ment, made pointed reference to the prosperity brought by the turpentine business as a factor in the liberality of individual contributions. At the same time he painted a moving picture of the destruction of the majestic longleaf pine forests. Writing from Clinton, North Carolina, in the heart of the turpentine region in the eastern part of the state, to the editor of the Raleigh *Biblical Recorder*, he said:

I am now operating in Sampson . . . . Clinton the county seat is a pleasant looking village with an air of neatness and comfort about it you seldom see. It is taking "the Spirit of the Age" and is rapidly growing in importance.— There is a large female school located at this place numbering a hundred and ten students and is in successful operation. The Baptists will soon build them a home of worship here. Indeed it is already under contract. The Brethren here generally seem to be spirited and liberal. But how they do bleed the poor pines to pay for it. They show their white faces around you on every side a great way up, and at night as you ride along they look for all the world like a great army of spectres ready to pounce upon you at every step and bear you away. Some of them from appearance have yielded their last supply and now stand like old martyrs awaiting the axe of the woodman. Unfeeling masters thus to exhaust the liberal tree until she can give no more, and then repay her by a burning. No wonder that the pines here *sigh* through all their leaves to every breeze that whispers by, for the time is not far distant when these stately monarchs of the forest, that have so long watched and adorned the soil that gave them birth, changing not amid summer's heat nor winter's cold, will have been borne down by the unwearied worker at their feet and not one vestige of their former glory will remain. Aye well may you weep melancholy tree for your days are numbered.[61]

Although the forests were rapidly and wantonly used, they at least provided some return before they were consumed by lumber mills or destroyed by farmers seeking land for cultivation; and the increase in capital derived from their exploitation contributed to the development of North Carolina in countless ways. That turpentine as a major "staple" passed rapidly from the state in the postwar period was of no great importance, for a more valuable and permanent substitute was soon found. The region whose economy once was based on the golden flow of resin from the longleaf pines is now the center for the culture of bright-leaf tobacco.

[61] Raleigh *Biblical Recorder*, April 7, 1854.

The Abolitionists and Reconstruction: A Critical Appraisal

By Richard O. Curry

ALONG WITH FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER, CHARLES A. BEARD, J. Franklin Jameson, Perry Miller, and a few others, Gilbert H. Barnes is among the select group of modern historians whose work has influenced a whole generation of scholars. In his seminal study *The Antislavery Impulse, 1830-1844* (New York, 1933) Barnes challenged what he termed "the authority of an orthodox tradition," which viewed the struggle for emancipation as a contest between the forces of freedom and despotism, portrayed William Lloyd Garrison as the personification of the movement, and depicted New England as its center.[1] While Barnes's work fully deserves the attention it has received, it needs to be emphasized that Albert Bushnell Hart first raised some of the issues later explored in greater depth by Barnes. For example, Hart, like Barnes, emphasized that Western evangelical revivalism was "one of the main taproots of abolition" and argued that William Lloyd Garrison was not entitled to his reputation as the "typical or chief abolitionist."[2] Nevertheless, it must be admitted that it was Barnes's work, not Hart's, that played a decisive role in shaping major areas of debate in modern antislavery scholarship. Questions and ideas advanced or developed by Barnes involving the origins of abolitionism, Garrison's leadership, Anglo-American cooperation in humanitarian affairs, the doctrine of immediatism, the schism of 1840, and the effects of abolitionism on the sectional crises of the 1840's and 1850's continue to stimulate scholarly controversy, and rightly so.[3]

[1] Barnes, *Antislavery Impulse*, vii-viii.
[2] Hart, *Slavery and Abolition, 1831-1841* (New York, 1906), 15, 181, 320, and *passim*.
[3] For example, see Russell B. Nye, *William Lloyd Garrison and the Humanitarian Reformers* (Boston, 1955); Louis Filler, *The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860* (New York, 1960); Walter M. Merrill, *Against Wind and Tide: A Biography of Wm. Lloyd Garrison* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963); David Donald, "Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," in Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered* (New York, 1956), 19-36; Roman J. Zorn, "The New England Anti-Slavery So-

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In recent years, however, new avenues of research have broad-ened the frontiers of abolitionist historiography to include developments during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Partially as a result of current racial tensions, riots, and insurrections, a number of historians, including John L. Thomas, C. Vann Woodward, James M. McPherson, Willie Lee Rose, George M. Fredrickson, Patrick W. Riddleberger, and John G. Sproat, have attempted to discover precisely why emancipation failed to produce the social planning necessary for creating a racial democracy.[4]

None of the historians approach the sociopolitical crisis caused by emancipation in quite the same way, but nearly all agree that "The Radicals' Abandonment of the Negro During Reconstruction"[5] was caused partly by political expediency and partly because theories of racial inferiority were so widely accepted in both the North and South that the equalitarian vision of men like Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Charles Sumner could not be re-

ciety: Pioneer Abolition Organization," *Journal of Negro History*, XLII (July 1957), 157-76; David Brion Davis, "The Emergence of Immediatism in British and American Antislavery Thought," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLIX (September 1962), 209-30; Thomas F. Harwood, "British Evangelical Abolitionism and American Churches in the 1830's," *Journal of Southern History*, XXVIII (August 1962), 287-306; and Anne C. Loveland, "Evangelicalism and 'Immediate Emancipation' in American Antislavery Thought," *ibid.*, XXXII (May 1966), 172-88.

[4] Thomas, *The Liberator, William Lloyd Garrison: A Biography* (Boston, 1963); Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865," *American Quarterly*, XVII (Winter 1965), 656-81; Thomas, "Antislavery and Utopia," in Martin Duberman (ed.), *The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists* (Princeton, 1965), 240-69; Woodward, "Equality: The Deferred Commitment," in Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (New York, 1961), 69-88; Woodward, "Seeds of Failure in Radical Race Policy," in Harold M. Hyman (ed.), *New Frontiers of the American Reconstruction* (Urbana, 1966), 125-47; McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton, 1964); McPherson, "A Brief for Equality: The Abolitionist Reply to the Racist Myth, 1860-1865," in Duberman (ed.), *Antislavery Vanguard*, 156-77; McPherson, "Abolitionists and the Civil Rights Act of 1875," *Journal of American History*, LII (December 1965), 493-510; McPherson, "Grant or Greeley? The Abolitionist Dilemma in the Election of 1872," *American Historical Review*, LXXI (October 1965), 43-61; Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis, New York, Kansas City, 1964); Rose, "'Iconoclasm Has Had Its Day': Abolitionists and Freedmen in South Carolina," in Duberman (ed.), *Antislavery Vanguard*, 178-205; Fredrickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (New York, 1965); Riddleberger, "The Radicals' Abandonment of the Negro During Reconstruction," *Journal of Negro History*, XLV (April 1960), 88-102; and Sproat, "Blueprint for Radical Reconstruction," *Journal of Southern History*, XXIII (February 1957), 25-44.

[5] The phraseology is Riddleberger's, "The Radicals' Abandonment of the Negro," 88.

alized. As Robert F. Durden phrases it, "neither North nor South of a century ago had exclusive title to tragically narrow vision and deficient morality."[6]

If a broad area of agreement exists among recent historians as to the nature of social defects in American society during the Civil War and Reconstruction era, no such consensus exists in analyzing the ideological positions taken by abolitionists themselves in approaching the political, social, and economic plight of freedmen. It is the purpose of this paper to analyze, and to suggest ways to resolve, interpretive contradictions in recent treatments of abolitionist ideology—contradictions that must be eliminated if we are to gain increased insight as to why "white America" failed to provide an economic basis for Negro freedom during Reconstruction and to guarantee enforcement of the Negroes' political and legal rights. The debate centers around three interrelated questions: the racial attitudes of white abolitionists, the meaning of equalitarianism as perceived by abolitionists themselves, and the strength of anti-institutional thought patterns in antislavery circles during the postwar era.

The first question that needs to be analyzed is whether or not abolitionists were as dedicated to the ideal of equality as McPherson, Woodward, Louis Ruchames, and Merton L. Dillon contend.[7] There is much evidence to support the equalitarian view. White abolitionists were instrumental in bringing about integration in public education and transportation, especially in New England, both before and after the Civil War. They also established or tried to establish private schools for free Negroes in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and elsewhere.[8] Moreover, Ruchames shows that abolitionists led a successful fight in Massachusetts against a law banning interracial mar-

[6] Durden, "Ambiguities in the Antislavery Crusade of the Republican Party," in Duberman (ed.), *Antislavery Vanguard*, 394.

[7] McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, 134-77; McPherson, "A Brief for Equality"; Woodward, "Equality: The Deferred Commitment"; Woodward, "Seeds of Failure in Radical Race Policy"; Ruchames, "Jim Crow Railroads in Massachusetts," *American Quarterly*, VIII (Spring 1956), 61-75; Ruchames, "Race, Marriage, and Abolition in Massachusetts," *Journal of Negro History*, XL (July 1955), 250-73; Dillon, "The Failure of the American Abolitionists," *Journal of Southern History*, XXV (May 1959), 159-77.

[8] For example, see Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago, 1961), 214-46; Ira V. Brown, "Pennsylvania and the Rights of the Negro, 1865-1877," *Pennsylvania History*, XXVIII (January 1961), 45-57; Nye, *William Lloyd Garrison*; and Ruchames, "Jim Crow Railroads in Massachusetts."

riages,[9] and McPherson's research reveals that many abolitionists acquainted themselves with the principles of anthropology in order to combat the theories of such members of the "American School" of anthropology as Louis Agassiz. This school not only "taught that the various races of mankind constituted separate and distinct species," but placed "the Negro at the bottom of the scale." Abolitionists, by quoting European scientists who disagreed with the findings of the American school, were able to argue "forcefully (and accurately) that science had failed to *prove* the innate inferiority of the Negro."[10]

Illustrations attesting to the dedication of abolitionists to equalitarian ideals can be enumerated at great length, but Leon F. Litwack demonstrates in his *North of Slavery* and elsewhere that many white abolitionists were far more ambiguous in their racial thinking than McPherson, Woodward, Dillon, and Ruchames indicate. According to Litwack, whose findings have been reinforced by those of William H. and Jane H. Pease,[11] equalitarians not only had to contend with Northern prejudice in general but with dissension and prejudice within the ranks of organized abolitionism itself. The women's antislavery society of New York, for example, refused to admit Negroes to membership; and a Philadelphia antislavery society, while granting membership to Negroes by a majority of only two votes, passed a resolution stating that "it was neither 'our object, or duty, to encourage social intercourse between colored and white families.' "[12]

Litwack concedes that contradictory racial attitudes in antislavery circles can be attributed in part to strategic considerations. On various occasions, some abolitionists, notably James G. Birney, Theodore Dwight Weld, and Arthur Tappan, cautioned against overt social intercourse with Negroes in order to avoid antagonizing public opinion. But Litwack shows that this was by no means the whole story. At times, abolitionist literature reflected popular misconceptions by characterizing Negroes as "meek, servile, comical" individuals with "minstrel-like qualities." More to the point, Negro leaders resented the fact that many white abolitionists concluded that Negroes did not meet white standards. For example, the editors of the New York *Colored*

American, while investigating the hardships endured by Negroes during the Panic of 1837, discovered that in New York City not even one "local abolitionist had placed a Negro in any conspicuous position in his business establishment . . . ." Nor could they find a Negro working in the offices of the American Anti-Slavery Society itself. Some Negroes did find employment in Arthur Tappan's department store, but only in menial tasks as the "lowest drudges." Before the Civil War little was done "in the way of economic assistance, except to call upon Negroes to improve themselves." Litwack argues that "Perhaps this simply reflected the dominant middle-class ideology of self-help which affected abolitionists, like other whites . . . ." But many Negro leaders insisted that the struggle for equality could not be won on "the bare ground of abstract principles" and called upon white abolitionists to take steps to end "economic dependence and pauperism." Feelings such as these, Litwack states, led to the emergence of black nationalism in the 1850's. A vocal minority of Negro leaders "rejected the democratic pretensions of white Americans, questioned the motives and effectiveness of white abolitionists," and began to urge "the establishment of an independent Negro state." Henceforth, white reformers would "have to contend with its implications."[13]

Litwack's points are well taken, but his analysis stops short of the mark. He clearly shows that other historians' analyses of the racial attitudes of white abolitionists cannot be accepted without qualification, but he concludes by arguing that reformers did not allow inconsistencies and contradictions in their racial thinking "to interfere materially" with their attempts "to demonstrate to a hostile public that environmental factors, rather than any peculiar racial traits, largely accounted for the degradation of the northern Negro."[14] Unfortunately, such a view does not come to terms with developments during Reconstruction. What Litwack terms the "middle-class ideology of self-help which affected abolitionists, like other whites" must be analyzed in depth, since the economic ideas of abolitionists are closely related to their conceptions of equality. And these conceptions must be weighed carefully if

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[9] Ruchames, "Race, Marriage, and Abolition in Massachusetts."
[10] McPherson, "A Brief for Equality," 159-60.
[11] Pease and Pease, "Antislavery Ambivalence: Immediatism, Expediency, Race," *American Quarterly*, XVII (Winter 1965), 682-95.
[12] Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 217-19, 221-22; the quotation is from page 218.

[13] *Ibid.*, 216-21, 224 (quotation on this page); and Litwack, "The Emancipation of the Negro Abolitionist," in Duberman (ed.), *Antislavery Vanguard*, 140-42, 152, 154 (quotations on pages 141, 142, 152, 154). See also Howard H. Bell, "Expressions of Negro Militancy in the North, 1840-1860," *Journal of Negro History*, XLV (January 1960), 11-20; and Bell, "Negro Nationalism: A Factor in Emigration Projects, 1858-1861," *ibid.*, XLVII (January 1962), 42-53.
[14] Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 230.

we are to answer, as one writer phrases it, why for American reformers "of a hundred years ago the cause of the freedman never equalled the cause of the slave . . . ."[15] As yet no historian has succeeded in answering this question in a totally convincing or comprehensive way. But the investigations of six—George M. Fredrickson, John L. Thomas, Willie Lee Rose, James M. McPherson, John G. Sproat, and Harold Schwartz—provide grounds for a highly suggestive and controversial debate.[16]

Fredrickson, who concerns himself with the effects of the Civil War in changing or modifying the ideological commitments of Northern intellectuals, argues that the war was a major turning point in American intellectual history, a turning point wherein the war itself was basically responsible for thwarting "the drive for 'humanitarian democracy.'" "The fact was," he asserts, "that the nation had turned a corner; the triumph of Unionism and nationalism had led to assumptions which obviated the anti-institutional philosophy that had been the basis of abolitionism." The "genuine radicalism" of the ante-bellum period had been turned into "an obvious anachronism." Fredrickson fails to develop these ideas, however, and shifts his focus away from what he considers the implications of emerging nationalism to a discussion of Social Darwinism.[17]

In the late 1860's, Fredrickson argues, there was also a "scientific" reason why intellectuals refused to consider the merits of national planning. Social Darwinism, which "warned against a paternalistic approach to the Negro problem," was beginning to exert a profound influence on American social thought. At that time Darwin's ideas were known only "to an intellectual elite," and William Graham Sumner "had not yet begun to write." But "Social Darwinism, if not fully formulated or accepted as a popular creed, was nevertheless in the air, and some applied it explicitly to Reconstruction and the Negro." Georges Clemenceau, for example, described the Negro's plight in Darwinist terms.[18]

Fearing that he has claimed too much for Darwinist influences, however, Fredrickson qualifies his position. "If the set of atti-

[15] Rose, "'Iconoclasm Has Had Its Day,'" 205.
[16] Ibid.; Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction; Fredrickson, Inner Civil War; Thomas, The Liberator; Thomas, "Antislavery and Utopia"; Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865"; McPherson, Struggle for Equality; McPherson, "Abolitionists and the Civil Rights Act of 1875"; Sproat, "Blueprint for Radical Reconstruction"; and Schwartz, Samuel Gridley Howe: Social Reformer, 1801-1876 (Cambridge, Mass., 1956).
[17] Fredrickson, Inner Civil War, 198, 188.
[18] Ibid., 192.

tudes summed up in the phrase 'Social Darwinism' did not really rule the thoughts of the architects of Reconstruction," he contends, "it can hardly be denied that it contributed to the later Northern decision to permit the fall of the Southern radical governments . . . ." "By 1883," Fredrickson argues, "white rule was firmly re-established" in the South, and Sumner "spoke for the 'enlightened' opinion of the North when he asserted that freedom meant greater personal hardship for the Negro than slavery . . . ." From a Darwinist perspective, "Outside interference with the Negro's struggle for existence was incompatible with the 'modern free system of industry.'" "The failure of the nation to plan for Negro freedom," Fredrickson concludes, thereby "suggests that the ideal of a strong central government encouraged by the war had a limited application." It was legitimate to suppress a rebellion and encourage economic growth, "but the line was drawn when government was called upon to act in the field of social welfare and humanitarian reform."[19]

Fredrickson shows beyond doubt that some Northern intellectuals, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Herman Melville, James Russell Lowell, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., developed greater regard for nationalistic and imperialistic ideals during the war, admiring the order and stability inherent in the idea of a positive state. But his assumption that the emergence of nationalistic attitudes in the minds of a few Northern intellectuals, few of whom can be described as humanitarian reformers, accurately reflects the decline of the anti-institutional ideological tenets on which humanitarianism was based is open to serious question. Fredrickson has not analyzed the thought and activities of an appreciable number of abolitionists themselves, and his attempt to buttress his conclusions by drawing extensively on contemporary analyses by conservative nationalists like Orestes A. Brownson and Francis Lieber, who opposed humanitarianism, appears to reveal more about their state of mind at the end of the war than about the process of intellectual change inaugurated by the war itself.[20]

Finally, Fredrickson's conclusion that the emergence of Darwinist attitudes in the postwar period helped to prevent a marriage between nationalistic and humanitarian ideas during Reconstruction creates interpretive difficulties in his thesis that he fails to resolve. If, as Fredrickson argues, the war gave rise to

[19] Ibid., 193-94.
[20] Ibid., 184-92.

nationalistic attitudes which undermined the anti-institutional ideology on which abolitionism was based, it appears that the concept of nationalism as it emerged from the war was a limited one—one that did not include demands for social and humanitarian reform in its train. If this is true, it does not follow that Social Darwinism was primarily, or even secondarily, responsible for preventing national planning "to ensure Negro freedom" in the late 1860's since it did not become a clearly formulated social philosophy until the 1880's. What then was responsible? Logical consistency, considering Fredrickson's emphasis on the decline of anti-institutional thought, would seem to require him to answer: widespread acceptance of the ideological tenets of conservative nationalism. In any case, it will not do to conclude that "If the set of attitudes summed up in the phrase 'Social Darwinism' did not really rule the thoughts of the architects of Reconstruction," Darwinism "nevertheless was in the air."[21]

Logical fallacies, limited evidence, and questionable assumptions aside, how can the issues raised by Fredrickson be resolved? A beginning in this direction is provided by the work of John L. Thomas. It must be noted, however, that Thomas' most recent essay, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865," lends support to the Fredrickson thesis. In this essay Thomas views the Civil War as an "intellectual counterrevolution" marked by "a revival of institutions and a renewal of an organic theory of society."[22] "The extreme individualism of ante-bellum reformers," Thomas concludes, "was swallowed up in a Northern war effort that made private conscience less important than saving the Union."[23] A historian is entitled to change his mind, but in this essay Thomas abandons much of the ground he occupied in his previous work. In his biography of William Lloyd Garrison and in the essay "Antislavery and Utopia" Thomas maintains that anti-institutionalism retained its vitality during the postwar era. Individualistic and abstract approaches of abolitionists to socioeconomic problems resulting from emancipation, Thomas argues, constituted a fundamental reason why Reconstruction failed to produce the social planning necessary to create a racial democracy.

[21] *Ibid.*, 192-93. These criticisms also apply to Harold M. Hyman's conclusion that Darwinism helped undermine "the white man's concern for the Negro" during Reconstruction. Hyman (ed.), *The Radical Republicans and Reconstruction, 1861-1870* (Indianapolis and New York, 1967), xxvi-xxix.

[22] Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865," 679.

[23] *Ibid.*, 680.

One of the purposes of this paper is to show that the two positions Thomas occupies cannot be reconciled and that his original thesis, which emphasized the persistence of anti-institutionalism after the war, like Banquo's ghost will not down. This original position not only helps to resolve contradictions inherent in the Fredrickson thesis, but challenges interpretations which view abolitionists as prototypes of twentieth-century social planners. Up to a point Thomas agrees with Woodward, Dillon, Ruchames, McPherson, and others who argue that abolitionists were dedicated equalitarians whose moral vision was too far advanced for its time. But his work also raises a fundamental question, as does that of Litwack and Willie Lee Rose, that nearly all other historians of abolitionism overlook or ignore: Exactly what did most abolitionists mean by the concept racial equality, and what plans and methods did they propose for achieving it?

According to Thomas abolitionism was a logical extension of a marriage between evangelical methods and Arminian ideas which provided the ideological underpinnings for numerous moral and humanitarian reform movements that emerged in American society during the 1820's and 1830's. Thus, abolitionists condemned slavery as a sin—not as a social, political, or economic evil. In their view moral reform and social change were not matters "of laws to be passed or steps to be taken, but of *error* to be rooted out and *repentance* to be exacted." All social evils, including slaveholding, "were reduced in the evangelical equation to elements of personal morality." Nowhere, Thomas argues, are the inadequacies of this kind of thinking better exemplified than by Garrison's career. For example, Garrison found Robert Owen's ideas on social reform "absurd and demoralizing" because Garrison failed to appreciate the importance of environmental factors in causing economic and social ills. He agreed with Owen that a "drastic reorganization of society was needed"; but it was "an inner rather than an outward reordering" that was called for, " a change of heart, not socialism." This type of mentality, Thomas argues, which appealed to "individual anxieties" and not to "community interest" was ill-prepared to deal with the long-range social, educational, and economic needs of freedmen.[24]

Once emancipation became a reality, Garrison hailed Negro freedom as the culmination of his life's work and stepped down as president of the American Anti-Slavery Society. A number of leading abolitionists, including Edmund Quincy, Henry C.

[24] Thomas, *The Liberator*, 326-27, 64, 298, 232, 263-64.

Wright, Samuel J. May, Jr., and Oliver Johnson retired with Garrison; but when Wendell Phillips refused and became the society's new president, Garrison roundly denounced him "as an opportunist who sought to make political capital out of the black man." Outbursts like this, Thomas maintains, clearly testify that Garrison's "ideas on rehabilitating the Negro were hazy and confused." He believed that emancipation "would open the way for *ultimate* social, civil and political equality; but this through industrial and educational development, and not by any arbitrary mandate." "Our danger" as a nation, Garrison declared, "lies in sensual indulgence, in a licentious perversion of liberty, in the prevalence of intemperance, and in whatever tends to the demoralization of the people." Thus, Garrison emerged from the war prescribing the same type of remedy for curing the ails of mankind that he advocated before the war began. Nevertheless, he remained a dedicated racial equalitarian. Belief in human brotherhood had been "the central theme in his long career." But in Garrison's mind racial equality, like all other questions, was a moral not a political issue.[25]

Broadening his approach in the essay entitled "Antislavery and Utopia," Thomas argues that some abolitionists, especially John A. Collins, George Benson, and Adin Ballou, by establishing perfectionist communities in New England or New York during the 1840's, began to grope their way, albeit unsuccessfully, toward concepts of social planning and controlled change. Like most Americans, these abolitionist communitarians "could not accept the environmentalist assumptions of secular utopians like Albert Brisbane and Parke Godwin"; they "held to the belief in the possibility of creating a perfect self-regulating society in which the moral priority of the individual would mysteriously harmonize with the needs and demands of the community." Yet, these communities, "however ill-constructed and short-lived," were pointing "in the right direction." "The future of the Negro in America would depend upon a renewed belief in perfectibility, social planning, and education," and these were the goals, Thomas argues, "toward which the perfectionists had groped their way."[26]

By 1860, however, "Even the abolitionist communitarians no longer believed in their power to change the country by example." Not only was their own vision of utopia destroyed; but in-

25 *Ibid.*, 437, 419, 434, 449-50.
26 Thomas, "Antislavery and Utopia," 249, 264-65.

directly their failure affected "the political abolitionists who had never seriously considered the perfectionist program." During Reconstruction, "when the time came to consider the merits of planning, the perfectionists . . . seemingly had proved what the antislavery politicians had suspected all along—that plans, controls, and models were of no use." Thus, "The failure of the utopian nerve narrowed the abolitionist vision by constricting social choices." As a result, Reconstruction turned out to be "an uncompleted social revolution," a "limited engagement fought for partial ends" based on "a philosophy of adjustment."[27]

In this essay Thomas draws a number of questionable conclusions. For example, in what sense were abolitionist communitarians actually "groping" their way before the war toward concepts of social planning and controlled change? With the exception of John A. Collins, did any of these abolitionists comprehend the environmentalist assumptions of secular utopians? Thomas says that they did not. If this is true, how then were they pointing "in the right direction"? To argue that abolitionist communitarians, like secular utopians, recognized "the importance of experimental models in achieving a general social reformation"[28] appears to endow these people with a higher degree of critical realism than Thomas himself admits they possessed. Further, to what extent can the failure of abolitionist communitarian experiments *per se* be held responsible for "constricting social choices" during Reconstruction? As Willie Lee Rose observes, the merits of social planning were thoroughly tested during the war by the Gideonites (a group consisting of abolitionists and others) at Port Royal, South Carolina.[29] "By all the reasonable standards which might have been applied," Mrs. Rose argues, "the Port Royal Experiment accomplished its purposes . . . . the freedmen demonstrated beyond question their willing and able response to freedom." It was not the fault of the Gideonites that their experiment in social planning was neither understood nor "followed by the government or by the people of the North." Nevertheless, the similarities between the views expressed by Rose and Thomas are greater in some ways than existing differences. Rose, while emphasizing that abolitionists were instrumental in planning and conducting the Port Royal experiment, also stresses the fact that the freedmen's aid movement encountered bitter hostility and op-

27 *Ibid.*, 266-68.
28 *Ibid.*, 267.
29 Rose, " 'Iconoclasm Has Had Its Day,' " 178-205.

...osition in antislavery ranks. And she, like Thomas, attributes the tragic failure to perceive the value of social planning to a "persistent streak" of "anti-institutionalism . . . in the intellectual's attitude toward entrenched social evil."[30]

No one can doubt, Rose argues, Wendell Phillips' unyielding devotion to the ideal of racial equality. Yet he was able to say in all candor: "I ask nothing more for the negro than I ask for the Irishman or German who comes to our shores. I thank the benevolent men who are laboring at Port Royal—all right!—but the blacks do not need them. They are not objects of charity. They only ask this nation—'Take your yokes off our necks' . . . they will accomplish books, and education, and work."[31] For reformers such as Phillips, Mrs. Rose writes, "the light of the moral issue was so blinding that the social problem was scarcely discernible." Furthermore, "the acknowledgment that the slave *required* assistance" posed a problem that many antislavery veterans were unwilling or unable to face: the fact that "striking off the fetters" did not automatically "make of a slave a truly free man." Such an admission ran counter to the demands made by doctrinaire anti-institutionalists for total solutions.[32]

James M. McPherson provides additional evidence in *The Struggle for Equality*, showing that such an outlook was not atypical. For example, Samuel Gridley Howe declared: "The white man has tried taking care of the negro, by slavery, by apprenticeship, by colonization, and has failed disastrously in all; now let the negro try to take care of himself."[33] When writing a Massachusetts congressman about the establishment of a freedman's bureau in 1864, Howe expressed his views even more candidly: ". . . whatever plan is adopted should be founded upon the principle that the negro, once emancipated, is as free as a white man; free to go or to come; free to accept or reject employment; free to work or to starve." What was desirable was "some general system for putting the negroes upon their own legs, and defending them against those who will strive to push them down, and keep them down."[34] Even Frederick Douglass, in replying to the question of what should be done with the Negroes, stated: "Our

answer is, to do nothing with them; mind your business, and let them mind theirs. . . . They have been undone by your doings, and all they now ask and really have need of at your hands, is just to let them alone."[35]

On other occasions, both Douglass and Phillips referred to freedmen's aid as an "old clothes movement."[36] "Alms giving to the Negro is very well," Phillips declared, "highly honorable to the newly-converted givers, very useful to the Negro, and may be necessary for a little while. . . . But I protest against its continuance for any length of time. I am still an Abolitionist, still a believer in the 'Negro's ability to take care of himself,' and do not intend to insult him by holding him up before the country as a chronic pauper. Let us . . . stand claiming for the Negro JUSTICE, not privileges; RIGHTS, not alms."[37] Thus, sufficient evidence exists to conclude, in sharp contrast to Fredrickson, that anti-institutional attitudes did not decline but retained their vigor during Reconstruction. This is not to say, however, that no challenges to doctrinal rigidity arose in antislavery circles or that no modifications in abolitionist ideology occurred. For example, neither Thomas nor Rose makes it sufficiently clear that many abolitionists, before emancipation and after, rejected one cardinal tenet of doctrinaire anti-institutionalism by becoming active in politics.

McPherson, following C. Vann Woodward's lead, clearly shows that abolitionists played a conspicuous if not decisive role in the political battles that incorporated "the Negro's civil and political equality into the law of the land." This is an important point, as it requires one to ask whether or not political activism significantly altered traditional abolitionist attitudes toward the nature of social change. Unfortunately, McPherson, who tends to disregard or underplay complexities inherent in abolitionist ideology, does not address himself to this issue. Instead he concludes by arguing that "Abolitionists had done their best to rally the conscience of the nation," but the nation tragically "refused to follow their leadership."[38] This point, while perfectly valid, takes into consideration only the failure of moral suasion as an instrument for persuading the nation to enforce its laws. Nevertheless, Mrs. Rose's analysis as well as some documentation in McPherson's

[30] *Ibid.*, 203-204, 189.
[31] Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction*, 158, 162-63.
[32] Rose, "'Iconoclasm Has Had Its Day,'" 188-89.
[33] From Samuel G. Howe, *The Refugees from Slavery in Canada West* (Boston, 1864), 104, as quoted in McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, 187.
[34] Howe to Thomas D. Eliot, in Boston *Commonwealth*, January 8, 1864, quoted, *ibid.*
[35] Douglass' speech at the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, January 25, 1865, quoted, *ibid.*
[36] *Ibid.*, 397.
[37] From the *National Antislavery Standard*, April 22, 1865, quoted, *ibid.*, 302.
[38] *Ibid.*, 430-31.

book itself shows beyond reasonable doubt that the perception of most abolitionists whose careers have been investigated remained highly individualistic, their conversion to political activism notwithstanding.

One may suggest, therefore, that the failure of the nation to engage in social planning during Reconstruction cannot be fully comprehended without understanding the elementary fact that twentieth-century theories of social change were alien to most mid-nineteenth-century Americans, including the abolitionists. One may also suggest, without challenging the idea that most abolitionists were dedicated equalitarians, that their conception, in practice if not in theory, was that of equality before the law—nothing more. And even this modest institutionalization of equalitarian principles, as evidenced by abolitionist support of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, necessitated a modification of ideological commitments by many Garrisonians who found it difficult to embrace political activism after years of dedication to the idea that moral reform and social change were not matters "of laws to be passed or steps to be taken, but of *error* to be rooted out and *repentance* to be exacted."³⁹ It was precisely this issue, political activism versus moral suasion, that served as a prime motivating force behind the abolitionist schism of 1865.⁴⁰

Such conclusions cannot be too strongly stressed, however, before coming to terms with the views of historians who argue that many abolitionists did indeed appreciate the need for national planning during Reconstruction and waged an unsuccessful campaign to achieve it. Mrs. Rose, while emphasizing that anti-institutionalism remained a potent force during Reconstruction, hesitates, in the final analysis, to attach overriding importance to its strength and influence.

Historians, she argues, "who have identified and helped to explain the anti-institutional bent in American reform movements have served scholarship well" by bringing "insight to bear upon important personalities who have been alternately blamed and praised, but little understood." But anti-institutionalism can be overemphasized, she writes, not only because of the propensity of modern scholars to stress the activities of the more "student reformers," but also from the "tendency of recent scholarship to define the abolition movement narrowly. . . . According to her this is especially true of David Donald, who excludes adherents who

³⁹ Thomas, *The Liberator*, 326-27.
⁴⁰ McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, 287-307.

joined the movement after the 1830's, and Stanley Elkins, who concentrates on "the New England branch of the movement . . . ."⁴¹ By 1860, Rose continues, abolitionism "had become a much broader stream . . . than could be contained in the old channel cut by those earliest pioneers in the cause of the slave." Among the "younger recruits to the freedmen's aid movement the anti-institutional attitudes of the veterans of the 1830's are hardly discernible."⁴²

That such a view is justified when applied specifically to the Port Royal experiment is clear. That such radical departures from traditional anti-institutional methods and ideas were typical of the Reconstruction period remains to be demonstrated. Rose raises more questions than she resolves when she contends that freedmen's aid work was "safely institutionalized" after the war by the American Missionary Association and other church-related groups. Her conclusion that these organizations founded numerous colleges and normal schools which made important contributions "to the steady increase in able leadership for Southern Negroes" does not come to terms with the fact that widespread Northern interest in freedmen's aid "flared spectacularly for a few short years" after the war. As Rose admits, "secular interest was nearly extinct" within a decade.⁴³ And, as McPherson points out, agents of the A.M.A. emphasized the "purification of the soul" as much as, if not more than, the "enlightenment of the mind."⁴⁴

If Christian benevolence, as dispensed by the A.M.A., was based primarily upon evangelical assumptions that social change begins with the moral reform of individuals, one must ask whether or not church-related freedmen's aid societies had developed clearly formulated ideas and programs for "rehabilitating the Negro." If they did not take into consideration long-range socioeconomic needs of freedmen, the issue raised by their philanthropic activities thus becomes one of perception—aims, motives, objectives—and not merely the existence of some type of voluntary association concerned primarily with improving or preserving the moral standards of freedmen. Thus, Mrs. Rose's conclusions along these lines are problematical at best. The same

⁴¹ She cites Donald, "Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," 19-36; and Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago, 1959), 164-75.
⁴² Rose, " 'Iconoclasm Has Had Its Day,' " 190-92.
⁴³ *Ibid.*, 203-204.
⁴⁴ McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, 401.

holds true for the views of historians who argue that some abolitionists clearly recognized the need for national planning calling for a program of economic reconstruction.

According to John G. Sproat, the findings of the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission served as a "Blueprint for Radical Reconstruction." "In planning the economic reconstruction of the South," Sproat writes," the [A.F.I.C. commissioners] [Robert Dale Owen, James McKaye, and Samuel Gridley Howe] showed real insight .... Owen and his colleagues knew that the freedmen must receive land if they were ever to attain economic independence." Sproat points out that "In their official report the commissioners skirted the direct issue of confiscation as a long-term policy and instead emphasized repeatedly the necessity of . . . devising some scheme whereby they [the Negroes] eventually could purchase the land." But Sproat asserts that "In their private reports to Radical leaders they attacked the question more directly, advocating 'forcible seizure' of Rebel estates."[45]

Sproat shows beyond question that McKaye held such views. But the validity of such a conclusion as applied to Howe and Owen must be challenged. Not only does it conflict with evidence cited previously in regard to Howe,[46] but it stands in opposition to the findings of Howe's biographer Harold Schwartz. According to Schwartz, both Howe and Owen, "but not McKaye were agreed upon recommending laissez-faire, except in those regions where Negroes would need protection." "Treat poor blacks as we would poor whites," Howe wrote to Charles Sumner. Schwartz adds that Howe would "Give to Negroes the ancient privilege of starving if they preferred not to work . . . ."[47]

Similar criticism must also be made of McPherson's analysis of the confiscation issue. McPherson points out that in November 1866 Phillips called for the "indefinite territorialization of the South," and demanded that "the federal government . . . enact measures to provide the freedmen with education, land, and economic independence." He admits that Phillips' version of the "conquered province" theory was too radical for most antislavery men; but he shows that on various occasions Elizur Wright, Edmund Quincy, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, William Goodell, Samuel J. May, the editors of the Boston *Commonwealth*, Gide-

45 Sproat, "Blueprint for Radical Reconstruction," 41-42.
46 McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, 104.
47 Schwartz, *Samuel Gridley Howe*, 265.
48 McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, 372, 370.

onites at Port Royal, and others called for the confiscation of Rebel property and its distribution among the freedmen.[49] McPherson concludes his argument, however, by observing that "abolitionists were fighting a losing battle on the confiscation front" because of limited support in Congress.[50] Thus McPherson fails once again to evaluate contradictory evidence, cited in his own study and elsewhere, which not only shows that many abolitionists never seriously considered national planning in any form but reveals that Phillips, Higginson, Quincy, and May never occupied a consistent position as to the merits of national planning in general or confiscation in particular, either in thought or action.[51]

In so far as available evidence can be brought to bear, so many fluctuations occurred in Phillips' thinking between 1865 and 1870 that one cannot judge with any degree of assurance precisely what his aims and objectives were.[52] Phillips is pictured before 1866 by both Rose and McPherson as a dedicated equalitarian whose thought retained a highly individualistic, laissez-faire cast —as a political activist who dismissed freedmen's aid as an "old clothes movement."[53] But Phillips, according to McPherson, altered his views by November 1866 to the point where he demanded federal legislation "to provide the freedmen with education, land, and economic independence."[54] Yet McPherson's study also reveals that in 1869 Phillips no longer was advocating economic measures and took the position that the "ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment would take the Negro question out of politics." "Most abolitionists," McPherson argues, "seemed to agree with this view, for the American Anti-Slavery Society resolved at its annual convention in May 1869, that the Fifteenth Amendment was the 'capstone and completion of our movement; the fulfillment of our pledge to the Negro race; since it secures to them equal political rights with the white race, or, if any single

49 *Ibid.*, 179, 243, 247-50, 252-53, 255-58, 270, 292-93, 372, 407, 409-12, 416.
50 *Ibid.*, 411-12.
51 *Ibid.*, 168, 179, 243, 252, 302, 370, 372, 407, 411-12, 416, 427-30.
52 Such a conclusion is also diametrically opposed to the views of both Phillips' biographer Irving H. Bartlett and Richard Hofstadter. Both argue that Phillips recognized the necessity for the passage of economic measures to aid freedmen, especially confiscation. Bartlett, *Wendell Phillips, Brahmin Radical* (Boston, 1961), 293-317; and Hofstadter, "Wendell Phillips: The Patrician as Agitator," in Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York, 1948), 135-61.
53 McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, 168, 302, 370, 397; Rose, " 'Iconoclasm Has Had Its Day,' " 187; and Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction*, 158, 162-63.
54 McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, 370-72.

right be still doubtful, placed them in such circumstances that they can easily achieve it.' "[55]

McPherson also points out that in 1870 some "abolitionists urged that the Society remain in existence to combat race prejudice, help the freedmen obtain land of their own, and agitate for strict enforcement of equal rights in the South." But the majority, including Phillips and Frederick Douglass, "maintained that these activities were outside the formal sphere of the Society." The work of the American Anti-Slavery Society *per se* was done. A new organization, the National Reform League, intended by its founders to be the successor of the A.A.S., was organized by Aaron Powell, editor of the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, and others. But this organization was never very strong and "faded out of existence by 1872. For all practical purposes . . . . the militant anti-slavery crusade reached its climax and consummation in 1870, the year the Fifteenth Amendment was adopted."[56]

In conclusion, therefore, one must emphasize that historians have not successfully demonstrated that the Civil War and Reconstruction was a transitional period during which new methods, ideas, and approaches to problems of social change weakened the taste for "old wine" in humanitarian circles.[57] As stated previously, this criticism applies both to the Fredrickson thesis, for which no supporting evidence exists, as well as to interpretations which attempt to show that modern concepts of social planning were pioneered by mid-nineteenth-century humanitari-

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[55] *Ibid.*, 427.

[56] *Ibid.*, 429-30.

[57] Analogous to this is Patrick W. Riddleberger's conclusion that the motives of Liberal Republicans—Carl Schurz, George W. Julian, Horace Greeley, Lyman Trumbull—who "abandoned" the Negro in 1872 must be explained in terms of their ideological commitments. "One of the tenets of the earlier reform movement [antislavery crusade] in which many of the Liberals had participated," Riddleberger writes, "was that the removal of institutional restraints would permit the ultimate freedom of the individual. Undoubtedly the Liberals still embraced this idea in their exaggerated confidence that the Negro, now that the formal institutional restraints of slavery had been lifted, could make his own way in the world." According to Riddleberger most Liberal leaders believed "that the great mission of the Republican party had been fully accomplished by the adoption of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments. Apparently no further implementation was needed, and other reforms could now be dealt with. It followed that there was no longer a reason for the existence of the regular Republican party which had already atrophied under the leadership of base men." Riddleberger, "The Radicals' Abandonment of the Negro," 93-94, and *passim*. (A typographical error is corrected in the quotation.) W. R. Brock develops the Riddleberger thesis at greater length in *An American Crisis: Congress and Reconstruction, 1865-1867* (London, 1962), 284-304.

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ans. It must be admitted, however, that the abolitionist response to emancipation has not received comprehensive historical investigation. Studies are needed which analyze in greater depth the ideological commitments which determined the positions abolitionists took on such issues as political activism, civil rights, freedmen's aid, confiscation, education, and race. This requires extended treatment both of leaders and as many members of rank and file as can be identified and of organizations—especially the American Anti-Slavery Society, the American Missionary Association, the American Freedmen's Union Commission, and the National Reform League. Once this is done, and it is no small task, perhaps it will be possible to judge with greater precision the combination of forces—social, political, ideological, and interpersonal—which conspired to prevent the realization of abolitionist dreams of racial equality.

Concomitant with and beyond this lie still other "voyages of discovery" which hopefully will reveal even more about the nature of social, economic, and psychological imperatives which both produced and inhibited intellectual change in late nineteenth-century America. Admittedly, the tragedy habitually called Radical Reconstruction is only one link among many in this "chain of being," but a vital one nonetheless if the disparities that separate Emerson's generation from a world inhabited by William James, John Dewey, Thorstein Veblen, Edward Bellamy, and Walter Rauschenbusch are to be clarified. Such comments are not intended to denigrate the value of the studies analyzed here. Some of the interpretations treated in these pages plainly have more validity than others, but nearly all, like those of Hart, Barnes, and others before them, have raised questions and advanced ideas which future historians must try to illuminate. Considering the elusive nature of the Muse, this is no mean accomplishment in itself.