THE PENNSYLVANIA YEARLY MEETING OF PROGRESSIVE FRIENDS

By Albert J. Wahl*

ON MAY 22, 1853, a band of rebellious Quakers, defying their more conservative Hicksite brethren, crowded into the Old Kennett Meetinghouse in Chester County, Pa., to "consider the propriety" of organizing a new society to speed the general social progress of man. Quickly convincing themselves of the need for such a society, they elected officers, took the name "The Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends," and wrote an "Exposition of Sentiments" to be broadcast to the world in explanation of their founding. In the next three days, with Joseph A. Dugdale and Sidney Peirce as clerks of the meeting, these ardent reformers completed their organization and prepared testimonies on women's rights, slavery, war, rum, capital punishment, and the "many evils arising from the use of Tobacco. . . ." In all of this work they bore in mind a principle expressed in their "Exposition of Sentiments"—that there was no social question too sacred for examination and discussion, no question on which human reason should yield to the authority of elevated position.[1]

Leaders of the discussions in this four-day meeting included Lucretia Mott, that well-known bundle of reformist energy; Ernestine L. Rose, zealous feminist and abolitionist; Oliver Johnson, veteran journalist and professional agitator for humanitarian projects; and Robert Purvis, well-educated mulatto now devoting his talents to the uplift of the Negro race in America.[2] Even "General" Sidney Jones and his consort Fannie Lee Townshend were

*Dr. Wahl is Professor of Social Studies at State Teachers College, Indiana, Pa. This article is an expanded version of "The Progressive Friends of Longwood," which appeared in *The Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*, vol. 42 (Spring Number, 1953).

[1] *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends* (N. Y., 1853), 3-6, and *passim*. Chester County Historical Society (CCHS), West Chester, Pa. Hereafter cited as Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings*. Compare the West Chester (Pa.) *American Republican*, May 31, 1853, CCHS.

[2] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853), *passim*.

allowed their day in court, although they advocated doctrines so "peculiar" that the records fail to reveal their exact nature. We are told, however, that enough was said by this pair "to provoke the indignation of every earnest mind and amongst any other than a non-resistant body [they] would have been kicked out of the building. . . ."[3]

While a local newspaper cast some aspersions on these idealists at Old Kennett, implying that their reach was far in excess of their grasp,[4] the Progressive Friends concluded their first general meeting on a note of optimism. "Reforms," they said, "are being consummated with a celerity which has never before been witnessed." There was a hope, they thought, for permanent and universal peace. Life could be made cheerful by a "right regulation of our homes, by an honorable discharge of the everyday duties of life, a steady diligence in the acquisition of knowledge, and by a continued allegiance to the promptings of an enlightened conscience. . . ."[5] When Oliver Johnson offered a prayer of thanksgiving and praise, the "solemn silence" following it was broken only by expressions of congratulation at the satisfactory issue to which the labors of the meeting had been brought.[6]

The founding of the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends was no isolated rebellion against particularly obdurate conservatives in Chester County; it was but another expression of the general state of unrest among American Protestants in the period before the Civil War. The Protestant churches had become arenas for a most unseemly battle between those who favored progress "in the spirit of Christ" and those who opposed it. This contest, on questions of antislavery, women's rights, and kindred causes, as well as on points of doctrine, brought on that phenomenon of pre-Civil War days known as "Come-outerism."[7] Come-outerism meant rebellion and a division of churches into splinter groups, and one of its most striking examples lay in the birth of

[3] *American Republican,* May 31, 1853.
[4] West Chester (Pa.) *Village Record,* May 24, 1853, CCHS.
[5] Letter, Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., to a similar society in Waterloo, New York. Found in *Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of Congregational Friends. . . . Waterloo, N. Y.* (Auburn, N. Y., 1853), 5. Friends Historical Library (FHL), Swarthmore College. Hereafter cited as Waterloo Y.M. Cong. Frds., *Proceedings.*
[6] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853), 10.
[7] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays* (Boston [c. 1898]), 119. Hereafter cited as Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays.*

the Progressive Friends from the body of Hicksite Quakerism. Starting in 1848,[8] and continuing for some years thereafter, yearly meetings in the northern and midwestern states were shaken by what the *Pennsylvania Freeman* called a "moral earthquake."[9] Rebel meetings—variously called Congregational Friends, Progressive Friends, or Friends of Human Progress—were formed in New York, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Michigan. They all claimed to be throwing off the authority and formalism of superior church bodies to return to the liberty and simplicity of primitive Quakerism,[10] and they were all condemned most heartily by conservatives. Such reform meetings, said the elders in the Indiana Yearly Meeting, were places where progress was a "beast of many heads and horns," and where people were "heaping to themselves teachers of man's making having itching ears and clamorous tongues. . . ."[11]

By 1852 the tension between the progressive and conservative factions in the Old Kennett area of Western Quarterly Meeting had reached the breaking point. Leaders of the progressive group were now being disowned for daring to "mix" with non-Quakers in antislavery meetings;[12] there was argument as to which group had the true right to use the meetinghouses within the Western Quarter,[13] and one man (Oliver Johnson) was arrested for speaking on a reform subject in a meeting for worship.[14] Finally, in the summer of 1852 the liberal group appointed a committee to submit their grievances to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting as the court of last resort.[15] Here they were met with a cooler but no less effective hostility, and their list of grievances was tabled.

[8] Waterloo Y.M. Cong. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853), 21.
[9] September 14, 1848, FHL.
[10] Waterloo Y.M. Cong. Frds., *Proceedings* (1851), 9; *ibid.* (1853), 21; Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853), 42; *ibid.* (1857), 40; *Minutes* [and] *Proceedings of Green Plain (Ohio) Annual Meeting of Friends . . .* (Springfield, Ohio, 1848), 1 FHL. Hereafter cited as Green Plain Y.M. Cong. Frds., *Minutes and Proceedings.*
[11] Western (Ohio) Quarterly Meeting (Hicksite) Minutes, Eighth Month 13, 1850, FHL.
[12] By May 1, 1852, William Barnard, Jonathan Lamborn, and Eusebius Barnard had been disowned; by 1858 thirty-four persons had suffered the same fate. Disownments from Kennett Monthly Meeting, 1851-1858, Longwood Records, Miscellaneous Papers, FHL.
[13] West Chester (Pa.) *Jeffersonian and Democratic Herald,* June 15, 1852, CCHS; Kennett Monthly Meeting (Hicksite) Minutes, Eighth Month 5, 1851, FHL; *ibid.,* First Month 6, 1852, Second Month 3, 1852.
[14] *American Republican,* June 15, 1852; *Village Record,* June 22, 1852.
[15] Western (Pa.) Quarterly Meeting (H) Minutes, Fifth Month 1, 1852, FHL.

Returning to Chester County, the committee reported on their treatment in Philadelphia to a group of the liberals. No other way was left open, they thought, than to form a separate yearly meeting as a relief from oppression. This recommendation threw the assembled Hicksites into such "lively exercises" that other and more routine business was left undone. The group did not dissolve, however, until another committee had been appointed to issue a call for a general religious conference to consider the advisability of establishing an independent body.[16]

To those people, however, who thought the new society originated in a mere family quarrel among the Hicksites on such specific issues as antislavery or feminism, the Progressives gave emphatic answer. It was much deeper and broader than that, they said: the revolt was a religious upheaval, an expression of a basic conflict between religious authority and religious freedom, as well as a conflict on the meaning and expression of Christianity.[17] Writing to compatriots in New York, they said they were "tired of the lifeless round of ceremonial . . . observances" to which they, in common with the "popular sects," were subjected. "Our intuitions were outraged by the terrible wrongs inflicted upon Christendom by the machinery of creed, discipline, and ritual. . . ."[18] Feeling so oppressed, they had resolved to throw off the authority of the Hicksite elders to start a free church; they had determined to form a Religion of Humanity which would serve God by serving man. Their group, they promised, would be a Christian democracy in which infidelity to the established churches would be interpreted as "*fidelity* [*sic*] to the teachings of Christ in works of mercy."[19]

Following these democratic principles, the Progressive Friends were organized in the loosest possible way; the greatest freedom was to be allowed each member. Everyone was invited to join, without regard to sex, race, or condition of life. The only test of membership would be the desire to "illustrate their faith in God,

[16] *Ibid.*, Tenth Month 30, 1852.
[17] "Call for a General Religious Conference," Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853), 3-4; "Exposition of Sentiments," *ibid.*, 12-26.
[18] Waterloo Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853), 4.
[19] Joseph A. Dugdale [n.p.], to Cassius M. Clay [n.p., n.d.], Dugdale MSS, FHL. Compare *Village Record*, June 6, 1854; Waterloo Y.M. Cong. Frds., *Proceedings* (1852), 4.

not by assent to a creed, but by lives of purity, and by works of beneficence and charity to mankind."[20]

In view of such liberality it is understandable that the Progressives' own temple of reform, erected at nearby Longwood in 1854-55,[21] attracted a great variety of people, each with his or her pet recipe for improving human happiness. Here a tall, gaunt ex-slave named Sojourner Truth raised her bony arms in prayer for the liberation of her race; here C. C. Burleigh, distinguished for his long hair and unkempt beard, ranted and raved about the world's sins. Small wonder, with abolitionists, spiritualists, phrenologists, vegetarians, and Bloomerites in attendance,[22] that the conservatives in Chester County called Longwood the place where "long-haired men and short-haired women" plotted revolution, where crack-brained reformers held forth without let or hindrance.[23] However, as one attendant at Longwood was to record in his memoirs, "without a little crack somewhere, a man could hardly do his duty to the times."[24]

Perhaps, on the other hand, these Progressives were called "cracked" because their testimonies on such topics as slavery, war, sectarianism, and the position of women contained a good deal of truth. Indeed, the pursuit of truth, no matter where the search led or whom the truth hurt, was a fundamental aspect of Longwood activity. Lucretia Mott's slogan, "Truth for Authority, not Authority for Truth," was to be found on the cover pages of many Progressive *Proceedings*.[25] And J. Williams Thorne, long active in reform, now rests in the Longwood Cemetery under a headstone

[20] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853), 5.

[21] *Ibid.* (1855), 55; West Chester (Pa.) *Jeffersonian,* May 5, 1855. CCHS.

[22] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853-1860), *passim.* Sidney Jones and Fannie Lee Townshend (mentioned above in connection with the first meeting at Old Kennett) were a constant trial to Joseph A. Dugdale and other Progressive leaders. Apparently their "peculiar doctrine," called *"coarse, vulgar,* [and] *indelicate"* by Dugdale, was concerned with some aspect of "physiology." *American Republican,* May 30, 1854. Compare *ibid.,* May 22, 1855; *ibid.,* May 20, 1856.

[23] Conservatives in nearby West Chester suggested that the saner members of the Progressive-Friend community erect a "snug little Asylum" for their insane, in which strait jackets would restrain the inmates. "A Philanthropic Proposition," *American Republican,* September 25, 1855; "A Keeper for the Institution," *ibid.,* October 21, 1855.

[24] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Contemporaries* (Boston [c 1899]), 329. Hereafter cited as Higginson, *Contemporaries.* See Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1859), 10, 11, for Higginson's part in Longwood activity.

[25] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853-1863). See the unbound copies of these *Proceedings,* CCHS.

bearing the proud epitaph: "Here lies a man who wasn't afraid to tell the truth as he believed it."

The belief that truth might be found by the free exercise of human reason, and that the "true Protestant right of private judgment" was based upon it, were but leading aspects of the Progressive philosophy. Other beliefs included primitive Christianity, the doctrine of the Inner Light, the natural rights of man, and the idea that human progress was as inevitable as a law of nature.[26] Still, as the people at Longwood saw it, their job was to hasten what nature would work out anyway; they agreed most heartily with Emerson when he asked, "What is a man born for, but to be a Reformer, a Remaker of what man has made. . . ?"[27]

This philosophy was optimistic; it aimed at happiness; and the Progressives at Longwood did their best to make their meetings occasions for joy and laughter as well as for the more serious business of rescuing the slave, the drunkard, and the victim of tobacco. The big annual spring meetings, lasting three or four days, were opportunities for "social worship," as they called it; and the hundreds of people attending these functions found pleasure in picnics, concerts, and congregational singing.[28] This was contrary to old-style Quakerism, of course. While some of the traditional Quakers showed a certain wry humor (one old Quaker was reported to have said, "I can't die for the life of me"), the Society of Friends as a whole frowned upon levity, and especially upon music in the church. Indeed, the importance given music and laughter by the Progressive Friends marks their one notable departure from primitive Quakerism.[29]

If not like the original Quakers on the subject of music, the Progressives were very much like the Founding Fathers in their

[26] Waterloo Y.M. Cong. Frds., *Proceedings* (1852), 4-7, and *passim.* Compare the "Basis of Religious Association," *ibid.* (1853), 21-24; "Exposition of Sentiments," Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853), 12-26.

[27] "Man the Reformer," in Mark Van Doren, ed., *The Portable Emerson* (N. Y., 1946), 83.

[28] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853-1863), *passim;* William L. Fisher, *Progressive Friends* ("Wakefield," 1856), 3, 4, CCHS. When the Longwood Meetinghouse was dedicated by Theodore Parker in 1855, the Hutchinson Family, a band of professional singers often heard at reform conventions, closed the ceremonies with "Coming Right Along; or Right Over Wrong." Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1855), 57.

[29] See Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House* . . . (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1948), 8, 9, for the puritanical attitude of the early Quakers.

evangelism. The annual meetings at Longwood had an evangelistic quality in their fervent pleas to be good and do good; this same spirit of carrying the good word was shown in the smaller weekly meetings[30] and on the occasions when individuals or small groups representing Longwood held missionary meetings in such places as the Millersville State Normal School, in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, or in wooded groves in Bucks and Chester counties. Here, as at Longwood, speakers exhorted, professional singers swayed the crowd in camp-meeting style, and tracts on reform subjects were distributed.[31] With these and other techniques, Longwood's influence went far afield.[32]

Few questions considered by the Progressive Friends attracted so many people or excited so much strong language as the struggle for women's rights. Longwood was often the scene of women's rights meetings—meetings at which the fiery Lucretia Mott, young Anna E. Dickinson, or Hannah Darlington might be seen addressing crowds in what the conservatives called a "most unladylike manner." William Lloyd Garrison might be urging a packed house to flood the Pennsylvania legislature with petitions for equality of women with men in property rights and educational opportunities; outside the house Fannie Lee Townshend might be haranguing the milling throng on more esoteric doctrine while Sidney Jones distributed copies of the *Monthly Jubilee*.[33] Here, we may be sure, the famous "Woman's Declaration of Independence"

[30] In the interim between the big annual meetings, usually held late in May or early in June, regular meetings for the Progressive brand of worship were held at Longwood on Sunday mornings. On these occasions anyone from a regularly ordained minister to an expert on horticulture might be the featured speaker. *Jeffersonian,* June 25, 1859, and April 6, 1861; *Village Record,* February 14, 1860; *American Republican,* July 21, 28, 1857.

[31] *Jeffersonian,* September 11 and February 5, 1859; *American Republican,* June 30, 1857; Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1859), 44.

[32] In the interval between the annual sessions of 1857 and 1858 twenty-six missionary meetings had been held in twelve different places; in 1858 the Yearly Meeting appointed a committee of sixty-four people to proselytize for reform in Ohio, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Indiana, and Iowa through personal visits, letters, or through any means that came to hand. Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1858), 11-17.

[33] James Monaghan, Longwood Progressive Friends and the Darlingtons, Papers about Longwood, Longwood Collection, FHL; Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1857), 4-15; *ibid.* (1862), 5-7; *ibid.* (1866), 5. The author's research has failed to find the exact character of the *Monthly Jubilee* mentioned above; he suspects, however, that it contained ideas similar to those found in Stephen Pearl Andrews' *Free Love Advocate.* See Kennett Square (Pa.) *Free Press,* October 30, 1855, CCHS.

was read and re-read. Here the women counted off their many wrongs at the hands of men.

Not the least of these wrongs were those arising from the use of alcohol and tobacco. These reformers, like the absolutists they were, made many intemperate demands for abstinence; many a petition was sent to Harrisburg urging a prohibition law like the one adopted by the State of Maine. It made little difference to them that such laws were sumptuary laws. They countered vigorously with arguments that alcoholic beverages were an economic waste, were wreckers of homes and of health.[34] On the subject of tobacco the housewives at Longwood protested most vehemently, saying "it was *they* who suffered." Their motto was, "Chew not, smoke not, snuff not."[35]

In 1860 the Longwood Progressives were reminded by A. D. Mayo, pastor of the Independent Church in Albany, New York, that all this agitation was only the preliminary stage in general uplift. The central—the most vital stage in improvement—was that of education, the speaker calling it "God's great secret of reform."[36] The Progressive Friends had long been concerned with the question, and came up with the conclusion that a proper education for the world's peoples would indeed solve all problems. This proper education, they thought, would be both practical and liberal, for boys *and* girls, and it would aim to train the whole being through a blending of physical and mental labor.[37]

Education was the best remedy for crime, these Progressives thought, but they also saw the relation between poverty and crime. Indeed, they were most proper environmentalists when they claimed that the criminal was usually the victim of social circumstances beyond his control. Society owed the criminal a debt, a debt to be discharged through instruction in a gainful trade or occupation, and through kind treatment while he was in jail.

[34] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., Proceedings (1853-1860), *passim;* West Chester (Pa.) *Independent Herald,* February 9, May 18, 1854, CCHS; Kennett Quarterly Meeting of Progressive Friends. Minutes, Ninth Month 2, Twelfth Month 2, 1854, FHL.

[35] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1859), 33.

[36] *Ibid.* (1860), 17-32.

[37] *Ibid.* (1856), 9; *ibid.* (1857), 38; *ibid.* (1858), 10, 39; *ibid.* (1859), 31, 32. Longwood was also the scene of lyceum meetings in 1855. The famous Holbrook Lyceum met there on October 28; in December a Dr. Hayes lectured there on the Arctic regions. *Free Press,* October 30, 1855; *Independent Herald,* December 22, 1855.

Finally, in view of the manifest failure of the code of an eye for an eye in stopping crime, the Progressives advocated the abolition of capital punishment, sending many petitions to the Pennsylvania Assembly for this purpose. No man was so bad that he was beyond rescue; each man, even a murderer, had a right to life.[38]

The Progressive interest in the organized peace movement before the Civil War was but an extension of this humane attitude. Like the original Quakers, the Friends at Longwood were pacifists—so much so that they joined Congregational Friends in Ohio in petitioning Congress for the abolition of West Point, all military schools, the Army and the Navy, and all fortifications.[39] Like their co-worker William L. Garrison, many of these Progressives had anarchical tendencies, refusing to support the constitution of the United States or the officials sworn to uphold it. The constitution, in their words, was "based upon violence and sustained by the sword," and it sanctioned slavery. Since war was inherently sinful, all preparations for war, and "every national flag," should be abolished forthwith as the "sources of corruption, misrule, pride, and lust of dominion. . . ."[40] When the Civil War came, these Progressives remained true to their pacifism, even if the war promised to put down the hated slavocracy and free the Negro from bondage.

The Progressive hatred of the slavocracy was only one aspect of a general hatred of special privileges and authority. They were especially critical of the special privileges bestowed by great wealth, saying it was the reformer's duty to labor for a greater equality, and halt the "tendency of the age to make the rich richer and the poor poorer."[41] Like so many Northern farmers, the Progressives were opposed to land monopoly, advocating free homesteads in the West for those who earned them with honest labor. Their argument here was based upon a part of the natural-rights theory, the belief that everyone had a right to a fair share of nature's bounty.[42] At a time when Marxian socialism was beginning to

[38] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1854), 8; (1855) 14, 15; (1859) 34. William Logan Fisher, one of the Longwood "regulars," had written a book on *Pauperism and Crime* as early as 1834. Anna D. Hallowell, ed., *James and Lucretia Mott, Life and Letters* (N. Y., 1884), 117.

[39] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853), 10. Compare Green Plain Y.M. Cong. Frds., *Minutes and Proceedings* (1849), 4, 6; *ibid.* (1850), 6.

[40] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1857), 15.

[41] *Ibid.* (1859), 35.

[42] *Ibid.* (1856), 10; (1859), 36.

enter American thought, they sympathized with the rising labor movement; they told the captains of industry to stop the exploitation of the workers; they said that these industrial leaders were only stewards placed over wealth for the greater good of all.[43] Like Karl Marx, they advocated a graduated income tax (a measure which was adopted by Congress in the Civil War period); they favored heavier inheritance taxes and urged the adoption of other direct taxation, so that "the people may realize what it costs them to be governed; and know why, and for what, so much is expended."[44]

While their advocacy of such ideas invited charges that they were dangerous "crackpots" and socialistic levellers, perhaps they were hated most by conservative Pennsylvanians for their association with the Garrisonian wing of the antislavery movement.[45] When the Progressives were organized, the antislavery workers had split into two camps. The more moderate majority followed James Gillespie Birney and Theodore D. Weld, believing in gradual emancipation by political action. The violent, absolutist minority followed Garrison and Wendell Phillips. Supporting Garrison, the Longwood reformers believed in immediate emancipation without compensation to slaveowners, but they put their trust in moral suasion alone, refusing in most cases to join a political party. If all else failed, they recommended secession of the free states from the union, since association with slaveholders was a sin. Convinced that the fugitive slave laws were immoral, they saw nothing wrong in helping fugitive slaves on their way to Canada, though this aid imperiled the lives and property of anyone caught in violation of the law.[46] The homes of Progressive Friends became stations on the Underground Railroad, while Chester County became criss-crossed with escape routes over

[43] *Ibid.* (1859), 35, 36.
[44] *Ibid.* (1856), 10, 11.
[45] Garrison was one of the "visiting artists" at Longwood Yearly Meeting on several occasions. Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1857), 13-15; *ibid.* (1862), 8.
[46] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1853-1863), *passim.* Some Progressive Friends, as members of a society of individualists, did favor political action against slavery and condemned the violent language of the Garrisons. *Village Record,* October 30, 1860; *Jeffersonian,* February 16, 1861. In 1863, when much of the friction between the "gradualists" and "immediatists" had gone, Theodore D. Weld—"our beloved friend"—read a paper at Longwood on "Truth and its Hindrances." Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1863), 5-9.

which thousands of fugitives were helped on their way to freedom.[47]

Such assistance was, of course, a direct violation of both the letter and the spirit of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, and Progressive Friends found that violation of the law was especially dangerous after this date. Castner Hanway and Elijah Lewis, implicated in the famous Christiana Riot in Lancaster County, were indicted on a charge of treason against the United States for allegedly "obstructing officers in arresting fugitives, [and] rescuing prisoners from custody. . . ."[48] After three months in the Moyamensing Prison in Philadelphia, they were acquitted with the help of Thaddeus Stevens, who served as their chief counsel.[49]

While Castner Hanway managed to have himself cast in the role of a martyr to the antislavery cause, claiming the affair had ruined him financially,[50] perhaps the most widely publicized martyrdom involved Passmore Williamson, another Progressive Friend. Williamson was thrown into Moyamensing Prison for refusing to divulge the hiding place of some slaves he had helped escape from a ship tied up at a Philadelphia wharf. He straightway became the darling of the abolitionists. While in jail he received many letters of sympathy. In addition to those from Longwood Friends, he was heartened by letters from Lewis Tappan and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, from Mary Grew of the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia, and from a faculty committee of Oberlin College. He also received many visitors, in-

[47] Identification of Progressive Friends as workers on the Underground Railroad is possible through the comparison of the names appearing in the Progressive Friend *Proceedings* (1853-1863), with the names given in special studies of Underground activity. The latter sources also indicate the location of "stations" and routes on the Railroad. See Robert C. Smedley, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties in Pennsylvania* (Lancaster, Pa., 1883); hereafter cited as Smedley, *Underground Railroad;* Marianna G. Brubaker, "The Underground Railroad," Lancaster County Historical Society, *Papers and Addresses,* XV (1911), 95-119; William Still, *Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia, 1872). Hereafter cited as Still, *Underground Railroad.*

[48] David R. Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot* (Quarryville, Pa., 1898), *passim;* W. U. Hensel, "The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851," Lancaster Co. Hist. Soc., *Papers and Addresses,* XV (October 1911); *American Republican,* September 16, 23, 1851; *ibid.,* October 7, 1851; *ibid.,* November 4, 1851.

[49] Smedley, *Underground Railroad,* 59, 64, 87, 88.

[50] *Pennsylvania Freeman,* May 18, 1854. Hanway, aided by the Progressive Friends, sent a petition to the United States Congress asking for "relief from [the] pecuniary embarrassment" incurred by his trial. Kennett Quarterly Meeting Progressive Friends, Minutes, Ninth Month 2, 1854, FHL.

cluding reformers from the antislavery headquarters in Philadelphia and the Deaf and Dumb Institute. Even Adin Ballou came down from the Hopedale Community in Milford, Massachusetts, to pay his respects.[51] Thomas Curtis, one of the charter members of the Progressive Friends, soon advertised that his Philadelphia bookstore had for sale a fine portrait of Passmore Williamson, "taken from life in the Cell in which he [was] confined. . . ." The cost was fifty cents a copy—two dollars if a gold frame was desired.[52] After some months, the judge who had committed him to prison could no longer face the rising tide of adverse public opinion and ordered Williamson liberated. Williamson promptly sued His Honor for false imprisonment.[53]

The most effective worker in the Underground, and the real martyr among the Progressive Friends, was Thomas Garrett, iron merchant and tool maker of Wilmington, Delaware. His Underground work had been interrupted as early as 1848, when he was a defendant in a fugitive-slave suit before Chief Justice Taney in the United States Circuit Court sitting in New Castle, Delaware. The three-day trial resulted in even heavier damages than the plaintiff had asked, so heavy as to wipe Garrett out. At the age of sixty he had to try to rebuild his fortune, a venture in which he was soon successful.[54] But his interest in business, and his punishment by the court, did not deter him from continuing his assistance to escaping slaves. Indeed, he considered the heavy penalty as a license to carry on this work for the rest of his life. By 1857, when he was in his sixty-eighth year, Garrett had assisted 2,072 slaves to freedom.[55]

To help fugitives was emancipation by retail; what these reformers really wanted was wholesale emancipation. Accordingly, in 1862, after long years of fruitless agitation for this universal freedom, the Longwood Friends decided to make a personal appeal to President Lincoln. A delegation from Longwood called on him at the White House during the third week of June, an inter-

[51] [John K. Kane] *Case of Passmore Williamson* . . . (Philadelphia, 1856), 3-21, CCHS. Compare *American Republican,* July 31, 1855; Passmore Williamson's Letters, CCHS.
[52] *Independent Herald,* November 17, 1855.
[53] *Free Press,* November 6, 13, 1855; *American Republican,* September 30, 1856.
[54] Still, *Underground Railroad,* 624-627.
[55] William Wistar Comfort, "Thomas Garrett's Letters To Two Ladies in Britain," *Delaware History,* IV (1950), 38, 47.

view having been arranged by Senator David Wilmot of Pennsylvania. Lincoln received them courteously, remarking that it was a relief to meet people who were not applicants for office. He said "his chief trouble was with that class of persons." But when he had heard the Progressive plea for immediate and universal emancipation, he countered by saying he could not enforce the Constitution in the South at that time. "How would a decree of emancipation be any more effective?" he asked.[56]

When, in the fullness of time, the slaves *were* emancipated, the general reform movement suffered a general collapse. Abolitionism, the mother of reforms, was gone, and the survivors found it hard to carry the torch in the moral darkness of the Gilded Age. Reform societies disintegrated almost everywhere; now people found it expedient to submit to the spirit and practices of the times, an attitude so well expressed in Lewis Mumford's phrase, "the pragmatic acquiescence." Now even Moncure D. Conway, once so hot to realize the ideal, was saying, "we must idealize the real." If such a man could abandon his hope of reforming and recreating the imperfect world of General Grant, if he could so rationalize the evils of his day—then indeed, in Mumford's memorable phrase, "the guts of idealism were gone."[57]

But not all idealism withered and died in the days of "Boss" Tweed and Roscoe Conkling: here and there small groups revived their agitation, the Progressive Friends of Pennsylvania among them. While the breath of war had caused the cancellation of the big annual meeting in 1861, succeeding meetings resumed familiar practices. Remnants of the old clan continued to "solve" social problems, and new "visiting artists" were invited to air unpopular opinions before a sympathetic audience. Susan B. An-

[56] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1862), 8, 15-19. Compare *Village Record,* July 1, 1862. Lincoln's rejection of the Progressive appeal incensed Lucretia Mott, we may be sure; even after Lincoln's preliminary emancipation announcement in September 1862, she was still very critical of him. The trouble with Lincoln, she said (quoting Robert Dale Owen), was that he lacked "that 'inward impulse' without which no reformer had ever had firmness to achieve anythg. . . ." Letter to [Martha Wright, Auburn, N. Y.], Eleventh Month 20, 1862, Mott MSS, FHL.

[57] Lewis Mumford, "The Pragmatic Acquiescence," in Gail Kennedy, ed., *Pragmatism and American Culture* (Boston [c. 1950]), 36-49. Moncure D. Conway took an enthusiastic part in Longwood activities in 1856. Fisher, *Progressive Friends,* 5. It should be added that the writer has been unable to find any evidence that the Congregational or Progressive Friends, starting out so bravely in New York, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Michigan in the late 'forties and 'fifties, were able to survive the Civil War period.

thony, Anna E. Dickinson, and Lucy Stone offered speeches and led discussions on universal suffrage in the post-war years. In 1890 Terrence V. Powderly spoke on the problems of labor. Henry George explained his single tax in 1894, and in 1902 Anna H. Shaw outlined her concept of strength of character. In 1903, a half-century of reform effort was climaxed by the Golden Anniversary celebration, to be held in memory by the issuance of *Proceedings* bound in impressive gold-hued cover pages.[58]

By this time, however, there were signs of decline in Longwood affairs. Whereas the original yearly meetings had lasted for three or four days, now even in an anniversary year, two days were considered sufficient. The early *Proceedings* were rather bulky booklets full of long speeches and much discussion; by the early nineteen hundreds these reports were pathetically thin. Sometimes several *Proceedings* were bound into one cover, apparently for the sake of economy. Finally, in 1906 the Yearly Meeting decided to abandon formal publication of its doings, except for the printing of program sheets to be distributed at the time of the annual session.[59]

In spite of Longwood's mild renaissance after World War I, under the able leadership of such people as Jesse H. Holmes and Sarah D. Chambers, the group decided to disband in 1940 after eighty-eight years of existence as an independent reform organization.[60] The meetinghouse was sold to Pierre S. DuPont for "more than could have been obtained at public sale. . . ."[61] Its furnishings were sold at nominal prices to individuals and to institutions like the Cheyney Teachers College (for Negroes) and the Chester County Historical Society.[62] The meetinghouse was left to stand on the fringe of the DuPont estate, where visitors to the famous Longwood Gardens can still see the modest white structure as a pale reminder of bygone agitation.

Any attempt to evaluate the place and meaning of the Progres-

[58] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., *Proceedings* (1866-1903), *passim.*

[59] See the paperback copies of the Longwood *Proceedings* (1853-1860; 1862-1906) in the Longwood Collection, CCHS. Some program sheets are also to be found here, as well as in the Longwood folders of FHL.

[60] Pa. Y.M. Prog. Frds., "The Eighty-Eighth And Last Yearly Meeting" (program, 1940), Longwood Collection, CCHS.

[61] Chester County Deed Book 0-20, vol. 486, p. 362. Recorder of Deeds Office, Court House, West Chester, Pa.

[62] Kennett Square (Pa.) *Kennett News and Advertiser,* September 20, 1940.

sive Friends in American history would of course be greatly influenced by one's predilections for liberalism or conservatism, as well as by one's religious persuasion. This society was born out of the eternal tension between liberty and authority, out of the conflict between those panting for progress and those basking in the warm comfort of the status quo. Essentially a religious revolt, it was, like all religious reforms, an effort to return to first principles—the original principles of Christ and of the founders of the Society of Friends. The words and actions of the Progressive Friends showed that the movement represented the confluence of the same four elements—mysticism, prophetism, perfectionism, and universalism—which had made primitive Quakerism such a potent religion. Like George Fox and William Penn, these Progressives were activists, enthusiasts; like the founders, they were moved by the Inner Light to defy the forces of clerical and secular authority in their efforts to achieve a Christian democracy. Believing that "Good works are the *outward,* and faith the *inward* life of man,"[63] they elevated their many reform projects into sacraments in the Religion of Humanity.

Any movement, of course, may be judged by its results. These Progressives were essentially gadflies trying to sting the public consciousness to a sense of error. Functioning as agitators and moral educators, they pointed the way to reforms to be achieved by others. Perhaps they might have achieved more if they had not put almost everything on a high moral plane, thereby forcing their opponents into an angry defensive position. Perhaps they spread themselves too thin by pursuing a multitude of reform projects. Perhaps also they asserted individualism too much by their general refusal to use political parties as instruments for reform. Still, their example suggests what seems to be a fair question: would not social progress be better served if we subsidized more forums in the Longwood pattern, where social problems might be given a full and free airing, and where evaluations of the status quo might be encouraged in the spirit of a "loyal opposition"?

[63] In an advertisement in the *Independent Herald,* April 6, 1854.