

Philadelphia not Philanthropolis: The Limits of Pennsylvanian Antislavery in the Era of the Haitian Revolution

IN THE WINTER OF 1796, Benjamin Giroud visited Philadelphia. Giroud was a Frenchman who had become an owner through marriage of a coffee plantation in Saint-Domingue, the embattled French West Indian colony that within a few years would declare its independence as the republic of Haiti. At the time of Giroud's trip, however, such a development seemed unlikely. Having been the scene of violence and disruption for the previous seven years, in late 1796 the colony was entering a period of relative stability. The white royalists who had leagued with the Spanish and British to separate the colony from France had fled or were in retreat. The free colored population, who had long struggled for civic equality, had been transformed into a reliable source of support by decrees recognizing them as French citizens. Most significantly, the insurgent slaves, who beginning in August 1791 had collectively rejected and dismantled the system of chattel slavery that sustained the colony's plantation economy, had been largely brought into the French fold by the 1794 policy of general emancipation. The decree of February 4, 1794, which ended slavery in all French possessions, had its origins in Saint-Domingue and was a ratification of the series of harried efforts to co-opt the insurgents by the French commissioners, L  ger-F  licit   Sonthonax and   tienne Polverel, as they struggled against various planter, royalist, and British factions. It offered liberty in exchange for armed service in defense of the revolution. Expanded by the National Convention in Paris, French emancipation was immediate, uncompensated, and universal in its

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application. By the time of Giroud's trip, black and colored troops, fighting for France and led by Toussaint Louverture, had defeated the Spaniards and stymied the British.¹ Giroud was an officer in the new commission of metropolitan officials headed by Sonthonax and was sent to take advantage of this success.

Benjamin Giroud was also a member of Les Amis des Noirs, a society of antislavery activists that had sprung up in Paris in 1788, achieved some noisy eminence during the early days of the republic, and then largely disappeared when its membership was purged during the Terror.² Though Les Amis never advocated immediate emancipation, now that French policy had turned in that direction, the group revived. Giroud came to Philadelphia as a French republican and as an abolitionist, identities that overlapped if they were not precisely coterminous. He came to America looking for allies.

The group he turned to was the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS). The "friends of the Blacks at Paris," he wrote, had long recognized these "Philanthropists of Philadelphia" as having taken the "first acts of virtue" in the fight against slavery. For nearly twenty years they had participated in efforts to fundamentally transform American society, and they had gained valuable experience with the mechanics of gradual emancipation, the integration of ex-slaves into the community, and the gathering together of other "Citizens of America who are animated with [the same] principles." This background made the society an ideal partner for France's project in Saint-Domingue. Having abolished slavery, the nation was now bent on "rendering this liberty useful to the new [F]rench citizens." The state had appropriated plantations formerly owned by émigré royalists, and Giroud proposed that the members of the PAS purchase or

¹ Among the best modern accounts of this period are David Patrick Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793–1798* (New York, 1982); Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (New York, 1988), 161–264; Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, TN, 1990); and Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2004). It is noteworthy that the French offer of freedom was accepted only by some of the insurgent slaves, a fact that suggests that the brand of liberty already in their possession carried more weight than that proffered by Sonthonax and France. See Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 157–68, and Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 154–79.

² Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 224. Les Amis des Noirs was most active in advocating for civic equality for free people of color and the end of the French slave trade. For the limits, as well as promise, of French antislavery, see Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism* (Berkeley, CA, 2005).

rent these lands and use them to provide the ex-slaves with “the example of their virtues.” He suggested that to begin the process, a delegate be sent to Saint-Domingue, and he assured the PAS that the “Citizen whom you shall chuse for this Mission” would be welcomed “as a sincere friend of France, and of the principles of humanity, liberty, and equality” that were now the fundaments of its “colonial system.”³ Writing from Saint-Domingue, Sonthonax reiterated the logic behind Giroud’s offer. “The immutable principles . . . which I have reduced to practice at Saint Domingo,” he explained, “are your own.”⁴ Giroud and his compatriots looked to Philadelphia assuming they would find brothers in arms.

That search did not bear fruit. While the PAS discussed the “highly interesting” proposal at its next general meeting and formed a committee to look into it, its only further action, at Giroud’s request, was to publish the correspondence and the text of the French decree of emancipation in one of the city’s newspapers.⁵ Giroud’s offer, it would seem, fell on deaf ears.

We might easily understand this episode as a sign of the limits of American abolition in this period. Scholars treating the American Revolution’s impact on slavery have demonstrated how the promise of revolutionary ideals was compromised in practice. Though championing a struggle for liberty and equality prompted many to question the institution, practical politics and an equally strong ideological commitment to the sanctity of property undercut the effort. The problem that slavery posed American revolutionaries—at least the white ones—could be resolved by positing a republic in which equality was predicated on whiteness. In such a republic, blacks would remain outside the civic body and slavery’s presence would be variegated across the polity according to its

³ Giroud to PAS, Jan. 17, 1797, Committee of Correspondence Letterbook (hereafter CCL), vol. 2, 1794–1809, 42, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers (hereafter PAS Papers), Historical Society of Pennsylvania. See also Giroud to Doctor Griffiths, Jan. 23, 1797, CCL 2:47. Giroud visited the city in December 1796, at which time he met with PAS president James Pemberton and member Samuel Griffiths and attended a meeting of one of the society’s subcommittees. Upon returning to Saint-Domingue, he reiterated and expanded upon his offer and provided lists naming those *Amis des Noirs* then serving in the colony. See Giroud to PAS, Jan. 17, 1797, Loose Correspondence, incoming, 1796–1819 (hereafter LCI), PAS Papers.

⁴ Léger-Félicité Sonthonax to PAS, 20th Germinal, Year 5 (Apr. 9, 1797), CCL 2:51, PAS Papers.

⁵ James Pemberton to Commissioners of the French Republic at Cape Francois, Jan. 17, 1797, CCL 2:48. General Meeting minutes, Apr. 3, 1797, General Meeting Book (hereafter GMB), vol. 1, 1787–1800, 272, PAS Papers. For the committee, see General Meeting minutes, Apr. 28 and June 5, 1797, GMB 1:280, 281. For the newspaper publication, see *Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), July 12, 1797, reprinted in *Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser*, July 15, 1797.

economic viability.⁶ Pennsylvania, a place where the revolutionary era spurred a decline in slavery, serves as a reminder of the moderateness of white abolitionist ideas. The state's vaunted abolition act of 1780 operated so gradually and partially that some people continued to be held in bondage well into the nineteenth century. Even out of slavery, African Americans were subject to a period of state-sponsored indenture and were the objects of paternalistic social monitoring.⁷ Among its responsibilities, the PAS sought "to qualify [freed blacks] for the exercise and enjoyment of civil liberty" by teaching them values steeped in elite white Protestant sensibilities with regard to work, family, morality, and education.⁸ This didactic approach mirrored the PAS's tactics in its ongoing fight against slavery. The committee work, petitions, and legal battles it conducted reflected a strategy that sought to produce change from within the system.⁹

⁶ The most influential interpretation of this dynamic remains David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, NY, 1975), esp. 84–212. See also Gary B. Nash, *Race and Revolution* (Madison, WI, 1990), and Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, 1975), esp. 363–87. For an argument for slavery's ongoing divisiveness among the American public, see Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), esp. 1–41. My understanding follows these works, but is also informed by histories that expand revolutionary politics to include black ideas and activism, a conceptualization that often confounds a strictly national narrative. See, for example, Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, NJ, 1991); Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston, 2006); Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2006); and Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (New York, 2009). For an interpretation that understands revolutionary ideals as ultimately transcendent, see Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, 1992).

⁷ The abolition act freed children born of slaves after March 1, 1780, after a twenty-eight-year period of service. For accounts of its passage and workings, see Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago, 1967), 124–37; Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York, 1991), 99–113; Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 255–60; and Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, "Philanthropy at Bargain Prices: Notes on the Economics of Gradual Emancipation," *Journal of Legal Studies* 3 (1974): 377–401.

⁸ General Meeting minutes, Oct. 19, 1789, GMB 1:93, PAS Papers. For the PAS committees set up to perform these duties and the tenor of their work, see Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), 108–9, 158–65. See also Minutes of the Delegates of the Abolition Societies, established in different parts of the United States, Jan. 6, 1796, 1:90–94; and General Meeting minutes, Apr. 11, 1796, GMB 1:257, both PAS Papers. For a typical example of the society's efforts, see an address "to the free Africans and other free people of color in the United States," published in the *Aurora* (Philadelphia), Jan. 18, 1796.

⁹ For a comprehensive account of the PAS's limitations, see Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002), chaps. 1 and 2, but esp. 20–34.

Giroud's enthusiastic depiction of the society produced by the new French "colonial system" would certainly have been jarring to Americans of this mold. As he told it, French Saint-Domingue was a republic in which slavery was forever banished and citizens of all colors were equal—he called it "Philanthropolis." Black soldiers maintained order and defended the colony against its enemies, be they slaveholders, counterrevolutionaries, or the British (who supported both). "These soldiers of Philosophy and of the rights of man" were led by "black, yellow, and white" officers, "confounded and mixed without any other distinction but that of their respective grades." Those not fighting worked on plantations, and "large and valuable crops" were being produced, "now that the labour [was] performed by freemen."¹⁰ Race unified, rather than demarcated, Philanthropolis. Giroud touted the prevalence of "marriages which confound and mix the Black and White colour." This was a society transformed by its inclusion of new members. "The ancient prejudices are daily wearing a way [*sic*]," he reported. Blacks and mulattos held public office. Children of all colors attended school together.¹¹ Saint-Domingue's citizens were in the process of liberating "this wonderful island, which the author of nature seem[ed] to have created for the happiness of man."¹²

The PAS membership was not simply being polite in describing Giroud's proposal as "highly interesting." The Frenchman's presentation, his ideas, and indeed his very presence are reminders of the radical possibilities that swirled around the Atlantic towards the end of the eighteenth century. These currents buffeted the PAS as well. Giroud's picture of universal liberty and raceless citizenship in Saint-Domingue formed a stark contrast to Pennsylvanian realities, but PAS activists encountered it in the context of their own efforts. His offer may have fallen flat, but the logic behind it—that activists in different locales were achieving related results towards the same glorious end—was essential to the PAS's sense of its mission. This understanding of transnational connectedness had radical implications that stood in tension with the limited purview and conservative results of the society's efforts. If the PAS declined to join Giroud and Sonthonax in Saint-Domingue, they nevertheless conceived of a struggle against slavery that was singular.

¹⁰ Giroud to PAS, undated (probably Apr. 1797), CCL 2:55, PAS Papers.

¹¹ Giroud to PAS, Jan. 17, 1797, CCL 2:42, PAS Papers.

¹² Giroud to PAS, undated (probably Apr. 1797), CCL 2:55, PAS Papers. Giroud also told that Joshua Barney of Baltimore, then serving as a commodore in the French navy, had rented an estate.

To recognize this understanding is not to contest the reality that Pennsylvanian antislavery was limited. An evaluation of the Atlantic connections felt by Pennsylvanian activists, however, highlights the choices and contingencies behind the declension of white antislavery. Just as the eventual general abolition of slavery in the United States was not a pre-ordained product of the republic's transcendent promise, neither was the decline of the challenge to slavery mounted by the American Revolution endemic to its ideals. By focusing on the PAS's international consciousness, this essay recovers the radical narrative they imagined, one in which their measured and gradual efforts were part of an interrelated whole. As we will see, this feeling of connection was unsustainable over time. When Sonthonax connected the "principles" at work in Philadelphia and Saint-Domingue he was not wrong, or even out of date: he was simply speaking a language that no longer was spoken by the members of the PAS. Giroud's proposal, then, offers an opportunity to bear witness to a particular moment in the diminution of American radicalism.¹³

Dreaming with Eyes Open: The Promise of Pennsylvanian Antislavery

The American Revolution, despite its ideological soft spots and multiplicity of interpretation, did engender a newly powerful critique of slavery, one rooted in the idea that liberty and equality were essential human rights.¹⁴ This liberty was universal; it posited a revolution that was general, one in which "American" was a modifier, not a proper noun.¹⁵ Starting in

¹³ For American reaction to events in Saint-Domingue more generally, albeit with an emphasis on the nineteenth century, see Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1988). More recent scholarship has focused on the multiple and fluid meanings given to events on Saint-Domingue as they unfolded. See, for example, James Sidbury, "Saint-Domingue in Virginia: Ideology, Local Meanings, and Resistance to Slavery, 1790–1800," *Journal of Southern History* 63 (1997): 531–52; Gary B. Nash, "Reverberations of Haiti in the American North: Black Saint Domingans in Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania History* 65, no. 5 (1998): 44–73; Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 258–70; and Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore, 2010). See also James Alexander Dun, "Dangerous Intelligence: Slavery, Race, and St. Domingue in the Early American Republic" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2004).

¹⁴ Following David Brion Davis, Susan Buck-Morss notes that "if the American Revolution could not solve the problem of slavery, it at least led to a *perception* of the problem." Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2009), 25n40.

¹⁵ Compare this to the "freedom principle" developed in eighteenth-century France or the sense that British soil was a "unique asylum for liberty," as established by the *Somerset* decision. For the French concept, see Sue Peabody, "There Are No Slaves in France": *The Political Culture of Race*

1787, the PAS opened an ambitious and expansive campaign based on this understanding.¹⁶ Anyone who sought “to extend the blessings of Freedom to every part of the human race” and who sought “to diffuse them, wherever the miseries & vices of Slavery exist” was welcomed to join. Only slave owners were barred. Conceptualized in this way, the PAS was to embody a struggle that superseded the nation; membership was defined by slavery, not locale. After expressly targeting “Foreigners or persons who do not reside in this State” as potential members, the society inducted a number of British and French luminaries. Equally important, it created a “Committee of Correspondence” to conduct an intensive and regular letter-writing campaign with these “corresponding Members.”¹⁷

These efforts reflected a desire to establish a network, but they also conveyed a sense that the community of the “benevolent” the PAS identified was potentially boundless. The very act of communication among the various nodes of antislavery effort placed the PAS’s goals into a wider context. “The present age has been distinguished by a remarkable Revolution,” the society wrote to the Marquis de Lafayette in mid-1788, “mankind begin at last to consider themselves as Members of one family.” Britain too “has felt the same spirit of humanity & justice,” as evidenced by the efforts of the London Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade there.¹⁸ When French abolitionist J. P. Brissot de Warville visited the PAS two months later its minutes recorded his intention to establish a “relation of brotherhood & mutual correspondence” between the PAS and the Les Amis des Noirs.¹⁹ These alliances were practical, but they also expressed

and Slavery in the Ancien Régime (New York, 1996). For Britain as an “asylum for liberty,” see Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), 101 and passim. Gary Nash and others have shown that African Americans maintained this conception of the Revolution’s meaning into the nineteenth century. See Nash, *Race and Revolution and Forgotten Fifth*; Egerton, *Death or Liberty*; Julie Winch, *Philadelphia’s Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787–1848* (Philadelphia, 1988); James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700–1860* (New York, 1997); and Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002).

¹⁶ For the PAS’s development before this period, see Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, 80, 115–18, 124–25. The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade will be referred to throughout as the London Society.

¹⁷ General Meeting minutes, Apr. 23, 1787, GMB 1:3, PAS Papers. Betty Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Antislavery Cooperation* (Urbana, IL, 1972), 40–43. See Brown, *Moral Capital*, esp. part 4.

¹⁸ General Meeting minutes, July 7, 1788, GMB 1:39, PAS Papers.

¹⁹ General Meeting minutes, Sept. 3, 1788, GMB 1:44, PAS Papers.

a sense that the labor against slavery was extranational and that it was burgeoning.

If the correspondence between activists were the ligaments of this imagined community, its blood was the printed material that accompanied their letters. Over the 1780s and '90s, a host of antislavery treatises, addresses, epistles, reports, sermons, and essays circulated among the various groups. Nearly every quarterly session of the PAS's general meeting recorded a quantity of incoming materials.²⁰ In addition to spreading and sharing antislavery arguments, this literature reified the international slavery community and the battle it waged. Communications with British and French activists, as well as those with groups in the United States, served both to bolster the sense that antislavery sentiment was spreading and to validate the means by which the PAS worked. The formation of new antislavery societies in "divers Places in America," the PAS wrote to London in early 1789, strongly suggested that "a Time must come when universal liberty shall prevail & slavery be known no more."²¹ For PAS president James Pemberton, each new group was an opportunity to "abundantly strengthen our Hands."²² Within several months, he would write to the London Society to tell of the "daily encouragement to proceed in the good work" that the PAS had received "by the gradual spreading of those principles of true Christian Liberty, which open the way for success to our endeavours in places far distant from the Metropolis."²³ To Les Amis des Noirs in Paris, Pemberton was similarly sanguine, forecasting the "near approach" of "General Emancipation" and noting that "the day is hastening when the United States of America will be able to evince that it is not by mere declarations that they mean to manifest their regard to their Fellow Creatures."²⁴ This optimism spilled over into the PAS's prospects for the "States where the Evil of Slavery exists in full force," where news of antislavery activity gave them "great reason to believe that our cause is

²⁰ See "Pamphlets received from the Society in London for the Abolition of the Slave Trade . . .," May 7, 1788, Misc. papers, PAS Papers. See also Benjamin Franklin to James Pemberton, July 2, 1789, Loose Correspondence, outgoing (hereafter LCo), PAS Papers. Also Brissot de Warville to Benjamin Franklin, Jan. 20, 1790, CCL, vol. 1, 1789–1794, 36; and Brissot to Myers Fisher, June 20, 1790, LCi, both PAS Papers.

²¹ PAS to Elhanan Winchester, Mar. 16, 1789, CCL 1:5, PAS Papers.

²² PAS to Samuel Hopkins, Mar. 9, 1789, CCL 1:4, PAS Papers.

²³ James Pemberton to Committee of the Society Instituted at London . . . , June 24, 1789, CCL 1:4, PAS Papers.

²⁴ James Pemberton to Les Amis des Noirs, Aug. 30, 1790, CCL 1:37; and Pemberton to the President of the Friends of the Blacks, Aug. 29, 1791, CCL 1:68, PAS Papers.

making an effectual tho a silent progress.”²⁵ When an abolition society was founded in New Jersey in February 1793, Pemberton wrote to London that “the chain is now compleat.”²⁶ Within a year, representatives from all of the American antislavery societies met in a single central meeting, beginning a series of annual gatherings that would continue, albeit with interruptions, into the early decades of the nineteenth century. These developments led activists in Philadelphia to believe that they were marching with other groups around the world towards a bright future. Pennsylvania was in the lead, but the labor was shoulder to shoulder.

The essential truth that PAS members understood as being on the march derived from the New Testament passage describing Paul’s lesson to the Athenians, in which the apostle preached that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” This formulation reverberated across a wide array of society writings and was echoed by their correspondents. The 1787 PAS constitution began by noting that “It having pleased the Creator of the World to make of one flesh all the Children of men—it becomes them to consult & promote each others’ happiness, as Members of the same family.”²⁷ An address by a member of Les Amis des Noirs began, “Man, rational Man is one Genus,” and continued “Reason[,] that first, best, greatest of Heaven’s gifts, depends not on the configuration of corporeal particles, nor on the reflection of a solar Beam, but is a part of the essence of him who bestowed it.”²⁸ The same sentiments found their way into private correspondence. Susanna Emlen of Burlington, New Jersey, approvingly described the words of a delegation of Cherokee in Philadelphia, who “expressed in their simple and expressive manner their opinion that all mankind were created by the same hand, for said they ‘tho some are black,

²⁵ James Pemberton to [the London Society?], [Mar. 1791?], CCL 1:59, PAS Papers. Such news included the formation of an antislavery society in Maryland. See *Federal Gazette* (Philadelphia), Dec. 24, 1789, reprinted in *American Museum*, vol. 7 (appendix II—1790), no. 6, pp. 6–8. For similar notices, see *General Advertiser* (Philadelphia), Feb. 28, 1792, and “Constitution of the Chester-Town society,” *American Museum*, vol. 11 (appendix II—1792), no. 6, p. 90. See also a plea for justice to slaves from Georgia by a writer whose sobriquet was A Friend to the Rights of Man, in *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), Dec. 26, 1792 (Augusta, Dec. 1).

²⁶ James Pemberton to Committee of the London Society, May 21, 1793, CCL 1:108, PAS Papers.

²⁷ General Meeting minutes, Apr. 23, 1787, GMB 1:3, PAS Papers. For other examples of the same sentiment, see Thomas Scott, president of Washington Society, Feb. 7, 1789, CCL 1:9, PAS Papers. See also David Rice, *Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good Policy* (Lexington, KY; Philadelphia, 1792), 4.

²⁸ Philip Mallet, *Remarks on a speech, made to the National Assembly of France* (London, [1792?]), 4.

some white, and others red, yet if you stick a fork into their flesh the same red blood flows from all.”²⁹ Similar ideas were expressed in more popular media as well.³⁰

At its heart, whether expressed through a biblically based assertion of man’s single origins or through a more secular emphasis on the universal rights of humanity, the axiom that all men were “of one blood” encapsulated a call for uniform justice across, or indeed beyond, racial lines and therefore held that slavery was wrong. If the Bible professed man’s monogenesis, slavery was contrary to God’s plan. If man’s universal rights were self-evident, slavery was irrational. Rather than suggesting legalistic means and cautious goals, this schema highlighted the injustice of holding a certain class of men as slaves. It also stressed the illogic of assertions of black inferiority. According to the dominant contemporary understanding, the environment produced human differences; climate might darken the skin or straighten the hair, but men, being “of one blood,” were men.³¹ In the absence of differentiating factors, they would naturally coalesce around a common (Anglo-Saxon) form. Emancipation was possible, and necessary, because of mankind’s essential sameness.

Modern understandings of the limits of Pennsylvania abolitionism notwithstanding, for contemporaries at home and abroad the PAS was an exemplar of this precept in action. Brissot, a recipient of one of the one thousand copies of the society’s constitution and the abolition act sent out in 1787, described the PAS as employing “indefatigable zeal.”³² He was not alone in pairing the society and 1780 law to describe Pennsylvania as a paragon for the global campaign. In addition to presiding over a gradual emancipation process, the PAS served as a font of evidence of black capabilities and of the possibilities of molding black communities.³³

²⁹ Susanna Emlen to William Dillwyn, Feb. 14, 1792, Dillwyn Manuscript, vol. 1, box “1770–1793,” folder “1 mo–5 mo 1792,” Library Company of Philadelphia, housed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

³⁰ Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley, CA, 1998), 6–10. For an arcane example involving speculation concerning lunar life forms, see *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), June 28, 1792.

³¹ Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1968), 287.

³² General Meeting minutes, Apr. 23, 1787, GMB 1:8, PAS Papers; J. P. Brissot de Warville, *New Travels in the United States of America*, trans. Mara Soceanu Vamos and Durand Echeverria, ed. Durand Echeverria (Cambridge, MA, 1964), 228–31. Even as he celebrated the PAS, Brissot was critical of the gradual pace of Pennsylvanian abolition.

³³ See General Meeting minutes, Oct. 20, 1787, GMB 1:17, PAS Papers for Pemberton’s notice of “a number of vouchers and testimonials of the industrious orderly & moral deportment of a great

British activist Richard How noted in mid-1789 that Pennsylvanian anti-slavery was admired the world over. His “ardent wish” was that their “commendable Example” would impact policy everywhere, “till not a single negro remain in Bondage.”³⁴

These plaudits were possible because activists considered themselves members of a global community. The idea that their battles were related allowed for comparisons across space. In the middle of 1789 James Pemberton thanked the London Society for sending a collection of pamphlets, telling of his intention to have one published. Because the British writing focused on the slave trade and “cautiously avoid[ed] the Idea of Emancipation,” however, some changes would be necessary in the American renditions, owing to their “more advanced stage of the Business.”³⁵ If the “Business” that they all were engaged in was the same, Pemberton’s formulation suggested that it was proceeding at different paces in different places. British actions against the slave trade were but a precursor to moves there against the institution of slavery itself—the “advanced stage” already evident in Pennsylvania.³⁶ Later, learning of the passage of a French decree granting a degree of civil rights to people of mixed racial descent, Pemberton expressed the “pleasure” he took in the fact. “We consider every advance of the kind to be of the highest importance,” he wrote *Les Amis des Noirs*, “as it tends to forward the great business of the abolition of slavery, and of a just recognition of the Rights of Man.”³⁷ By the logic of antislavery and human society that practitioners of Pennsylvanian abolition espoused, the developments of the 1780s and early ’90s were linked to an inexorable progression of global

number of black people” who had been manumitted in various states. Also, General Meeting minutes, Jan. 19, 1789, GMB 1:68; [London Society?] to PAS, Mar. 3, 1789, CCL 1:15; Elias Ellicott to James Pemberton, June 10, 1791, and D. Rittenhouse to James Pemberton, Aug. 6, 1791, both LCi; William Goddard to James Pemberton, Sept. 13, 1791, CCL 1:89; Brissot de Warville to Benjamin Franklin, Jan. 20, 1790, CCL 1:36; Granville Sharp to PAS, Feb. 20, 1790, CCL 1:29; James Pemberton to Committee of the Society Instituted at London . . . , Apr. 2, 1790, CCL 1:24; Granville Sharp to PAS, July 20, 1790, CCL 1:41; James Pemberton to Committee of the London Society, May 21, 1793, CCL 1:108; General Meeting minutes, Feb. 10, 1794, GMB 1:206; and Granville Sharp to James Pemberton, Aug. 20, 1794, CCL 2:7, all PAS Papers.

³⁴ Richard How to John Pemberton, Aug. 8, 1789, Pemberton Papers, vol. 52, p. 167, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

³⁵ James Pemberton to Committee of the Society Instituted at London . . . , June 24, 1789, CCL 1:18, PAS Papers. See “Letter on slavery—by a negro,” *American Museum*, July 1789, 77–80.

³⁶ For the tacit notice of this in British debates, see Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 407–11.

³⁷ James Pemberton to President of the Friends of the Blacks, Aug. 29, 1791, CCL 1:68, PAS Papers.

changes in the way whites and blacks lived together, the way blackness was conceived of in white minds, and in the way society itself was constructed. In short, the logic evidenced by the PAS's transnational connections depicted a course of history—a development of places “of liberty”—and gave clues as to the relative position held by particular locales in that trajectory.

In early 1790 the PAS looked to plumb the extent to which the United States as a whole was such a place when it submitted a petition to the first U.S. Congress. Hoping to cut through the Constitution's papering over of the slavery issue, the society's memorial pushed Congress to act “without distinction of Colour” and to “Step to the very verge” of its powers to “promot[e] the Abolition of Slavery.”³⁸ The nation tacitly envisioned by this request was rooted in a universal approach to the (im)morality of slavery. Those PAS members who witnessed the ensuing debates from the gallery, however, were doubly disappointed. For one thing, the representatives ultimately delineated a meager domain of congressional power over slavery and the slave trade. More troubling was the attitude of southern congressmen, who rejected the idea that the memorialists had a monopoly on the meaning of the Revolution for slavery—that they understood “the rights of mankind, and the disposition of Providence, better than others” as James Jackson of Georgia put it.³⁹ Moreover, they contested the core assertion of the memorial, that there was a need for a single national response to the issue. In effect, they made explicit what the Constitution had kept vague: the Union was an amalgamation fused by a common struggle, a shared history, and a patchwork of interests; it was not an expression of a single people. “When we entered into this confederacy, we did it from political, not from moral motives,” William Smith

³⁸ General Meeting minutes, Feb. 3, 1790, GMB 1:11, PAS Papers. See also *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2d sess., 1239–40 (Feb. 12, 1790). The underlined portions of the text are visible on the image shown at http://gwu.edu/~ffcp/exhibit/p11/p11_5text.html, “Memorial of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, 3 February 1790,” at the site Birth of the Nation: The First Federal Congress 1789–1791. For the politics of slavery in the Constitution, see Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 33–35. An important earlier interpretation is Howard A. Ohline, “Slavery, Economics, and Congressional Politics, 1790,” *Journal of Southern History* 46 (1980): 335–60. For contending arguments, see Paul Finkelman, “Slavery and the Constitutional Convention: Making a Covenant with Death,” in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity*, ed. Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter II (Chapel Hill, NC, 1987), 188–225; and Don E. Fehrenbacher (completed and edited by Ward M. McAfee), *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery* (New York, 2001).

³⁹ *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2d sess., 1227, 1229 (Feb. 11, 1790).

of South Carolina argued. The petitioners, he continued later, were not to be allowed to “judge for the whole Continent.”⁴⁰

Stung in the halls of Congress, the PAS shifted tactics, but not the thrust of its bid to move the nation towards an antislavery republic. James Pemberton’s brother John, watching the congressional debate from the gallery, explained that the political response could be summed up as “Scratch me & I will scratch thee.” Even when confronted with their “Inconsistency,” congressmen proved themselves driven by “self ends & party views.”⁴¹ Self-interest and prejudice blinded men to their true interests. This realization concentrated the PAS effort and spurred the PAS leadership in its campaign to connect activists in Britain and France with like-minded laborers in the United States.

Criticism during the same episode made clear the radical implications of the PAS’s logic and effort. Despite the best efforts of southern congressmen to quash all mention of the PAS memorial, several writers opined over the meaning of the debates in Philadelphia newspapers. Of these, “Rusticus” was the PAS’s most ardent and voluminous opponent. Rusticus accepted that slavery would end, but not that man could play a role in the process. Instead, the institution would be abandoned as it ceased to serve American interests. To interfere with this, however, was to flout nature and flirt with disaster. The “sheep-hairy African negroe” and the “spirited, noble, and generous American Freeman” were fundamentally different. No human effort could undo “the immutable order of the universe” or “overthrow the fixed order of nature [to] improve the original.” Given the innate difference between the two “nations” and their “interests,” freed slaves were a liability in the new nation. If the PAS plan were followed, “tranquility would fly from Columbia, and not be re-established until intermarriage had dyed the nation one and the same colour!” He ended the thought with a sigh, “but then the original character of the nation will only stand recorded in the historic page.” For Rusticus, abolition had to be accompanied by black removal.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2d sess., 1244, 1507 (Feb. 12 and Mar. 17, 1790). For historians’ treatments of this debate, some with different emphases than mine, see Donald L. Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765–1820* (New York, 1970), 302–12; Nash, *Race and Revolution*, 40–42; Ohline, “Slavery, Economics, and Congressional Politics”; Richard S. Newman, “Prelude to the Gag Rule: Southern Reaction to Antislavery Petitions in the First Federal Congress,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 16 (1996): 571–99; Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 100; and Jordan, *White Over Black*, 325–26.

⁴¹ John Pemberton to James Pemberton, Feb. 23, 1790, LCi, PAS Papers.

⁴² *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), Feb. 27, 1790 (“LETTER.—No. III”), and Mar. 5, 1790 (“FOR THE GAZETTE OF THE UNITED STATES, LETTER.—No. IV”).

Rusticus's criticism highlights the expansive nature of the PAS's attack on slavery. In imagining an end to bondage coupled with a rejection of the notion that mankind was "of one blood," he posited a white nation. Instead of essentializing man, he essentialized race and racial interests. PAS activists imagined a very different polity. Free blacks and freed people were to be incorporated into society. If many in the PAS assumed that society would be hierarchically arranged, they did not interject an overtly racial logic to its structure.⁴³ Where Rusticus saw slavery as a reasonable binding of the interests of a distinct (and aggrieved) race, the PAS saw slavery as the source of the grievance itself and as a corruption of the naturally congruent interests of a universalized society. Where Rusticus saw blackness as a permanent badge of subhuman difference, the PAS saw a temporary marker, to be erased through freedom and "proper" conduct over time. Where Rusticus found a solution to the problem of slavery that ended at the borders of the United States, the PAS imagined its solution as part of a global end to slavery, whose limits were bounded only by man's ability to hear the logic of mankind being "of one blood."

The largest insurrection in the history of plantation slavery, which took place in Saint-Domingue in the summer of 1791, nestled quite easily into this framework. Since resistance to slavery, like that to all forms of tyranny, was part of man's nature, uprisings stemmed from slavery itself. As PAS member Benjamin Rush explained, events in Saint-Domingue only proved that to deny the truism that man was of one blood was to court disaster. The revolts in "one of the richest Islands in the West Indies" made it clear that it was "inconsistent with sound policy" to continue to allow slavery.⁴⁴ Shortly after news of the revolts broke, the PAS Committee of Correspondence obtained a pamphlet written by British abolitionist William Roscoe that explained the revolts as the predictable result of enslaving one's fellow man. "Is not the love of freedom contagious?" he asked.⁴⁵ Consistent with the print-laden nature of its efforts, the PAS purchased five hundred

⁴³ For Federalist ideals related to antislavery efforts in this period, see Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, 136, and Newman, *Transformation of American Abolitionism*, 17–18.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the Delegates of the Abolition Societies, established in different parts of the United States, Jan. 6, 1794, 1:25, PAS Papers.

⁴⁵ [William Roscoe], *An Inquiry into the Causes of the Insurrection of the Negroes in the Island of St. Domingo* (Philadelphia, 1792). For examples of similar ideas about slaves "regaining" their "natural" freedom, see *General Advertiser* (Philadelphia), Sept. 1, 1791 (New York, Aug. 29), Sept. 6, 1791 ("A Lesson to the Oppressed"), Feb. 11, 1794 (Providence, Jan. 21), and May 29, 1794 (Rhode Island).

copies of the work and distributed them to other antislavery groups over the following months.⁴⁶

Slave violence might be unfortunate—Rush termed it an “evil”—but it was also proof of the probity of abolitionist conceptions of the world and its workings. Slave societies were inherently unstable: slavery was brutal, slaves were men, and God was watching. This perspective led some to embrace, or at least accept, the insurgents’ actions. “Let us turn our eyes to the West Indies,” PAS correspondent David Rice wrote in 1792, “there you may see the sable . . . brave sons of Africa, engaged in a noble conflict . . . fired with a generous resentment of the greatest injuries, and bravely sacrificing their lives on the altar of liberty.”⁴⁷ The slaves of Saint-Domingue touched PAS member Warner Mifflin’s subconscious. In late fall 1791 while spending the night in a lodging house, he had a vivid dream in which he argued with a figure who was criticizing the slaves for “being so bad as to break out.” Mifflin countered by insisting that God had caused “a kind of itching” to “runn through the blood of their veins so as that they would not be easy but have a craveing for Liberty,” a feeling, he reflected later, that was “a little like the Americans had” in making their own Revolution. That Mifflin processed the slave revolts through a defensive confrontation with a faceless critic was no accident. He had sat in the congressional gallery during the debates over the PAS memorial and had been the focus of personal attacks from the floor. Relating his dream to his fellow lodgers the next morning, some of them needled him “that such a dream from Mifflin might be concluded to be with his Eyes open,” and they may have been right. Like the PAS more generally, he saw in the violence on the island an opportunity to sharpen the call for change at home. This was a moment of crisis and danger. Mifflin wrote of his “fear” of “stoping [sic]” his efforts against slavery and reasoned that “if we can do any thing to save our Country it ought not to be omitted.” Perhaps remembering Congressmen Jackson and Smith, he judged that the “ever lasting Arm of Power” that had operated in Saint-Domingue might soon be at work in the American South.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ General Meeting minutes, July 2, 1792, and Oct. 1, 1792, GMB 1:174, 177; “For David Rice of Kentucky” (list of materials sent), Aug. 28, 1792, Misc. papers, both PAS Papers. For a slightly different emphasis, see Newman, *Transformation of American Abolitionism*, 26–27.

⁴⁷ Rice, *Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good Policy*, 9.

⁴⁸ Warner Mifflin to John Parrish, Oct. 10, 1791, Cox-Parrish-Wharton Collection, box 1 (“John Parrish Correspondence, 1794–1799”), folder “Parish, John 1791, 1792,” Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

By imposing their own interpretation of events in Saint-Domingue, the PAS bolstered the sense that its efforts to deal with the institution of slavery were right-minded. Pennsylvania abolished slavery in such a way as to transform, rather than destroy, society. The funeral of the wife of prominent African American leader William Gray in Philadelphia, at which both white and black citizens paid their respects, induced one editor to eulogize the event more than the individual.

This pleasing instance of total indifference to complexion, tho' on a melancholy occasion, must prove a . . . happy presage of the time, fast approaching, when the important declaration of *holy writ* will be fully verified, that "God hath made of one blood, all the nations of the Earth."⁴⁹

Over the first half of the 1790s, local events provided other such "intelligence" and seemed to indicate a widespread acceptance of the PAS's conception of abolition and black incorporation into society. In 1790, delegates to Pennsylvania's constitutional convention voted down a proposal to expressly limit citizenship to whites.⁵⁰ Between December 1790 and the middle of 1791, the PAS successfully beat back an attempt by Governor Thomas Mifflin to amend the abolition act to allow federal officials to keep their slaves in Philadelphia while they served in the national government.⁵¹ When, in late 1792, émigrés from Saint-Domingue petitioned the state legislature for exemptions from the abolition act, the PAS "strenuously exerted" itself "in opposition to this application" and was gratified by its unanimous rejection.⁵² The language of the House committee report on the event presented abolition as originating from principles that were perpetual and permanent and that were derived "from the sacred and immutable obligations of justice and natural

⁴⁹ *Federal Gazette* (Philadelphia), June 17, 1792; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 172.

⁵⁰ John M. Murrin, "Escaping Perfidious Albion: Federalism, Fear of Aristocracy, and the Democratization of Corruption in Postrevolutionary America," in *Virtue, Corruption, and Self-Interest: Political Values in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Richard K. Matthews (Bethlehem, PA, 1994), 103–47. See James Pemberton to Committee of the Society Instituted at London . . . , Apr. 3, 1790, CCL 1:32, PAS Papers.

⁵¹ See *Journal of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania*, 1st Ass., 1st sess., 45, 120, 132, 150, and 157. For PAS notice of the issue see Acting Committee minutes, Feb. 2–16, 1791, Acting Committee Minute Book (hereafter ACMB), vol. 2, 1789–1797, 142–44, PAS Papers. Also General Meeting minutes, July 4, 1791, and Jan. 2, 1792, GMB 1:157, 166, PAS Papers.

⁵² General Meeting minutes, Jan. 7, 1793, GMB 1:179, PAS Papers. See also *Federal Gazette* (Philadelphia), Nov. 5, 1792 ("For the FEDERAL GAZETTE"), and Nov. 12, 1792 ("FOR the FEDERAL GAZETTE").

right.” No modification of them could be permitted. Slavery was “contrary . . . to the laws of nature . . . to the dictates of justice . . . and to the constitution of this state.”⁵³

In March 1793 Pennsylvania representative John Shoemaker moved to amend the state abolition act so as to free all blacks over the age of twenty-one. He based his motion on the observation that the abolition act’s imposition of servitude conflicted with the state constitution’s declaration “that all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent and indefeasible rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty.” The committee bringing in Shoemaker’s bill went further, judging “that slavery is inconsistent with every principle of humanity, justice and right, and repugnant to the spirit and express letter of the Constitution of this commonwealth,” and proposed that “slavery be abolished in this commonwealth.” The reception this bill might have met is unknown. Disrupted by the yellow fever epidemic in the summer and fall of 1793, the Pennsylvania legislature failed to act on it, and it was not taken up again thereafter.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the foundational approach of the PAS was seemingly driving Pennsylvania’s intentions towards slavery. In this heady moment, the PAS reached new heights, even seeking to turn away from the gradual mechanism of the 1780 act and instead to end slavery in Pennsylvania all at once.⁵⁵ At nearly the same moment, a similar, if more sweeping, step was taken in France, when the National Convention decreed the abolition of slavery in the French empire on February 4, 1794. The details behind French abolition, and its antecedents in Saint-Domingue, were fuzzy in Philadelphia. While generally depicted as ending slavery, descriptions of the act failed to supply any information regarding the law’s specifics, enforcement, or implications, leaving PAS observers to glean what they could from their

⁵³ *Journal of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania*, 3rd Ass., 1st sess., 39, 42, 45, 55, 60 (Dec. 17, 18, 19, 27, 28, 1792).

⁵⁴ *Journal of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania*, 3rd Ass., 1st sess., 195, 201, 205, 291 (Feb. 21 and Mar. 12, 1793). A similar effort languished after the fever of 1798.

⁵⁵ For the general meeting’s cool response to a proposal for a legal strategy that would use county courts to free individual slaves immediately, see James Pemberton to Alexander Addison, Feb. 12, 1793, CCL 1:103, and General Meeting minutes, Apr. 1 and 8, 1793, GMB 1:188, 191, PAS Papers. For the proposal, see Addison to Pemberton, Jan. 1, 1793, CCL 1:99, PAS Papers. Instead, the society decided at around the same time to appeal to the state supreme court that slavery was unconstitutional in Pennsylvania.

network of correspondents.⁵⁶ What they heard was heartening. Benjamin Rush learned from a British friend that “the French . . . are more rapid in their motions than we.”⁵⁷ James Pemberton wrapped the news into other positive developments, to include British and American actions against the slave trade and the increasing public acceptance of “emancipation.”⁵⁸ PAS leaders cautiously embraced French abolition as yet another in the array of signals that the common struggle was continuing and even cresting.

*Fanatics in Philadelphia: Contractions in the Global
Antislavery Community*

It proved easier, however, to champion rebel slaves than to embrace radical French politicians. The muted tone of the PAS leadership’s response to the French edict was telling. John Pemberton received news of the decree in a letter from a colleague in Britain, who viewed it favorably, “whatever may be the sentiments of men Concerning the Conduct of that Assembly in other respects.”⁵⁹ The advent of Anglo-French war, internal French instability, and continued havoc on Saint-Domingue contributed to a hesitancy on the part of Pennsylvanian activists to fully embrace French developments. This distancing signaled a fraying of the PAS’s sense of its connection to other antislavery struggles, a development that ultimately impacted the society’s conception of Pennsylvania’s place in the world.

The elements of the PAS that did closely follow French emancipation were the exceptions that proved the rule. The society’s Acting Committee—the body that conducted the PAS’s business in between its general meetings—engaged in the daily grind of preserving freedom and expanding antislavery in Pennsylvania. Its efforts to combat kidnappings, to prevent evasions of the 1780 abolition act, and to reverse the illegal or

⁵⁶ See Dun, “Dangerous Intelligence,” chap. 4. Besides the difficulties provided by the frenetic and complex nature of the developments, the details were further muddled by the proclivity of American newspaper editors to latch onto the issue as a way of judging the French Revolution as a whole.

⁵⁷ Anonymous to Benjamin Rush, Mar. 3, 1794, Benjamin Rush Mss Correspondence, Library Company of Philadelphia, housed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁵⁸ James Pemberton to Committee of the London Society for Promoting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, May 6, 1794, CCL 1:112, PAS Papers.

⁵⁹ William Lindsay to John Pemberton, Mar. 17, 1794, Gratz Collection, box 1, case 14, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

improper binding of black laborers made the details of the French law relevant and vitally important. In addition to continuing efforts to ensure that Pennsylvania law was applied to the people of color brought by émigrés from Saint-Domingue, they now worked to ascertain whether French citizens could treat any people as slaves. This proved a difficult task. Beginning in the autumn of 1794, the Acting Committee pressed the Committee of Correspondence to find out more information about the new French order, an effort that was fruitless until Giroud provided a copy of the French decree in 1797.⁶⁰ Thereafter, the Acting Committee used it as a partner to Pennsylvania's 1780 act as it worked on behalf of black people in jeopardy in Philadelphia and its environs.⁶¹

The utilitarian and pragmatic character of this response to French emancipation registered an important counter to the expansive and universal sense of the society's goals and prospects. The Acting Committee's focus was local: it sought to prevent the "place" of liberty that Pennsylvania represented from being compromised by French West Indians sidestepping French emancipation. This emphasis on local conditions surfaced elsewhere in the PAS's response to the news from France. "We have been informed that many persons . . . notwithstanding the decree in their favor, have been brought from the West India Islands, by emigrants, into the United States, and are now held as slaves," activists wrote to the Georgia legislature in January 1795; "we suggest to you the propriety, as well as necessity . . . of effecting their liberation, so far as may be found consistent with the laws of your state."⁶² A year later the annual convention of abolition societies suggested that they all follow the same course.⁶³

More than simply tepid, this response had innately conservative implications. In understanding French emancipation as essentially relevant to efforts to preserve pockets of American liberty, the PAS had conceded an important point. Places that were not "of liberty" would endure. Local successes need not have cosmopolitan meanings. Georgian laws, for example, not universal truths, would dictate the fate of slavery there. What had been conceived as a global campaign, could now be understood

⁶⁰ Acting Committee minutes, Sept. 3, 1794, ACMB 2:321; and Lawrence Embree to James Pemberton, Jan. 24, 1795, CCL 2:10, PAS Papers.

⁶¹ General Meeting minutes, Apr. 11, 1796, GMB 1:257; and Acting Committee minutes, Apr. 21–22, 1796, ACMB 2:409–10, PAS Papers.

⁶² American Convention minutes, Jan. 14, 1795, PAS Papers.

⁶³ General Meeting minutes, Apr. 11, 1796, GMB 1:257, PAS Papers.

as a collection of local efforts, each intimately related to its particular context. The net effect was to disentangle antislavery from the American Revolution, jettisoning it as a quintessential marker of the change that revolution embodied. Similarly, the transnational connections among radical activities in France, Britain, Saint-Domingue, and the United States were thrown into question. Pennsylvania might be unique and exceptional, even in America, rather than a harbinger for the future. This possibility, and the shift in approach it represented, was a lesson PAS activists learned piecemeal during the 1790s. Events at home and abroad forced them to confront the limits of the expansion of antislavery space, first by calling into question the tactics they considered to be so central to the fight, and then by empowering an alternate vision of the nation's future that was more compelling to the public.

If antislavery societies and the presence of antislavery materials both demonstrated and created community, their absence also indicated places that were not "of liberty." Publications, distributed by local societies, were to awaken men's sentiments, reason away their false understandings, and expose their self-interest. Granville Sharp's assessment that merely "diffusing that information which so many are destitute of" was sufficient to bring "Men of real Principle" to their cause reflected this approach. Furthermore, the logic provided in the publications also swayed those "whose Judgments are influenced by the less rigid Maxims of human Policy."⁶⁴ This might be true, but Sharp's dichotomy revealed an increasingly apparent reality as the 1790s wore on: some men would not be persuaded of the need for antislavery action. Over the second half of the decade the PAS confronted the boundaries of its reach. Curtailed, its idealism would take on a different shape.

Just as activists in correspondence across the Atlantic assumed (and determined) that their efforts were part of a monolithic whole, so too did they understand their enemies as embodying common characteristics. The "Prejudice of some & the interested Views of others" stood against the community of the "benevolent" according to one observer.⁶⁵ Pemberton identified the "powerful opposition" that "self-Interest and prejudice will make to Justice."⁶⁶ The PAS, like its fellow societies elsewhere in the United States, Britain, and France, confronted those who benefited from

⁶⁴ Granville Sharp to James Pemberton, Feb. 18, 1791, CCL 1:56, PAS Papers.

⁶⁵ PAS to Governor Collins, Jan. 19, 1789, CCL 1:6, PAS Papers.

⁶⁶ James Pemberton to Les Amis des Noirs, Aug. 30, 1790, CCL 1:37, PAS Papers.

their ownership of slaves—men motivated by their “Interest and avarice.”⁶⁷ These factors fed a sort of willful blindness and nourished a rejection of reason that, to antislavery activists, was both self-evident and essential. This blindness put the PAS’s opponents outside rational society, making them “domestic enemies,” in Pemberton’s words.⁶⁸

Radical ideas and slave violence caused the PAS to confront the limits of their reasoned approach in budging slaveholder “interests” and showed them ways that their enemies were winning. Charles Nisbet, of Carlisle, Kentucky, wrote in the summer of 1792 to acknowledge the receipt of a collection of pamphlets sent there. Nisbet sent thanks, but explained that the publications had been quickly spirited away to a library, where they would “sleep in Peace.” While he had “a high esteem for the characters of your Society,” he explained (somewhat patiently) the hard realities that confronted antislavery in his area. No one in Carlisle had “a zeal for the Liberty of others” that matched the PAS’s. Furthermore, to “imagine that a Robber & a Tyrant, and every Slave-holder must be both these in conjunction, should be prevailed on by arguments drawn from Reason & Religion to emancipate his Slaves, in Opposition to his Avarice, which is the ruling Principle of his Conduct, argues very little Acquaintance with History or Human Nature.”⁶⁹ Antislavery materials had been sent to Kentucky previously, but this literature seems to have made little impression. “Interest, all powerful Interest,” Kentucky preacher David Rice wrote two years later, “closes the eyes and hardens the heart to a great degree: it gives the least plausible pretence the force of the strongest arguments.” That “pretence” might be a simple rationalization, such as the mechanical difficulty of emancipation, or it might be a more ominous warning about the dangers of a society containing free blacks. In either case, Rice explained, “we stand in more need of something to awaken the conscience than to inform the understanding.”⁷⁰

While it spurred the efforts of men like Warner Mifflin, black violence, made less theoretical by the events in Saint-Domingue, was more likely to serve as a further “pretence” than as a prod to slaveholders’

⁶⁷ Isaac Smith to James Pemberton, Dec. 3, 1790, CCL 1:53, PAS Papers.

⁶⁸ James Pemberton to Committee of the Society Instituted at London . . . , Feb. 28, 1790, CCL 1:27, PAS Papers.

⁶⁹ Charles Nisbet to Rev. William Rogers, Aug. 17, 1792, LCI, PAS Papers.

⁷⁰ David Rice to Rev. Dr. William Rogers, Nov. 4, 1794, CCL 2:19, PAS Papers. See also, James D. Essig, *The Bonds of Wickedness: American Evangelicals against Slavery, 1770–1808* (Philadelphia, 1982).

consciences. Nisbet thought that men under the influence of self-interest could be transformed only by acts of God. "A Negroe war, which may probably break out soon, would go much farther to enlighten the Consciences" of men in Carlisle "than all the Arguments that have been published," he wrote. Nisbet's "History," then, which alternatively might have been expressed as God's will in Rice's mouth, would do what pamphlets could not. This was in line with the PAS's understanding of the natural resistance to slavery common to all men, but Nisbet's counsel to wait for black violence presented a very different conclusion. A second reason he had tucked the PAS pamphlets quietly away was that if they were read by "slave-holders, or ever heard of by Negroes," any "disorders that may arise afterwards will be laid to the charge of your Society." This had been the case, he noted, in France with regard to Saint-Domingue, and he had read accounts from South Carolina telling that PAS members were "execrated there & treated as Madmen, Robbers of their Neighbours Property & Enemies to the Peace of Society."⁷¹ Archibald McClean wrote to the PAS in early 1796 to tell of a similar reception in Alexandria, Virginia. At an early meeting of an antislavery group there, a member had risen to give "a lengthy harangue on the impropriety . . . and dangerous consequences which might result from the establishment of such a Society by infusing into the Slaves a spirit of insurrection and rebellion which might eventually destroy the tranquility of the state." McClean admitted that "very little reply was made" to the charge. "The alarm was soon spread," he explained, and a bill was passed that prevented the society from interceding on behalf of a slave.⁷² Such a law, McClean wrote later, "evinces the predominancy of interest combined with power, over the principles of reason, justice, humanity and every benevolent and sympathetic feeling."⁷³

Correspondence such as this illuminated the crippling effects of the charge of "fanaticism" in locales south and west of Pennsylvania. Critics of antislavery efforts resisted the notion that antislavery activists understood something that planters did not about slavery, slaves, and the workings of God, nature, and history. The harangues against the PAS from the floor of Congress presaged indictments uttered by the opponents of free colored equality in France's National Assembly and by those

⁷¹ Charles Nisbet to Rev. William Rogers, Aug. 17, 1792, CCL 2:19, PAS Papers.

⁷² Archibald McClean to "Reverend Sir," Feb. 15, 1796, CCL 2:31, PAS Papers.

⁷³ Archibald McClean to Rev. William Rogers, June 6, 1796, CCL 2:41, PAS Papers.

against slave-trade reform in Parliament. Where southern representatives railed against misplaced “morality,” others objected to false “philanthropy.” Critics stated that local understandings of the institution should predominate. Antislavery activists were irresponsible at best; at worst they were “fanatics” whose attempts to force their ideals into inappropriate places endangered society. Saint-Domingue made this charge easier to make.⁷⁴

In different ways, the London Society and Les Amis des Noirs also fell victim to this calumny.⁷⁵ By mid-1792, the London Society would write to the PAS to describe the various “checks” it had received at the seats of government.⁷⁶ Paradoxically, by the same period, a number of the “fanatical” members of Les Amis des Noirs had emerged as leaders of the French republic. In that position, however, they found the specifically antislavery content of their doings subsumed by domestic concerns and by the realities of statecraft, diplomacy, and war. With the declaration of emancipation in 1794, France could claim victory in the battle against slavery, but the nation’s attention, and its commitment, were subject to question. Concomitant with these developments, however, both British and French planters could turn to the British state for aid as part of opposition to French political efforts, thereby clothing and incorporating their desire to preserve the slave system within a more general opposition to French “radicalism.”⁷⁷

Antislavery activists in Philadelphia were also labeled “fanatics” by their opponents. When Mifflin submitted another petition to Congress in late 1792, southern representatives took a markedly more aggressive stance than they had in 1790. John Steele of North Carolina labeled Mifflin “a fanatic, who, not content with keeping his own conscience, undertook to become the keeper of consciences of other men” and moved that all record of the episode be expunged. William Smith of South Carolina seconded the motion to be rid of this “mere rant and rhapsody

⁷⁴ Gabriel’s Rebellion in Richmond in 1800 was treated the same way. The reaction it produced destroyed all antislavery momentum in Virginia, a PAS correspondent explained four years later: “We are in fact dead & I may say I have no hope of reanimation.” George Drinker to Joseph Bringhurst, Dec. 10, 1804, LCi 2:12, PAS Papers.

⁷⁵ David Geggus, “British Opinion and the Emergence of Haiti, 1791–1805,” in *Slavery and British Society, 1776–1838*, ed. James Walvin (London, 1982), 123–49. See also, Geggus, “Haiti and the Abolitionists: Opinion Propaganda and International Politics, 1804–1838,” in *Abolition and Its Aftermath: The Historical Context, 1790–1916*, ed. David Richardson (London, 1985), 113–40.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Granville Sharp to James Pemberton, [1792], CCL 1:96, PAS Papers.

⁷⁷ See Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution*.

of a meddling fanatic, interlarded with texts of Scripture.”⁷⁸ Steele’s motion was passed.

Portions of the speeches around the topic that were recorded in the *Annals of Congress* differ considerably from the versions printed in contemporary newspapers, which were much less detailed. These alterations suggest the nature of the “real danger” that Smith saw in Mifflin’s effort: southern citizens who read that their new government was allowing such a debate “might be alarmed, and led to believe, that doctrines were countenanced destructive to their interests.” This hearkened back to the threats of “disunion” heard in 1790, but the emphasis now lay elsewhere. Mifflin’s true purpose, Smith surmised, was to “create disunion among the states, and to excite the most horrible insurrections.”⁷⁹ Subsequent anti-slavery petitions, by Quaker meetings, abolition societies, and by the American Convention after 1794, would barely register in the congressional records.⁸⁰

The paucity of official activity, however, should not mask real differences between the American antislavery position and the European. Antislavery rhetoric continued to bear weight in American political discussion.⁸¹ Steele’s and Smith’s phrases echoed those spoken in France by men identified as “counter-revolutionaries” in contemporary newspapers and political dialogue. By 1792 French antislavery activists were a controlling force in government, and, with the advent of emancipation in 1794, they had in effect vanquished the counterrevolution, if only with regard to slavery. American antislavery activists, however, could not brand their opponents as counterrevolutionaries in this way. True, an active battle continued over the issue of slavery in the young republic, and both antislavery and proslavery forces could (and indeed needed to) claim to be “revolutionaries.”⁸² Yet, most of these adversaries agreed on some level that slavery was not a permanent fixture on the American landscape. While planters might prefer to rest their arguments on the right to property, a fluidity existed with regard to slavery’s ultimate fate in the United States. Even Rusticus, for example, entertained an end to slavery,

⁷⁸ *Annals of Congress*, 2d Cong., 2d sess., 730–31 (Nov. 28, 1792).

⁷⁹ *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), Dec. 5, 1792 (Congress, Nov. 28).

⁸⁰ For the American Convention’s memorial, see *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 1st sess., 39 (Jan. 28, 1794).

⁸¹ Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 9–41.

⁸² Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens, GA, 1987), 190–93.

but such an event was to be exceedingly gradual and entirely under the control those who understood it best. Smith's resistance to Mifflin's petition in 1792, for all of its vitriol, was directed at the inappropriate means of the effort, not its ends. Smith claimed a superior knowledge and a privileged perspective about slavery, noting that, contrary to the hopes of Mifflin and his kind, these attempts were counterproductive. "So far from being calculated to meliorate the condition of the race who were the object of them," he explained, "they had a tendency to alienate their affections from their masters, and by exciting in them a spirit of restlessness, to render greater severity towards them necessary."⁸³ Smith and the PAS differed over the proper route to slavery's end: the congressman through an amelioration of their conditions (probably followed by their removal), the society through gradual freedom and controlled education. As a representative of the American planter class, Smith's reaction typifies a certain vein of the response to the insurrections, violence, and political developments on Saint-Domingue over this period in its suggestion of a heightened security consciousness and strict regard to discipline, order, and local control.⁸⁴ In this framework, Saint-Domingue served to stoke resistance against efforts for quick or immediate changes, the kinds of efforts sought by "fanatics."

To European opponents of antislavery, fanatics were dangerous because their ideas tended to foment slave violence. While their American counterparts made this charge too, they also connected the threat to their emerging opposition to "French" radicalism, and thereby to a greater threat to the nation as a whole. Among the various excoriations conservative British journalist William Cobbett offered to his political opponents in Philadelphia in 1795 was the tale of a dream in which he walked up Market Street with William Penn, who had returned to earth to check up on the progress of his city. Asking the venerable founder for his impressions, Cobbett was happy to convey Penn's "heavy sigh" and to report his displeasure over the emphasis on antislavery and the tumult surrounding "those 'precious hypocrites' (these were his very words)

⁸³ *Annals of Congress*, 2d Cong., 2d sess., 730–31 (Nov. 28, 1792).

⁸⁴ Similarly, see Olwyn M. Blouet, "Bryan Edwards and the Haitian Revolution," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia, SC, 2001), 44N57. See also Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, chap. 4. For a treatment that tends to equate this southern response to Haiti with that of white America as a whole, see Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America*.

Brissot and Warner Mifflin.”⁸⁵ Cobbett, however, celebrated the approach taken by the American government towards slavery. Resisting the zealotry of a Brissot or a Mifflin, the United States “with much more humane views, with a much more sincere desire of seeing all mankind free and happy,” had decided to proceed slowly and cautiously towards emancipation. While Cobbett posited this decision as being made “in spite of clubs and societies,” he nonetheless portrayed a future that included “the abolition of negro slavery,” albeit one in contrast with that of “the mad plan of the National Convention.”⁸⁶ As Cobbett’s use of William Penn suggests, the meaning of “American” foundational elements with regard to slavery was not closed off. Cobbett was no planter. He, like Rusticus, pointed to an American Revolution that produced emancipation. He trusted the planters, however, as participants in that Revolution, to decide when and if that result might occur safely.

American “fanatics,” then, were those who pushed too hard towards an end that ultimately would come anyway. The successes experienced by the PAS to this point, combined with the difficulties of advocating a course that could be identified as “radical” as political tensions heightened towards the middle of the decade, strengthened the premises behind this critique. Taken together, these factors blunted the expansive tendencies of the PAS perspective. By the late 1790s the global community that the PAS had imagined, connected, and in many ways successfully forged, was contracting. Rather than continuing to understand their doings as essentially connected to a wider change moving forward across the globe, the society had come to identify its efforts as discrete—as evolutionary, not revolutionary. At its first meeting, the Convention of Delegates from American Abolition Societies drew representatives from eight societies in six states, including Maryland and Delaware. Two societies in Virginia would send delegates to subsequent meetings, and the convention would conduct correspondence with men in South Carolina. Over the next ten years, its meetings, while active, would have fewer delegates from southern states and, after 1798, would meet less frequently.

⁸⁵ Peter Porcupine [William Cobbett], *A Bone to Gnaw, for the Democrats . . .* (Philadelphia, 1795), 36. See also, Richard Panglos (pseud.) to Peter Porcupine, 1795, Cox-Parrish-Wharton Collection, box 13 (“Miscellaneous Correspondence Alphabetical by Author N-Sarah Parrish”), folder “Panglos, Richard.”

⁸⁶ [William Cobbett], *Observations on the Emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley* (Philadelphia, 1794), 20.

As efforts elsewhere seemed to be dwindling and its connections to other groups weakened, the PAS's self-perception of itself as a vanguard intensified. In missives to the London Society the PAS offered British abolitionists advice and consolation for their reversals. On more than one occasion PAS letters chided their brethren for their lack of correspondence. London Society secretary Samuel Hoare apologized for their inactivity, told of their gloomy results, and applauded American successes. "Indeed if the friends of the Africans in America do but continue to go on in the regular and harmonious manner in which they have begun," he wrote, "We cannot but believe that the dawn of that day is not far off, when Skin shall no longer afford a handle for injury and . . . a seat for prejudice, but that black and white Men shall be seen living together throughout the United States, as Friends and Brethren."⁸⁷ Hoare's ideas about the future set Philadelphia apart from efforts in Britain and contrasted with the signals sent by Nisbet, Rice, and McClean. Rather than embodying the future, Pennsylvania antislavery was increasingly conceived of as an exception. PAS correspondence and activities increasingly focused within, especially looking to efforts to start schools for blacks and to continue efforts towards their moral improvement.⁸⁸ The society's optimism came to be less related to its position in a global revolution against slavery than to its distinctive success in dealing with the ills of slavery in its own area.

* * *

When Benjamin Giroud and his compatriots in Saint-Domingue made contact with the friends of the blacks in Philadelphia, they assumed that the American concept of friendship paralleled their own. Julien Raimond (a man of color), in accepting his membership in the PAS, told the society that "we see the effects of your principles fully realized amongst us." Indeed, Raimond even intimated that Saint-Domingue had surpassed Philadelphia as a "place of liberty," when he expressed his hopes that the PAS would soon be able to convince the United States to follow the French lead in providing general emancipation. In closing, he noted that, just recently, a group of slaves being brought from Africa to Jamaica had been intercepted, and had become "free the moment they touched this part of the Republic."⁸⁹ Both Philadelphia and Saint-Domingue

⁸⁷ Samuel Hoare Jr., treasurer, to James Pemberton, July 10, 1794, CCL 2:1, PAS Papers.

⁸⁸ See Nash, *Forging Freedom*.

⁸⁹ Julien Raimond to PAS, [probably Mar. 1797], CCL 2:52, PAS Papers.

proffered relief from slavery, but Raimond suggested that the latter provided a better freedom and a model for the future.

This distinction would only grow larger with time. Though PAS members imagined themselves as transnational activists, they were unable to escape the national paradigm. While they recognized French and British allies, they were blind to connections between their efforts and the truly revolutionary changes going on in Saint-Domingue. Even at the time of Giroud's contact, which was an intermediate stage of what would eventually be termed the Haitian Revolution, events in the colony represented the furthest extent of the radical implications of the ideals of the revolutionary age. Ideals of universal freedom, expressed variously through the idiom of the emergent French Revolution or in the actions and efforts of insurgent slaves, when mixed with what was perhaps the most intensive slave society the world had known, led to a wholesale destruction of that society. Giroud's visit to Philadelphia came at a point of relative calm, but Napoleon Bonaparte's attempt to reimpose slavery several years later would lead to new heights of violence and would ultimately prompt a full-scale rejection of the European presence. By 1804, Haiti, named in the language of the original Amerindian inhabitants, was deemed by its founders as having "avenged America." Its citizenry was defined by blackness, a fact that connected the nation to efforts against slavery around the world, even as the exigencies of global politics and power acted to sever those connections and efface the new nation's presence. The success of that erasure, described as "silencing" by Michel-Rolph Trouillot, contributed to the limiting of narratives of slavery and revolution to the national, rather than global, level. This is something scholars have only recently sought to redress.⁹⁰ Giroud's radical universalism,

⁹⁰ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995). For connections between the Haitian, American, and French revolutions, see Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63 (2006): 643–74, and Geggus, *Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*. Recent scholarship has contested Trouillot's notion that Haiti was "silenced"—that is, that eighteenth-century categories of understanding were incapable of considering black self-assertion and freedom acts as part of the same framework as European revolutions. Not only were events on Saint-Domingue intensively noted, they argue, but they were constitutive to important facets of European modernity. See, for example, Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): 821–65; Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, NC, 2004); Nick Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (Charlottesville, VA, 2008); Ada Ferrer, "Talk about Haiti: The Archive and the Atlantic's Haitian Revolution," in *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. Doris Lorraine Garraway (Charlottesville, VA, 2008), 21–40; and Doris Lorraine

while presented as an expression of the French Revolution, was conditioned, and even determined, by events and circumstances in Haiti, and was driven by ideals that spanned well beyond French borders. If considering its reception in the United States similarly destabilizes a national narrative of American Revolutionary antislavery, it also illuminates the distinctive aspects of the American answer to a transnational problem.

By the late 1790s, the connections that had defined the promise of Pennsylvania's freedom had been severed. The liberty to be found there came from membership in the community, not from merely touching the soil. Yes, Pennsylvania was an asylum from slavery, but it was not a touchstone for freedom. Whereas, in late 1789 a writer in Philadelphia could hope "that the time is rapidly approaching when the citizens of these United States will no longer merit the odious character of *oppressors of their fellow men*; but, by nobly breaking the chains of slavery, justly entitle their country to the name of *THE LAND OF LIBERTY*," by the time of Giroud's visit, that "land" had been circumscribed considerably.⁹¹ At nearly the same time as the PAS considered his offer, the society entertained another vision of postemancipation society. It, too, bore the influence of events on Saint-Domingue. In October 1796 the society took up for consideration a plan for gradual emancipation written by Virginian academic and jurist St. George Tucker. A copy was procured in order to decide whether it "contain[ed] such matter as to render it proper for this Society to undertake to distribute it."⁹² Tucker's provisions were to some extent familiar. Steeped in what were by this point common adages describing the hypocrisy of the American Revolution with regard to slavery, he outlined a mechanism to gradually emancipate his state's slaves not dissimilar to that used in Pennsylvania. The crux of his plan, however, was what was to come after emancipation, and here it veered sharply from Pennsylvania's model. Tucker hoped that by denying freed blacks all rights whatsoever in Virginia they would be spurred to voluntarily separate from white society "to seek those privileges in some other climate." This

Garraway, "Légitime Defense': Universalism and Nationalism in the Discourse of the Haitian Revolution," in *Tree of Liberty*, 63–90. For a masterful demonstration of the appropriation and expansion of French ideals of human equality by colonists of color, see Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787–1804* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004).

⁹¹ *Federal Gazette* (Philadelphia), Dec. 24, 1789 ("CONSTITUTION of the MARYLAND SOCIETY . . .").

⁹² General Meeting minutes, Oct. 3, 1796, GMB 1:265, PAS Papers.

feature was driven not only by the desire to cleanse the American experiment of inconsistency, but also by a concern for white well-being. "At this moment we have the most awful demonstrations" of the dangers slavery posed to white society, he exclaimed, pointing to Saint-Domingue. While the population of American slaves was relatively low now, the recent census showed a trend of rapid growth, especially in the Chesapeake region. It was best for whites to begin to dispense with this problem, getting out while the getting was still good.⁹³

This flew in the face of PAS practices and ideas. Like Rusticus before him, Tucker rooted his approach in the notion that white and black interests were distinct, and that those of the latter could be translated as the destruction of the former. From Saint-Domingue he took the lesson that, without slavery to contain black interests, white safety demanded freed blacks' separation and removal. PAS members disagreed. On February 1 the society resolved that Tucker's pamphlet was not "a publication of such a nature as to be necessary . . . to purchase any thereof."⁹⁴ By that point, the PAS no longer understood its purpose as making the United States into the nation without slaves that its Revolution had once seemed to suggest. Instead, the nation was a conglomerate of "interests," some of which, as the PAS response to Tucker's ideas indicates, remained anathema. For the moment, however, this disjunction was insoluble. The PAS activists would have to remain content, complaisant perhaps, with Philadelphia, if not "Philanthropolis."

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⁹³ St. George Tucker, *A Dissertation on Slavery: With a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of it, in the State of Virginia* (Philadelphia, 1796), 91–94.

⁹⁴ General Meeting minutes, Feb. 1, 1797, GMB 1:267, PAS Papers.