SLAVERY REFORM IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: AN ASPECT OF TRANSATLANTIC INTELLECTUAL COOPERATION

An awakened social conscience is one of the outstanding characteristics of the eighteenth century. This is not to say that previous centuries made no provision for those members of society who had faltered and lagged behind in the pursuit of happiness. In medieval Christendom the Church lent a helping hand to the disheartened, and when the unity of the religious world was shattered the Protestant churches and the state ministered to the needy and discouraged. The second half of the seventeenth century contributed some organizations that pricked a complacent society, but their effectiveness was strictly limited. Scattered individuals were small voices in a heedless world, but during the eighteenth century practical minds, skilled in the ways of propaganda, united disparate voices into thunderous commands that shook indifferent parliaments and peoples into activity.

It is not easy to determine why the heart of man was so unusually stirred during this century. English philanthropic activity was stimulated by more frequent intercourse with the continental countries whose experience was often appealed to as an example to support local proposals.¹ To the tolerance of the Dutch was ascribed much of their commercial prosperity and the English were bid to do likewise. The *Pietas Hallensis* of A. H. Francke in Germany in the early days of the eighteenth century was a powerful stimulant to humanitarianism, and the *Pietas Londinensis* published nearly one hundred years later listed the large number of institutions established in the eighteenth century.² New religious forces loosened related impulses, and it is possible to show a close relationship between the growth of evangelicalism and the deepening of the spirit of benevo-

The word "benevolence" itself was endowed with vigorous vitality in the years after Shaftesbury, in 1711, in his "Characteristics," had focussed upon it the attention of the English literary world. Altruism is a novel note in the English literature of this century, whereas it had shown during the Restoration an aristocratic indifference to the lower classes. Charity, which in the hands of the Anglican Church appeared to be a bargain with God, was now to issue from a genuine benevolence. James Thomson was among those who initiated the ethical movement, and his poetry, which encouraged the prison reforms of Oglethorpe and various other philanthropic ventures, ranks him "the first humanitarian poet in English." The connection between the burst of humanitarian activity associated with the names of Wilberforce, Howard, and others, and the constant poetizing of benevolence and charity, is real. In fact it is argued that the Romantic Revolt in English literature was itself only one aspect of a more inclusive social movement, which expressed itself politically in a reform of the suffrage franchise; religiously, in the rise of evangelicalism and Methodism; ethically, in the rise of humanitarianism; and esthetically, in naturalism and the romanticism of the remote.

There was, too, a kind of science or religion of humanity that sought to create a unity in a world of diversity. Perhaps it was a substitute for a vanished religious unity; perhaps it was the harbinger of a society that is yet to be. A German writer referred to Franklin as the "most humane and happiest of all who have been chosen as contributors to the sublime work of inaugurating the Golden Age of Humanity". The 1797 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica stated that Philadelphia excelled all other cities in making "useful improvements... particularly in the science of humanity." Herder played an important part in the formation of a "Friday Society," which was influenced by Franklin's Junto in Philadelphia. For his group, which in his eyes was really a "Society of Humanity," Herder wrote the Letters of Humanity, largely inspired by the life of Franklin. "Would to God we


* P. C. Weber, America in Imaginative German Literature in the first half of the 19th Century, 18.
had in all Europe," he exclaimed, "a people who would read him, recognize his principles and act and live in accordance therewith to their own best well-being; where would we then be!" 7

A Swiss writer believed there was a germ of perfection in mankind that could be developed by cultivation. To do this he must know those facts that contribute to the enlightenment of society; America, he reasoned, could furnish a great number of these, and he therefore requested Franklin to name a correspondent who would forward papers of this kind from time to time. An American writer on government and education thought that history should no longer be concerned with petty intrigues, but rather with the "science of human nature". A cosmopolitanism that makes the twentieth century with its heritage of nationalism seem in some respects more provincial than earlier ages was a distinct feature of much eighteenth century thought.

The shifting economic bases of life in this century likewise contributed to the growth of the philanthropic spirit; this philanthropy was frequently the result of sheer necessity. The changes in industry and agriculture dislocated many a routine life that had hitherto spent itself as a yeoman, or spinner, or weaver at home, and in the period of readjustment the body had to be fed and the spirit nurtured. Lifelines had literally to be thrown to those who had been torn from their moorings. And for those debtors who had been tripped by the law there was a new sympathy because the principles of law themselves were called into question. For rationalism, which was doing its work in science, knew no limits to its probing, and man's relationship to man was subjected as well to a new analysis.

With almost every phase of the philanthropic activity that we shall note in these years were associated one or more Quaker names. These were often leading causes whose early hopelessness frightened the faint-hearted, but whose gradual success attracted the waverer and then made of him a crusader. It is an instructive study, this comparatively small sectarian group, which seemed to be a conscience to the eighteenth century. Sometimes the conscience was its guide, some-

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7 Calendar of Franklin Papers, II. Isaac Iselin, July 28, 1778.
times the conscience was deliberately ignored, but it was hard to be indifferent to it.⁹

Among those causes that appealed to a softened humanity was slavery. It was from the new world, too, that the most insistent voices were raised in the slave's behalf. An Anglican divine, Morgan Godwin, who was later to be quoted by Benezet, had shown the slave sympathy at the close of the seventeenth century. Chief Justice Sewall, of Massachusetts, wrote a significant tract, which, though it did not propose the abolition of slavery, criticised the traffic in slaves and the institution itself. Boston was already preparing to legislate against slavery when Sewall wrote his Selling of Joseph.¹⁰ American Quakers in 1729 agreed to oppose the further purchase of slaves, and leaders with convictions as strong as those possessed by John Woolman and Anthony Benezet preached and wrote on the unchristianity of slaveholding. To the religious arguments against slavery were added, during the Revolutionary period, those derived from the doctrine of natural rights. A Harvard thesis denied that it was "lawful to subject Africans to perpetual bondage."¹¹ Prohibitive duties were placed on the importation of slaves into Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, while Quakers in the New England and Middle Colonies began to disown their fellow sectarians who persisted in holding slaves.¹²

In a correspondence covering many years, Quakers on both sides of the Atlantic exhorted one another to hold fast to the determination to abolish slavery. Philadelphia Quakers wrote in 1761 of a provincial tax on the importation of slaves and requested English support, lest an opposition group urge the repeal of the prohibitory duty. Members of other religious groups were also converted to the Quaker position, wrote the Philadelphia Friends.¹³ From North Carolina and Virginia Quakers, too, came a message to London of opposition to the slave trade.¹⁴ Further progress in the promotion of anti-slavery sentiment,

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⁹ Dietrich von Dobbeler, Social-politik der Nachstenliebe dargestellt am Beispiel der gesellschaft der freunde (Goslar, 1912), an inadequate study; A. Jorns, The Quakers as Pioneers in Social Work (1932), better.


¹² M. S. Locke, Anti-Slavery in America, 1619–1808.

¹³ MS. "Letters to and from Philadelphia," 1, March 24, 1761; Friends House, London.

especially among non-Quakers, was reported with satisfaction to London Friends up to the outbreak of the War for Independence, and always there is revealed the belief in the need for co-operative action. Even during the war correspondence on the subject was continued, and London Quakers acknowledged American assistance in “discouraging the African Trade.”

Thus the movement gained impetus on this side of the Atlantic. Overseas in England and France opinion was formed more slowly, but its shape was fashioned largely by America. An international fellowship of those who joined in the crusade against humanity’s ills made one of its strongest fights against slavery. Anthony Benezet, the peace-loving Philadelphia schoolmaster, was one of the most militant crusaders. He appealed to the influential Franklin to do something about this evil; to Franklin and to important Londoners Benezet sent his tracts on the slave trade, urging that the matter be brought up in Parliament. In support of reform he quoted liberal American opinion, yet he realized the opposition that would be encountered from those “who sell their country and their God for gold.” In reply Franklin wrote to Benezet that he had made a short extract from the reformer’s writings and had published it in the London Chronicle. Franklin mentioned that several selections had been printed against slavery and assured Benezet that his “labours had already been attended with great effects.” Soon after, Franklin met Granville Sharp with whom he decided to co-operate in eradicating the slave trade.

Earlier than this letters had appeared here and there indicating a strong hostility to slavery, and one contributor to an Edinburgh periodical singled out American negro slavery for particular condemnation. A newspaper thirty years before had printed as its leading article a long letter against slavery. The same year the London Magazine printed a strong attack on slavery which rested its arguments on the natural right of an individual to freedom. Some time later another attack on slavery appeared in this magazine; “Have Britons, who have so long tasted the sweets of liberty forgot the relish

15 MS. “Letters to and from Philadelphia,” April 22, 1773; April 9, 1779; Friends House, London.
16 Calendar of Franklin Papers, April 27, 1772.
19 The Old Whig; or, The Consistent Protestant, March 16, 1737/1738.
of it?"\(^{20}\) The *Gentleman's Magazine* reprinted the resolution of the town assembly of Salem, Massachusetts, against the importation of slaves, as repugnant to the "natural rights of mankind."\(^{21}\) Sharp reminded Philadelphia that many negroes were natives of the colonies, "and consequently have a natural right to a free existence therein, as well as the Landholders themselves.\(^{22}\)

As early as 1727 London Quakers distributed to other English Friends answers to queries of Philadelphia Friends about slave importation which was frowned upon as "not a commendable, nor allow'd practice.\(^{23}\) At about the same time that Benezet was writing to Franklin, the *Scots Magazine* gave a very sympathetic review to the former's *Historical Account of Guinea*, which in Clarkson's opinion did more than any other book to spread a knowledge and hatred of the trade.\(^{24}\) Benezet sent some copies of a treatise on the slave trade to David Barclay to place in the hands of influential English citizens.\(^{25}\)

The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Quakers sent to the London Yearly Meeting the tracts of Benezet which were to be reprinted and circulated particularly among the students in English schools, in order, as Clarkson put it, "that the rising youth might acquire a knowledge, and at the same time a detestation of this cruel traffic." Parliamentary members likewise received hundreds of copies. Rufus M. Jones, perhaps the leading authority on the Quakers, believes that Benezet wielded greater influence through his personal correspondence. He selected prominent individuals, or friends of them, like Robert Shackleton, the friend of Burke, through whom he carried on his propaganda. John Woolman, too, though he was with the English Friends but a very short time, left them with a renewed determination to fight against slavery.\(^{26}\) It was probably Benezet's work that aroused John Wesley to strong comment against slavery. When the evangelist wrote a tract against slavery it was reprinted in Philadelphia by Benezet with notes and additional material.\(^{27}\)

\(^{21}\) 1773, p. 358.
\(^{22}\) *The Just Limitation of Slavery* (1776), Appendix 6, July 18, 1775.
\(^{25}\) MS. Portfolio, 38, (87), April 29, 1767.
\(^{26}\) Clarkson, *op. cit.*, 94; Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, II. 318-21; Woolman MSS., Portfolio, 6, (33), March 25, 1773; Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting.
\(^{27}\) Tyerman, *Wesley*, III. 115, 183; see copy in New York Historical Society.
Samuel Johnson was strongly opposed to slavery, but the most effective champion in the earlier period was Granville Sharp, who was a correspondent of Benezet. Sharp, in the Somerset case, which furnished the precedent for the Knight case in Scotland, had outlawed slavery from the British Isles. An abridgment by Benezet of Sharp's tract *On the Injustice of Slavery* was put into the hands of the judges and counsel who were interested in the Somerset case. This case attracted the attention of American Quakers who then began a correspondence with Granville Sharp. John Wesley told Benezet that he and Sharp intended to make weekly contributions to the newspapers on the slave trade to stir up public opinion.  

But trade in slaves was still carried on. So long as the trade was supported "by authority on your side," wrote Philadelphia Friends to England, "Great Britain cannot be clear of a pollution," but when word arrived of a petition to Parliament, the American Quakers felt relieved. A report on the conditions of Negroes was presented to each member of Parliament, and a copy was sent to America. Within a few months the Americans had reprinted five thousand copies of the report for general distribution throughout the states.

The agitation against the slave trade, one half of which was carried on in ships from Liverpool, was more impressive in the decade following 1783. *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* by James Ramsay, whose first hand experience enabled him to write with authority, presented most of the arguments used against the trade and slavery in after years. The *European Magazine* and the *Gentleman's Magazine* gave it favorable reviews. Another writer, Anthony Stokes, in *A View of the Constitution of the British Colonies...*, devoted a section to slavery, particularly in the West Indies. He claimed that whites could work where Negroes worked, and he supported his statement with a reference to many poor whites in Carolina and Georgia who raised grain without slave assistance.

The time seemed ripe for a popular attack, and so the Quakers determined on a campaign of public education in the spirit of modern propagandists. James Pemberton wrote to Phillips, the bookseller,
that the Pennsylvania Quakers had found frequent publications on the slave question very helpful; "the like means will I expect be useful in your kingdom." Tracts and newspapers were pressed into service; a petition to Parliament called for the abolition of the trade. Twelve thousand copies were printed of The Case of our Fellow-creatures, the oppressed Africans, respectfully recommended to the serious consideration of the Legislature of Great Britain, by the people called Quakers. James Phillips, who did most of the printing for the Quakers, listed seventeen titles of anti-slavery publications, "lately published" by him; M. Gurney, another Quaker bookseller, also published many of these tracts. English Friends circulated the work of Benezet on the condition of negro slaves in the British colonies. They reported to Philadelphia that various essays were appearing on the subject in England, and that increased public attention was focussed on it, but sorrowfully they added, "Deep rooted ideas of interest however mistaken, still silence the call of humanity on many minds.

In 1786, Clarkson, who was to gain great fame in this movement, published Is it lawful to make men slaves against their will? The next year Wilberforce announced himself the champion of the cause in Parliament, and the Negroes' case was further strengthened with the formation of a Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, with Granville Sharp as president. Richard Price informed Franklin of the organization of the London society, whose papers he had earlier forwarded, and at the same time acknowledged his election to the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, of which Sharp was also a corresponding member. Englishmen requested copies of the constitution of the Pennsylvania Society and called on their native land to imitate the North Americans, her late enemies, in the extirpation of slavery. Dr. Lettsom, who was in frequent correspondence with Americans, was the center in his own country of many humanitarian movements, and writers in various parts of England informed him of the progress of anti-slavery activity. It was suggested that committees of correspon-

82 MS. Portfolio, 6, (152), July 22, 1783; Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting.
83 See list at end of James Ramsay's Objections to the Abolition of the Slave Trade with Answers (2d ed., 1788).
84 Ibid., Dec. 2, 1785.
85 Calendar of Franklin Papers, Jan. 10, 1788; Sparks, ed., Franklin's Writings, X. 320; Price to Franklin, Sept. 26, 1787.
86 Pettigrew, Lettsom Memoirs, II. 238; Dr. Percival to Lettsom, Jan. 9, 1788; p. 320, 370, 432.
dence, patterned on those formed by the colonials in the American Revolution, be organized to bring pressure on Parliament by an aroused public opinion; all the abolitionist agencies were to be joined together in a vast network.

Granville Sharp was in correspondence with the New York Anti-slavery Society of which John Jay was president, and in one letter he wrote that the English group had been in communication with French reformers. He thought Jay could assist in extending the "sphere of action" to include France. At the same time Sharp sent New York the recent tracts against slavery, and added that petitions from various towns and religious bodies had been sent to Parliament.88

It was believed that a universal abolition of the slave trade might be secured by treaty, for France too, was the center of lively reform agitation. The Quakers were praised for the liberation of their slaves, and French newspapers pointed to them as an example worthy of imitation.89 Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* was very critical of the slave system, and Condorcet revealed his sympathy for the slaves in his *Reflexions sur l'esclavage des nègres*. In a letter to the Abbé Raynal, Benezet called for a united attack on slavery, "so contrary to humanity, reason and religion."90 Jefferson's remarks in favor of freedom for the negro slaves drew French attention to his *Notes on Virginia*.41 In 1788 *Les Amis des Noirs* was organized with Condorcet and Lafayette as members; abolition was supported by Mirabeau and Brissot as well. Brissot de Warville was the soul of the society, wrote a member to Franklin, who included copies of various discourses and letters, a list of members, and added that a memoir was to be presented to the States General to examine the question of abolition.42 Jay wrote Sharp that Brissot was in New York to set up a correspondence with the anti-slavery group, "and to collect such information as may promote our common aims." Brissot, Lafayette, and Sharp were elected honorary members of the New York society.43 Members of *Les Amis des Noirs* were in correspondence with Dr. W. Thornton in America, who had plans for an independent negro state in Africa, similar to the

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88 Johnston, *Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, May 1, 1788.
93 Johnston, *op. cit.*, June, 1788; Sept. 1, 1788.
English Sierra Leone project. Pitt thought to get the important commercial powers to join in the abandonment of the slave trade; England wanted co-operative action lest other powers inherit the lucrative trade she contemplated dropping. Clarkson himself went to France to work with the reform group there, but although his efforts were unsuccessful, the French Revolution, which came at this time, swept into the discard, along with many other things, the trade and slavery itself.

The friends of the Negro marshaled the evidence to controvert the argument that he was an inferior being. Anthony Benezet furnished the English abolitionists with this type of material, and sympathetic magazines printed similar contributions. William Dillwyn, American born pupil of Benezet, formed a little group in London which was a center for propaganda. His American experience enabled him to refute the objections of slave-trade protagonists, and Clarkson made use of Dillwyn's knowledge in his own work. American Friends wrote to English co-religionists of the school for Negroes in Philadelphia where they gave proofs of their capacity to learn; the same letter brought the proud declaration, "the members of our Society in these parts are now mainly clear of holding any of these people in bondage". A free school for Negroes was opened in Providence, Rhode Island, and they were reported as proficient as the whites. "[This] may be reckon'd, among the numerous Evidences of their being Men capable of Every Improvement with ourselves where they [are] under the Same Advantages," wrote Moses Brown to James Phillips. Years earlier the Gentleman's Magazine had extracted a section from Dr. Beattie's Essay on Truth which defended the intelligence of primitive races and pointed out that negro slaves had become excellent craftsmen and musicians. The Bee, in Edinburgh, printed a lengthy account of an American Negro, Benjamin Banneker, whose almanac gained a wide fame. The writer thought this "a fresh proof that the powers of the mind are disconnected with the colour of the skin," and Jefferson wrote to Banneker that he had

44 Pettigrew, op. cit., II. 236, 497, 516, 520.
46 Clarkson, op. cit., p. 131-41.
48 MS. Portfolio, 23, (44), March 5, 1791.
49 1771, p. 595.
sent a copy of the almanac to Condorcet, because he considered it "as a document to which your whole colour had a right, for their justification against the doubts which have been entertained of them."  

London Quakers were anxious to convince their fellow countrymen that manumission was compatible even with the temporal interest of communities. They felt that their American brethren could supply them with the necessary evidence on this point to defeat their opponents even on what seemed their strongest ground.  

Benezet argued that the abolition of slavery would permit the British to trade freely with Africa, whose raw materials could be exchanged for English manufactures. The English abolitionists adopted this argument as their own. A volume of *Letters on Slavery*, published in London, quoted Franklin to the effect that the introduction of slaves into a new region caused the population as a whole to decline. A good part of this work quoted American authorities for testimony on the proficiency of the Negro in various capacities.  

Interest in the slavery question was stimulated by special articles and references in periodicals and books which had rather a general appeal. The *Gentleman's Magazine* devoted some of its space sympathetically to anti-slavery activities. The report of the committee of the Pennsylvania Assembly was printed as a model for Parliament, lest a loosely-worded act defeat the purpose of benevolence and "encourage evasion, perjury and all kinds of roguery." The *European Magazine* contained prose and poetry in opposition to slavery. The *Scots Magazine* extracted "Some Account of the State of Negroes in South Carolina" from Crevecoeur, which gave the editor opportunity to indicate his sympathy for the slaves whose condition, he declared, called "loudly for redress," not only in America but also in the British West Indies. These, the leading magazines in England and Scotland, printed many items that indicated the progress of the anti-slavery movement. Once it was the prohibition of slave imports into Virginia, then it was a memorial of the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society to Congress, and later there was news of the Edinburgh Society,

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60 XIII. 291-93, 331-34 (1793); *Jefferson's Writings* (Monticello ed.), Aug. 30, 1791.
63 William Dickson, p. 40, note, quoting Franklin's *Thoughts on Peopling of Countries*.
64 1783, p. 534; 1784, p. 121; 1785, p. 67; 1788, p. 211, 212, 311, 545.
65 V. 455; VI. 325; X. 133; XIII. 98.
which, influenced by Clarkson's writings, believed in immediate abolition.\textsuperscript{56} A reviewer in the \textit{Gentleman's Magazine} of Clarkson's \textit{Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species} mentioned the importance of Woolman, Benezet, and the Quakers generally in the effort to abolish slavery.\textsuperscript{57}

The author of \textit{The American Oracle}, published in London, was very bitter in his judgment of the slave trade. Why did not other countries, he asked, follow the legislatures in some of the States which had liberated their enslaved negroes?\textsuperscript{58} In the same year the \textit{Baptist Annual Register} reported that Robert Carter of Virginia had emancipated his 442 slaves. “If this be true, vote him a triumph, crown him with laurels,” the editor exclaimed.\textsuperscript{59} To the first volume of Tilloch's \textit{The Philosophical Magazine}, Dr. Rush contributed an account of the sugar maple in the United States, which he contended was superior to cane sugar, and incidentally he added that its use would obviate the need for slaves in the West Indies. The editor appended a footnote to the article in which he called attention especially to the information on the slave trade.\textsuperscript{60} Franklin's essay \textit{On the Slave Trade} was extracted for the benefit of the readers of the \textit{European Magazine}.\textsuperscript{61} The \textit{American Geography} of Jedidiah Morse, which was reprinted in London, and was consulted by Europeans for many years as the standard authority on America, was opposed to slavery. In the English edition of 1792, the belief was stated that “all slaves in the United States will in time be emancipated.” William Guthrie's \textit{Geographical, Historical and Commercial Grammar}, a very popular work, which in later editions owed much to Morse for its material on America, was very critical of Virginia whose “indolence and luxury” were called the “fruit of African slavery.”\textsuperscript{62} Josiah Wedgwood, the maker of the famous Wedgwood ware, sent to the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society a few cameos whose subject was the abolition of slavery.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Scots Magazine}, XLIV. 573–75; XLIX. 43, LII. 616.
\textsuperscript{57} 1786, p. 590–91.
\textsuperscript{59} 1791, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{60} 1798, p. 182–91.
\textsuperscript{61} XXIV. 45–48.
\textsuperscript{62} Edinburgh, 1798, p. 889.
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Calendar of Franklin Papers}, Feb. 29, 1788; May 2, 1788.
The younger generation was also inoculated with the anti-slavery virus. The Friends in London went directly to the schools so that "just notions of Slavery might be instilled into the tender minds of Youth." Lindley Murray indoctrinated them at an early age, and Priscilla Wakefield's *Excursions in North America* was written with a strong Quaker bias against the slave trade. In *The Universal Gazetteer*, John Walker, a former Quaker schoolmaster, lashed out at "the Merchants of Liverpool who have disgraced themselves . . . by their iniquitous exertions in the man trade; and they seem to wish the incorrigible butchers, to perpetuate their infamy, by giving African names to the new and improved parts of their town." Jefferson had urged Richard Price to address a tract to the students of William and Mary College whose influence he felt, would be "perhaps decisive" in the future solution of the slave question. English Friends were writing optimistically to America that people of all classes were now interested in the movement and that petitions against the slave trade were being sent to Parliament from many parts of the country. Ministers of various denominations found slavery a live subject for their sermons, in which they acknowledged indebtedness to the Quakers.

In the last few years of the century reports from London were less enthusiastic, but Quakers did take steps to withdraw political support from any Parliamentary candidate friendly to the slave trade. American Friends continued to write to individual English correspondents of progress in Congress, and of attempts to strengthen anti-slavery sentiment in regions outside of Pennsylvania. In a restrained mood Ezra Stiles wrote in his diary that little would be done, yet public discussions of the subject in Congress, in Parliament, in France and in

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* London, 1795, art. "Liverpool."
* Jefferson's Writings (Monticello ed.), Aug. 7, 1785.
* MS. "Letters to and from Philadelphia," Feb. 29, 1788.
* MS. "Letters to and from Philadelphia," July 30, 1790.
* Gibson MSS., IV. 73, Jos. Gilpin to James Phillips, Nov. 26, 1792; idem, II. 15, December 31, 1799.
other European countries might “ripen such a general Conviction as may prepare for future Abolition.” Moses Brown told James Phillips that American abolition societies had prepared addresses to the coming Congress, in 1791, but before then, he added, “We hope to hear the British Parliament has set the Example.” That example was not to be set by the British Parliament, despite some show of promise the next year, because the radical tendencies of the French Revolution frightened conservatives into opposition against all reform movements. It was a dark age for social reform, and the desertion of the slave cause by Parliament “in contradiction to their own resolution in 1792” saddened many Friends in Philadelphia. Almost a whole generation of reformers was to be saddened in the next thirty years, for theirs was the way of humiliation with triumph long deferred.

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