises, commercial or religious as may lead to its diminution".⁷⁵ Members of the Anti-Slavery Society were particularly angry at what they regarded as Cameron's attempt to hijack the anti-slave trade campaign for his own ambitions. Many were Quakers and were therefore opposed to the use of armed force, and they preferred to work through formal diplomatic channels.

We have more faith in a union of the Powers of Europe, and in the weight of public opinion throughout the civilized world, acting by degrees upon the Mahommedan rulers, who still encourage the Slave-Trade by their insatiable demands of the infamous harem system, than we have in the

fact that a hundred enthusiastic young men may be induced to go forth with arms in their hands to perish miserably in the malarious swamps of Central Africa.⁷⁶

By early March, Waller was confident that Cameron's scheme would not succeed as "too many distrust his capabilities for such a stupendous affair".⁷⁷

Cameron's scheme faltered due to the instinctive opposition of many British anti-slavery campaigners to the use of private militia. In Germany, Wissmann's expedition garnered more support because it was supported by the Reich and by the leading anti-slave trade campaigners. Here campaigners set up an Anti-Slavery Society, which raised money by means of a lottery. Wissmann also raised money privately, in addition to the Reichstag's passage of 2 million marks for his expedition. His expedition combined the aims of suppressing the slave trade, putting down a revolt in German East Africa, and rescuing Emin Pacha. He had limited success, managing to restore German control on the east African coast. However, his success arguably contributed to the persistence of slavery in German East Africa as the company used coercive labour regimes to sustain its enterprise there.⁷⁸

Indeed the claim, often made by anti-slave trade campaigners, that trade and commerce would bring about an end to slavery was unfounded. The German East African Company and the British East African Company both claimed in public that the suppression of the slave trade was one of their aims. At the very beginning of the prospectus of the British East African Company, granted a charter on 3 September 1888, it was claimed that "the present use for slave labour and slavery generally will disappear, civilisation will be extended, and the means adopted in attaining such objects will prove financially beneficial to the Company".⁷⁹ This grand fusion of commercial interest and philanthropy was largely for public consumption. The original founders' agreement completely neglected the suppression of the slave trade, while Mackinnon in his private correspondence was indifferent to the issue. The company profits were important and leading figures on the ground in East Africa, such as John Kirk and George Mackenzie, warned against upsetting "old customs until we have gained a firm footing".⁸⁰ As for the German East African Company, it ignored the issues of slavery and the slave trade at its annual general meeting in September 1888.⁸¹ Once local tribes in East Africa revolted, the company and its supporters in Germany claimed that its civilizing mission was being impeded by slave traders. Its anti-slave trade claims lacked credibility and some supporters of the expedition to East Africa, such as Windthorst, were embarrassed by its association with commercial interests.⁸² In fact, European commercial interests in Africa were more likely to re-inforce slavery than to eradicate it. The large plantations and demand for labour ensured that European rulers would require some form of coerced labour regime. Paul Reichard, a leading figure in the German Colonial Society, made as much clear in an article in September 1889.⁸³

Civil society in Europe therefore could not intervene—commercially, militarily, or culturally—to end the slave trade. The success of the popular movement started by Lavigerie in the summer of 1888 lay in its impact on government decisions. Without this campaign it is unlikely that the great powers would have held a conference on the suppression of the slave trade. Governments could have negotiated a series of bilateral agreements, imposed blockades, and sent some expeditions into the interior of the continent. While ostensibly justified by its anti-slave trade ambitions, the Anglo-German naval blockade in East Africa, undertaken in 1888, was the kind of limited diplomatic and military commitment that European governments preferred over grandiose declarations of principle. The significance of the Brussels Conference is that it set down norms in a multilateral treaty concerning the slave trade. The pressure of public opinion had the most significant impact on the British government. In conjunction with the unrest in East Africa and the threats to British and German commercial interests there, Lavigerie's campaign provided an important domestic political stimulant to great power action. British officials, such as Lord Vivian, then minister to Brussels, had a long-standing interest in anti-slave trade policy. It was important that the campaign had advocates within the Foreign Office. Officials there noted the popular interest in the anti-slave trade campaign.⁸⁴ In the wake of Lavigerie's campaign, the Foreign Office

feels that the European powers which have assumed interests and responsibilities in the Colonization and civilization of Africa, and who recorded their sense of these responsibilities in the General Act of the Conference of Berlin, should take some endeavour to find some common means to check the mischief which exists and flourishes side by side with and in defence of their common interest.⁸⁵

Salisbury pressed the Belgian government to convene the conference. Popular support for anti-slave trade measures, combined Anglo-German measures in East Africa, and the responsibilities of the colonial powers as set out in the 1885 Congo Act provided an excellent opportunity to “find the means to prosecute a great cause”.⁸⁶ The Belgian government issued the invitations. Although Bismarck did not expect any significant outcomes and the French government suspected Britain of using anti-slave trade issues as an excuse to prolong its occupation of Egypt, none of the great powers could refuse the invitation to a conference on the suppression of the slave trade. At the very minimum, rhetorical commitment to the anti-slavery cause constituted a moral standard, which no great power could evade. Lavigerie's popular campaign had acted as a kind of linguistic entrapment from which European governments had no escape.

Miers points out that Salisbury, Bismarck, and Lambermont (the Belgian foreign minister) sought to exploit the anti-slave trade campaign for their

own diplomatic and colonial interests. However, until Lavigerie began his campaign, there was little indication that the great powers had any plans to take concerted anti-slave trade measures. Salisbury was reluctant to add to Britain's imperial responsibilities and feared that anti-slave trade measures could disrupt, rather than advance, British interests. Bismarck, after his brief foray into colonial politics in 1884 and 1885, had little inclination to bail out German commercial interests in East Africa. The anti-slave trade campaign was an essential impetus to German military and naval measures in East Africa in late 1888 and early 1889.⁸⁷ It is also worth bearing in mind that many of the anti-slave trade campaigners sought government support and accepted that less noble interests would shape the anti-slave trade measures in Africa. The Anti-Slavery Society considered that government intervention would pre-empt the more radical ideas of Lavigerie for armed militias.⁸⁸

Salisbury proclaimed that the Brussels Conference marked a new era of human freedom. *The Times* editorial expressed justifiable scepticism about the immediate impact of the Brussels Conference, but it concluded:

But valuable as the coercive which the Powers may agree to adopt will doubtless be, there is perhaps even more to be hoped from the solemn declaration, made for the first time in the name of the whole civilized world, that the slave trade is an anti-human outrage, which every nation pretending to have risen above the level of savagery is bound to join in stamping out and bringing to punishment.⁸⁹

Contemporaries viewed the Brussels Conference Act as a moral promise and legal basis for European policy in Africa. It was invoked regularly after 1890, though there was increasing interest in its provisions concerning the importation of arms and liquor to Africa, issues that displaced its original anti-slave trade purpose. Richard Webster, the attorney general, could boast that the Brussels Conference Act represented a remarkable advance in international law, while the Conservative government partly justified the building of the railway in Uganda on the basis of British commitments enshrined in the act.⁹⁰ The Belgian government claimed that it was adhering to the act and liberating slaves in the Congo Free State'.⁹¹

These claims were exposed in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁹² Even in the 1880s, humanitarian associations had concerns about King Leopold's Congo Free State' regime and its alliance with Tippu Tib. Now Leopold could be held to account against the Brussels Conference Act. The reforms were slow and inadequate. The king and his government were able to evade their responsibilities. Tensions between the great powers in Europe relegated concerns about humanitarian atrocities in Africa lower down the agenda. Nonetheless, without the Brussels Conference Act, which created a standard to which European governments were expected to adhere, the reforms in the Congo Free State' would in all likelihood have been slower

and even more ineffective. The act signified certain norms of behaviour. Transgressions could be punished.⁹³ The language of common humanity, Christian duty, and European standards of behaviour and civilization ameliorated the worst excesses of empire.

By the late 1880s the abolition of slavery and suppression of the slave trade had become a global issue. A century earlier it had not been evident that slavery was morally wrong. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, abolitionists had worked within national or imperial frameworks. In short, slavery was considered abhorrent by the standards of a particular society but was not necessarily condemned as a universal wrong. By the end of the century this was no longer the case. Lavigerie's campaign in the late 1880s both profited from and stimulated the expansion of the abolitionist sphere.

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9

The Invasion of the United States by an Englishman: E. D. Morel and the Anglo-American Intervention in the Congo

Charles Laderman

At the outset of the twentieth century, reports of atrocities in the administration of the Congo Free State by King Leopold II of Belgium excited the moral outrage of the British public. As the foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, later remarked, “no external question for at least thirty years has moved the country so strongly and so vehemently”.¹ At the forefront of the movement to publicize the horrors was the honorary secretary of the Congo Reform Association (CRA), E. D. Morel. He believed that the mobilization of Britain would stir the conscience of the rest of the world; if “the British people could be really roused, the world might be roused”; and Leopold’s brutal regime would be eradicated.² With his assistance, branches of the CRA sprouted up across Europe [from 1900 onwards]. Yet, outside Britain, only in the United States did the cause of Congo reform become a truly mass movement. Together the two associations cultivated public opinion and lobbied their governments to alleviate the suffering in the Congo. Popular pressure ultimately led to diplomatic action [in 1908]. Following a scandal in the United States over Leopold’s attempts to combat his deteriorating public image, the British and American governments joined together to press for an end to the king’s regime. The subsequent downfall of Leopold’s administration and the annexation of the Congo Free State by Belgium was largely a consequence of this Anglo-American intervention, the first of its kind in the twentieth century.

This study will examine the role of E. D. Morel in the creation of the American CRA and the movement’s significance in bringing about the downfall of Leopold’s administration of the Congo. It will illustrate how Morel was able to overcome widespread anti-British sentiments prevalent in the United States at this time to help establish the organization, a factor neglected by other studies of the movement’s foundation. The manner in which

Morel successfully appealed to a diverse array of competing interests across American society to ensure the organization attracted the widest possible support will be examined. The chapter will explain how the cultivation of public opinion helped to win over the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt, which was initially sceptical of intervention, and helped prepare the ground for joint action once Roosevelt believed it to be politically feasible. Finally, it will illustrate the limits of Morel's attempt to ensure that the Anglo-American intervention eliminated not only Leopold but the entire regime which he instituted in the Congo Free State.

Advancing Christian civilization?

Shared notions of a Christian civilizing mission underpinned a growing rapprochement between the United States and the British Empire at the turn of the twentieth century. The CRA would become a beneficiary of this reconciliation. Following a brief war scare in 1895 over British imperial interests in Venezuela and conflicting interpretations of the Monroe doctrine, politicians on both sides, including President Grover Cleveland and Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, sought to improve relations. In the spirit of cooperation, the American secretary of state, Richard Olney, wrote to the British colonial secretary, Joseph Chamberlain:

Because of our inborn and instinctive English sympathies, proclivities, modes of thought and standards of right and wrong, nothing would more gratify the mass of the American people than to stand side by side and shoulder to shoulder with England in support of a great cause—in a necessary struggle for the defence of human rights and the advancement of Christian civilization.³

The “great cause” to which Olney refers was an intervention in the Ottoman Empire on behalf of Armenian Christians, the victims of massacres which had aroused public indignation on both sides of the Atlantic since their outbreak in 1894. Chamberlain was attracted to Olney's proposal, having already urged Salisbury to work for “a combination of the two Anglo-Saxon nations... to bring irresistible force to bear in defence of the weak and oppressed”.⁴ Despite this mutual sympathy for a joint intervention in the Near East, no action was taken. Following the Spanish American War, and the expansion of the nation's frontier westwards with the acquisition of the Philippines, Hawaii, and Guam, the United States did join together with Britain and six other powers to intervene in China to suppress the Boxer Rebellion and discussed intervention in Romania following anti-Semitic pogroms in that country.⁵ However, the possibility of the United States joining with Britain in the type of alliance outlined by Olney and Chamberlain remained remote; the advantages of continued isolation from

European affairs were still manifest to the American public and the legacy of Anglophobia still persistent.

In the early years of the twentieth century another humanitarian cause aroused the indignation of large numbers of people on both sides of the Atlantic. Reports had begun to filter out of the Congo Free State, transmitted by American and European missionaries, that grave atrocities were being perpetrated in the territory overseen by King Leopold II. The creation of the Congo Free State in 1884–5 had initially been welcomed by Europeans and Americans; while administered by the Belgian king, it was regarded as a sort of international protectorate, open to traders from all nations, and an agent for the abolition of the slave trade and the advance of civilization.⁶ Leopold was lauded as a benefactor of Christian missionaries and elected honorary president of the British humanitarian organization the Aborigines' Protection Society for his forceful condemnation of the slave trade.⁷ His championship of humanitarian causes for imperial ends was not limited to Africa; at the time of the Armenian massacres he volunteered the use of Congo officers "for the purpose of invading and occupying Armenia and so putting a stop to the massacres", and, when the United States deliberated over acquiring the Philippines, Leopold indicated his interest in assuming the burden.⁸

This search for additional colonies was driven by Leopold's need to find new sources of revenue. The Belgian Parliament had agreed to their king's assumption of sovereignty over the Congo in a private capacity on the condition that expenses incurred would be met by the territory's own resources and the king's private fortune. Despite the Congo's bountiful supply of ivory, Leopold's investments had failed to yield the desired profits and his debts had spiralled. However, the surge in global rubber consumption at the end of the nineteenth century offered the king a welcome reprieve. Between 1890 and 1904 the Congo's income from wild rubber expanded 96 times over, far surpassing ivory as the colony's major source of revenue.⁹ To ensure maximum profits, Leopold's regime reduced the salary of state officials to a minimal level, supplemented by the receipt of a commission payment based on the profit returned to the king. A quota system for rubber production in each district was also introduced and the local communities were forbidden to sell their produce to anyone but the state, undermining the commitment to free trade made at the Berlin Conference. The quotas were ruthlessly enforced by armed officers, the Force Publique, who laid waste to any village which refused to submit to the regime. Missionary reports emerged of widespread massacres and horrific torture methods. Most notorious were the accounts of soldiers ordered to collect human hands. This was intended to serve as proof that ammunition had been used to kill people rather than simply squandered on hunting or, worse still, stockpiled for a potential mutiny. Nor were hands always collected from corpses. As one officer informed a missionary, soldiers sometimes "shot a cartridge at an animal in hunting;

they then cut off a hand from a living man".¹⁰ A state established, in part, to further the cause of abolitionism had evolved into a slave regime.

The new African slavery

British newspapers began printing accounts of these brutalities during the 1890s but initially they excited little public outrage. Tales of individual atrocities emerged from many imperial missions; without access to the internal trade statistics of the Congo administration in Europe, it was difficult to expose the systematic nature of the abuse. Furthermore, the campaign against Leopold lacked a spokesperson capable of publicizing the cause to a mass audience. This would change with the intervention of Morel. While working in Antwerp as a clerk for Elder Dempster, the Liverpool-based shipping line with a monopoly on transporting cargo to and from the Congo, he had gained access to the private trade records of the region. He quickly realized that they did not correspond with the figures released to the public. Far larger quantities of rubber and ivory were arriving in Antwerp than the Congo government's returns indicated. Moreover, Morel was horrified to discover that hardly any commercial goods were going the other way to pay for the rubber and ivory; instead, the ships leaving Belgium for the Congo carried little but "prodigious quantities of ball cartridge and thousands of rifles and cap-guns". He concluded that "forced labour of a terrible and continuous kind could alone explain such unheard-of profits... forced labour in which the Congo government was immediate beneficiary; forced labour directed by the closest associates of the King himself".¹¹

Armed with his findings, Morel resigned his position and turned to journalism, determined to expose and destroy what he regarded as "the revival, under worse forms, of the African slave trade".¹² When his efforts to excoriate Leopold were checked by editorial censorship, he set up his own publication, the *West African Mail*. This became the pre-eminent instrument of protest against the Congo Free State and he quickly established himself as the regime's most prolific critic. In addition to his editorial work, he published a voluminous body of work on the subject over the coming years, including three full books, sections of two others, and hundreds of articles for British and foreign newspapers.¹³ Morel's central thesis was that the iniquity of Leopold's regime stemmed from the absence of property rights and the violation of free trade principles enshrined in the Berlin Act. An heir of the British abolitionist tradition, he viewed free labour as essential to legitimate colonial government.¹⁴ For him, therefore, the fundamental issues at stake over the Congo were "the right of the native to his land and to the fruits of his land" and "his right to sell those fruits to whomsoever he will".¹⁵ Only a system based on property ownership and free trade for Africans would benefit both them and the rest of the world.

As befits a former employee of a major shipping firm and a member of the West African Trade Section of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, Morel regarded the British merchant as an agent for ensuring ethical imperial development. He declared that the British merchant was “rendering a great service to humanity” because by “fighting primarily for himself, [he] is indirectly fighting the new form of slavery which has been introduced into Africa with such fatal results by the Sovereign of the Congo State”.¹⁶ He drew on his connections to the merchant lobby to raise funds for the *West African Mail*, with the journal publishing shipping schedules alongside their denunciations of colonial abuses. However, Morel was aware that if he associated his reform campaign too closely with the merchant lobby it would be vulnerable to the accusation that it was exploiting the issue in the interests of British trade. He recognized that a more broad-based coalition was necessary if he was to “liberate, with God’s help, the natives of the Congo from their unspeakable bondage”.¹⁷ Privately unenthusiastic about organized religion, he looked to missionaries to offer divine intervention. Not only did they provide him with evidence of atrocities for his publications but their lantern lectures helped spread the message of Congo reform throughout Britain and “transformed the campaign into an evangelical crusade”.¹⁸ Morel also forged links with other organizations motivated by Christian humanitarianism, like the Anti-Slavery Society and the Aborigines’ Protection Society, and with sympathetic parliamentarians, like Sir Charles Dilke, who advocated Congo reform at Westminster. Together this diverse group imprinted the Congo atrocities on the British public consciousness and precipitated a major debate in the House of Commons on the subject in May 1903.¹⁹

Following the house’s unanimous passage of a resolution calling for the Congo to be “governed with humanity”, the British Foreign Office requested that Roger Casement, a consular official in West Africa, travel to the interior of the continent and gather “authentic information” on the condition of natives on the Upper Congo. Although he had not travelled in the region for 15 years, Casement had been a veteran of African affairs for the past two decades. The information he had received from missionaries and merchants while on the Lower Congo had already prejudiced him against Leopold’s regime. After two-and-a-half months, he returned to Britain and in February 1904 his report was presented to Parliament. His exposition of the systemic abuse perpetrated by Leopold’s regime contained information that was familiar to those acquainted with Morel’s work. However, this was the first time that information had been presented by anyone with the official standing of a British consul and, as a consequence, the Congo question received unprecedented press attention.²⁰

Yet the report did not satisfy Casement, who was so furious with the Foreign Office for omitting all the names of Congolese witnesses, as well as their towns, villages, and dates of his conversations with them, that he threatened to resign. Even before publication he had expressed disillusionment with his

superiors, describing them in his diary as “a gang of stupidities”, and had become convinced that the cause of Congo reform could be furthered more effectively as a private campaign. Morel’s articles had impressed Casement and the two men started a correspondence shortly after the consul undertook his mission. In January 1904, a month before the publication of his report, Casement urged Morel to set up a CRA and convinced him, following its establishment in March, to serve as honorary secretary. Casement’s official position prevented him from taking a public role in the campaign, although he offered private advice and even tacitly helped with fundraising. It was Morel who took on public leadership of a campaign whose programme he outlined at the CRA’s inaugural meeting as securing “for the natives inhabiting the Congo State territories the just and humane treatment which was guaranteed to them under the Berlin and Brussels Act”.²¹ In establishing the movement, he was inspired by the legacy of previous British humanitarian movements, like the campaigns against the Ottoman massacre of Bulgarians in the 1870s and the Armenians in the 1890s, and, above all, the abolitionist movement of the early nineteenth century.²² In the foreword to his book *King Leopold’s Rule in Africa*, Morel proclaimed: “Our forefathers smashed the over-sea slave trade and we shall root out the modern inland slave trade in the Congo.” He was convinced that of “the two evils”, Leopold’s regime was “more destructive of human life and human happiness, and more demoralizing in its cumulative effects than the former was, even at the height of its power”.²³ To exorcize this evil, Morel and Casement recognized from the outset that the association must “enlighten systematically and continuously public opinion in this country and abroad”.²⁴ To ensure abolition of “The New African Slavery” the organization would need to operate transnationally and internationally as well as nationally.²⁵

Morel forged links with like-minded activists on the European continent and trumpeted their signatures on Congo reform petitions in his publicity campaigns. Yet, in private, he confessed to a supporter that European adherents to the Congo reform cause might serve “a very useful purpose in showing that there are men on the Continent who think as we do, and it does all right as a sort of guerilla warfare; but nothing more”. There was little chance that a European insurgency would lead to government action as, from “the point of view of practical politics”, the impact of this “Continental movement [is] virtually nil”.²⁶ In part, this impotence was a consequence of concerns among European governments that protesting against Belgian conduct in the Congo would result in enhanced scrutiny of their own imperial missions. Above all, though, for European statesmen in the opening decade of the twentieth century, like Bismarck before them, their map of Africa lay in Europe. With tensions resurfacing between France and Germany, Belgium’s geo-strategic position made the territory crucial to both sides in a potential conflict. Morel complained bitterly that “the Congo is being used purely as a pawn in the European chess-board, and is being treated from

that point of view alone, so far as the Continent is concerned".²⁷ European geopolitical concerns also shaped the response of the British Foreign Office, which feared that protests over the Congo would antagonize the Belgian government and threaten the long-standing Anglo-Belgian alliance. This accord was pivotal to British security against German expansion, particularly in light of the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale signed in 1904.²⁸ Convinced that Britain's "constant dread of European complications" would preclude it from acting alone and increasingly frustrated with the machinations of continental diplomacy, Morel began to look beyond Europe for a solution to the Congo question.²⁹

An evidently entirely independent and national movement

When Morel was invited to address the Thirteenth International Peace Congress in Boston on the Congo question in September 1904, he seized the opportunity to extend his campaign to the New World.³⁰ The United States held a special place in the history of the Congo Free State. The key figure in opening up the Congo region, the explorer Henry Morton Stanley, had emigrated from Britain to the United States as a young man; although he later resumed his British citizenship and accepted a knighthood, he regarded himself as an American at the time of his expedition. He later went to work for Leopold, laying the foundations for his state, and his status as "a citizen of the United States" was invoked by President Chester A. Arthur when first expressing official American interest in the Congo in 1883. In addition to national pride in Stanley's prominent role in developing the region, American interest also stemmed from concerns that Britain had designs on the territory. Determined to promote the "right of trade and residence in the Congo Valley free from the interference or political control of any one nation", and swayed by the promises of the king and his agents in Washington to respect free trade, the United States became the first country to recognize Leopold's claim to the territory.³¹ If the United States' recognition was crucial to the birth of the Free State, Americans were also among the earliest critics of maladministration in the Congo. George Washington Williams, who has been described as "America's first major black historian" for his pioneering *The History of the Negro Race in America 1619–1880*, published a series of devastating critiques of the Congo system following his visit in February 1890.³² His premature death in 1891 may have spared the Congo government a powerful adversary, but in subsequent years Leopold came under renewed attack from American missionaries working in the Congo, most notably the American Baptists J. B. Murphy and Reverend W. M. Morrison, and the Southern Presbyterian William Sheppard. Although these denunciations provided ample fodder for Leopold's opponents, including Morel, missionary attempts to pressurize American churches into taking up Congo reform met with little success.³³

The Congo question remained relatively dormant in the United States until a delegation of American missionaries petitioned the White House in March 1904, the same month as Morel unveiled the British CRA. The following month, Dr Thomas Barbour, foreign secretary of the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, manoeuvred to have a memorial presented to the United States Senate on behalf of the American Congo missionaries. In neither case did the United States government take any further action. It was in this context that Barbour, through his work with the Peace Congress and the recently established Congo Committee of the Massachusetts Commission of International Justice, invited Morel to the United States to help publicize the cause of Congo reform.³⁴

Morel informed an American journalist that his visit had two chief objectives: to address the Peace Congress at Boston on the Congo question and to present a memorial to President Theodore Roosevelt on behalf of the CRA.³⁵ Before arriving in the United States he had also submitted copies of the memorial to the major American press syndicates and informed them of his hope that "President Roosevelt and the American people may help undo the grieves [sic.] wrong" which had been "inflicted upon the native inhabitants of the Congo territories".³⁶ Following an introduction from John St Loie Strachey, editor of *The Spectator* and a correspondent of the president, Morel called on the White House the day after his arrival. Roosevelt received him cordially and expressed interest in the cause but made no definite commitment beyond promising to pass the memorial on to the secretary of state, John Hay, and "to go into the matter carefully".³⁷ From Washington, Morel travelled to Boston to address the Peace Congress. Informing the congress that "the African slave trade has been revived, and is in full swing in the Congo today", he asked those "met here in the cause of peace whether you will... help us to root it up and fling it out of Africa". Although this was an international conference, the British and American societies had served as the core of the organization since its inception. Recognizing this composition, Morel urged a joint Anglo-American intervention "on behalf of the oppressed and persecuted peoples of the Congo, for whose present unhappy condition you, in America, and we, in England, have a great moral responsibility from which we cannot escape and from which in honour we should not attempt to escape". His appeal proved persuasive and the congress unanimously passed a resolution calling for the Congo question to be referred either to a new conference of the powers that had recognized Leopold's rule at Berlin and Brussels, or to the Hague Tribunal.³⁸

Morel's address at the Peace Congress and his reception at the White House received extensive attention in the American press. This served what he regarded as the "subsidiary objects" of his month long American trip: "to seek all the publicity possible for the cause and to interest as many prominent people as possible during my short stay in the States".³⁹ The publicity was not entirely favourable, however. Anglophobia remained a powerful

factor in American politics, not least among Irish immigrants who despised Britain for its continued subjugation of their homeland. The cause of Congo reform did not escape being tarred as the latest instance of British perfidy. Morel noted that “it was from Irish and Catholic quarters that the attacks upon England, upon the Congo Reform Association, and upon myself personally, proceeded during my stay in the country”. Before he arrived, he was warned by sympathetic Americans that anti-British sentiment might hamper his campaign. He was advised that it was evident to anyone who “lived over here and caught something of the spirit of the people and of their attitude towards England” that the “more this can be shown to be an American movement (as opposed to an English movement) the more effective it will be for the cause”.⁴⁰ Morel witnessed this spirit for himself during his visit. One editorial, entitled “Other people’s chestnuts”, charged England with conspiring to have the United States interfere on “her (England’s) behalf” and claimed this was occurring surreptitiously as “England has no theory fit for publication”.⁴¹ A *New York Herald* commentator declared: “The invasion of American soil by a few Englishmen with their anti-Congo crusade is no less amusing than it is bold.”⁴² Morel believed these stories were influenced by Leopold’s network of agents in the United States, made up of Belgian government officials and hired propagandists.⁴³ However, he was aware that hostility to his mission was not simply a product of propaganda. Above all, Morel recognized that Irish-Americans were inimical to a joint action that could only further enhance a rapprochement they bitterly resented. These attacks threatened to undermine the entire campaign. If his opponents succeeded in depicting the Congo reform campaign as an “English movement”, there was little chance of Washington joining London in a joint intervention.

In consultation with Robert E. Park, a young journalist and subsequently one of the United States’ leading sociologists, who had been hired by Barbour to help establish an American CRA, Morel shaped a strategy to counter his critics’ charges.⁴⁴ He laid out his response in a series of public addresses, articles, and letters to editors. Answering accusations of an English incursion, he replied that “there has been an invasion of American soil, not by a few Englishmen, but by one”, and that if he was an “invader” it was by invitation only. By contrast, he pointed out that Leopold’s agents, a “moneyed conspiracy” that employed skullduggery to stifle the campaign for reform, were not accused of “invading” but instead enjoyed American hospitality. Downplaying the national, British background of the Congo reform movement, he emphasized its “international character;” he highlighted public appeals made to governments in Germany, Italy, France, Belgium and, above all, the memorial in the United States itself earlier that year.⁴⁵ Dismissing the political nature of his visit, he emphatically denied any link to the British government, instead positioning himself at the head of a popular movement and as “a representative of the British people to the American people”.⁴⁶

Responding to claims that Congo reform was a product of “commercial jealousy”, and that in his person was the “Liverpool ivory and rubber market incarnated”, he stressed that it was “a purely humanitarian movement” prompted by “a despotism that is grinding the people, a system that has revived the worst horrors of slavery”.⁴⁷

While distancing the cause of Congo reform from London, he concurrently appealed to Washington to “take the lead in this movement”. Morel outlined the historical basis for American action: the United States had become the first country to recognize Leopold’s sovereignty on the condition that he respected his pledge to protect the natives and not suppress commerce, a pledge the king had subsequently violated. However, recognizing that the legal basis for American intervention was weak as the United States had not signed the Berlin Act—although it was a signatory to the Brussels Act on anti-slavery which followed—Morel stressed the United States’ exceptional position. As it had “no land interests in Africa [and] could not well be suspected of having any ambitions in that direction”, its president “could do more than any potentate in Europe, because it would be evident that anything he did would spring from altogether altruistic motives”.⁴⁸ Yet Morel was well aware that, coming from an Englishman, the force of this appeal was reduced. Park had informed him: “The United States is a tyro in foreign affairs and is likely to feel a sort of childish resentment against anything that sounds like suggestion from outside, and particularly from England, from whom she is seeking to maintain her independence in international affairs.”⁴⁹ Morel’s goal of joint Anglo-American action would be best served by heeding this desire for independence.

To this end, Morel helped establish an American chapter of the CRA. G. Stanley Hall, a leading American sociologist and president of Clark University, served as titular head of the association, although day-to-day leadership continued to rest with Barbour and Park. To advance their shared cause, the American CRA presented itself as “an evidently entirely independent and national movement” rather than as simply an “auxiliary” to the British CRA. As a representative of the American association, John Daniels informed Morel that this was necessary because “where we have made mention of your name the Leopoldian press agents have immediately begun crying, ‘allies of Liverpool merchants’ and all that rot, which of course in the ears of the ignorant public has some effect”.⁵⁰ Morel worked with the association behind the scenes, and continued to do so even after returning to Britain, coordinating the messages of the two organizations and publicizing the issue in the United States through his correspondence.

Morel was convinced that the “future action or inaction of the American government would depend very largely upon the growth of public opinion in the States”.⁵¹ As he had done when establishing the British CRA, he worked with a variety of competing interest groups, tailoring his message to ensure his cause retained the broadest possible support.⁵² Protestant

groups were prominent, as they continued to be in Britain. A number of missionary leaders and churchmen, in addition to Barbour, served in leadership positions of the American association. Ecumenical newspapers fostered the sentiment of reform, and the Protestant organization the Foreign Christian Missionary Society informed Morel that he could "depend upon it that the missionary societies in this country will do all in their power to assist the friends in England who are planning for reform".⁵³ While attracting Protestant support, he was careful not to alienate Catholics. Protestant missionaries in the Congo were predominantly foreign and thus not as susceptible to Leopold's influence as Catholics, the majority of whom were Belgian and loyal supporters of their king. Leopold's patronage of Catholic missionaries, together with the perception that he was the victim of a conspiracy of Protestant missionaries, won him the support of the Vatican and its adherents across the world, above all in Catholic Belgium.⁵⁴ The British CRA had already come under attack from Irish Catholic members of Parliament and sections of the Catholic press. In the United States, James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore served as the chief Catholic defender of Leopold's regime. Gibbons was a member of the general committee that arranged the Peace Congress at Boston. Although he did not attend the congress he had tried to scupper Morel's mission, first urging the committee to prevent Morel from speaking and then, when that proved unsuccessful, dispatching a letter to the congress requesting caution on the Congo issue and supporting the attendance of six of Leopold's agents, demanding equal speaking time with the Englishman.⁵⁵ Morel was forced to tread carefully in his response. Gibbons was highly respected across American society, for his support of the labour movement and his works of theology.⁵⁶ Moreover, Francis B. Loomis, assistant secretary of state, had already expressed concern about "sectarianism" in the Congo reform issue when Morel was in Washington. On that occasion, Morel had assured Loomis that there was no "sectarianism... of any kind behind the movement".⁵⁷ Conscious that a sectarian split would antagonize Washington and hinder efforts to promote a joint intervention, he worked, both in Britain and in the United States, to prevent Congo reform from being identified as a Protestant crusade.⁵⁸

Morel was also forced to confront the contentious connection between events in Africa and the question of race in the United States. One of the most influential American proponents of Congo reform was Senator John Tyler Morgan of Alabama, a former Confederate general and leading member of the Foreign Relations Committee. His interest in the Congo had stemmed from his fear that millions of freed slaves in the American south would demand equality and civil rights, leading to "enforced negro rule".⁵⁹ Morgan believed Americans were "only going to solve the negro problem in the United States by the exportation of American negroes to Africa".⁶⁰ In pursuit of this goal he served as a member of the American Colonization Society, the organization that had created Liberia in 1822 as a settlement

for emancipated American slaves and which continued to exercise a paternalist control over state affairs after its independence. He also embraced the American acquisition of the Philippines, as another potential outlet for what he regarded as the United States' surplus black population. He had taken an early interest in Leopold's enterprise, actively supporting his campaign for American recognition of his Congo claims in 1884. However, the reports of abuse in the Congo horrified him—the atrocity tales threatened his objective of persuading African-Americans to freely migrate to Africa. Consequently, he became a vocal, congressional proponent of Congo reform. Indeed, it was Morgan who introduced the American missionary memorial on Congo atrocities in the Senate.⁶¹ He informed Morel that Leopold had perverted the “real mission of the Free State”, which was to ensure “the voluntary and unconstrained migration of our negroes to the Congo, as a nucleus of intelligent capacity to use the wonderful resources of that country for the domestic, commercial and governmental upbuilding of the negro race”. He expressed concern that southerners who benefitted from the labour of African-Americans would exploit the atrocities to deter them from going to the Congo and would, therefore, not support efforts to suppress the abuse. Speaking as a southern Democrat who had experienced the American Civil War and was terrified about the potential for race war, he argued that in calling for a policy of repatriation he was “espousing actively the defence of humanity”.⁶² Morel's strategy for defending humanity was very different from Morgan's but, in the pursuit of an Anglo-American intervention, he was prepared to work with whoever helped advance his goal.

Park did not share Morgan's vision either. An executive secretary of the American CRA, he confided to Morel that “Senator Morgan represents the old slave-holding tradition” and “isn't at all interested in [the African-American] after he gets to Africa”.⁶³ Conversely, he believed that the majority of Americans were interested in the colonial policy of governments in Africa and elsewhere. He suggested to Morel that the way to get “our [American] Congo Movement on a somewhat firmer basis” was to appeal to “the increasing interest that we now observe in the United States in colonial matters in general”. Rather than appealing to the American people “from the purely impersonal and philanthropic one”, Park advised Morel to demonstrate “that if the evil policy now in force in Africa is allowed to go on, it is likely to affect the policy of other colonial governments, not only in Africa, but elsewhere”. Above all, he urged Morel to emphasize that “Belgium is the awful example of just exactly what we do not want under any circumstances in the United States.”⁶⁴ In his public addresses and comments to the American press, Morel seized the opportunity to expose Leopold's system of colonialism as contrary to the precepts of civilization and a check on progress. He argued that there were only two ways to develop a country: either by trade, the only civilized method, or by slavery, which Leopold had chosen. He claimed that despite Leopold's boasts, the workshops, telegraph

line, and transport infrastructure established in the Congo were nothing but “the tinsel of civilization”. Indeed, he claimed that these advances made Leopold’s conduct “infinitely worse” because the king’s administration “reflected the unrestrained instincts of savages, quickened and intensified by the ingenuity which is the outcome of civilization”. Above all, as Morel made clear in an interview with the secretary of state, John Hay, the issue was far more than just the Congo Free State; at stake was “the whole fabric of the relationship between the White man and the Black in tropical Africa”. This made the success of the Congo reform campaign all the more critical. As Morel insisted, if the movement to abolish Leopold’s system of rule failed, it could only mean “that civilization is content to admit that Africa can only be developed through the enslavement of the people, and the accompaniment of such an admission must in the end spell disaster for all concerned, besides setting back the clock of centuries”.⁶⁵ In a period when the United States was coming to terms with its rise to global power, both Morel and Park concluded that the success of their campaign was dependent on linking it to the country’s own perceived role in advancing the spread of civilization within the context of a world of competing empires.

In correspondence with Morel, Park expressed his belief that since the Spanish American War it was “hopeless to preach against holding colonies in the United States” and that the “only question is what type of colonial policy we are going to have”. He declared that he was “strongly in sympathy with all the Imperialistic ambition that the country shows” but advocated what he described as a “rational colonial policy”.⁶⁶ Over the coming years, in a series of pamphlets and articles, while simultaneously condemning the brutality of Leopold’s colonial system, Park outlined this alternative policy. His model was based on the industrial education promulgated by Booker T. Washington, the African-American educator and political leader. Park’s admiration stemmed from his work with Washington and his Tuskegee Institute, the school he established in Alabama and which later served as the model for German attempts to transform the political economy of their colonial government in Togo.⁶⁷ It was through his work with the American CRA that he first became acquainted with Washington. Offering to draft articles for him, Park had suggested that a piece published under Washington’s name, in which “a representative of your race has come out openly in defense of the other members of your race in Africa, will strike the imagination of the American people”.⁶⁸ This article, entitled “Cruelty in the Congo country” and ghost-written by Park, condemned Leopold for instituting a system that was not only “harsher and more evil in its consequences than any form of slavery that has ever existed on African soil” but was also more barbarous than “anything in American slavery”. Reflecting Washington, Park and Morel’s shared commitment to a humane colonial model based on free labour and industrial education lamented:

One of the most unfortunate results of this method of dealing with the African is the heritage of misunderstanding, mutual distrust and race hatred [that] will render fruitless for many years to come every effort to bring the great mass of the natives under the better and higher influences of our Christian civilization.⁶⁹

While this article did not say anything that he and Park hadn't already articulated, Morel regarded its appearance under Washington's name as a huge boost for the movement. As Park had predicted, Washington's public standing ensured that his pronouncement had a considerable impact on public opinion. Moreover, Washington was known to have strong links to the president, who consulted him on race questions and had invited him for dinner at the White House, the first time an African-American had been granted that honour. As Morel had hoped, Washington visited the White House again, this time with a delegation of African-American Baptists to urge Roosevelt to intervene against Leopold.⁷⁰

Morel was aware that the movement would also need to appeal to the strong American anti-imperialist movement if it was to prove successful. Anti-imperialists were dominant in the Peace Congress, which had first invited Morel to the United States and featured prominently in the Congo reform campaign. David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford and one of the leading opponents of the United States' presence in the Philippines, also served as a vice-president of the CRA. The most significant link between anti-imperialism and Congo reform was Samuel Clemens, better known by his pen name Mark Twain. The country's most famous author served as a vice-president of both the American Anti-Imperialist League and the CRA. Morel had met Twain in New York and converted him to the cause of Congo reform.⁷¹ Twain would take to advocacy with such fervour that Booker T. Washington later recalled that he had "never known him to be so stirred up on any one question as he was on that of the cruel treatment of the natives in the Congo Free State".⁷² Yet Morel knew that he would have to handle his prized asset with care. Twain felt himself better suited to literary pursuits than campaign speeches and feared becoming entangled "in the Congo matter, permanently, exclusively and beyond hope of honourable escape". He informed Barbour: "If I had Morel's splendid equipment of energy, brains, diligence, concentration, persistence—but I haven't; he is a 'mobile, I am a wheelbarrow."⁷³ Morel and Barbour worked to alleviate Twain's concerns, convincing him that he could "do little and accomplish much".⁷⁴ Their gentle coaxing paid off. Twain addressed public meetings on Congo reform in several cities and travelled to Washington to lobby the Roosevelt administration to take up the issue. His defining contribution to the movement was a satirical pamphlet, entitled "King Leopold's soliloquy". It was written as a fictitious monologue by Leopold in which he defends his rule, bemoans his inability to do anything to "satisfy the

cursed Englishman", and ridicules the United States as a "vain Republic, self-appointed Champion and Promoter of the Liberties of the World" which, by its recognition of the Congo Free State, was "the only democracy in history that has lent its power and influence to the establishing of an absolute monarchy".⁷⁵ Twain's work was published on behalf of both the American and the British reform associations in 1905, and Morel noted excitedly that it "caused considerable impression in the States".⁷⁶

An advantage to justice

Morel and the CRA had made considerable progress in winning over public opinion. Yet government support remained elusive. Morel believed that the Roosevelt administration's initial refusal to embrace the Congo reform cause was due to concerns about the political consequences of Anglophobia. Morel's arrival in the United States coincided with the closing month of the American presidential election and John Hay had informed him that if the United States did anything at all about the Congo, "it can only be after the presidential election". Morel would later claim that this was a consequence of the administration "spreading a specially attractive bait for the Catholic vote" and having no interest in doing anything that might incur hostility from Irish-Americans, who would oppose any action over the Congo "not from the merits or demerits of the case per se, but out of antagonism to Great Britain".⁷⁷ He was correct about the administration's priorities. A former ambassador to London, Hay was considered the American official most closely associated with the rapprochement between the United States and the British Empire. This had exposed him to opprobrium and he once complained: "All I have ever done with England is to have wrung great concessions out of her with no compensation. And yet, these idiots say I'm not an American because I don't say, 'To hell with the Queen,' at every breath."⁷⁸ His sensitivity to this criticism was reflected in his handling of the Congo issue and he had grumbled to Roosevelt that it was "a well-meant impertinence, after all, for Englishmen to come to us to take up their Congo quarrel". Preoccupied with his battle for the White House and determined that nothing should harm his hopes for re-election, Roosevelt passed on Hay's complaint to a prominent Catholic lawyer, Eugene Philbin, who had expressed concern that the United States might take up the cause of Congo reform.⁷⁹

However, the ramifications of Anglophobia only partially explained the administration's response. Hay had informed Morel that the American legal case for intervention was weak, pointed to the "absence of any American interest directly threatened", and stressed that the administration couldn't "take up every humanitarian question which is put before us, otherwise we should be doing nothing else". Furthermore, when Morel emphasized the unique nature and scale of the "oppression and atrocity", he was reminded

that the United States did not have the power to investigate the conditions in the Congo as it had no diplomatic or consular representatives in the country. As a consequence, it had to balance the accusations of the CRA against the defence put forward by supporters of Leopold's regime.⁸⁰

This equilibrium became more difficult to sustain after November 1905, when the findings of a commission of inquiry, set up by Leopold himself under the Belgian judge Emile Janssens in response to Casement's report, were published. Janssens' report confirmed that abuses existed in the Congo. This completely undermined the regime's defence that the campaign against Leopold was simply an English conspiracy to acquire the territory or a plot by unscrupulous Protestant missionaries. It caused outrage in Belgium where Leopold was already under attack from the Socialist Party, led by Emile Vandevelde. Together with a study by Professor Felicien Cattier which charged the king with embezzling public money, the report strengthened support among Belgians for annexation—the so called “Belgian solution”.⁸¹ It also emboldened opponents of Leopold's regime outside Belgium, and the British *Manchester Guardian* newspaper reported that “the volume of disinterested opinion... all over Western Europe is now rising in arms against the atrocities of a monstrous regime”.⁸² In Britain the publication of the report coincided with the revival of the Congo reform campaign, which had been struggling with a lack of funds. At the forefront of this resurgence were British missionaries and, in particular, the Reverend John Harris and his wife, Alice, who were stationed in the Congo Free State for several years, until August 1905. On their return they conducted a speaking tour across Britain to rally support for Congo reform. Their lectures were accompanied by photographs of atrocities, which Alice had documented during their Congo mission, and which were presented in the form of lantern slides. The success of their tour encouraged Morel to invite them to become officers of the CRA, and between them they made roughly 600 public addresses over the next two years. Emphasizing Christian ethics to a greater extent than Morel, John remarked to him: “You appeal to the more educated classes and politicians, what I want to do is to appeal to the popular mind.”⁸³ Having witnessed their appeal to the British public conscience, Morel sent the Harrises to the United States in early 1906 to build on his work there.⁸⁴

While Morel's 1904 trip to the United States had been confined to New England, the Harrises travelled to 49 cities across the country and addressed nearly 200 public meetings. As a result, hundreds of telegrams and thousands of letters and petitions poured into Washington demanding the government help to put a stop to the atrocities in the Congo; Harris reported to Morel that “one of the clerks informed me that during the last three weeks of our meetings ten type writers had been kept at work dealing with the correspondence”.⁸⁵ The recipient of this barrage of requests was the new secretary of state, Elihu Root. He would later look back on the incident with frustration,

complaining that “the very people who are most ardent against entangling alliances insist most fanatically upon our doing one hundred things a year on humanitarian grounds, which would lead to immediate war”. This exasperation found voice in his reply to a request from the Indiana congressman Edwin Denby for the United States to call for an international inquiry to help ameliorate conditions in the Congo. Root took the opportunity to issue this response as a public statement outlining the administration’s position. The secretary denied that the Berlin Act offered any grounds for legal intervention for any nation and certainly not for the United States, which wasn’t even a signatory to this mutual agreement. Furthermore, he expressed sympathy for Leopold’s position, suggesting that “if the United States had happened to possess in Darkest Africa a territory seven times as large and four times as populous as the Philippines, we too might find good government difficult and come in for our share of just or unjust criticism”. This statement was regarded as much a welcome reprieve for the embattled Leopold and his supporters as it was a blow to the British and American reform associations. However, as Morel had recognized from the outset, the administration’s position would be to a large extent shaped by the dictates of public opinion. Root’s statement had done little to stem the flow of petitions and, as the secretary himself noted, “people kept piling down on the Department demanding action on the Congo”.⁸⁶ Consequently, Root was forced to row back from his claim that the United States had no responsibility for what was going on in Africa. As he informed the American CRA, while the government did not share the supervisory powers of the signatories of the Berlin Act and could not investigate conditions in the territory as it still had no diplomatic representation there, he did not “wish to be understood as holding that the case is closed or as declining to consider further information as to facts, or suggestions of action along other lines”.⁸⁷ This statement helped to lift the gloom which had descended on the two associations after Root’s letter to Denby. John Harris excitedly reported to Morel that “the ever increasing pressure from the humanitarian public has forced Mr Root to alter his position”. Furthermore, the missionary proclaimed that “on the whole we have every reason to be thankful for the work done in the United States of America, being assured that action by that government is now practically certain and at no distant date”.⁸⁸

Harris’s prognosis was exaggerated. While Roosevelt was a president especially attuned to the currents of popular opinion, and his own sympathy for the cause of Congo reform had grown alongside that of the public, he did not yet envision American intervention. As he privately noted to the steel magnate, Andrew Carnegie,

It would be an advantage to justice if we were able to interfere in the Congo Free State to secure a more righteous government . . . but at present I do not see how we can interfere . . . and the one thing I won’t do is to

bluff when I cannot make good; to bluster and threaten and then fail to take the action if my words need to be backed up.⁸⁹

Like his secretary of state, the president was antipathetic to “professional international humanitarians” who urged the government to make diplomatic representations on humanitarian grounds without recognizing the consequences of their action.⁹⁰ By contrast, he informed his friend Lyman Abbott, a Congregationalist theologian, editor, and activist for Congo reform, that his philosophy was informed by his experience as a hunter and ranchman in the American west: “I have the horror of the former frontier for the man who draws and doesn’t shoot.”⁹¹ As the weight of appeals continued to grow throughout 1906, so did Roosevelt’s exasperation. When activists tried to pressure the Republican state convention in Massachusetts to adopt a plank on Congo reform, he privately remarked to the state’s senator, and his closest political confidant, Henry Cabot Lodge, that “the only tomfoolery that anyone seems bent on is that about the Congo Free State outrages, and that is imbecile rather than noxious.”⁹² Rather than an indication of Roosevelt’s lack of sympathy for the cause, as some historians have suggested, this statement was a reflection of his frustration with the activists’ lack of realism.⁹³ As he confided to Oscar Straus, the former American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire and a future member of his cabinet, his irritation stemmed from the inability of petitioners to understand that it was “a literal physical impossibility to interfere . . . save in the most guarded manner, under penalty of making this nation ridiculous and of aggravating instead of ameliorating the fate for whom we interfere.”⁹⁴ The surge in popular support stimulated the president’s interest in the Congo question but he refused to act until he could do so with effectiveness and while maintaining American dignity, by backing up his words with deeds.

King Leopold observed this rising tide of opposition to his regime with concern. Although his agents had been active in the United States ever since the creation of the Congo Free State, Morel’s 1904 visit had forced him to step up his propaganda campaign. He had poured his extensive resources into these operations, directed by the sympathetic Belgian minister in Washington, Baron Ludovic Moncheur. A host of American lobbyists were placed on the payroll of the Belgian Crown and, in addition, various envoys were dispatched from Europe to the United States to defend the Congo Free State.⁹⁵ However, the report of Leopold’s own commission undercut his agents’ characterization of the Congo reform campaign as simply a plot by the perfidious British, and the popular outrage aroused by Harris’s lecture tour forced the king to adopt new tactics. In November 1906, it was publicly announced that major concession rights had been granted to a number of leading American businessmen, including the influential Senator Nelson W. Aldrich of Rhode Island, the Guggenheim interests, John D. Rockefeller

Jr., the financier Bernard Baruch, and the tobacco and transport magnate Thomas Ryan, whom Elihu Root had served as attorney before he became secretary of state. An American propagandist for the Crown, a lawyer named Henry Wellington Wack, had encouraged the concessions as a means to “create an American vested interest in the Congo which will render the yelping of the English agitators and Belgian Socialists futile”.⁹⁶ The CRA immediately recognized the threat this posed: “We must assume that Mr Ryan and his colleagues will fight tooth and nail against American diplomatic intervention in the affairs of the Congo.”⁹⁷ The potential impact of this lobby group can only be speculated about. Little more than a month after the announcement, Colonel Henry Kowalsky, a Californian lawyer hired as a lobbyist for Leopold and subsequently dropped as a liability, sold confidential documents he had received from Brussels and his complete correspondence with Leopold to the *New York American*. The scandal, which broke on 9 December, was fully exploited by the newspaper’s owner, William Randolph Hearst, and was front-page, headline news across the country. Not only did this expose the motives behind the concessions but it also revealed how the Belgian Crown had paid agents to subvert members of Congress and had even successfully bribed a staff member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.⁹⁸ In seeking to counter Morel and the CRA’s conquest of American public opinion, Leopold and his agents had overextended themselves, lost any last vestige of popular support, and provided an opportunity for American interference.

Even before the scandal erupted, the *London Morning Post* had announced that the Roosevelt administration was prepared to cooperate with Britain and attend any international conference convened to discuss the affairs in the Congo Free State. The story was published under the name of Maurice Low, the paper’s American correspondent who was a known confidant of the president.⁹⁹ It was immediately seized upon by Morel and the CRA, whose pressure had already moved Sir Edward Grey, the foreign secretary of the new Liberal government, to come out in favour of the “Belgian solution” in July.¹⁰⁰ Morel had long believed that if the Roosevelt administration chose to act with Britain over the Congo, it would first explore the issue through unofficial channels. This would ensure that action, when it did occur, appeared to the American public as an “independent and spontaneous initiative, and not as the outcome of a previous entente with England” which could be exploited by “anti-British sentiment in the States”.¹⁰¹ Regarding *The Morning Post* article as a potential feeler, he had contacted the State Department and was informed that while the president couldn’t “announce or even forecast . . . his policy or future course”, the United States had occasionally participated “in conferences concerning the well-being of the natives of Africa” in the past and “should a similar occasion arise, it would doubtless have appropriate consideration”.¹⁰² The Kowalsky scandal offered such an occasion and the administration moved quickly to outline its policy.

On 10 December, just hours after the *New York American's* exposé, Lodge, with the backing of the administration, introduced a Senate resolution. This pledged Senate support for any action which the president deemed necessary to secure reforms in the Congo Free State. Although Moncheur's lobbying and Senator Aldrich's intrigue succeeded in having the language amended to imply criticism of all the European colonial powers in the region, Lodge informed the American CRA that this didn't weaken the resolution's effectiveness. The senator emphasized that it "gives to the President the approbation of the Senate in entering into negotiations with Great Britain or any other power looking towards an international inquiry".¹⁰³ The Roosevelt administration had pre-empted the passage of this resolution by communicating directly with the British government on 11 December. This memorandum stated: "The President, moved by the deep interest shown by all classes of the American people in the amelioration of conditions in the Congo State, has observed with deep appreciation the steps which His Majesty's Government are considering towards that end." Justifying American action in response to the violation of the Brussels Act articles on the "involuntary servitude of the natives", the administration expressed its desire to cooperate with the British government "towards the realization of whatever reforms may be counselled by the sentiments of humanity".¹⁰⁴ With his strategy vindicated, Morel's objectives seemed on the verge of realization.

England and America acting together

When the news that the United States was willing to cooperate with Britain was cabled to Brussels on 13 December, it served as a critical turning point for Leopold's rule over the Congo. The United States had indicated its interest in cooperating with Britain, whose government was committed to annexation, the "Belgian solution". The king and his supporters' most powerful argument against the transfer of the Congo to Belgium had always been that acquiring a large African colony risked involving the nation in international complications, thus compromising its neutral stance between Germany and France. Now Belgians were faced with the opposing dilemma—the country faced foreign intervention unless it became a colonial power. This strengthened the hand of Leopold's opponents in Belgium, like Vandeveld and the Socialists, who had been advocating a "Belgian solution" since Janssens' report and Cattier's study. As pressure grew in the Belgian Parliament and the country itself, Leopold recognized that he would now be forced to relinquish the Congo rather than be able to bestow it as a royal gift to Belgium on his death as he had intended. However, he was also aware that although his powers were circumscribed within Belgium itself, the Belgian legislature had no legal control over his rule in the Congo. The king decided that if he was going to surrender his sovereignty, he would do so on his terms.¹⁰⁵

As Leopold procrastinated and obstructed, bringing governments down in Belgium, Congo reformers on both sides of the Atlantic grew increasingly frustrated. The Roosevelt administration had surrendered the initiative to Grey, and the British foreign minister in turn expressed his willingness to hold out for a "Belgian solution" for fear of compromising his plans in Europe. As Morel recognized, "the Germanization of the Netherlands is, of course, an ever-haunting fear in the minds of our diplomatists" and the fear remained that "Germany will use the Congo question if raised acutely by us and this will upset the status quo [in Europe]".¹⁰⁶ While Morel also saw no real alternative at this time to the "Belgian solution", he was adamant that Belgian annexation should not lead to Leopold's regime simply being perpetuated under a different name and demanded adherence to the original principles of the Berlin Act. Despite some misgiving, he placed his hope in the Belgian people, "convinced that, if they can obtain full control, the abuses fostered by the secret and unscrupulous methods of absolutism will soon be swept away". But he emphasized that "the control must be complete".¹⁰⁷ Morel's faith in the Belgians, and in his own government, was tested as negotiations dragged on throughout 1907.

Impatience was also growing in the United States. John Daniels, now secretary of the American CRA, wrote to Morel about the association's frustration that Belgian delay meant "the combined action by Great Britain and the United States which seemed near at hand [appears] to us to be indefinitely postponed".¹⁰⁸ Yet the American reformers remained convinced that when necessary, "a great popular expression can be secured" due to the "committal of Congress and Mr. Root and a practically complete conquest of public opinion and the influential press".¹⁰⁹ In December 1907, this commitment was tested when the State Department received an official report from its own, newly appointed consul-general, James A. Smith. This report claimed that there was not a "shadow of doubt" that Leopold had "openly violated" the terms of the Berlin Act that provided for the treatment of the Congolese natives. Leopold's regime was "but one tremendous commercial organization" and had instituted a system to "brutalize rather than civilize". With pressure growing on the government to act, Root decided to take the initiative. He instructed the United States ambassador in Brussels, Henry Lane Wilson, to join his British counterpart, Arthur Hardinge, in making a demarche to the Belgian government.¹¹⁰ As the secretary informed the American CRA, "it would be impossible to secure attendance of the powers at an international conference called on the issue of opposition to Belgian annexation" so "the best hope of relief of present conditions is in Belgian annexation under the best obtainable safeguards".¹¹¹ On 23 January 1908, the United States and Britain made a joint demarche to the Belgian government, demanding that any reforms recognize their obligations under the Berlin and Brussels acts to uphold "freedom of trade, rights of missionaries and humane treatment of natives".¹¹² Under the shadow of

this Anglo-American diplomatic intervention, Franz Schollaert's new government in Brussels went to work on a deal that would finally convince Leopold to yield control. Within a week the rudiments of a deal were in place and it was completed in March 1908. Leopold's tough negotiating stance ensured him a handsome profit: not only was the Belgian government forced to assume 110 million francs worth of the Congo Free State's debt but it also agreed to provide 45 million francs from the Congo for Leopold's personal public work projects within Belgium and to bequeath to him another 50 million francs "as a mark of gratitude for his great sacrifices made for the Congo". With their king no longer an impediment, the Belgian Parliament finally voted for annexation in August 1908.¹¹³ The Anglo-American intervention that Morel and his associates had long worked for had precipitated the downfall of Leopold's autocracy and ensured its replacement by a Belgian government considered more susceptible to the pressure of international public opinion.

However, Morel regarded this as a "definite though not a complete victory".¹¹⁴ While the Congo was now subject to the sovereignty of the Belgian parliament, Brussels had given no guarantees that the system would be reformed. Rather than asking for international recognition, Schollaert's government, under pressure from Leopold, had presented the annexation as a *fait accompli*. As Morel's confidence in Belgian willingness to enact the necessary reforms declined, he pressurized Grey to push for the reconvening of the Berlin Conference and ensure Belgium's colonial government was held to its international commitments. Grey was determined to restore amicable Anglo-Belgian relations in the interest of maintaining a favourable balance of power in Europe, but he remained concerned that renewed CRA agitation would turn public opinion against the Liberal government. Therefore he enquired whether the other powers would cooperate with Britain to ensure Belgium abided by its obligations under the Berlin Act. However, Grey's overtures were rebuffed: France and Germany were both happy to extend recognition to Belgium in exchange for a resolution of border differences in Europe, and other European nations evinced little interest in the issue.¹¹⁵ Britain and the United States were the only nations to withhold recognition. Morel continued to hope that Anglo-American pressure could compel the Belgians to institute guaranteed reforms. Increasingly belligerent, he informed Barbour that he had "come to the conclusion that nothing short of an Anglo-American demonstration in Congo waters will bring the Belgian Government to its senses". Convinced that Europeans were now "living under a deadweight of mutual suspicion and fear which banishes all generous ideals", he exhorted his colleagues at the American CRA to take the lead in pushing for Congo reform. The United States had a unique opportunity "to show that moral purpose is not yet dead in the world" because "America in this matter has a freedom of elbow-room which England has not... No-one can embarrass her and trip her up—she is too

big, too obviously disinterested." As he had done since 1904, Morel believed "that England and America acting together can secure the triumph of the movement".¹¹⁶

Morel's vision was dismissed by British politicians and the press, who expressed "a very strong disbelief that America would give us anything more than moral help". Morel was quick to remind the detractors that "when there was first talk of even moral assistance from America they pooh-poohed it...and that they have one and all been proved wrong".¹¹⁷ On this occasion, however, it was he who was proved wrong. William Howard Taft's administration, which replaced Roosevelt's in 1909, took little interest in Congo reform and the American CRA collapsed. Reflecting on the movement's decline in the United States, Morel ruefully remarked: "that is the worst of Americans, they have not got very much staying power".¹¹⁸ Conversely, the British CRA continued in existence even after Leopold's death in November 1909. Leopold's successor, King Albert, had expressed his commitment to ending the existing regime, but Belgian administrators were unable to immediately remedy the evils of a system which had been in place for two decades. While this drew the ire of the CRA, which continued to demand evidence that abuses had been abolished, public interest in the Congo was diminishing. As the Leopoldian system was gradually dismantled, the atrocities subsided and a more benevolent administration restored free trade in the territory, the British government moved towards recognition in 1913. Pre-empting this, the CRA proclaimed victory in its campaign and folded.¹¹⁹

Meeting for the final time on 16 June 1913 to commemorate "The Close of a Great Campaign", Morel declared that the association had achieved all of its objectives, with the exception of "a specific act of the Belgian Parliament recognizing the native tenure in land". Despite this, he rejoiced that "the native of the Congo is once more a free man". He proclaimed that the CRA had risen "as a small cloud on the horizon of a tyrant's will and [gathered] into a tornado which swept him from his African throne". In doing so it had "struck a blow for human justice that cannot and will not pass away".¹²⁰ The triumph resounded on the other side of the Atlantic. Recalling Morel's "successful pilgrimage" to the United States to form the American CRA, the American press reflected on this as a "landmark in the success of the movement". This perspective was not shared by former secretary of state Elihu Root. Looking back on the American action over the Congo, Root reflected that the Roosevelt administration had gone "to the limit which wasn't far". However, while he was correct that the American response was limited to a diplomatic intervention, the consequences of this act went farther than he acknowledged: it proved critical in forcing Leopold to yield control over his African possession and enabled the consequent "freeing of the Congo from the slavery scandals".¹²¹

After his journey to the United States in 1904, Morel had confidently predicted that he had "sowed the seeds which will give forth fruit".¹²² His

prognosis was ultimately realized. By countering the widespread anti-British sentiments prevalent in American society, he cultivated an American reform movement which successfully pressured its government into collaborating with Britain to bring about the end of Leopold's autocratic regime in the Congo. Furthermore, by bolstering the growing Anglo-American rapprochement, the intervention contributed to a century of increased cooperation between the two nations in international affairs and prepared the ground for subsequent joint interventions.

Notes

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19. Morel, Louis and Stengers, *History*, pp. 102–36.

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22. Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, p. 211.
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26. Morel to John Daniels, 14 Apr. 1909, M.P., F4/21.
27. Morel to Daniels, 15 Apr. 1909, M.P., F4/21.
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47. *New York Times*, 30 Sept. 1904; newspaper cutting (182), M.P., F4/15.
48. *New York Times*, 30 Sept. 1904.
49. Park to Morel, 11 Aug. 1904, M.P., F4/15.
50. Daniels to Morel, 17 Oct. 1908, M.P., F4/21.
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10

The Slave Trade, Slavery, and Abolitionism: The Unfinished Debate in France

Françoise Vergès

The slave trade, slavery, and their abolition remain divisive issues in France. There are many reasons for this—abolitionism was never a popular cause in France; after the 1848 abolition, there was prolonged silence concerning slavery; and descendants of slaves did not elaborate political and social demands centred on slavery before the 1960s and, in addition, their demands have been diverse. The presence of slaves in French public, political, and cultural history remains problematic and marginal, though this is changing due to the mobilization of associations, important advances in research, the opening of galleries devoted to these themes in the *musée des ducs de Bretagne* in Nantes and the *musée d'Aquitaine* in Bordeaux (two major French slave ports), and the establishment of a national day of the memories of the slave trade, slavery and their abolition in 2006.

In the ten years since the vote of 10 May 2001 for a law recognizing slave trade and slavery as a “crime against humanity,” associations, artists, and cultural actors have turned to the history of slavery for inspiration. There are currently a dozen research theses on themes related to slavery and abolition. On the other hand, one can still find declarations opposing the return of slavery in the public space on the grounds that it reeks of “repentance” or that there is no reason to privilege colonial slavery over all other forms of slavery (especially the “Oriental” or Muslim trade). A Conservative declared at the beginning of 2011 that the law was “a shame for our country, a shame for freedom of expression in our country. We must suppress it at once. It is an ‘anti-French’ law.”¹ Tensions remain between an orthodox republican narrative that still gives to French abolitionism the main role in putting an end to slavery, thus rendering slaves’ revolts and resistance largely insignificant, and a movement that seeks to revise the national narrative and debunk myths and half truths.² Among the populations of post-slavery society, the belief lingers that the abolition of slavery was a “gift” from a

generous France. This obscures the contribution of slaves in the struggle for human rights and marginalizes the difficult history of anti-slavery, with its two abolitions, the re-establishment of slavery by Napoleon in 1802, a long silence, and the ambivalences and ambiguities of French abolitionism. In each overseas territory concerned with slavery—Guadeloupe, Guyana, Martinique, Reunion Island, Mayotte—there is no consensus about how to address it. In “hexagonal” France, Left and Right have often adopted a form of republican orthodoxy which leaves little space for a large revision of French colonial past.

True, 10 May, the national day to commemorate the slave trade, slavery, and their abolition since 2006, has been largely adopted by associations and institutions, while the government organizes an event each year. Nonetheless, when one looks more closely at the ways in which the history is taught and presented in schools and in the media, and when one listens to discourses on national identity, it is difficult to express satisfaction. For instance, in a 2011 report, the National Institute of Research on Pedagogy (INRP)³ showed that teachers privilege the *leçon de morale*, a moral approach when they speak of colonial slavery; cannot explain why it lasted for centuries or how and why African kings, warriors, and traders participated in the trade; stress the suffering of blacks at the hands of whites; and highlight the importance of French abolitionist figures. The words of slaves are largely absent. Teachers declare that they want to give a civic lesson to future “white” citizens by showing that “blacks” must be treated with respect.⁴ The racialization of colonial slavery is explained as a failure of moral values, and the struggle against racism becomes a lesson of respect and of humanistic tolerance where the brutality of the search for immediate profit based on brutal exploitation is marginalized. The predominant approach has become condemnation of suffering and victimization, and celebration of righteous politics. Observations in classes by the researchers of the INRP show that students do not quite comprehend why slaves did not “revolt” and immediately put an end to the slave trade and slavery, which in turn push teachers to insist on punishment and death. The agency of slaves, as well as of other actors—slave traders, slave-owners—is reduced. A linear narrative—from barbarism to progress—becomes inevitable.

The French-centred approach reduces the significance of slave revolts, the Haitian Revolution, the interaction with British abolitionism, the rivalry among European powers, and the fact that colonial slavery was a global system. In summary, though there is much more in textbooks about slavery than there was ten years ago (though slavery appeared in textbooks in the 1970s contrary to popular belief), one notes a shift between how it was taught in the 1970s and today: whereas social history was still present then, today, the moral approach is favoured in which the victimization of black slaves has become central. Few images of black heroes circulate in the media or in schools. Though on the internet, rap, hip hop, and all kinds of mixed

genres of music testify to the interest of the urban French youth in a culture and a history that is not found in the books, the elites that still manage media, education, and culture remain suspicious of the non-white youths' intents and desires.

Discussion of slavery occurs in a specific political context. It is complex and full of contradictions: on the one hand, ethnicization of political discourse (the debate on "national identity"),⁵ the rise of the "popular right" (*droite populaire*) known for its demands for more control, more discipline, and respect for the French flag, French colonization and French "Christian identity",⁶ and the construction of the enemy within (such as the "Roma"); on the other, an increasing presence of young French who demand a larger place for colonial history, more respect, an end to anti-black racism, more diversity, and more social equality. However, they are not yet united in a common political and cultural movement. They constitute a fluid group, which shares an experience of marginalization and exclusion from the elite, a fascination for the United States, and common tastes in music and language, but who have not developed a strong sense of transversal solidarity. Their identity is territorialized. For example, those living around Paris barely perceive the problems of those living in Cayenne or Pointe-à-Pitre. It is an uneven terrain with a myriad of positions. A space has been made for identity politics and "diversity" has become an inevitable term of political vocabulary while the discourse on "Christian values",⁷ on the "failure of multiculturalism",⁸ and on "secularism and Islam" constructs a public space of suspicion towards demands for a revision of the national narrative.

Moreover, the politics of welfare and poverty shape debates about slavery. The representation of the populations of post-slavery overseas territories has long been negative: living on welfare, biting the hand that feeds them, and, in turn, justifying an exasperation towards their claims. A 2009 Senate report noted deep-rooted negative clichés in the Hexagon towards the overseas territories.⁹ The cultural, social, and political terrain upon which the return to slavery and anti-slavery has taken place in recent decades is thus confrontational and tense. Memories are fragmented and territorialized. However, it is clear that memories of slavery and colonial history are disturbing the established narrative. They question the linear story of progress and challenge the discourse of an economy that claims to work for the common good but rests on the exploitation of individual human beings.

There are two imperatives in the present debate about slavery and abolition in France. First, it is necessary to "emancipate" slavery from moralistic and economic approaches. The former transformed the enslaved into an object of suffering to pity and protect. The latter encourages a reading of economy through stages rigorously separated from each other—antiquity giving way to slavery giving way to feudalism giving way to industry—which cannot explain why forms of slavery or feudalism can perfectly coexist with recent technological discoveries, and despite important progress in

humanitarian law and technology.¹⁰ The second imperative is to show the central role that colonial slavery played in the making of France, Europe, and the world, of anti-black racism, of a republican colour line in the making of citizenship, and to bring back the radicalism of anti-slavery politics, its transnational conceptualization, its global history, its humanitarian impulse, and the battle of ideas it provoked around human rights, equality, and humanity. Teaching about colonial slavery must also bring back the singularity, individuality, and agency of the enslaved, the extreme diversity of its application through French colonies and the colonial world, showing the local, regional, and global dimension of colonial slavery and anti-slavery. The figure of the enslaved is protean—it speaks in many languages and its singular and collective experience cannot be lumped into the category “slaves” as long as this category has not been unpacked. Other historical perspectives which are still marginalized in France are that colonial slavery was contemporaneous with European modernity, that the Haitian Revolution was central to the history of anti-slavery, and that slavery was the history of a long war between the enslaved and slave-owners.

In France, the memories of the slave trade, slavery, and their abolition are constrained by an approach that focuses on suffering, refuses “repentance”, and adopts a teleology of progress. The terrain is fragmented. Antillean and African associations often do not see eye to eye. It is clear that year after year the number of cultural and scientific events around 10 May is increasing. Nantes, the most important slave trade port, has since 1994 initiated a wide city programme, opened new galleries in the Musée des ducs de Bretagne on slave trade and slavery, and inaugurated, in December 2011, a memorial to the abolition of slavery. Visitors to the Musée d’Aquitaine have tripled since the opening on 10 May 2009 of 800 square metres devoted to the history of the slave trade and slavery connected to the region, belying the fear that an exhibition on the connection between Bordeaux and slavery would drive visitors away.¹¹

The story of slavery and anti-slavery is slowly emerging, but myths continue to contaminate the debate and emotions still run high. The humouristic film *Case départ* (2011) tells the story of two young French blacks sent back to 1780 in a plantation in the Antilles, with all the cultural shocks produced by the encounter with colonial racism and with the lives of the enslaved showing how slavery has launched a debate. There have been calls for demonstrations and petitions to demand that the film is banned. Its authors, Félix Éboué, Thomas Ngijol, and Lionel Skeketee, have been accused of playing “house Negroes”, of being “traitors to the race”, and of trying to please the white masters. The intense reaction can be explained by a legitimate frustration: the first French-produced film on slavery that drew a large audience is a comedy. The reaction demonstrates the existence of an accumulated anger towards a funding policy that has repeatedly refused to finance “memory” projects. *Case départ* plays on anachronisms, tries to show

the absurdity and madness of anti-black racism, and touches upon contemporary issues such as homophobia in the Antillean community. Humour is a genre and reactions from an audience in Paris show that spectators are not naïve and do not confuse this film with a drama about slavery.¹² This reveals a social interest in the history of colonial slavery and the ways in which it has shaped current issues.

French abolitionism and its discontent

The weaknesses of the nineteenth-century French abolitionist movement—its failure to organize a real collective mobilization, to perceive the importance of slaves' revolts, to develop strong arguments against the pro-slavery faction, and to analyse and remedy the situation in post-slavery society—are at odds with the prominence of French abolitionism within official narratives. The opposition to slavery was mostly one of principle. It did not lead to a political movement challenging the exception to a universalism that allowed human rights and citizenship to be coloured. Following the abolition of slavery in 1848, slave-owners received financial compensation, post-slavery territories remained under colonial status, and the economy was still in the hands of the whites. The goal of an expected rupture with an unequal system was not reached.

The abolition of slavery coincided with the colonization of Algeria. The decree of April 1848, which announced financial compensation for slave-owners, coincided with a decree providing free and public education in the colonies and a decree transforming Algeria into "French departments". This concordance of the post-slavery civilizing mission and the ideology of French abolitionism—order, reform, Christianization—cast a shadow on the rights of freed slaves. It is impossible to analyse the history and culture of French abolitionism without taking into account Republican colonialism. The complicity of French abolitionism, voluntary or involuntary, with post-slavery colonial conquest in Algeria, West Africa, and Madagascar blemished the legacy of what aspired to be a humanitarian movement. French abolitionism became entangled with the policies of post-slavery colonization and the logic of colonial economy. As Nelly Schmidt remarks, none of the reformers and utopists of the 1840s questioned the principle of slavery and of colonial conquest.¹³ Their main concern was the suffering of the French working class and they linked its situation with the slaves. They advocated a politics of reform, many were seduced by the notion of a French civilizing mission which would bring "fraternity" to uncultured and barbarian countries, and they were convinced that a "harmonious" colonization would progressively put an end to slavery.¹⁴

The ambiguous history of abolitionism has compounded the blind spot in French thought about slavery. It does not appear in major contemporary historians' work, nor in Pierre Nora's *Sites of Memory* (in the three volumes),

nor in Alain Corbin's *1515 et les grandes dates de l'histoire de France* (2005). Jean Hébrard argues that the re-establishment of slavery by Napoleon in May 1802 went without protest and, for two decades, slavery disappeared from public debate. Even the creation of the committee against the slave trade, a branch of the Société de la morale chrétienne, did not stir up public opinion. Voices that radically denounced slavery were few and far between. Among these, Cyrille Bissette, a Martinican, and Victor Schoelcher stood out. Schoelcher's publication of *Des colonies françaises. Abolition immédiate de l'esclavage* in 1842 developed the ways in which abolition should occur with financial compensation for slave-owners, the modernization of the sugar industry, and free primary education. Though the government of the 1848 Revolution was prepared to abolish slavery, it was still cowed by the powerful lobby of slave-owners. When Schoelcher was asked by the 1848 government to work on a decree, he had to go against the idea of gradual abolition, which was still discussed among Republicans, and had to insist that abolition was "complete and definitive". On 27 April the same year, a governmental decree abolished slavery in all of the French colonies, but the government delayed its publication. Schoelcher wrote to a friend that "Truly, I would never have thought that killing slavery would be so slow and so long."¹⁵ Gustave Flaubert powerfully captured the shift from the politics of hatred to a society rooted in empathy. In *The Sentimental Education*, a patriot of the *Club de l'Intelligence* cries: "After the abolition of slavery would come the abolition of the proletariat. The age of hatred was past; the age of love was about to begin."¹⁶

For Schmidt, following 1848, the silence not only continued but was total. Dates related to slavery and anti-slavery never became "historical ruptures", and they did not entail debates or controversies or constitute a turning point in terms of thought, except during the French Revolution, though historians do not agree on their importance.

There are few studies analysing the causes of the weakness of French abolitionism. To Schmidt, its individualism, its incapacity to develop strong arguments against the pro-slavery lobby, and its failure to go beyond a mere moral condemnation of slavery explain why the French abolitionist movement never became a large social, cultural, and political movement. His argument has much to contribute, but comparative frameworks, either implicit or explicit, raise issues and questions for further research. If French abolitionists were timid, individualistic, unable to forcefully counter pro-slavery, and failed to go beyond moralistic discourse, we need to identify what was specific to the French case that led to these failures. The strong belief in the uniqueness of French universalism can hinder self-reflection. Again, the example of Haiti, both as a historical event and in terms of its neglect in present-day France, is striking. Historical methods, which are wedded to the Hexagon, limit the explanatory power of histories of French abolitionism.¹⁷

If the sentimentality of this position has been under attack in postcolonial writing, its corrosive force has yet to be countered by a narrative that rediscovers in the anti-slavery struggle a radical challenge to racial ideologies. To fix the slave in the category of the victim, the continuous representation of suffering is needed, constructing a form of obscene kitsch, and finally re-enforcing a kind of ethno-history where “whites” and “blacks” play the role that has been assigned to them: brutes and humanitarian, barbarous and victims. The history of consent to colonial slavery must also be explored. The narrative of French abolitionism’s weakness and complicity with post-slavery colonial conquest must be complicated. Stories and figures of radical anti-slavery struggle must be distinguished from the more accommodating form of abolitionism. Both must be unearthed with their contradictions and transformations to show that the anti-slavery struggle was long and difficult, and that the diversity of approaches testifies to the centrality of the problem raised by slavery. The formation of a transnational network with an ethical-political objective, winning the recognition of the humanity of the slave, constructs a powerful counter-history and casts an interesting light on the current state’s obsession with security and sovereignty that marginalizes victims’ rights.

The rejection of this history of French abolitionism by young French citizens with origins in the Antilles, Reunion, or Africa is understandable. In the Antilles, the annual celebration of the birthday of Victor Schoelcher while local resistance was ignored has ended up erasing his radicalism.¹⁸ Children attend ceremonies and chant songs in the honour of him, redolent of colonial servility. In many cities and villages, his statue, usually with a paternalistic gesture towards a young black, has served to enforce the representation of freedom as a gift. In Reunion, the abolition of slavery was announced under the slogan: “God, Family, France and Work.”¹⁹ The narrative was that slavery was “softer” in the island than in the Antilles and that the interethnic mixing of the island’s population made impossible to say who was a descendant of slaves and who was not. For years after 1848, the day of freedom was transformed into a “Celebration of Work”.²⁰ In Africa, postcolonial regimes did not want to speak of the slave trade and slavery until the 1990s. As Wole Soyinka remarks, “the ignominious role of ancient rulers, continuing into the present, serves to remind us of their complicity in the cause for which reparations are sought”.²¹ But European abolitionism also left an ambiguous legacy—General Joseph Galliéni, the colonizer of Madagascar, received a medal from the French society for the abolition of slavery (*Société française pour l’abolition de l’esclavage*) for putting an end to local slavery even though in the same movement he had instituted forced labour. Shame, desire to forget, and soothing narratives about freedom concurred to construct an uneven and hidden memory, buried in rituals, prayers, melancholia, songs, and language.

French abolitionism was an important component of French assimilationist policies: "You have become citizens thank to France's generosity. You owe her your freedom." This logic was summarized by Frantz Fanon, one of the anti-colonial intellectuals after 1945, thus: "The Negro knows nothing of the cost of freedom for he has not fought for Liberty and Justice, but these were always white liberty and white justice; that is, values secreted by his masters."²² The contamination of liberty and justice by colonial policies, which invented a "colonized citizenship" in the post-slavery colonies and maintained a regime of inequality and racial discrimination, has weighed on society's memories. The past remained imprecise and opaque and the local political elites who often sought to demonstrate their gratitude to France asked not to confuse them with the "colonized Africans",²³ supporting assimilation in the hope that it would bring full equality. Hence, resistance to slavery could not constitute a reservoir of political ideals because it was a history of shame and humiliation, and one that would challenge the idealization of France as the mother of human rights. Yet, as Aimé Césaire, another leading anti-colonial intellectual, has shown, there is a radical dimension to anti-slavery that questions the narrative of abolition as debt, and frees the descendants of slaves from the impossibility of paying back such a debt. Césaire argued that Schoelcher always insisted on the slaves' struggles and did not ignore the power of pro-slavery forces: "Since we had societies, the oppressed have obtained something from their oppressors through force, and if each step towards freedom is marked with blood, it is a necessity that we must acknowledge, for which neither impotence nor meanness must be made responsible."²⁴ The radicalism of anti-slavery, its struggle against established and "natural" truths, and the transnational circulation of its texts, ideas, and images must be retraced to offer a counter-discourse to the hegemony of a soothing narrative. The anti-slavery struggle, of which French abolitionism was an expression, can serve as a lesson to understand consent, why colonial slavery could last so long, and why and how all this has echoes for our times.

Mapping French history

Current debates are shaped by the belief that slavery and abolition have played a marginal role in the making of French modern history and culture due to the belief that slavery happened elsewhere, far from metropolitan France. As long as the hexagon remains the exclusive geographical terrain of its national history, France will have difficulty with the inclusion of other groups, of other narratives. Three assumptions coalesce to build a fictive geography of French history. First, the hexagon has been cleansed of any "foreign" presence, making it still a pure space with a linear narrative (from the Gauls to the French). Second- or third-generation citizens whose parents came from the former colonial empire are still seen as "immigrants" who

have problems integrating, while populations of overseas territories are still conceived as “exotic”. Second, what has happened, or is happening, in the overseas territories does not belong to French history, thus excluding them from national consciousness. Third, the slave trade, slavery, the struggle for their abolition, colonialism, and post-colonialism remain marginal chapters in French history. The absence of the figure of the slave as agent contributes to the confusion around the role and place of a colour line in the history of citizenship and democracy in France. Feelings and memories among populations of post-slavery societies are usually dismissed. The postcolonial critique of French abolitionism is generally ignored. French thinkers who are asked to discuss difference, legacies of slavery, and colonialism in the media or in Parliament are more than often “continental”. These assumptions stand in stark contrast to debates about the role of slavery and abolition in Britain, in which a historical and geographical imagination rooted in a global empire predominates.

The title of Sue Peabody’s 2002 book, *There Are No Slaves in France*, still resonates. Bringing back the presence of slaves on French soil has been a difficult task owing to ignorance, indifference, and a refusal to imagine slavery as a political problem. The question that must be asked is: why, despite progress in humanitarian law, technology, and democracy, did slavery persist for so long and why does it continue to exist in some forms? How to explore this remains unresolved. For example, in an April 2010 report on the controversial “Maison de l’histoire de France” project,²⁵ slavery appeared as a “decorative” object in an installation that contrasted a seventeenth-century tapestry with a slave’s chains. The installation raises important questions and issues, such as whether chains define a slave, a view challenged by historians and descendants of slaves. The failure or inability to listen to the slaves’ voices, to pay attention to their memories and legacies, and to value their contributions hinders a general revision of the representation of slaves and of methodological approaches to slavery. Slavery is still seen from the colonial metropole, through the images and discourses it constructed, through the objects of its history—chains, codes of law, painting, registers, and acts of notaries, police, and tribunals. What the enslaved did with these objects is not known or shown. Thus, the fact that the enslaved in the French colonies used the Code Noir to attack their owners for ignoring its articles is not fully explored for fear that it would temper present-day criticism of the code.²⁶ It has been constructed as an evil text that demonstrates the hypocrisy of the Enlightenment (undoubtedly the case), but in the meantime the agency of the enslaved has been reduced as if their suffering was the only source of indictment of the Code Noir.

Historically, France has been mapped along its European borders. This perception of the country contained within its hexagonal frontiers has been accompanied by a distinction between what was acceptable on the “national” territory and what was acceptable in French territories. What

occurred over there could not taint the nation which remained “pure”. It was understood that two separate entities existed. Though this division can be observed in each colonial empire, the strong Jacobinism of France reinforced the idea of two unequal but linked territories—the hexagon and the colony.

This division still operates. National statistics exclude data from the overseas territories—New Caledonia, Tahiti Wallis and Futuna, Saint-Martin, Saint-Barthélemy Guyana, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, Mayotte, Reunion—in the fields of education, health, and work. In the media, the map of France is the hexagon and Corsica. National debates about the “foulard” or the place of Islam in society never take into account the situation in Mayotte (a Muslim society) or Reunion (where Islam has been present since the nineteenth century). When the media pay attention to these territories, it is often as a result of a natural catastrophe (usually a hurricane) or a riot. Their inclusion as symbols of “cultural diversity”, as signs of the wealth of regional cultures, belongs to the ideology of cultural regionalism which is part and parcel of France’s construction of itself, as a *France des terroirs*, anchored in tradition and folklore.

Therefore, remapping French history through the inclusion of slavery and anti-slavery is an important task today. It has bearing upon debates on multiculturalism, “national identity”, colonial and postcolonial situation, law, literature, philosophy, and the arts.²⁷

A new cartography of memories

After the second and final abolition of slavery in the French colonies, a long silence ensued. Testimonies were not collected and the material traces of slaves’ lives were often destroyed. Former slaves did not dwell on a past they wished to forget. In hexagonal France, building a new colonial empire required a new narrative. French Republicans coined the expression “civilizing mission”, which had, as one of its objectives, the abolition of slavery in newly conquered territories in North and West Africa. In these colonial and post-slavery societies, local political movements sought equality with French citizens. At the National Assembly, their representatives spoke of the sacrifices of local soldiers and of the undying attachment of their population to France. In 1946, debate on the future of the French colonies suggested two outcomes: independence in a federation or assimilation into France. Post-slavery populations chose the latter. They elected by a large majority those who defended in their programme the demand for “departmentalization”. During the meetings of the 1945 commission on the future of the French colonial empire, their representatives made a clear distinction between their situation and that of African or Asian colonies. They were “French” and intended to remain “French”. In his speech, Aimé Césaire, who presented the proposition to abolish the colonial status and institute the status of “department”, never referred to the figure of the slaves. He called upon Republican

ideals to justify the demand, tracing its connection with the 1848 abolition. He reminded Parliament that “Martinique and Guadeloupe are French since 1635”, have “participated in the destiny of the *métropole*”, and “have never ceased through a series of steps to integrate themselves in the civilization of la Mère Patrie”.²⁸ He contrasted the Republican doctrine of integration with the reactionary doctrine of discrimination.²⁹ “Only assimilation would resolve the problems at hand.” Césaire’s speech was nonetheless an indictment of 300 years of French colonization, but the enemy was local capitalism in the hands of feudal lords and the republic had the duty to help and protect the populations against their avidity. However, in 1948, for the centenary of the 1848 decree, he spoke of a date that was “huge yet insufficient” for “racism was still there. It is not dead.”³⁰

In the 1960s, in the post-slavery societies, French overseas departments, and cultural and political movements, began to turn to oral memories of slavery, which had been kept alive in popular memory—a means of affirming the existence of their own history, language and culture. The role of local Communist parties was significant. These were inscribed within the global movement of decolonization and a challenge to European hegemony. Creole language, songs, music, rituals, and historical figures of maroons and rebels were brought back from oblivion. Under the pressure of local cultural movements and leftist parties, the government adopted a decree in 1983 which made the annual anniversary of the application of the 1848 decree into a holiday.³¹ Theatre, poetry, literature, research, and cultural events were organized but the Hexagon remained largely indifferent to this emergence. During the 1989 bicentenary of the French Revolution, slavery was evoked in colloquiums discussing the first abolition of slavery in 1794, but it remained an academic concern. Memories were shaped by local factors. For example, interest slowly emerged in former slave ports.

In 1998 the Socialist government decided to celebrate on a large scale the 150th anniversary of the final abolition of slavery. A committee was installed, headed by Guadeloupean poet and writer Daniel Maximin. A large poster, “All Born in 1848”, was symptomatic of the ways in which the celebration was imagined. That year “gave birth to the children of the abolition, who, whatever their origin and difference, wish to defend with vigilance liberty and equality”.³² The poster, which showed young people of different colours, aimed to demonstrate that “Thanks to a subtle juxtaposition between image and text, [we see] an accepted *métissage* that is the product of the 1848 which reestablished liberty and equality in France and the overseas territories.”³³ There was no mention of the maintenance of the colonial status or of inequality. The narrative was resolutely optimistic yet blind to the tensions that existed between France and its overseas territories. On 23 May 1998, a large demonstration drew 50,000 people into the streets of Paris to contest this narrative, and to celebrate the lives and existence of slaves. In the late 1990s, slavery increasingly became a reference point

from which to describe and explain the situation of the overseas territories and in the Hexagon: anti-black racism, inequalities, and discrimination. This protest originated from different, but inter-related, contexts. The promise of 1946 (equality and economic development) had not been kept: unemployment, illiteracy, lack of development, and dependency plagued the society. Assimilation had revealed its limits and the French Republican doctrine its contradictions. As early as the 1960s, political parties chose to defend a programme of political autonomy—that is, local responsibility for economic development, and valorization of vernacular culture and language. In this context, the history of slaves' resistance took on a new meaning. The figure of the Maroon became the figure of rebellion, the ancestor of autonomous politics. The 1960s and 1970s were shaped in the overseas departments by strikes, violent demonstrations, and censorship of the press, critical thinking, and vernacular expressions. Activists were jailed, unionists in the civil service were sent to the Hexagon, writers and political leaders (Edouard Glissant, for instance) were assigned to residency in hexagonal France or forbidden from travelling to their own country, newspapers were seized, people were killed, and elections were not free.³⁴ Disillusion spread, which, in turn, influenced the perception of the children of people from Reunion, Guyana, or the Antilles who had come under the aegis of the BUMIDOM, a government institution that organized the migration of thousands of women and men from these territories in the 1960s.³⁵ They saw that their parents had been kept in low-paid jobs in hospitals, post offices, or factories and that, despite being French citizens, they were discriminated against.³⁶ They discovered that they were “blacks” and the third generation shared with the youth of African and North African origins, and with poor whites, the understanding that France had to reckon with its multiculturalism.

The emergence of the memories of the slave trade and slavery also benefited from the revision of the national narrative provoked by the Shoah and by the challenge by movements of immigrants from Africa. The myth of a cultural homogenous France, “la patrie des droits de l’homme” (“fatherland of human rights”), was rent asunder under the criticisms of associations and historians who unveiled colonial exploitations and war crimes, support by successive French governments of African dictatorships, and the racism of a large part of French society. The 2001 law resulted from this political constellation.

The 21 May 2001 law

On 21 May 2001 the text of this law was published in the *Journal Officiel*. Unanimously adopted by the French Parliament, it was conceived by its initiators as a response to the silence that had prevailed in France around its active participation in the slave trade and slavery.³⁷ Its adoption did not stir up controversy; in fact, it was barely noticed in the national media. The riots

in 2005 changed everything. Suddenly there was talk about the pernicious aspect of the *lois mémorielles* (“laws of memory”). The Taubira Law had supposedly fed resentment against France from the youth whose parents had come from the Antilles or Africa. Calls to repeal the laws were made. Meanwhile, social demands for information about this history increased. Books were published, documentaries made, conferences and colloquiums organized, and cultural and artistic creations examining the slave trade, slavery, and their legacies flourished.

The law also called for the establishment of a committee—Comité pour la mémoire de l’esclavage (CPME)—which would propose a national day of commemoration, as well as ways to include the history of the slave trade, slavery, and their abolition in school programmes and texts. The law made it possible for associations and individuals to sue those who, in their view, had offended the “memories of the slaves and of their descendants”. The CPME was set up in 2004 for five years.³⁸ It issued its first report in 2005 in which it analysed the state of teaching and research on slavery, listed exhibitions that had been organized, and made a series of proposals. In 2006 the Chirac government adopted the proposals of the CPME and 10 May became the national day of the memories of slave trade, slavery, and their abolition. However, the field continued to be divided. The leaders of the 23 May 1998 demonstration thought that another date was needed to honour the victims of slavery.³⁹ Their association, cm98, mobilized against the choice of 10 May with petitions and lobbying, and it organized its own event. It mobilized thousands of Antilleans on 23 May 2007 at the Trocadéro in Paris. In 2009 the Sarkozy government issued a circular recognizing the two dates: if 10 May remained the national day, 23 May became the day for the victims of slavery. On 10 May 2009, the government re-established the committee, now known as Comité pour la mémoire et l’histoire de l’esclavage (CPMHE). This and cm98 have now reached an understanding and each recognizes the specificity of the other’s objectives.

On 10 May 2011, for the ten-year anniversary of the Taubira Law, Sarkozy, inaugurated a stele in the Jardin du Luxembourg with a text written by the CPMHE: “By their struggles, with their undying desire for freedom and dignity, the slaves of the French colonies have contributed to the universality of human rights and to the ideal of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity that founds the Republic. France pays tribute to them.” The goal was to insist on the fact that neither the universality of human rights nor the extended dimension of the Republican ideal would have been reached without the thoughts and deeds of the slaves. Yet, the event was marred by the expulsion of a group of young blacks who were protesting against the “negrophobia” of the Sarkozy government. On 23 May, cm98 organized, as in other years, a mass in the Basilica of Saint-Denis where the kings and queens of France rest. They had put together an exhibition of panels upon which they had listed all the names of the slaves in the 1848 registers of Martinique and Guadeloupe, the

year when slaves received a patronymic. This action echoed deeply among the Antillean population, who often cry and express their emotion when discovering the name of their ancestors. Guadeloupe Regional Council has asked cm98 to help it to install in each village around the island a monument bearing the name of the village's 1848 enfranchised. Elsewhere, around 10 May, cultural events and colloquiums are held in the Hexagon and in the post-slavery overseas territories.

The law was a turning point. It legitimated the demands for monuments, steles, teaching, and funding of cultural events and research. Memories of slavery and anti-slavery are now part of the social landscape. But the law has its weaknesses. It calls for the creation of a committee but one that can only make proposals, not one that can act. The compromise imposed by the Socialist government—a law on the condition that there would be no reference whatsoever to any kind of reparation—closed the debate on the ways in which responsibility is analysed. This has hindered the creation of an institute, a memorial, or a museum. The field remains polarized and the focus remains on victimization and suffering, rather than on slaves' own agency. Hence, the African continent as a victim of Europe remains framed by the colonial discourse that deprived it of agency. Slaves are depicted as passive “Uncle Toms” to be the object of pity. Injury becomes the basis of identity. The invention of relations based on respect, equality, and autonomy remains hindered. Yet, quite a few young activists, artists, and researchers are rejecting this approach and seeking to recover the multiplicity of voices of the enslaved and their living memory. The uneven terrain, the emergence of other memories of colonial history—those of indigenous peoples in French territories; of descendants of maroon communities; of those condemned to forced labour, to exile, to prison for challenging the hegemony of an ideology that erases the intensity of a struggle for the recognition of the human—contribute to the debate for a “world free of that particular hierarchy which has accomplished untold wrongs”.⁴⁰ Creole languages carry the mark of languages, dreams, imaginaries, which were there at the very start, delivered unconsciously and cryptically. But they burst forth again, in one way or another, in the everyday exchange of words, in poetic speech, in the lyrics of songs, and in proverbs, word-play, and riddles. Anti-slavery rhetoric is carried by these songs and their words offer and infuse the vocabulary of a radical humanitarianism.

Notes

1. Declaration by Christian Vanneste, member of the National Assembly and of the Nicolas Sarkozy's political party, UMP, on 3 Mar. 2011: *“La loi Taubira est une honte pour notre pays, une honte pour la liberté d'expression dans notre pays. Il faut la supprimer tout de suite. C'est une loi anti-française”*. See the answer of the *Comité pour la mémoire et l'histoire de l'esclavage* at www.cpmhe.fr

2. On the national myth, see Suzanne Citron, *Le mythe national: L'histoire de France revisitée* (Paris, 2008); François Reynaert, *Nos ancêtres les Gaulois et autres fadaïses* (Paris, 2010).
3. Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique, *Rapport 2006–2010, L'enseignement de l'esclavage, des traits et de leurs abolitions dans l'espace scolaire hexagonal*, accessible online: www.cpmhe.fr
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 126–7.
5. On this, see www.rue89.com/2010/01/05/debat-sur-identite-nationale-le-vrai-bilan
6. See their webpage: <http://www.ladroitepopulaire.fr>
7. Speech of Nicolas Sarkozy, 3 Mar. 2011, Puy-en-Velay, www.rtl.fr
8. Remarks by Nicolas Sarkozy, 10 Feb. 2011, TF1, www.tf1.fr
9. www.senate.fr "Rapport de mission 2009 sur les outre-mer".
10. On this theme, see my last book, *L'Homme prédateur: Ce que nous enseignent l'esclavage sur notre temps* (Paris, 2011).
11. Communication of François Hubert, director of the Musée d'Aquitaine at the colloquium *Exhibiting Slavery. Methods and Practices*, musée du quai Branly, 11–13 May 2011. See the programme on www.cpmhe.fr
12. www.respectmag.com/2011/07
13. Nelly Schmidt, *La France a-t-elle aboli l'esclavage? Guadeloupe- Martinique- Guyane, 1830–1935* (Paris, 2009), pp. 97–9.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 102–3.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
16. Gustave Flaubert, *The Sentimental Education* (London, 1869), p. 303.
17. On this, see Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2004); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (New York, 1997).
18. His birthday continues to be celebrated, see <http://martinique.coconews.com> "Fête de Schoelcher 2010", <http://www.guadeloupe.franceantilles.fr/regions/basse-terre-et-sa-region/digne-hommage-a-victor-schoelcher-22-07-2010-87876.php> "Digne hommage à Victor Schoelcher", 22 Jul. 2010.
19. Françoise Vergès, *Abolir l'esclavage: une utopie coloniale: Les ambiguïtés d'une politique humanitaire* (Paris, 2001).
20. *Ibid.*
21. Wole Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness* (Oxford, 1998), p. 89.
22. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, Whites Masks* (New York, 1967), p. 221.
23. See Dominique Chathuant "Français de couleur contre métèques: les députés coloniaux contre le préjugé racial (1919–1939)", *Outre-Mers, Revue d'histoire*, Jun. 2010, pp. 239–56; *id.*, "L'émergence d'une élite politique noire dans la France du premier 20^e siècle," *Vingtième siècle*, 101, 1 (2009), pp. 133–47; Jacques Dumont, *L'Amère partie: Histoire des Antilles françaises au XX^e siècle* (Paris, 2010).
24. <http://aime-cesaire.blogspot.com>. Aimé Césaire, *Victor Schoelcher et l'abolition de l'esclavage* (Paris, 2004).
25. Rapport de Jean-François Hébert, Apr. 2010, www.culture.gouv.fr. On the controversy, see <http://ldh-toulon.net>. This project has since been abandoned by the government of François Hollande.
26. Mohammed Assaoui, *L'affaire de l'esclave Furcy* (Paris, 2009); Margaret Tanager, *Les juridictions coloniales devant la Cour de Cassation (1828–1848)*, (Paris, 2007).
27. It must be said that few postcolonial thinkers of overseas territories intervene on the national scene to challenge the "francocentrism" of French thought.

28. Françoise Vergès, *La loi du 19 mars 1946: Les débats à l'Assemblée constituante* (Saint-Denis, Reunion, 1996), p. 69.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
30. Aimé Césaire, *Victor Schoelcher*.
31. The decree was adopted on 27 April 1848 in Paris. Republican envoys were sent to follow the application of the decree in Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyana, and Reunion. In Martinique, slaves did not wait for the envoy and declared themselves free on 22 May; in Guadeloupe, slaves took their freedom on 29 May; in Guyana, the envoy applied the decree on 10 June; in Reunion, the republican envoy accepted the conditions of slave-owners—to wait until after the sugar cane harvest and to impose new laws of discipline—to free the slaves. The abolition of slavery was declared on 20 December 1848.
32. Explanation given by the creators of the poster, of the Publicis Agency, *Archives of the "mission interministérielle"*, Apr. 1998.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Michel Giraud, "Revendication identitaire et cadre national", *Pouvoirs*, 113 (2005), pp. 96–107; Jean-Claude Leloutre, *La Réunion, département français* (Paris, 1968); Thierry Michalon, *L'outre-mer français* (Paris, 2009).
35. Today the number of Antillean living in the Hexagon is equal to the number of people living on both islands.
36. See Claude-Valentin Marie and Michel Giraud, "Insertion et gestion socio-politique de l'identité culturelle: les cas des Antillais en France", *Revue Européenne de Migration Internationale*, 3, 3 (2003), pp. 31–48; *Hommes et Migrations*, no. 1237, May–June 2002; Viviane Romana, interview with Sonia Lainel, RFO Guadeloupe, 11 Oct. 2004.
37. The full text of the law can be found at www.cpmhe.fr
38. It had 12 members, Maryse Condé as president, and me, Françoise Vergès, as vice-president. When Maryse Condé resigned in 2008, I became president.
39. www.cm98.fr
40. Paul Gilroy, *Race and the Right to be Human* (Utrecht, 2009), p. 21.

11

Transformations in the Law Concerning Slavery: Legacies of the Nineteenth Century Anti-slavery Movement

Andrea Nicholson

For those involved in the study of slavery, it will be unsurprising to read the estimated statistics of slavery as it exists in the world today. While it is impossible to gauge accurately the numbers of people currently held in the condition of slavery, the figure of 27 million is often quoted and is probably a conservative estimate.¹ The breadth of practices potentially falling within the ambit of slavery and of which the international community is now aware is immense. International law has rushed to keep up with a growing consciousness of “modern” slavery, and in so doing a number of issues have arisen and are potentially a significant hindrance to the success of modern anti-slavery strategies. Of particular concern is the reluctance to review the nineteenth-century abolitionist movement when constructing a modern legal framework. In many ways, that period can be viewed as an attempt to distinguish the past and to create new futures. In some way this discarding of the past has continued and results in a form of abstraction with which current anti-slavery discourse is infused, maintaining (perhaps inadvertently) a false distinction between “old” and “new” slavery.² Modern anti-slavery laws have their roots in the nineteenth-century campaign against slavery, thus a reflection on that time serves not only as a comparator but also as a means by which we may understand how best to progress. That century also demonstrates a momentous period of change in international law that coincided with, was affected by, and contributed to the anti-slavery agenda. An examination of the social and legal endeavours that led to the gradual abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, and eventually the international prohibition of the institution of slavery in the twentieth century, can be a valuable tool when determining progression in the anti-slavery campaign today.

This chapter examines the legacy of nineteenth-century legal conventions for the development of international law concerning anti-slavery in the following century. The startling number of legal instruments that have expanded upon the original slavery conventions indicates that the nature and emphasis of the law has shifted. To some extent this is necessary and has brought renewed vigour to the obligation on states to recognize and effectively prohibit slavery both within and without their borders. However, international anti-slavery laws have become somewhat fragmented and the whole has consequently lost some cohesiveness. The indications are that the rate and means of progression will compound an existing lack of clarity and permanence in the law, which suggests that we should be wary of viewing the development of global norms concerning human rights in a purely teleological and progressive fashion.

It is a particularly difficult enterprise to sum up progress towards abolition of the Atlantic slave trade during the nineteenth century. Not only is this period saturated in and deeply affected by slavery, but scholars continue to research and debate the myriad factors that contributed to such an exceptional and sustained campaign.³ Despite the slow progress, given the political agendas and fears of the world powers at a time of expansion and industrialization, and the comparative lack of state intercourse, the accomplishments of the anti-slavery cohort were remarkable.

The expansion of anti-slavery law during this period is often viewed in terms of British effort, but a wider analysis raises other interesting causative features, which collectively enabled the suppression and eventual abolition of the slave trade. From the perspective of the lawyer, three predominant themes repeatedly emerge from studies of the anti-slavery agenda. First, a shift in legal philosophy from a coexistence of positive and natural law in the preceding century to the prevalence of positive law during the nineteenth, which would impact on the means by which slavery was tackled internationally.⁴ Second, a reluctant easing in the defence of state sovereignty in international law, particularly with regard to the law of the sea. Third, the merging of previously distinct concepts of state (an abstract institution) and nation (peoples), which was somewhat bound up with the distinction between “civilized” and “non-civilized” states. This would prove significant in terms of rights to engage in, and exercise powers of negotiation over, bilateral treaties concerning trade as manifested through state sovereignty (and exercised on behalf of the nation).⁵

Given the difficulty in achieving a practical semblance even of national consensus, it is unsurprising that at the start of the nineteenth century, little had been achieved by way of concerted international action. As the institution of slavery itself was not under attack but rather the slave trade, the solution had to extend beyond the borders of the state and to the high seas. As a result of British anti-slavery sentiment and British maritime power (and therefore political influence), the development of the law of the sea

was the logical, and possibly the only, means of achieving real progress. Whether viewed from a cynical or a humanitarian perspective, British maritime power was such that increasing control of the high seas to police the waters for slave trading would constitute the “objective equivalent to severing the aorta of new world slavery”.⁶ However, state sovereignty was all, and as such no state enjoyed rights to patrol and visit ships in the territorial waters of another without the relevant state’s consent. Two key notions in international jurisprudence are highlighted by this position: state sovereignty and, by consequence, consent. Treaties were a formal means of providing said consent but were carefully negotiated, and the early treaties (often non-European) did little to address the slave trade, being instead primarily concerned with trade in general. Several of these treaties do recognize the municipal laws of states and make reference to the right of the slave to be considered free should they escape onto an English man-of-war. This might sound progressive but merely reasserts British sovereignty—had a slave escaped onto another state’s vessel, they would have remained a slave.⁷ Thus the provisions concerning slaves tended to simply confirm their existing legal position.⁸

The need for the development of the law of the sea is clear from early case law, which evidences a key obstacle to suppression; the right to visit and search on the high seas only existed in times of war. In the *Le Louis* case (1817),⁹ the judge, Sir William Scott, sets out the position clearly:

whether the right of search exists in time of peace, I have to observe, that two principles of public law are generally recognised as fundamental. One is, the perfect equality and entire independence of all distinct states . . . This is the great foundation of public law . . . The second is, that all nations being equal, all have an equal right to the uninterrupted use of the unappropriated parts of the ocean for their navigation. In places where no local authority exists, where the subjects of all states meet upon a footing of entire equality and independence, no one state, or any of its subjects, has a right to assume or exercise authority over the subjects of another. I can find no authority that gives the right of interruption to the navigation of states in amity upon the high seas, excepting that which the rights of war give to both belligerents against neutrals.¹⁰

Thus, a right of visitation could only legitimately be exercised on the high seas in times of war on the basis of self-defence or against pirates (viewed as “enemies of every country”).¹¹ Exceptionally, maritime practice was such that warships were allowed to approach but only to determine the nationality of a ship. Visitation and search could, of course, also be granted by consent—in other words by treaty.

Recognizing that the particular facts of *Le Louis* had occurred during times of peace on the high seas, the only possible avenue left was to attempt to

extend jurisdiction by trying to establish slave trading as piracy. However, this interpretation of the law was swiftly denied by the judge, who rejected the moral arguments and asked instead what the law considered the position to be, concluding that slave trading did not fulfil the criteria for piracy.¹² Thus, slave ships could not be boarded without the permission of the nation-state. It is interesting that this did not prevent an attempt to create a bilateral treaty between Britain and the United States in 1824, which agreed between them that the slave trade was to be recognized as slavery. This perspective would only have been valid between the two states, and so would not affect the law as it related to other states but would have allowed for the right of visitation on British and American ships by these two states, and prosecution for piracy. However, the treaty was never signed by the British following a number of amendments by the United States undermining its force. The position in *Le Louis* was subsequently supported in a number of cases spanning several decades, and for the purposes of the law it remained that the slave trade was not piracy.¹³

Thus the concept of state sovereignty, and the rights associated with it, ensured that during peacetime, no state, no matter how powerful, had the right to visit and search the ship of another state without explicit agreement. It should be noted that the number of cases challenging the British for breach of this rule would indicate their disregard for the law where it served their purpose. As one of the only states with the maritime power to patrol the Atlantic in this way, it is perhaps unsurprising that the British did not consider breach of much consequence when confronted with the inhumanity of slavery. Nevertheless, despite British disregard, the legal position posed a serious hindrance to the eradication of the African slave trade.

During this period it was typical for allied powers to meet in congress, a form of political summit, to discuss matters of international concern. In 1814 the British met with Austria, France, Russia, Prussia, Sweden, and Spain at the Congress of Vienna (1814–15) with, inter alia, a clear intention to abolish the slave trade over the following three years. It was hoped that this would be bolstered by agreeing a reciprocal right of visit and the creation of a permanent supervisory body to ensure adherence to the resultant treaty.¹⁴ The result was disappointing, particularly because the suggestion for an international league with the power to search and seize slave ships failed when put to the French statesman.¹⁵ Having come together to hammer out a strategy to eradicate the slave trade within a defined period, the eventual measure achieved was a formal declaration annexed to the treaty recognizing the “duty and necessity” of abolishing the slave trade and urging all the attending powers to renew efforts to suppress this “traffic”.¹⁶ No specific time frame was determined and no right of visit was agreed. Further, the vague commitment made in no way attempted to tackle the institution of slavery but was instead concerned only with the African slave trade.

Nevertheless, the declaration was important as the first international agreement establishing a commitment to the anti-slavery cause; the Congress of Vienna placed the slave trade on the international agenda, and in so doing elevated it as a matter of international concern. The Netherlands abolished the slave trade in 1814 and France in 1815, with Portugal and Spain attempting limited abolition in the same year (albeit applicable only to the north coasts of Spain and Portugal at the time).¹⁷

The Vienna declaration was followed in later years by the Aix la Chappelle Congress in 1818 and the Congress of Verona in 1822. Letters in support of the latter appeared in a London newspaper calling on the sovereigns for "*un pacte grand et perpétuel*" to suppress the slave trade and to declare it piracy.¹⁸ However, British parliamentary records indicate frustration as to the meaning of the resultant treaty, which provided the signatory states were

firmly resolved never to depart, neither in their mutual relations nor in those which bind them to other states, from the principle of intimate union which has hitherto presided over all their common relations and interests—a union rendered more strong and indissoluble by the bonds of Christian fraternity which the sovereigns have formed among themselves.¹⁹

The meaning of such a "union" of sovereigns and of this "Christian fraternity" were far from clear. One interpretation was that they referred to the Holy Alliance comprising Austria, Russia, and Prussia and created at the Congress of Vienna. As Britain was not party to the Holy Alliance, it was instead suggested in an equally indistinct manner that the paragraph alluded only to those principles "which the allied powers had all along publicly acted".²⁰ Little more was achieved at the Congress of Verona some four years later, where another declaration was made indicating states' ongoing moral commitment to ending the African slave trade but having failed to agree any formidable anti-slavery provisions.

The nature of these congresses becomes clear. They were attended less as a means of realizing humanitarian ideals and more as a means of political manoeuvring, state collaboration serving their collective and individual interests, and clarification or reaffirmation as to the nature of their relationships. Yet, despite this, the congresses enabled a level of international interaction and communication on a number of important issues, and so were intrinsic to the progression of an international anti-slavery campaign.

After such a halting (and disappointing) start to the process of suppression, Britain instead turned to the treaty mechanism to continue its cause. Momentum was therefore carried by an impressive number of bilateral treaties agreed between Britain and other countries. It was here that concessions were granted between states so as to allow a right between those states to visit, and in many cases search and seize ships of either nationality.

Among these, Britain entered into bilateral treaties with Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands between 1817 and 1818 to allow for a reciprocal right of visit and search by their ships of war where there was reasonable suspicion that a vessel was engaged in the slave trade.²¹ This also included a right to detain the vessel if suspicions were founded, and to bring it before one of the mixed commissions that had been established to deal with slave traders so discovered.²²

The establishment of a number of mixed commissions, a form of international tribunal, would prove vital to the application and exercise of the right of visit and search agreed in these treaties. The extent of the problem of enforcement had been highlighted in the British Parliament in 1819:

The house must be aware that there were many difficulties to impede the execution of conventions of this kind. Hitherto no instructions had been issued under these conventions to our cruisers to catch ships engaged in the slave trade, and the reason was, that there was no tribunal before which such prizes could be brought, and it would be contrary to the laws of nations to make such captures before a tribunal was appointed.²³

Thus between 1819 and 1871, mixed commissions were established under various treaties and founded in a number of locations, including Freetown, Surinam, Lunanda, Spanish Town, the Cape of Good Hope, Boa Vista, Rio de Janeiro, Havana, and New York.²⁴ The capability to bring traders before a court or tribunal was fundamental, if only because many of the bilateral treaties in place lacked institutions and procedures to ensure enforcement.

The network of bilateral treaties, underpinned by the existence of a number of mixed commissions, proved instrumental in manoeuvring many states away from a defensive stance, to concede to inspection by other (although in reality often British) ships. Depending on the particulars of the agreement in place, these treaties meant that vessels of states party to any such agreement that were found to be trading in slaves were in some cases able to be seized and brought before a mixed commission, or before a national tribunal. Often this resulted in the distribution of their goods and the “emancipation” of the slaves.²⁵ This bilateral network grew over several decades to include approximately 100 treaties. However, the right of visit and search only extended to the parties agreed; there was no international law allowing these rights outside formal consent.

A turning point was reached in 1841 with the Treaty of London for the suppression of the slave trade, also known as the Quintuple Treaty, which was agreed between Austria, Britain, Prussia, and Russia, later joined by Belgium and eventually Germany. Article 1 of the treaty not only included an undertaking to prohibit the slave trade by their subjects, under their flags, or by means of capital support from their subjects, but also provided that “the mere attempt to carry on the slave trade should have as a consequence

the loss of any right to the protection of their respective flags". This was an important watershed. If the treaties agreed with France in 1831 and 1833 are used by way of comparison, the right of visit and search was granted but jurisdiction for any slave ships remained with the flag state.²⁶

By the mid nineteenth century the anti-slavery movement was flagging. The United States was recognized as a world power and together with France it confronted the British abuse of the principle of freedom of the high seas. Compensation was paid at a loss to the British public purse, and worse: there seemed to be no reduction in the slave trade despite British efforts, so Britain capitulated on rights to visit and search in 1858. However, with the British no longer posing a problem, the United States was able to take control and it started to comply with the terms of the treaty it had previously agreed in 1842 with Britain for cooperation in the suppression of the slave trade.²⁷ A treaty similar in terms to the Quintuple Treaty was later agreed with the United States in 1862, and the abolition of slavery in there occurred in 1865 under the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution.²⁸

As anti-slavery efforts reached a lull, the campaign was taken up by Catholic and Protestant missionaries whose recounting of slavery in Africa engaged public sympathies and started to draw the institution of slavery into the national consciousness.²⁹ With the focus on the slave trade for so many decades, the shift to the condition of slavery was welcome but much harder to address. The African slave trade was more easily tackled and came with a clear solution—police the sea and disrupt its routes, something that despite the hindrances of international law was both possible and to some degree successful given the unique position of Britain at the time. Not only was the country the pre-eminent maritime power with a large fleet at its disposal, but, as one of the largest original slavers, it was also ideally placed to destabilize the trade. By contrast, the institution of slavery extended well beyond the parameters of West Africa and into countries where Britain had little influence. The institution of slavery existed in myriad forms—it was pervasive and would continue to present a challenge to human rights into the next century and beyond.

The final and strongest movements occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. Represented by 14 powers,³⁰ the Berlin Conference is notoriously described as the "scramble for Africa". In among the provisions for the division of Africa in the General Act of the Berlin Conference, the act addressed slavery in two articles. Article 6 provided for "All powers exercising rights of sovereignty or influence to . . . strive for the suppression of slavery and especially the Negro-slave-trade". It also included a declaration relative to the slave trade under Article 9, which provides:

seeing that trading in slaves is forbidden in conformity with the principles of international law as recognized by the Signatory Powers, and seeing also that the operations, which, by sea or land, furnish slaves to

trade, ought likewise to be regarded as forbidden, the Powers which do or shall exercise sovereign rights or influence in the territories forming the Conventional basin of the Congo declare that these territories may not serve as a market or means of transit for the trade in slaves, of whatever race they may be. Each of the Powers binds itself to employ all the means at its disposal for putting an end to this trade and for punishing those who engage in it.³¹

The focus of the Berlin Conference was not slavery; the conference was a means by which the 14 powers could negotiate the political partitioning of West Africa and agree navigational and trade rights.³² The tone of the articles was in places a little paternalistic and continued to pursue the notion of civilized and non-civilized peoples. Thus the preamble to the act referred to the “development of trade and civilisation in certain regions of Africa”, and Article 6 also provided for the aim of “instructing the natives and bringing home to them the blessings of civilisation”. However, it did have the consequence of reminding states of continuing slavery in the Congo Free State. This tied in with the crusade launched several years later against the slave trade by white missionaries in Africa, such as Cardinal Lavignerie, who travelled Europe exposing slave experiences and galvanizing public outrage. These provisions in the General Act of Berlin indicate a move away from the more demonstrative, and in some cases concessionary, declarations that marked the earlier part of the nineteenth century to the model of multilateral treaties that became the norm in the twentieth century after the decline of European world power.

The slow-building, sustained campaign against the slave trade was reaching its apex and came to fruition just five years after the Berlin Conference. The declarations, bilateral and multilateral treaties, religious and political campaigns, and slave uprisings and rebellions were brought to bear in a purposive manner at the Brussels Conference of 1890 convened solely to tackle the African slave trade. However, as a marker in the anti-slavery campaign, the Berlin Conference was minor compared with the consequences of the Brussels Conference not long after. This sudden development would seem strange had it not also been of political and economic interest to the parties. For example, France had a vested interest in the conference and sought to utilize it to suppress the traffic in arms, to control the trade in liquor, and to levy import duties, and the British, having borne much of the responsibility for, and the economic brunt of, policing the seas, saw the event as an opportunity to finally bring France fully on board. It is not insignificant that the Brussels Conference also corresponded with the international peace movement, resulting in the International Peace Conference of 1899, which was held with the intention of expanding instruments for settling crises peacefully, preventing wars, and codifying rules of warfare.³³

In comparison with the earlier international treaties, the Brussels Conference was an unparalleled success. The resulting treaty, the Convention Relative to the Slave-trade and Importation into Africa of Firearms, Ammunition, and Spiritous Liquors 1890 (hereafter the Brussels Act 1890), was signed and ratified by 17 states and contained an extensive number of articles providing for military and economic measures to combat slavery and the slave trade. Chapter III of the convention focuses entirely on the slave trade within defined maritime zones of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, and it agrees rights of visit, search, and seizure within these zones.³⁴ Under Article 28, any slave who had taken refuge on board a ship of war bearing the flag of one of the signatory powers was immediately and definitively to be set free. This meant that any state that had not already implemented this measure into its laws was now bound to do so.³⁵ A large section of the treaty (articles 30–61) set out the rules allowing rights of visit, search, and seizure. The parties bound themselves to enact criminal laws against slave traders and associated persons within a year.³⁶ Further, the treaty was the first to expressly recognize domestic slavery and to require the prohibition of “all forms of slavery”. Not only did it attempt to tackle the slave trade decisively, but the international community had finally begun to face other forms of slavery, albeit limited to domestic servitude. The result was a commanding treaty that produced a concrete and concerted strategy, which created municipal legislation prohibiting the slave trade where this had not already existed, and which applied to the largest number of states yet. However, the provisions for rights of visit, search, and seizure were limited to the maritime zones outlined in articles 22 and 23, and to vessels under 500 tons. It has also been argued that the Brussels Act “cloaked the entire conquest of Africa in a humanitarian guise by presenting European rule and capitalist enterprise, including the employment of freed slaves, as anti-slavery measures”.³⁷ Further, beyond mention of domestic slavery there was no explicit recognition of other forms of slavery—simply a requirement to abolish “all forms”. This last point would prove problematic in the expansion of international treaties on slavery in the twentieth century.

There is no doubt that the giving of rights to visit and search was instrumental in the suppression of the African slave trade. It is clear, therefore, that the development of the international law of the sea was critical to the suppression of the slave trade. However, the issue of sovereignty upon which this rested was also tightly bound together with the notion of “civilization”. Further, the value of law as a means of effective action was deeply concerned with the shift to positivism in legal philosophy. The move towards positive law is evident in *Somerset’s Case* (1772)³⁸ in which the judge, Lord Mansfield, stated:

The state of slavery is of such a nature, that it is incapable of being introduced on any reasons, moral or political; but only positive law, which

preserves its force long after the reasons, occasion, and time itself from whence it was created, is erased from memory: it's so odious, that nothing can be suffered to support it, but positive law.³⁹

Natural law had previously continued to hold its own against the tide of positive thought, but lost ground to positivism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its position that morality and the law are intrinsically concomitant, that man's capability to exercise rational thought renders him particularly suited to determine human law (a capability that is somehow inherent or organic), was believed to give rise to the realization of universally applicable laws. It would be thought that a philosophy that identified law with morality would abhor the state of slavery, but the defence of slavery had been justified by some traditional natural law theorists, whether on the basis of the "natural born" state of a man or on the basis that slavery was the natural condition of the fallen man. By contrast, positive law attempted to divorce law from morality and posited that law was legitimate where it reflected socially accepted views. As John Austin famously argued,

The existence of law is one thing; its merit or demerit is another. Whether it be or be not is one enquiry; whether it be or be not conformable to an assumed standard, is a different enquiry. A law, which actually exists, is a law, though we happen to dislike it, or though it vary from the text, by which we regulate our approbation and disapprobation.⁴⁰

Thus the law need not necessarily be just to be regarded as law. Further, some theories falling within the ambit of positivism conceived that law was a phenomenon of large societies requiring a sovereign: someone or some entity with the power to command and which will be obeyed.

The idea that law is a mere social construct and can legitimately be unjust seems to leave little room for compassionate moralizing. However, the positivist emphasis on the importance of tangible law and of consent became a vital element in the legitimization of international prohibition in the minds of states. Sovereignty was the cornerstone of positivism and from this was derived the fundamental requirement of consent; as sovereignty was all, freedom from interference was a corollary of this.⁴¹

The nineteenth century also gave rise to a traditional separation between the notions of "nations" (meaning "peoples") and "states" (meaning governments), which had fused, giving rise to the concept of the "nation-state".⁴² This term was neatly appropriated by "civilized" European states to indicate their progression and to distinguish themselves from the less progressive "uncivilized" and "un-Christian" states. These notions are intrinsically bound together so that the rise of positivism and of the nation-state closely parallels claims of legal and political supremacy during the nineteenth century.⁴³ The concepts of state recognition and therefore autonomy and

sovereign rights were connected to the distinction between civilized nation-states and non-civilized “barbaric” states. Indeed, the nineteenth-century jurist Henry Wheaton argued that international law was exclusive to civilized societies.⁴⁴ James Lorimer also argued as late as 1883 that “Even now the same rights and duties do not belong to savages and civilised man”,⁴⁵ and this view was supported by others, such as John Westlake, and Lassa Oppenheim, who wrote that it was “doubtful” that full sovereignty could be exercised by non-Christian states.⁴⁶

There is little doubt that this notion of the uncivilized “other” contributed to the slow pace of abolition. The belief that only civilized nations held, and were capable of exercising, true sovereignty (almost all of them European) limited the number of states party to the congresses, and also dictated the balance of reciprocal duties and obligations agreed via bilateral treaties. For example, treaties with African chiefs were largely commercial, leading to accusations that the British were trying to secure a monopoly in African markets.⁴⁷ Thus non-European societies that did not share some homogeneity of culture, language, and economic development were considered in some sense *sans* law or “extra-legal”⁴⁸ and were treated as subordinate. Consequently they possessed little bargaining power.

The positivist influence prevalent during the nineteenth century was in one respect vital to the anti-slavery movement in enhancing the move towards the formal creation of international laws and propelling international organization. However, it is clear that while anti-slavery campaigners may have relied on positivist progress to achieve their ends, their language was couched in moral terms based on the humanity of man. States, however, were less concerned with morals and more concerned with power and economies. Positivism served to strengthen the nation-state, raising questions as to the idea that human rights, dignity, and humanity were the impetus for state action, particularly where the corresponding concept of “civilization” and its consequences further indicate a perception that non-homogenous societies were considered “other” and “savage” (see above).⁴⁹

The twentieth century

Tackling only the slave trade during the nineteenth century was tactically shrewd. Britain had a large enough fleet and the political authority to engage in a huge number of bilateral treaties that incrementally and collectively established an international scheme to suppress the slave trade. This transformed the abolitionist movement into an international campaign, which was eventually to be realized at the Brussels Convention of 1890. A natural consequence of this was the emancipation of a particular “category” of slaves. Unfortunately, the reality of emancipation often meant indentured servitude, which in many cases simply constituted another form of slavery.

This form of servitude was masked as “employment”, and slavery continued to exist in other forms and in other regions, but had not explicitly been recognized in the preceding treaties, let alone targeted. Nineteenth-century anti-slavery international law was therefore created in the context of black chattel slavery. Thus it was in the twentieth century that the international community would attempt to address this omission.

The International Convention for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic at Final Protocol (1910) was the first international instrument to address the existence of “white slavery”⁵⁰ and was followed by a supplementary convention in 1919 signed at Saint- Germain-en-Laye.⁵¹ Here

[the] signatory powers exercising sovereign rights or authority over African territories [promised to] . . . in particular, endeavour to secure the complete suppression of slavery in *all its forms*⁵² and of the slave-trade by land and sea.⁵³

However, at the outbreak of the First World War, the General Act of Brussels of 1890 remained the most detailed and comprehensive international treaty regarding slavery and the slave trade in force.⁵⁴ At this time the League of Nations was formed under the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 “to promote international cooperation and to achieve peace and security”, in part to replace the pre-war international system so as to allow for independent nation-states, free from outside interference, and to provide an open forum for the discussion and resolution of disputes. The ILO was also created under the Treaty of Versailles as an affiliated agency of the league and would go on to produce several conventions relating to forced and child labour.⁵⁵ However, it was the League of Nations that appointed the Temporary Slavery Commission in 1925, which embarked on an inquiry into slavery as a result of lobbying by the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society.⁵⁶ The commission exposed the continuing existence of slavery and analogous practices, many of which did not correspond with traditional notions of chattel slavery but nevertheless constituted a serious breach of the dignity and freedom of man.⁵⁷ The result was the 1926 Slavery Convention. This was the first international treaty in which signatory states promised to bring about “progressively and as soon as possible, the complete abolition of slavery in all its forms”,⁵⁸ and in which the condition of slavery was given legal definition as “the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised”.⁵⁹ Further, the 1926 convention identifies with practices similar to slavery, noting in its preamble that it is necessary to prevent forced labour from developing into “conditions analogous to slavery”.⁶⁰ The preamble to the convention also explicitly mentions the acts of Berlin and Brussels but attempts something very different. Where the aforementioned acts concerned the slave trade (and therefore also tended towards the expression of navigational and trade rights), the

1926 convention uses these as foundation for provisions concerning the institution of slavery itself. The slavery convention was designed to complete and extend the work of the Brussels Act and to give practical effect to the expressed intentions of the parties. However, the *travaux préparatoires* reveal that the convention also comprised an attempt to continue the civilizing mission of the nineteenth century.⁶¹

Unfortunately the League of Nations did not survive the Second World War, but its aims were transmitted to the UN, created in 1945. Today the UN is essentially the nucleus of the international world order, and in 1945 it was the most important development for the cooperation and collaboration of states. Its principle aims were to save succeeding generations from the "scourge of war", and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small.⁶² With 26 original signatories, the UN signalled a new era of international cooperation, and in particular of human rights. The explicit reference to human rights in the objectives of the UN, and the subsequent Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which was intended to be read as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations,⁶³ marked the start of the modern human rights movement.

There was a distinct shift during this period from the conferences of the nineteenth century to a more global order in the twentieth. The former century did not see the global concert that occurred in the latter. Rather, in terms of state action, anti-slavery efforts were effected by a few powerful states meeting in concert, whose actions were often borne of economic and political motivation and agreed in privileged summits. By contrast, the creation of the League of Nations and then the UN meant that a much greater number of states were engaged in international relations. Coupled with the decline in European power, states were able to assert themselves to greater effect, particularly as the notion of the "civilized other" no longer held sway. In the light of the horrors of the two world wars, in compliance with the Charter of the United Nations, and as a result of incredible work by the UN Commission on Human Rights, the acknowledgement of a number of human rights was embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, a treaty which included, but extended far beyond, the institution of slavery to provide a comprehensive account of human rights, giving human rights international legal status.

While human rights are not "new",⁶⁴ it should be recognized that global human rights and "human rights speak" are really a feature of the twentieth century. By this I mean that international human rights were formed as a result of the consequences of the two world wars and following the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Prior to this the purpose of the League of Nations, and later the UN, was primarily to attempt global cohesion, peace, and security, which are explicitly declared in the respective bodies'

founding treaties. Thus one should first distinguish between the two distinct, although not necessarily unconnected, efforts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on the basis of motivation and impetus. One should also distinguish perceptions of rights so that the post-1945 language of universal human rights is contrasted with the anti-slavery efforts during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the former century, "rights" talk by campaigners was couched in terms of dignity and humanity, but for states, and for many individuals, notions of "civilization" and "nation" were far more dominant. Thus human rights talk as we know it today was not a feature of earlier anti-slavery efforts, which were distinct in a number of ways. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that human rights today are a legacy of prior rights awareness and of targeted action by powerful states. This is not to say that state efforts post-1945 were purely altruistic, but certainly there was a shift in motivation behind the legal protection of rights, and in the language and reach of rights at that time.

Thus it can be argued that both slavery and human rights agendas ran in tandem but were in fact quite distinct efforts, each of which was bolstered by the existence of the other, eventually merging in the mid-twentieth century. The nineteenth century efforts of the anti-slavery movement therefore may have provided ongoing momentum (not cause) to establish the international human rights framework, with the twentieth-century human rights movement ensuring that slavery remained part of the human rights discourse.⁶⁵

While the slavery convention still provides the accepted definition of slavery and recognized forms of servitude and forced labour,⁶⁶ the realization that many practices may not fall within its definition of slavery led to the implementation of the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave-trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery in 1956 and which provided for the abolition of a variety of practices similar to slavery under Article 1. These include debt bondage, serfdom, the inheritance of a woman, and extreme forms of child labour.⁶⁷ Numerous subsequent related treaties have served to crystallize the prohibition of slavery and enhance the view that it has achieved *jus cogens* status, the International Court of Justice defining the prohibition of slavery as an obligation "*erga omnes* arising out of human rights law"⁶⁸—an obligation owed to the international community as a whole. The human rights agenda has since taken hold and has resulted in the unremitting propagation of international human rights-related treaties over the last half century. Many of these are specifically created to tackle human rights, and some, such as the Palermo Protocol,⁶⁹ deal with human rights as an extension of a wider problem, in this case transnational organized crime.⁷⁰ Importantly, state reporting systems are now in place, and some of these treaties create committees with monitoring powers. In some cases these bodies have the capability to consider communications from individuals against a state.⁷¹

The large number of treaties created which concern more specific practices that fall somewhere within the labels of slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour have further confused the issue. These address, *inter alia*, trafficking of people, prostitution, pornography, forced labour, children's rights, and gender discrimination. The current legal complexity is not assisted by conflicting regional interpretations of the meaning and extent of slavery under the accepted definition from the 1926 convention.⁷² The consequence is that our understanding, and therefore the application of the original slavery laws, has been muddled by the proliferation of subsequent legal instruments on a variety of analogous practices. In our haste to confront "contemporary" forms of slavery, a conflation of legal analysis and application has arisen internationally, regionally, and domestically. As a result, practices similar to slavery are now often analysed in terms of exploitation (a potentially problematic term for the lawyer) in order to encapsulate the various recognized forms of slavery today. The problem with the concept of exploitation is where to draw the line; the term "exploitation" includes some comparatively innocuous acts. Thus one might perceive a sliding scale of gravity with slavery at the top, then servitude, progressing down to milder forms of forced labour.

Moreover, current slavery discourse has a tendency to revolve around people trafficking, and more often sexual trafficking is highlighted in particular. Trafficking in people has been widely recognized as a possible form of slavery,⁷³ and its prohibition is more universally implemented. One reason for this may be because trafficking is often concomitant with drugs trafficking, organized crime, asylum, immigration, prostitution, and efforts to control borders and crime generally. These matters are of particular importance to states both economically and politically, and therefore are more likely to draw their attention. States are able to exercise greater control in terms of immigration and border control, a task the state is already required to exercise and which re-inforces state sovereignty. This is reflected in the discourse on trafficking, which is also dominated by consideration of immigration and asylum policy. For example, trafficking laws have often been accused of facilitating border restrictions and of leading to the criminalization of sex work. Approaches to asylum include constructing systems that treat women as asylum seekers first and victims second. Where trafficking is claimed, it becomes a matter for immigration or criminal law.⁷⁴ Interestingly, there is also a perception that cross-border trafficking is linked to a notion of the "other"—so there is a capability to abstract the victim in much the same way as African slaves were abstracted, albeit through the separate concept of the nature of "uncivilized" peoples.

Over the last century we have therefore seen a move from the more general overarching rights introduced in the early twentieth century to more rights specific treaties in the latter half. Rather than engaging in an exercise of clarification of existing slavery conventions, the international community

has sought to expand through the addition of protocols and the practice of specific conventions. The continual redefining of the ILO in its forced labour conventions has also contributed to this effort. On the one hand, this approach has renewed efforts to combat slavery, has ensured that slavery has remained on the human rights agenda, and has prompted an impressive study of slavery in the world today. In contrast to the nineteenth century with international efforts directed solely at the African slave trade, today, world practices similar to slavery are known, and the existing prohibitions are being reinforced via a number of international agreements, promulgated by the UN (thereby representing the majority of world states), and bolstered by a number of treaty bodies. However, the fragmented and somewhat self-perfecting attitude to international law on slavery can produce undesirable consequences. Asylum law now privileges victims of trafficking as *asylum seekers* first and only then *as victims of a crime*. More worryingly, the increased recognition of the number of practices associated with slavery may result in the dilution of the meaning of slavery, and the interest in trafficking may pervert perceptions of the extent of slavery worldwide, resulting in the possible marginalization of slavery.⁷⁵

Temporality has changed, and we must look to the position today. However, increasingly it is being argued that a failure to look back may have hindered the formulation of modern anti-slavery law. Once established, international law focused on new models and new law, avoiding a historical approach and concerned that history would simply reveal the fragility and contingency of human action, which could prove debilitating to the new international order.⁷⁶ The international community set itself the task of formulating a stronger and peaceful world order via the UN. A product of this movement was the drive to advance human rights, which has given rise to a consistent self-perfecting legislative endeavour, and a move towards providing "solutions" as opposed to standard setting alone.

However, the resulting abstraction of certain practices from the original slavery conventions, such as human trafficking, which is now embodied in a distinct Optional Protocol,⁷⁷ and the linguistic distinction between slavery and servitude that has arisen via regional case law, while raising awareness and renewing anti-slavery efforts, has resulted in a conflation of provisions and terminology that dilutes the meaning of slavery, and has consequences for fair labelling and victim satisfaction. Further, the persistent reference to "modern" forms of slavery denies the historical bases of many of these practices, somehow restricting the problem and leading to trite statements that attribute the "rise of modern slavery" to "globalization".⁷⁸ If the international community does not reflect the historical bases of these practices in its laws and policies, fundamental understandings as to its underlying causes cannot be fully achieved, and the most constructive and effective means of tackling the practice will be neglected. However, it could also be argued that in some respects the modern position is a reflection

of the past. Certainly the creation of monitoring bodies, and the recognition of various practices analogous to slavery, would indicate a recognition of past problems and omissions.

However, it is also clear that while those reading this book may be immersed in the analysis of slavery, and despite perhaps perceptions to the alternative, slavery is not on the international agenda as it was in the nineteenth century, meaning that it is not a state priority. The particular circumstances and factors that came together in the nineteenth century are not emulated today where other political and economic concerns, and issues of state security, have taken precedence and do not naturally coincide with anti-slavery efforts.

During the nineteenth century, ending the slave trade was the objective. With the victim in mind, the end was to facilitate the freedom of slaves, not to tackle the institution of slavery *per se*. Further, there was a clear lacuna in international law, which had not attempted to deal with the various other forms of slavery existing at the time. Today, the campaign to end slavery continues but the more recent treaties indicate two trends:

- a move towards victim assistance to manage the consequences of emancipation;
- a potentially separate human rights agenda protecting children.⁷⁹

International treaties are becoming increasingly victim-oriented and do not merely represent an exercise in cause and effect. The Palermo Protocol in particular calls for very specific measures, suggesting that psychological assistance be given to victims, and for states to consider re-patriation or regularization of immigration status, and the provision of housing and health care.⁸⁰ In other words, the protocol is more statutory in nature and goes far beyond the usual call for “effective implementation”, which has often resulted in states merely setting minimum standards rather than proactively leading the field. The implementation of more extensive and effective post-discovery measures must be the correct approach to new legislation. The very nature of slavery means that individuals are less able to make their condition known, and, by the time they are discovered, the offence is likely to have occurred already. The forms of assistance suggested by the Palermo Protocol are therefore vital to achieving justice. The focus today is also very much on women and children as the most vulnerable, and revolves around people trafficking, and more often sexual trafficking is highlighted in particular. As already noted human trafficking is often part of a larger complex of criminal activity, including drug trafficking and organised prostitution. States therefore tend to treat trafficking as a challenge to law and order and sovereignty rather than as a human rights issue. This is reflected in the discourse on trafficking which can be dominated by a consideration of

immigration and asylum policy.⁸¹ There is also a perception that cross-border trafficking is linked to a notion of the victim as the “other”, so there is a capability to abstract the victim, much as occurred in the nineteenth century where the distinction between civilized and uncivilized others led to similar abstraction.

Quirk argues skilfully for historical scholarship to be considered anew in the fight to implement effective strategies against “modern” slavery. In particular, the unfortunate terminology of “old” and “new” slavery ought to be discarded in order to avoid the abstraction of slavery from its ancestry.⁸² Only by studying the social, cultural, and economic roots of slavery in all its forms can we begin to understand how best to tackle it in the twenty-first century. While some form of international state unity exists in both centuries, as did a number of anti-slavery treaties, there remains a feeling that the anti-slavery movement today is overwhelmingly different, and struggling to effect change at the grass-roots level. This is in part due to a lack of targeted action, which is affected by a lack of drive from the most powerful states, and by a less localized, more dispersed slave problem. An awareness of the magnitude and variation of global slavery renders the international community somewhat physically incapable of striking at all practices with the same consequence, despite international cooperation. It should be noted that when identifying contributory factors, globalization is often presented as facilitating “modern” slavery. However, in theory, globalization also facilitates cooperation and cohesiveness. The retreat to globalization as an excuse for the continuing existence of slavery is therefore unsustainable, particularly in the light of nineteenth-century achievements where cooperation was so difficult, and especially when confronted with rural and cultural slavery where its influence is limited.

The means by which slavery is managed has also changed. Historically, national efforts moved to international and filtered through to domestic law. In order for slavery to be tackled effectively today, international movement needs to move to the national agenda, and states should perhaps emulate the nineteenth-century campaign by taking on greater responsibility in initiating effective domestic anti-slavery measures.

Conclusion

In the new laws on slavery we are seeing a means of embedding greater obligations to ensure more appropriate and effective methods with a focus on victim assistance. There are other advantages to these multiple specific treaties: new treaties have introduced monitoring and reporting processes, there is more clarity as to certain offences, and the treaties are becoming exceptionally prescriptive. So it seems that the distinction is between a rights-based focus in the old treaties, and a focus on sentencing and victim

assistance in the new.⁸³ The purpose of practice-specific treaties is to move away from the definitional problems with the older slavery conventions and provide for a more specific and targeted approach by criminalizing the most commonly recognized acts. Unfortunately, this means international human rights law as it relates to slavery has become somewhat fragmented. The concern is that there will be a consequential loss of effect when transposed into municipal law. If that is the case, then protection will become dependent on grass-roots organizations rather than their being supported by, and part of, an effective network. In combating slavery it is important that the law suits not just the doctrinal lawyers but also non-governmental organizations and international bodies, so the question remains whether we need a more systematic approach to the law on slavery, or some form of consolidatory framework.

Part of the reason for this fragmentation is no doubt the appropriation of the term “slavery” to describe a number of practices so as to benefit from the stigma of slavery by association. However, it is also likely that this has been compounded by a failure to reflect on and acknowledge historical slavery, which has led to the conceptualization of practices existing today as “new”. This reluctance to engage with the history of the anti-slavery movement or a tendency to view it as irrelevant is misplaced. Statements about “new” slavery are not particularly helpful; awareness can only be enhanced by a recognition of the historical nature of many practices analogous to slavery. An analysis of the social, moral, cultural, philosophical, economic, and political factors intrinsic to the abolitionist movement must be relevant to understanding the measures needed today and could have avoided many of the issues arising in the filtering down of international law to the domestic level. Thus one becomes persuaded by Philip Allott’s criticism that the world, having so thoroughly rejected natural law, finds itself in a state of “frenzied progress” and in constant need of improvement and self-perfection.⁸⁴

The current rate of creation of international human rights law can, on the one hand, be regarded as a positive and proactive move towards the eradication of slavery, distinct from the slow and politically laden steps of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the rate at which the law is moving today leaves little pause for reflection and modern anti-slavery laws have faltered when translated into real protection.

Notes

1. Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (Berkeley, CA, 1999), p. 8; Joel Quirk, *Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery* (UNESCO, 2008).
2. Joel Quirk, “The anti-slavery project: linking the historical and the contemporary,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, 28 (2006), pp. 565–98.
3. Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labour versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (Oxford, 2004).

4. R. Ago, "Positive law and international law", *The American Journal of International Law*, 51 (1957), pp. 691–732.
5. C. Brown, T. Nardin, and N. Rengger, eds., *International Relations in Political Thought: Texts from the Ancient Greeks to the First World War* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 458.
6. David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (Oxford, 1986), p. 172.
7. Unless, of course, a treaty to the contrary had been agreed or similar municipal laws existed.
8. E. Keene, "A case study of the construction of international hierarchy: British treaty-making against the slave-trade in the early 19th century", *International Organization*, 61 (Spring 2007), pp. 311–39. Prior to this movement, slaves were legally considered mere chattels. In *R v Knowles*, ex parte Somersett (1772) 20 State Tr 1, while finding the transportation of a slave illegal in British waters, noted that had the case concerned a contract for the sale of the same slave it would have been valid. This approach to the slave as property also confirmed in the *Zong* case (*Grayson v Gilbert* (1783) 3 Dougl 232) where it transpired that it was more profitable for a British slave ship captain to throw sick slaves overboard to their deaths than it was to try to look after them with the possibility of their dying onshore. If the captain lost his "cargo" en route he would be paid compensation.
9. *Le Louis* (1817) 2 Dodds. 210; 165 E.R.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 243–4.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Le Louis* (1817) 2 Dodds. 210; 165 E.R., p. 247.
13. For example, *Madrazo v Willes* (1820) 3 B. & A. 353; *Buron v Denmand* (1848) 2 Ex. 167; 154 E.R. For an excellent and thorough discussion of cases on this matter, H. Fischer, "The suppression of slavery in international law", *The International Law Quarterly*, 3, 1 (1950), pp. 28–51. It is interesting to note that twentieth-century attempts to introduce legal recognition of the slave trade as piracy during negotiations for the 1926 Slavery Convention were also unsuccessful. See Jean Allain, *The Slavery Conventions: The Travaux Préparatoires of the 1926 League of Nations Conventions and the 1956 United Nations Convention* (Leiden, 2008), p. 6.
14. Suzanne Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave-Trade* (London, 1975), p. 10.
15. Junius Rodriguez, ed., *The Historical Encyclopaedia of World Slavery* (Santa Barbara, CA, 1997), p. 673.
16. Declaration Relative to the Universal Abolition of the Slave-trade, 8 Feb. 1815, Consolidated Treaty Series, vol. 63, no. 47.
17. Britain and the United States declared the slave trade illegal in 1807, the Netherlands in 1814, France in 1815, Spain and Portugal for trade north of the border in 1815, eventually extending to all of Spain in 1820.
18. Peter Hogg, *The African Slave-Trade and Its Suppression* (London, 1973), p. 209.
19. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, vol. 39, 11 Feb. 1819, pp. 422–33.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 424.
21. These were agreed in 1817 (Portugal and Spain) and 1818 (the Netherlands).
22. Unfortunately, there was ongoing opposition from France; a legacy of the Napoleonic Wars and recognition that the negotiation of these treaties also served to fortify and expand British naval strength. Equally, the United States was reluctant to allow a right of visit and search, and as such was uncooperative.
23. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, vol. 39, 19 Feb. 1819, p. 541.

24. L. Bethell, "The mixed commissions for the suppression of the transatlantic slave-trade in the 19th century", *Journal of African History*, 7, 1 (1966), pp. 79–93.
25. Although this too often transpired to mean indentured labour.
26. France subsequently withdrew from these altogether in 1845.
27. The Webster–Ashburton Treaty 1842 delimited navigational rights and established a joint naval system for suppressing the slave trade off the African coast.
28. Although voting rights to all races took a little longer and were granted following adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1870.
29. Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison, WI, 1989), p. 16.
30. Germany, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, the United States, France, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Sweden-Norway, and Turkey.
31. The General Act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa, 26 Feb. 1885 (76 British and Foreign Estate Papers 4, English Translation A.J.I.L. 3 (1909). Chapter II, Article 9. The act was signed by all of the attending powers but was not ratified by the United States.
32. The intentions of the signatories are noted at the beginning of the General Act of the Brussels Conference, 2 Jul. 1890, which provides that the purpose of the Berlin conference was primarily to "guide [States'] commercial and civilising action in the little-known or inadequately organised regions of a continent".
33. Adopting the first Hague Convention 1899, soon followed by the second Hague Convention in 1907.
34. See articles XXII and XXIII.
35. This was further supported by Article XXIX, which provided that any slave detained on a native vessel had the right to demand his liberty.
36. Articles V–XIX.
37. Miers and Roberts, eds., *End of Slavery*, p. 17.
38. *Somerset v Stewart* (1772) 98 E.R. 499.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
40. John Austin, *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined* (Cambridge, 1995: first edition 1832), p. 157.
41. A. Anghie, "Finding the peripheries: sovereignty and colonialism in 19th century international law", *Harvard International Law Journal*, 40, 1 (1999), pp. 1–80.
42. Anghie, "Finding"; Lorca Becker, "Universal international law: nineteenth-century histories of imposition and appropriation", *Harvard International Law Journal*, 51, 2 (2010), pp. 475–552.
43. Louis Henkin, *International Law: Cases and Materials: American Casebook*, 3rd ed. (London, 1993), p. xxv.
44. Henry Wheaton, *Elements of International Law, with a Sketch of the History of the Science* (Philadelphia, PA, 1836), pp. 17–18.
45. James Lorimer, *The Institutes of the Law of Nations: A Treatise of the Jural Relations of Separate Political Communities* (Edinburgh, 1883), p. 4.
46. A. Orakhelashvili, "The idea of European international law", *The European Journal of International Law*, 17 (2006), pp. 315–34.
47. H. C. Landry, "Slavery and the slave-trade in Atlantic diplomacy, 1850–1861", *Journal of Southern History*, 27, 2 (1961), pp. 184–207.
48. Stefan Ludwig Hoffmann, "Genealogies of human rights", in *id.*, ed., *Human Rights of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 1–28.

49. Henkin, *International Law*; Wheaton, *Elements*; Lorimer, *Law of Nations*; Orakhelashvili, "The idea of European international law", pp. 320–1; Mark Mazower, "The end of civilisation and the rise of human rights: the mid-twentieth century disjuncture", in Hoffmann, ed., *Human Rights*.
50. International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic at Final Protocol, UN Sale No. 1450.IV.2 (1910); International Convention to Suppress the Slave-trade and Slavery, 1926; the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, UN Sales No.1950 IV.I.
51. Convention revising the General Act of Berlin, 26 Feb. 1885, and of the General Act and the Declaration of Brussels, 2 Jul. 1890, signed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 10 Sep. 1919 [1922] LNTSer 19; 8 LNTS 27.
52. Author's emphasis.
53. Article II, Para I.
54. See the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, Geneva, Switzerland 24 Feb. to 27 Apr. 1958. Doc:- A/Conf.13/7.
55. Forced Labour Convention 1930 (C29); Minimum Age Convention 1973 (C138); the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999 (C182).
56. Anti-Slavery International.
57. See generally A. Gallagher, *The International Law of Human Trafficking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
58. Article 2.
59. Article 1(1) the Slavery Convention 1926. Article 1(2) provides "The slave trade includes all acts involved in the capture, acquisition or disposal of a person with intent to reduce him to slavery; all acts involved in the acquisition of a slave with a view to selling or exchanging him; all acts of disposal by sale or exchange of a slave acquired with a view to being sold or exchanged, and, in general, every act of trade or transport in slaves."
60. Reinforced by Article 5, which requires states to take all necessary measures to prevent forced labour and sets out legitimate circumstances of compulsory labour.
61. Allain, *Slavery Conventions*, p. 6.
62. See the preamble to the United Nations Charter 1945.
63. See the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.
64. Micheline Ishay, *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalisation Era* (Berkeley, CA, 2004).
65. See Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.
66. Andrea Nicholson, "Reflections on *Siliadin v France*: slavery and legal definition", *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 14, 5 (2010), pp. 705–20; T. Buck and A. Nicholson, "Constructing the legal framework", in G. Craig, ed., *Child Slavery Now: A Contemporary Reader* (Bristol, 2010); H. Cullen, "*Siliadin v France*: positive obligations under Article 4 of the European convention of human rights", *Human Rights Law Review*, 6, 3 (2006), pp. 585–92.
67. Article 1.
68. Barcelona Traction, Light and Power Co., Ltd (Belgium v Spain), 5 Feb. 1971, ICJ Reports 1970, p. 32.
69. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children 2000.
70. The Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000.
71. Human Rights Committee of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966.
72. See *Siliadin v France* (2006) 43 EHRR 16; *Kumarac et als.* (IT-96-23-T & IT-96-23/1-T) Judgment, 22 Feb. 2001; *R v Tang* [2008] HCA 39; *Hadijatou Mani Koraou v*

- The Republic of Niger* (2008) Judgment No. ECW/CCJ/JUD/06/08. 27 Oct. 2008; *Rantsev v Cyprus* (25965/04) (2010) 51 EHRR 1 (ECHR).
73. This is reflected in the definition of trafficking and recognizes that the movement of an individual for exploitative purposes, within or across borders, may not in itself amount to slavery.
 74. "Trafficking in Children for Sexual Purposes: An Analytical Review", Paper for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, ECPAT; Integration of the Human Rights of women and the gender perspective violence against women, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, on trafficking in women, women's migration and violence against women, submitted in accordance with United Nations Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/44. E/CN.4/2000/68, 29 Feb. 2000.
 75. J. C. Hathaway, "The human rights quagmire of 'human trafficking'," *Virginia Journal of International Law*, 49, 1 (2008), p. 6.
 76. Anghie, "Finding the periphery", p. 20.
 77. The Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 2000, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.
 78. Quirk, "Anti-slavery project".
 79. Craig, ed., *Child Slavery Now*; D. Marshall, "The construction of children as an object of international relations: the declaration of children's rights and the child welfare committee of league of nations, 1900–1924", *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 7, 2 (1999), pp. 103–47; T. Buck, *International Child Law* (Abingdon, 2011); D. Smolin, "Strategic choices in the international campaign against child labour", *Human Rights Quarterly*, 22, 4 (2000), pp. 942–987; G. Van Bueren, *International Law on the Rights of the Child* (Dordrecht, 1995).
 80. Article 6.
 81. N. Howard and M. Lalani, "The politics of human trafficking", *The St Anthony's International Review*, 4, 1 (2008), pp. 5–15; International Organisation for Migration, *Combatting Trafficking in South-East Asia: A Review of Policy and Programme Responses* (UNESCO, 2000); S. Huda, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights aspects of victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 20 Feb. 2006, E/CN.4/2006/62.
 82. Quirk, "Anti-slavery project", p. 580.
 83. The EU Group of Experts on Trafficking in Human Beings who have suggested a revision of the Council Framework Decision on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2002/629/JHA) to include unconditional assistance to the victim, followed by temporary residence permits, and compensation for both financial and non-material damages.
 84. See generally the Review Essay Symposium, "Philip Allott's Eunomia and the health of nations thinking another world: 'this cannot be how the world was meant to be'," *The European Journal of International Law*, 16, 2 (2005), p. 259.

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Index

- Abbott, Lyman, 188
Abduh, Muhammad, 122
Aborigines Protection Society, 152,
173, 175, 225
Act for the Abolition of the Slave
Trade (1807), 37, 40, 104
Act of Union (1800), 71
Adam, William, 72
African Institution, 40, 42–4
Afrikaverein deutscher Katholiken, 159
Ahmet, bey of Tunis, 124
Aix la Chappelle Congress (1818), 218
Albert I, 193
Aldrich, Nelson W., 188, 190
Alexander I, 32, 100–1, 107
Alexander II, 97, 99–100, 102–4
Alfonso XII, 145
Algeria, 129, 202
al-Kawakibi, Abd al-Rahman, 122–3
Allen, Charles, 152, 156, 159
Allen, Richard, 71
Allott, Philip, 232
al-Nabhani, Yusuf, 123
Anglo-French Entente Cordiale
(1904), 177
Anti-Corn Law League, 82
Antilles, 201, 204, 209–10
Anti-Slavery Committee, 159
Anti-Slavery League, 82–4, 89, 91
Anti-Slavery Society (ASS), 151–7,
159–60, 162–3, 165, 175
Aponte Rebellion of 1812, 137, 142
Argentina, 11, 141
Arthur, Chester A., 177
Arthur, Timothy Shay, 111–12
Ashurst, William, 85
Assing, Otilie, 86
Association for Tariff Reform, 143
Atlantic world, 1, 18, 119, 130, 133–5
Austin, John, 223
Austria, 217–19

Barbour, Thomas, 178–81, 184, 192
Barnett, Michael, 6

Baruch, Bernard, 189
Bathurst, Henry, 3rd Earl Bathurst, 41–2,
44, 48
Beecher, Charles, 90
Beecher Stowe, Harriet, 79, 81, 90–1, 93
Beitz, Charles, 7
Belgium, 155, 171, 174, 176, 179, 181–2,
186, 190–2, 219
Benson, Edward, 152
Berlin Conference (1884–5), 149, 173,
176, 191–2, 220–1
Bickersteth, Edward, Reverend, 46–9, 51
Bismarck, Otto von, 152, 157–8, 164–5,
176
Bissette, Cyrille, 203
Bolívar, Simón, 18, 28–9, 140–1
Boxer Rebellion, 172
Bradburn, George, 65, 70–1, 73
Brazil, 138, 153
Brecht, Theodor, 159
Bright, John, 89
Brion Davis, David, 2–5
Bristol and Clifton Ladies' Anti-Slavery
Society, 83, 86
Britain, 8, 38–9, 41–4, 47–8, 53, 59–67,
69–72, 78–86, 88–92, 98, 104, 106,
109, 111, 140–1, 146, 151–2, 154–6,
158, 160, 164–5, 171–2, 175,
177–81, 185–6, 189–92, 206,
218–20, 224
British East Africa Company, 162
British and Foreign Anti-Slavery
Society (BFASS), 62–3, 72, 119
British Foreign Office, 72, 110,
175, 177
British India Society, 78, 81–2
empire, 4, 19, 24, 37, 61, 66, 70, 73,
108, 185
Parliament, 38, 42, 59–61, 219
Royal Navy, 1, 11, 37, 146, 157, 162
treaty with United States 1824,
217, 220
Brussels Conference (1889–90), 149–50,
156–7, 164–5, 221–2

- Brussels Conference Act (1890), 11, 149, 165, 176, 191, 222–5
 BUMIDOM, 209
 Buxton, Thomas Fowell, 78, 80
- Cameron, Verney Lovett, 162–3
 Campbell, Neil, 50–1
 Campos, Arsenio Martínez, 145
 Carlyle, Thomas, 88
 Carnegie, Andrew, 187
 Casement, Roger, 175–6, 186
 Castlereagh, Lord, Robert Stewart, 41
 Catherine II, 100–1, 103–6
 Catholic Centre Party, 158
 Catholic Church, 9, 12, 104, 152–4, 158–60, 179, 181, 185
 Catholic Emancipation, 59–60
 Cattier, Felicien, 186, 190
 Césaire, Aimé, 205, 207–8
 Chailley, Joseph, 155
 Chamberlain, Joseph, 172
 Channing, William Ellery, 62
 Chapman, Maria Weston, 85–8
 Charles IV, 140
 Chartists, 82, 91
 Chesson, Fredrick W., 85, 91
 Chile, 140
 China, 172
 Christophe, Henry, 7, 9, 17, 19–21, 23, 29–32
 Church Missionary Society (CMS), 12, 38, 44–54, 152
 Circassians, 126, 133
 Clapham Sect, 42–3
 Clapp, Henry, 90
 Clarke, Robert, 40
 Clarkson, Thomas, 20, 30–2, 43, 62, 80, 82
 Clemens, Samuel, *see* Twain, Mark
 Cleveland, Grosvenor, 172
 Cmiel, Kenneth, 6
 Cobden, Richard, 83, 143
 Cochrane, Alexander, 28
 Collins, John, 85
 Colombia, 11, 141
 Columbine, Edward, 38, 41
 Committee on Free Labour, 68
 Congo, 171, 173–94, 221
 Congo Act (1885), 164
 Congo Free State, 165, 171, 173, 221
 Congo Reform Association, 12–13, 171, 179
 Congress of Verona (1822), 218
 Congress of Vienna (1814–5), 2, 17–18
 Conspiracy of La Escalera, 137
 Convocation of Canterbury, 162
 Corbet, Edward, 23–5
 Corbin, Alain, 203
 Cresson, Elliott, 80
 Crimean War, 102, 110
 Cuba, 68, 137–9, 141–7
- Dacres, James Richard, 28
 Daniels, John, 180, 191
 Dawes, William, 65
 De Antillón, Isidoro, 142
 Decembrist Uprising (Russia), 101
 De Labra, Rafael María, 145
 De la Roque, General, 129
 De Menezes, José Ferreira, 4
 De Miranda, Francisco, 18, 27–9
 Denby, Edwin, 187
 Derby, Earl 15th, Edward Stanley, 162
 De Saint Méry, Médéric Louis Élie Moreau, 27
 Dessalines, Jean-Jacques, 7, 9, 17, 19–27, 30, 32
 Dilke, Charles, 175
 Douglass, Frederick, 4, 79, 83–4, 86, 90–3
 Drescher, Seymour, 4–5, 150
 Dubois, Laurent, 5
 Dupont, Edouard, 161
 Éboué, Félix, 201
- Egypt, 10, 122–3, 133, 164
 Elder Dempster, 174
 Emancipation Act, 61, 64
 Emin Pacha (born Isaak Schnitzer), 152, 163
 Erekle II, King of Eastern Georgia, 105–6
 Estlin, John B., 88
 Estlin, Mary, 83, 86
 Evangelical Alliance, 83
- Fabri, Friedrich, 161
 Fanon, Frantz, 205
 Ferdinand VII, 140, 142
 Flaubert, Gustave, 203
 Foreign Christian Missionary Society, 181

- France, 4, 8, 12, 14, 24, 29–32, 101, 126, 129, 151–2, 155, 160, 176, 179, 190, 192, 198–210, 217–18, 220–1
 empire, 17, 27
 revolution, 5–6, 8, 156–7, 203, 208
- Free Church of Scotland, 83
- Freehling, William, 60
- Free Society of Political Economy, 143
- French Anti-Slavery Society, 156
- Fugitive Slave Act 1851, 79
- Fuller, James, 70–2
- Galliéni, Joseph, 204
- Galusha, Elon, Reverend, 72
- Garrison, William Lloyd, 61, 63, 78–93
- Geggus, David, 26
- Georgia, 105–7
- Germany, 12, 151–2, 154–5, 158–61, 163
 German Colonial Association, 152
 German Colonial Society, 152, 158–61
 German East Africa Company, 156
- Ghazal, Amla, 122–3
- Gibbons, James Cardinal, 181
- Gladstone, William, 112
- Glasgow Emancipation Society, 63
- Glissant, Edouard, 209
- Godwin, Benjamin, Reverend, 64
- Granville, Earl 2nd (Granville Leveson-Gower), 154
- Grey, Edward, 171, 189, 191–2
- Griffiths, Julia, 86
- Guadeloupe, 25–7, 199, 207–8, 210–11
- Guyana, 199, 207, 209
- Haiti, 1, 9, 17–32, 203
 independence, 17–21, 23–4, 29–32
 revolution, 2, 4, 5, 7, 17–19, 25–6, 29–30, 32, 199, 201
- Hall, G. Stanley, 180
- Hamilton, William, 40
- Hamm, Oskar, 158, 160
- Hardinge, Arthur, 191
- Harris, John, 186–8
- Hay, John, 178, 183, 185
- Hearst, William Randolph, 189
- Hébrard, Jean, 203
- Hexagon, 200, 208–9, 211
- Hoffman, Stefan Ludwig, 6
- Holy Alliance, 218
- Holy Law, 122, 124
- Howitt, Mary, 81, 89–90
- Hunt, Lynn, 5, 7, 150
- Institut Colonial International, 155
- International Convention for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic at Final Protocol 1910, 225
 supplementary convention 1919, 225
- International Court of Justice, 227
- International Peace Conference (Hague) 1899, 221
- Iran, 111, 122
- Isabel II, 142, 144–5
- Islam, 7, 9, 12–13, 105, 112, 120–8, 130–5, 149–50, 155–6, 158–9, 198, 207
- Italy, 179
- Jamaica, 22, 25, 28
- James, C. L. R., 2
- James, John Angell, Reverend, 64
- Janssens, Emile, 186, 190
- Jefferson, Thomas, 28
- Jenson, Deborah, 26
- Johnson, W. B. A., 53
- Jordan, David Starr, 184
- Karamzin, Nicholas, 101, 104
- Keep, John, 69
- Kennaway, John, 161–2
- Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, 112
- Kirk, John, 163
- Kiselev, P. D., Count, 102
- Kowalsky, Henry, 189
- Lambermont, Auguste, 164
- Langen, Eugean, 158
- Larguèche, Abdelhamid, 132
- Lartigue, Arnaud André Roberjot, 26–7
- Lavigerie, Charles, Cardinal, 10, 12, 149–51, 153–5, 158–9, 161–2, 164–6, 221
- Layard, Austen, 155
- League of Nations, 225–6
 Convention 1926, 14, 149, 225–6, 228
 Temporary Slavery Commission 1925, 225
- Leeds Anti-Slavery Society, 86
- Leeds Young Man Christian Association, 156

- Le Louis case, 216–17
 Leo XIII, Pope, 153
 Leopold II, 8, 10, 165, 171, 173, 176, 184, 188
 Liberated African Department, 38, 46, 49, 51–2
 Lincoln, Abraham, 10, 143
 Liverpool, 1st Lord (Jenkinson, Charles), 22
 Liverpool, 2nd Lord (Jenkinson, Robert), 29
 Livonian War, 98
 Lodge, Henry Cabot, 188, 190
 London Emancipation Committee, 91
 Loomis, Francis B., 181
 Lorimer, James, 11, 224
 L'Ouverture, Toussaint, 2, 22
 Lovejoy, Paul, 2
 Lovett, William, 91
 Low, Maurice, 189
 Ludlam, William, 39–42
 Lugard, Frederick, 162
- Macaulay, Kenneth, 41
 Macaulay, Zachary, 42–3
 MacGahan, J. A., 111–12
 Mackenzie, George, 163
 Madagascar, 202, 204
 Madison, James, 28
 Manning, Henry Edward, 154
 Mansfield, 1st Earl of (Murray, William), 8, 222
 Manzanedo, Juan Manuel de, 146
 Maritain, Jacques, 7
 Marques, João Pedro, 4
 Martens, F. F., 111
 Martineau, Harriet, 78, 88
 Martinique, 25–7, 199, 207–8, 210
 Massachusetts Commission of International Justice, 178
 Maximin, Daniel, 208
 Maxwell, C. W., 38, 41–2, 44–5
 Mayotte, 199, 207
 May, Samuel, 88
 Mazower, Mark, 6
 McCarthy, Charles, 44–51
 McDonald Beckles, Hilary, 4
 Mexico, 139, 146
 Midhad, Paşa, Grand Vizer, 126
 Mirbach, Julian von, 156
 Moncheur, Ludovic, 188, 190
 Monroe doctrine, 172
- Morel, E. D., 12, 171–2, 174–93
 Moret Law, 144
 Moret y Prendergast, Segismundo, 144
 Morgan, John Tyler, 181–2
 Morrison, W. M., 177
 Mott, Lucretia, 61, 63
 Moyn, Samuel, 6
 Muraviev, Nikolai, 109
 Murphy, J. B., 177
- Nabitan, Abdallah b, 122
 Nabuco, Joaquim, 153
 Napoleon I, 31, 140, 199, 203
 National Institute of Research on Pedagogy, 199
 Netherlands, 191, 218–19
 New England Anti-Slavery society for Negro Education, 80
 Ngijol, Thomas, 201
 Nicholas I, 100–3, 109
 Nora, Pierre, 202
 North of England Anti-Slavery and India Reform League, 91
 Nugent, George, 21–5
- O'Connell, Daniel, 12, 60–1, 63, 65–7, 70–2, 88
 Olney, Richard, 172
 Oppenheim, Lassa, 224
 Ottoman Empire, 7, 10, 12, 72, 105, 107–8, 112, 118–20, 122, 124–8, 130–1, 133, 135, 155, 172, 188
- Palermo Protocol, 227, 230
 Palmerston, Lord, (Temple, Henry John), 72
 Park, Robert E., 178–80, 182–4
 Peabody, Sue, 206
 Pease, Elizabeth, 84–5, 88
 Pease, Joseph, 78, 81–2
 Perovskii, Vasilii Alekseevich, 110
 Persia, 10, 106, 109
 Peru, 11, 137, 139–41, 146
 Peter the Great, 99
 Peters, Carl, 154, 159
 Pétion, Alexandre, 17–18, 20–1, 25–6, 28–30
 Petrovich Ignatiev, Nikolai, 10, 110
 Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 63

- Philbin, Eugene, 185
 Philip II, 139
 Philippines, 128–30, 172–3, 182, 184, 187
 Phillips, Wendell, 68, 72, 87–8
 Pichon, Louis-André, 25
 Pillsbury, Parker, 85
 Portugal, 138–9, 218–19
 Powell, William P., 85, 88
 Prévost, Julien, 31
 Prussia, 217–19
 Puerto Rico, 137–8, 141, 143–4, 147
 Pugh, Sarah, 63, 85–6

 Quakers, 2–3, 16, 62, 81
 Society of Friends, 62

 Racine, Karen, 30
 Radischev, Alexander, 8, 100
 Rawson, Mary Anne, 78, 81, 86, 88
 Reffell, Joseph, 45
 Reichard, Paul, 163
 Reunion, 199, 204, 207, 209
 Rida, Rashid, 122, 124
 Rochester Anti-Slavery Society, 79, 86
 Rockefeller Jr., John D., 188
 Romania, 172
 Roosevelt, Theodore, 172, 178, 184–5, 187–91, 193
 Root, Elihu, 186–7, 189, 191, 193
 Royal Geographical Society, 154, 162
 Rugemer, Edward, 4
 Russia, 10, 97–113, 217–19
 empire, 97–8, 103, 106, 108, 112
 Russo-Ottoman War 1877–8, 112
 Ryan, Thomas, 189

 Sabar, Adolph, 161
 St Loe, John, 178
 Salisbury, 3rd Marquess of, (Robert Gascoyne-Cecil), 151, 155, 157, 164–5, 172
 Salman, Michael, 128, 130
 Sarkozy, Nicolas, 14, 210
 Schmidt, Nelly, 202–3
 Schoelcher, Victor, 203–5
 Schollaert, Franz, 192
 Scott, William, 11, 216
 Second World War, 6, 14, 226

 Seven Years War, 139
 Shaftesbury, 7th Earl of, (Anthony Ashley-Cooper), 91
 Shah, Nadir, 109
 Sharp, Granville, 43, 80
 Sheppard, William, 177
 Sierra Leone, 38, 42–3, 48–51, 53
 Simon, Jules, 155–6
 Skeketee, Lionel, 201
 Smith, James A., 191
 Smythies, Charles, 154
 Society for Effecting the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 146
 Solomon, King of Western Georgia, 105
 Somersett Case, 8, 222
 Spain, 10–11, 28, 137–4, 217–19
 empire, 11, 138–9, 146
 Spanish Abolitionist Society, 138, 143–4
 Spanish American War, 172, 183
 treaty with Britain 1817, 137
 Sprague, Seth, 69
 Stanley, Henry, 152, 177
 Stanton, Henry B., 67
 Stevenson, Andrew, 66, 69
 Story, Joseph, 66
 Straus, Oscar, 188
 Stubbs, E., 156
 Sturge, Joseph, 61, 78, 91
 Sublime Porte, 119–20
 Sultan Abdülhamit II, 126
 Sulu, 128
 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery 1956, 227
 Sutherland, Duchess of, (Harriet Sutherland-Leveson-Gower), 91
 Sweden, 217

 Taft, William Howard, 128, 193
 Tanzimat, 120, 125, 129–30
 Tappan, Lewis, 63, 81, 86
 Taubira Law, 210
 Test and Corporation Acts, 60
 Thirteenth International Peace Congress, 177–8, 181, 184
 Thompson, George, 68, 79–80, 82–3, 85, 88, 91–2
 Thompson, Thomas, 38, 40–1, 43

- Tib, Tippo, 165
 Tilly, Charles, 60
 Treaties
 Alcaçovas (1479), 138
 Georgievsk, 106
 Kuchck Kainardji, 106
 London (1841), 219–20
 Versailles (1919), 225
 Vienna (1815), 11
 Trinidad, 26–7
 Tucker, John, 71
 Tunisia, 124
 Turnbull, David, 68
 Turner, Charles, 50
 Tuskegee Institute, 183
 Twain, Mark, 184–5
- Uganda, 165
 Ukraine, 98, 100, 103
 United Nations (UN), 7, 226, 229
 Commission on Human Rights, 226
 Declaration of Human Rights, 14, 226
 UNESCO, 7
 United States, 3–4, 8–10, 18, 25, 28,
 59–61, 63, 65–7, 68–72, 78–80, 83,
 85–7, 89–92, 117, 128, 132, 138,
 141, 149, 171–3, 177–88, 190–3,
 217, 220
 American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS),
 63, 67, 79, 81, 83–4, 92
 American Baptist Foreign Missionary
 Society, 178
 American Colonization Society, 80,
 181
 American CRA, 171, 179–80, 182–3,
 187, 190–3
 American and Foreign Anti-Slavery
 Society, 63, 81, 86, 92
 civil war, 9, 93, 142–3
 Congress, 59–60, 65, 189, 191
 revolution, 6, 8, 59, 157
- Vandervelde, Emile, 186, 190
 Venezuela, 11, 28, 137, 139–41, 172
 Vivian, Hussey Crespigny, 156, 164
- Wack, Henry Wellington, 189
 Wallace, William, 128
 Warnecke, Gustav, 159
 Washington, Booker T., 183–4
 Webb, Richard, 82, 84, 87
 Webster, Richard, 165
 Wellington, Duke of, (Arthur
 Wellesley), 60
 Westlake, John, 224
 Wheaton, Henry, 11, 224
 Whigs, 60
 White, Joseph Blanco, 142
 Wilberforce, William, 22, 29, 31, 41, 43,
 80, 104, 154
 Williams, Eric, 1–2
 Williams, George Washington, 177
 Wilson, Charlotte, 78, 81
 Wilson, Henry Lane, 191
 Windhorst, Ludwig, 158
 Winthrop, John, 59
 Wissmann, Colonel, 154–5, 159,
 162–3
 World Anti-Slavery Convention
 1840, 5, 11, 61–73, 81–2, 152
 1843, 152
 Wright, Henry C., 83, 85
- Young Turks, 125–6
- Zulueta, Julian, 142, 146