

Proceedings of the Third Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference  
at Yale University

## Sisterhood and Slavery: Transatlantic Antislavery and Women's Rights

October 25-28, 2001  
Yale University  
New Haven, Connecticut

### American Responses to British Emancipation: The Problem of Progress

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#### I

Abolitionists relied heavily on empirical evidence to support their moral claim that slavery was a blight on society and needed to be abolished. But when evidence deviated from their beliefs about the institution, they tended to ignore or downplay this evidence in order to further their argument. Their evasions are richly revealed in their attempt to explain the economic decline in the British West Indies following emancipation. During the 1840s and 1850s, numerous reports documented a withdrawal of labor and sharp declines in sugar production in the British West Indies. High levels of sugar production seemed to depend upon forced labor: during the apprenticeship period from 1834 to 1838, production remained relatively stable, and overall declined by roughly ten percent. But beginning in 1838 the economy of the islands worsened. In Jamaica, the largest colony, sugar production declined by fifty percent. In the British West Indies as a whole, average production from 1839 to 1846 declined by thirty-six

percent as compared with average production from 1824 to 1833. While sugar was certainly not the only product in the British West Indies, it was the most important export and the primary index by which the islands' prosperity and productivity was measured.<sup>1</sup>

The decline was directly tied to workers' aversion to wage labor. Beginning in 1838, laborers were for the first time legally free to choose their employers (except in Bermuda, Antigua, and Montserrat, which did not adopt apprenticeship or ended it prematurely). They responded by seeking independence from their former masters. Instead of relying solely on plantation wages, they drifted away from the plantations, set up communities of their own on uncultivated land, and engaged in subsistence agriculture. In other words, "they resisted becoming proletarians," as Thomas Holt summarized the efforts of Jamaican freed people. In the smaller islands, where planters were already cultivating most of the land, workers were more dependent on plantation wage labor, and sugar production was little affected. But in the larger colonies of Jamaica, Trinidad, and British Guiana, where no such land existed, production dropped dramatically.<sup>2</sup>

American abolitionists in particular were reticent, evasive, or downright deceptive about reporting these declines. Most white abolitionists anxiously viewed the results of emancipation in the West Indies as an important "test case" or "laboratory experiment," according to Howard Temperley, which would "prove to the rest of the world" especially other Americans—that peaceful emancipation was not only possible in a slave society, but "advantageous to all concerned." If British emancipation went well, abolitionists would have potent evidence to back up their rhetoric about the universal evils of slavery and the virtues of freedom. But it did not go well; the reports were very

discouraging, and abolitionists ignored them or selectively used them to declare emancipation a success. In fact, the reports seemed to buttress the views of their enemies. Proslavery Southerners seized upon the news of declining production and exports; the pages of *De Bow's Review* and the *Southern Literary Messenger* during the 1840s and 1850s are filled with statistics from the British West Indies detailing the economic decline of the islands.<sup>3</sup>

What was so disturbing about West Indian emancipation was that it flew in the face of abolitionists' theory of progress. As Robert Fogel has noted, abolitionists clung to "the proposition that divine Providence rewarded virtue and punished evil." This proposition "continues to be widely accepted today," not only among the religious faithful (especially evangelical Protestants), but also among individuals with highly secular philosophies. Both then and now, the idea that evil actions can bring worldly fame, fortune, and happiness contradicts some of the basic assumptions about what it means to be an American. In the nineteenth century the vast majority of Americans believed that moral and material progress moved in parallel paths. While evil deeds were punished in this world and the next, virtuous actions were rewarded here and in the hereafter. Both proslavery propagandists and abolitionists agreed on this point; Southerners trumpeted the news of declining prosperity in the West Indies to support their belief in slavery as a positive good; and abolitionists ignored, altered, or downplayed evidence of economic decline to accommodate their belief that slavery was both a material and moral blight on society.<sup>4</sup>

There were a few abolitionists, however—especially Gerrit Smith and Frederick Douglass--who acknowledged a declining economy in the West Indies after emancipation

and an apparent divergence between material and moral progress. Their attitudes about progress have not been adequately explored, and they are the ones I want to focus on.<sup>5</sup> In grappling with the possibility that righteous actions might dampen the economy, they reveal an understanding of progress that differed from that of most of their peers. Their vision of progress was much more nuanced than one that saw change over time moving in a unilateral path. Progress, they realized, was contingent upon many factors, especially perspective and vantage point, and could at times follow a path independent of moral action. In order to appreciate how far these abolitionists deviated from the norm, it is necessary first to summarize the mainstream views.

## II

Most American abolitionists were hesitant to analyze or discuss in depth the economy of the British West Indies. When they did confront the situation, they refused to admit that virtuous actions could bring on economic declines. Some abolitionists blamed declining prosperity not on emancipation but on the inability of planters to cope with the free labor market. Some acknowledged that laborers, owing to lives spent in slavery, were prone to “idleness” and “laziness.” Some attributed the declines to the failure of the gradualist approach—specifically the apprenticeship period that was designed to “prepare” slaves for freedom. And many of them blamed the evidence itself and denied that there had been declines in productivity. Lewis Tappan argued that the evidence showing declines in productivity were based on “fabricated and false information” concocted by the United States Consul in Jamaica in order to misrepresent the progress of emancipation in the British West Indies.” William Lloyd Garrison cited

figures from one small West Indian island in which sugar production was greater in 1854 than in 1833 (there were only two such islands), and claimed “emancipation had universally proven a great success.” Garrison believed that free labor was “beyond all doubt” less expensive and more productive than slave labor.<sup>6</sup>

Franklin Sanborn blamed the “problem” of emancipation in the West Indies on gradualist use of apprenticeship. He compared conditions on Antigua, which had granted slaves immediate and universal freedom in 1834 and had become the most prosperous of the islands, with those on Jamaica, which implemented apprenticeship and was now the least prosperous of the islands, to argue that successful emancipation depended on immediate emancipation.<sup>7</sup>

Lydia Maria Child also saw apprenticeship as contributing to Jamaica’s woes, and like Sanborn, she contrasted it with Antigua’s success. But her main point in *The Right Way the Safe Way, Proved by Emancipation in the British West Indies, and Elsewhere* (1860), is that British West Indian emancipation had been an overwhelming economic and moral success. The problems in Jamaica had been caused primarily by “the spirit of slavery,” which was “more violent and unyielding there than in the other Colonies.” Slavery, not emancipation, had dragged down the economy. By ignoring statistics, she asserted that emancipation had been safe, effective, and profitable. Child also followed most abolitionists in believing that wage labor should replace slavery; in her mind, it was better for slaves, masters, and the economy and society as a whole. Former masters needed “but to substitute the stimulus of wages for the coercion of the lash,” and conditions would immediately improve. Education, religious teaching, agricultural improvements, and the emergence of “that middling class, which is the best reliance in

every community,” would soon follow, “as matters of course.” For Child, wage labor would preserve the social hierarchy and economy, and give rise to a vibrant black middle class. In a separate essay designed to teach freedmen and women how to be good parents, she applied the virtues of wage labor to the domestic sphere:

The system of Slavery was all penalty and no attraction; in other words, it punished men if they did *not* do, but it did not reward them for *doing*. . . . After emancipation in the West Indies, planters who had been violent slaveholders, if they saw a freedman leaning on his hoe, would say, ‘Work, you black rascal, or I’ll flog you’; and the freedman would lean all the longer on his hoe. Planters of a more wise and moderate character, if they saw the emancipated laborers idling away their time, would say, ‘We expect better things of free men’; and that appeal to their manhood made the hoes fly fast.

Child likened a “violent” planter to a bad parent, and a “wise and moderate planter” to a good one.<sup>8</sup>

Ralph Waldo Emerson declared in two successive anniversary celebrations of British Emancipation (August 1, 1844 and August 1, 1845) that emancipation had been a resounding success. Despite “sinister predictions” of declining production, he characterized emancipation as “a moral revolution” that necessarily brought with it economic and material rewards. As if to explain his use of evidence, he stated: “All the facts in history are fables, and untrustworthy, beside the dictates of the moral sentiment which speaks one and the same voice in all ages.”<sup>9</sup>

In order to see for themselves what was happening in the British West Indies, a number of abolitionists went there and sent back their own interpretation of the results of emancipation. These were the reports that abolitionists tended to rely on, not the

extensive and well-documented accounts by Southerners that provided extensive figures for the production and export of sugar and other crops in the West Indies from 1800 through the end of apprenticeship in 1838.<sup>10</sup> The British Quaker Joseph John Gurney spent four months in Santa Cruz (a Danish colony), St. Thomas and Tortola of the Virgin Islands, St. Christopher's, Antigua, Dominica, and Jamaica. In each of the islands he gathered comparative data on the economic activity and social conditions prior to and after emancipation, and reported his findings to Americans. His reports ignored the overall decline in productivity and focused instead on specific evidence in smaller islands that suggested a strong economy. He emphasized that in Antigua, sugar exports had almost doubled from the early 1830s to 1839. And in Dominica he pointed to a substantial increase in produce for local use and a doubling of imports, which he attributed to the higher standard of living among Negroes. He acknowledged that things were far worse in Jamaica; production had fallen off after emancipation, and freedmen and women did not want to work for their former masters. Gurney was so disturbed by this that he wrote a long letter to Jamaica planters, telling them what needed to be done to achieve former levels of sugar production. Both planters and laborers had been at fault, he said: laborers had been careless and lazy, and planters had dictated low wages to workers who paid rent for cottages on their property. Gurney returned to the United States convinced that the British West Indies experiment on the whole had been an economic as well as moral success.<sup>11</sup>

The Anglo-American abolitionist Charles Stuart spent seventeen months in the British West Indies beginning November 1838. A close friend of Gerrit Smith, Beriah Green, and Theodore Weld, Stuart was "one of the most outspoken exponents of the

argument that slavery was economically less efficient than free labor,” according to his biographer, and his account of his trip shows him trying to realize that belief. In Tobago he urged blacks to show “that liberty makes better labourers than slavery, and [that] the honourable and happy motives of freedom produce better industry than all the powers of slavery can do.” At a meeting in Berbice, he upheld the plantation economy, scolded freedmen and women for “symptoms of idleness,” and treated idleness as though it were a disease. Yet he summarized “the present state of Jamaica” as “exceedingly happy” in a letter to Theodore Dwight Weld in 1839. True, the plantation economy had been paralyzed because of the “pride, selfishness, and impatience” of both laborers and masters. He sought to alleviate tensions between the two groups by endorsing the movement to establish free villages and thus liberate blacks from planters’ control of living quarters and provision grounds. He did not realize that this strategy threatened his free labor ideology, for black freeholders could and did refuse to work for wages on plantations. Throughout his descriptions of the islands he assumed that the plantation economy, where stagnant, would quickly rebound and that wage labor would soon be far more productive and profitable than slavery.<sup>12</sup>

American abolitionists who acknowledged the decline in prosperity generally echoed Stuart’s belief that the island economy would quickly turn around. But as year after year passed without a return to prosperity, they refused to question their belief in progress. Placing blame on planter incompetence “also wore thin with time,” especially in light of findings by the parliamentary investigation, the reports of the Colonial Office, and the growing reports among abolitionists who criticized the freed people for their

idleness. Nowhere, it seemed, were abolitionists able to revise their theory of progress to accommodate the evidence in the West Indies.<sup>13</sup>

Almost nowhere, that is. A few abolitionists did acknowledge the extent of economic decline on the islands, did not seem that concerned about it, and did not endorse the doctrine of free labor (which for most whites meant freed people working for wages) as a successor to slavery. For them, economic progress did not necessarily move in tandem with moral progress because they implicitly asked the question: Progress and prosperity for whom? For the West Indies? For England? For the planter? Or for the laborer? By focusing their attention on the conditions of freedmen and women, they concluded that while the islands had suffered economic decline, freedmen and women had not. The cost of freedom for the planters and the island economy had been significant; but conditions for laborers had improved dramatically, and so from their perspective, it was well worth the cost. Instead of succumbing to the ideology of free labor as the necessary replacement for slave labor, they accepted subsistence farming as an appropriate alternative.<sup>14</sup>

### III

The question of perspective helps explain Emerson's apparent ignorance about the state of the British West Indies. Howard Temperley summarizes Emerson's August 1, 1844 emancipation speech by saying that Emerson "simply ignored the statistics" and described an "unparalleled increase in prosperity that had come to the West Indies since emancipation." But for Emerson, it was more a matter of perspective than of ignoring statistics. In each of Emerson's two August 1 speeches on West Indian emancipation, his

rds, history mattered only in relation to morality. This is not to say that Emerson totally ignored material concerns. He believed, along with most other Northerners, that slavery retarded the economic growth: “the laws of nature are in harmony with each other: that which the head and the heart demand, is found to be, in the long run, for what the grossest calculator calls his advantage. The moral sense is always supported by the permanent interest of the parties.” Virtuous actions would, in the long run, bring economic rewards. In the short run, moral and material progress could diverge. The West Indian prosperity he describes in 1844 and 1845 is from the point of view of the laborer. The primary focus of his two speeches is to show how emancipation marked a new epoch in history: the emergence of blacks from slavery to civilization. That is the purpose of his two speeches, not the state of the West Indian economy.<sup>15</sup>

Gerrit Smith went further than just about any other abolitionist in frankly acknowledging the sharp decrease in productivity and profitability in the British West Indies and accepting a divergence between ethical and economic progress. What mattered for him was neither the productivity of the freed people, nor the economy of the islands, but obedience to God and the moral state of the individual and society. He said

as much in an 1840 letter to the Tennessee slaveowner and planter in an effort to convince him to liberate his 1,100 slaves. He cited the example of the British West Indies as a case in point. Sounding a bit like Emerson, he said: On August 1, 1834, when “800,000 things rose up into men,” it was “widely predicted” that the British West Indies “would run blood.” Yet “no colored man has yet taken the life of a white man, and whites constitute six or seven percent of the island. . . . There is also far less crime on these islands than there was during slavery.” Things were so peaceful that “most of the military force [has been] withdrawn.”<sup>16</sup>

Smith acknowledged that the moral condition of the islands had witnessed dramatic improvement while its economy had suffered a steep decline:

The exports of the islands are less. This is true—and the inference is, that the people labor less than when in a state of slavery.

Perhaps they do—and if any people have a right to be lazy, it is they who have through life been subject to compulsory toil. But their laziness is their own concern.

In the context of its time, it is an astonishing statement. Slavery, he suggests, “perhaps” yields a more productive workforce than does freedom. Southerners would have agreed with his assessment of slavery’s profitability. But Smith radically departs from the proslavery view in his ethical position and perspective, which focuses on the plight of the former slaves: slavery is wrong; and however freed people choose to work, it is “their own concern,” and no one else’s. From Smith’s perspective, the two main reasons for the decline in West Indian exports were the “inadequate wages” offered to former slaves, and their “reasonable disposition” to “consume and enjoy a larger share of the products of their toil than was allowed them before emancipation.”<sup>17</sup>

Smith thought that poor and landless New York State blacks, though legally free, also preferred to consume and enjoy a larger share of the products of their toil. In 1846, after reducing a heavy debt burden, he announced his intent to give away 120,000 acres of land to some 3,000 poor New York State blacks (roughly forty acres a piece). The land was located in the wilds of the Adirondacks, near Lake Placid, New York, primarily in Essex and Franklin Counties. His gift offered a way to protect blacks from anti-black prejudice, become self-sufficient, and receive the fruits of their labor. It also enabled the poor and landless recipients of his deeds a way to obtain the suffrage. New York suffrage laws required blacks to own \$250 of freehold property to vote, and although the land was of poor quality (which Smith acknowledged) and would not automatically grant suffrage, forty acres, if cultivated, would allow them to vote.<sup>18</sup>

It is significant that Smith announced his gift on August 1, 1846, to coincide with the anniversary of emancipation in the British West Indies. He saw resemblances between the condition of free blacks in the United States and freed people in the West Indies. Implicit in Smith's gift was a type of freedom much different from that pursued by the architects of British emancipation. British policy-makers sought to transform slaves into wage earners who continued to work for their former masters. Wage labor, they thought (as did many American abolitionists), prevented former slaves from "regressing to the imagined barbarous life of their African ancestors." But most slaves defined freedom differently; they preferred to work small plots of land, in which they could earn their subsistence and resist the authority of former masters. Smith's gift, then, was based on the preference of West Indian slaves rather than British policymakers; it presented a model of freedom that allowed poor blacks to become self-sufficient and

relatively insulated from white oppression. It allowed them to become “respectable,” in Smith’s mind, even though other abolitionists defined subsistence farming and independence from wage labor for whites as a form of “barbarism.”<sup>19</sup>

Smith recognized that his plan threatened a market-based economy, which depended on large cash crops and economies of scale. It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that an important impetus for his “land grant” came from his correspondence and friendship beginning in 1844 with George Henry Evans, the well-known labor leader and editor of *Working Man’s Advocate*. Evans considered “land monopoly” the primary cause of poverty, and advocated the free distribution of all public land to the “landless.” After a combative start, in which Evans call Smith “one of the largest Slaveholders in the United States” for holding so much excess land, both men especially Smith--saw common cause with each other’s reform emphases. As an “agrarian,” Evans believed that Northern workers were in a “worse state of ignorance, degradation, misery, and vice” than slavery, and he was unsympathetic to the plight of slaves and free blacks. Smith had never before heard of Evans or his newspapers, but hoped that “Agrarians” and “Abolitionists” could work together. “You can enlighten abolitionists by inculcating upon them the great truth that men have a natural right to the soil,” Smith told Evans. And abolitionists could enlighten labor leaders by telling them to include slaves and blacks in their vision of land reform. Evans was so impressed with Smith that in 1846 he asked him to run for New York civil office under the National Reform Association (NRA), the labor party he had organized and led. The NRA had recently acquired the slogan, “Vote Yourself a Farm,” and sought to create republican townships of 160-acre plots for poor laborers that would be funded by reserves of government land. Although

Smith declined the offer, Evans prompted Smith to act on his vision of land reform to create forty-acre plots for poor New York State blacks.<sup>20</sup>

Smith's gift of land can also be seen as an important precedent in the debates about land distribution during the Civil War and Reconstruction. The questions of how to dispose of confiscated southern land and how to organize black labor became major points of conflict in the transition to free labor in the United States. Most American abolitionists and policymakers, much like their British counterparts, understood the term "free labor" for blacks to mean working for wages on plantations. But to blacks themselves, "free labor" meant farming their own land "reaping the fruit of our own labor," as one former slave put it, obtaining "forty acres a expression went—and living largely apart from the marketplace. On the anniversary of West Indian emancipation in 1846, Smith offered forty acres to 3,000 blacks (he did not have funds to purchase 3,000 mules) as an alternative to wage labor and racism. In assessing the condition of the British West Indies and the United States, his understanding of progress was from the perspective of the freed people, the slaves, and free blacks, even though it threatened the advance of a market economy.<sup>21</sup>

James McCune Smith considered moral progress to be at times inversely proportional to material progress. McCune Smith was widely considered to be the foremost black intellectual of his day, and his broad and deep understanding of America convinced him that evil actions were all too often rewarded by worldly gain, and that virtuous deeds could be accompanied by a decline in material conditions.<sup>22</sup> McCune Smith was a good friend of Gerrit Smith, served as the principal trustee for distributing deeds to eligible black recipients of Gerrit's gift, and enthusiastically encouraged blacks

to settle on the land and become self-sufficient and independent from white racism and wage labor.<sup>23</sup> Although there is no record of him commenting on the effects of emancipation in the West Indies, his other writings suggest no reason to believe that he would have downplayed or evaded reports about declining sugar production. McCune Smith's initial response to Gerrit Smith gift of land was that this virtuous act would not only result in a loss of personal wealth; it would mark Gerrit as a foolish man:

You have borne much and well for the truth's sake and for the sake of your fellow man," McCune Smith wrote Gerrit, "but what you contemplate doing [by giving away your land to blacks] will, in the present state of society, subject you to trials more painful than anything you have endured. You have borne the taint of fanaticism; you must prepare to be branded as a foolish man.

Blacks were borne along the tide of "wealth-worship" as much as whites," McCune Smith added: "we are but men," and there will be those "so base as [to] laugh at the poverty of the man who made us rich!"<sup>24</sup>

McCune Smith understood that "wealth and caste" were inextricably joined, fueling the swell of hate "in the great American heart!" While the virtues of "thrift, punctuality, enterprise, and persistent energy" were admirable, they led all too easily to the pursuit of wealth for its own sake and thus to racial hate. In his essays in Frederick Douglass' Paper and other journals, he urged his readers to embrace these virtues without worshipping the God of Mammon. He understood a central feature of American culture, namely that "the Keystone of American morals and religion is gold: hence, American society is a poor, dumb, blind dog to whom the sun in the heavens and the sweet harmonies of nature" and humanity "are as a closed book."<sup>25</sup>

Frederick Douglass gave four separate West Indian emancipation anniversary speeches during the 1840s and 1850s (in 1847, 1848, 1857, and 1858). In the last three, he confronts reports of economic decline of the island, and like Gerrit Smith, derides wage labor as a replacement for slavery, and is generally unconcerned about the economic effects of emancipation.<sup>26</sup> In his 1848 speech Douglass deflects the frequent statements from American newspapers that state “‘The British Colonies are ruined,’ ‘The emancipated negroes are lazy and won’t work,’ ‘Emancipation has been a failure,’” by turning the debate into distinctions of race: Blacks are simply better workers than whites, he argues, regardless of the condition of their labor. “[W]hite industry is unequal to” slave labor in the United States, and “none but the sinewy arm of the sable race is capable

st, newly acquired regions of the Southwest. As for West Indian emancipation, the main purpose of the Act was to give freedom to “800,000 persons” and place them “in a state of independence, prosperity, and happiness.” And that object “has been accomplished,” Douglass notes. That some freed people were able to spend fifty pounds on “the luxury of dress” was not a cause of distress but a confirmation of

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Douglass’s 1857 address on the significance of West Indian emancipation is one of his most moving and powerful speeches. In the face of unprecedented material prosperity in America, he says, moral decay is everywhere. By contrast, “there was something Godlike in this decree [of emancipation] of the British nation. It was the spirit of the Son of God commanding the devil of slavery to go out of the British West Indies.” The material achievements in America “sink to nothingness” compared to Britain’s emancipation decree. But no “such responsive note of rejoicing” over Britain’s example

has occurred in America, “except from a part of the colored people and their few white friends. As a nation, we are deaf, dumb, and blind to the moral beauty, and transcendent sublimity of West India Emancipation.” Why? Because “out of the fullness of our dollar-loving hearts, we have asked with owl-like wisdom, WILL IT PAY? Will it increase the growth of sugar? Will it cheapen tobacco? Will it increase the imports and exports of the Islands?” In America, “[m]oney is the measure of morality,” Douglass concluded, echoing McCune Smith’s sentiments; “and the success or failure of slavery, as a money-making system, determines with many whether the thing is virtuous or villainous.” In his 1858 speech, he excoriated Americans for calling West Indian emancipation an “experiment”—an “experiment” that has been considered a failure. It was a base and pathetic response to a “sublime” act: “There is. . . no more reason for calling West Indian Emancipation an “experiment” than for calling the law of gravitation an experiment.” Both were “laws of nature dating back to man’s creation.”<sup>28</sup>

Despite his attacks on America’s love of Mammon and worldly progress, Douglass did believe, as did Gerrit Smith and McCune Smith, that freedom would ultimately bring prosperity. If he had to assign blame for the West Indian economy, it rested with slavery and not liberty. “West India freedom” was “yet an infant. And to predict its future on its present weakness, awkwardness, and improvidence now, is about as wise as to apply the same rule to your little toothless children.” As Douglass acknowledged a few years later: “Material progress, may for a time be separated from moral progress. But the two cannot be permanently divorced.” A permanent severing of the moral and material realms would have destroyed his faith in a new world—specifically an America that had realized its ideals of freedom and democracy. Like

Gerrit Smith and McCune Smith, Douglass was a millennialist whose most passionate desire was the immediate end of all sin. “I believe in the millennium--the final perfection of the race,” he said. Their hopes for a new world allowed them to reconcile the sinful present, in which slavery was expanding and appeared profitable, with their future hopes of perfection. In assessing the state of society they focused on the conditions of slaves and the poor. And they violently attacked those institutions—wage labor, commercialism, and a market economy—that many of their peers viewed as the incarnation of progress. Complete liberation—the equivalent of perfection—could only occur from a realignment of material and moral progress. It would be marked by a rupture—a sharp break from the limits of previous political, economic, and racial history—and the dawn of a new world.<sup>29</sup>

*Review*, 24:6 (June 1858): 492-502; "The Country in 1950, or the Conservatism of Slavery," *Southern Literary Messenger*, 22 (1856): 426-439.

<sup>4</sup> Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, p. 410. See also Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, pp. 210-226, 231-258; Davis, *Antebellum American Culture: An Interpretative Anthology* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1979), pp. 345-366.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Fogel, in his superb study, suggests that abolitionists were alike in "[t]he tenacity with which [they] clung to the contention that emancipation was bringing prosperity, despite all the contrary evidence." Similarly, Howard Temperley assumes that American abolitionists were alike in casting the development of the West Indies in the best possible light. Fogel, Temperley, and Davis are among the few scholars to examine in depth Americans' attitude toward West

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Indian emancipation. See Fogel, *Without Consent and Contract*, p. 410; Temperley, *British Antislavery*, pp. 118-120; and Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, pp. 231-258.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Stuart to Theodore Dwight Weld, June 8, 1839, in Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké* (1934; reprint, Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1965), 766-767; Anthony J. Barker, *Captain Charles Stuart: Anglo-American Abolitionist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), p. 170-171; Tappan and Garrison, quoted in Temperley, *British Antislavery*, p. 119; Garrison to Joseph Pease, August 3, 1840, in Louis Ruchames, ed., *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison, Volume II: A House Dividing Against Itself, 1836-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 674.

<sup>7</sup> Franklin Sanborn, *Emancipation in the West Indies* (Boston, 1862), p. 15; James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 185-186; McPherson, "Was West Indian Emancipation a Success? The Abolitionist Argument During the American Civil War," *Caribbean Studies*, 4:2 (1964): 28-34.

<sup>8</sup> Lydia Maria Child, *The Right Way the Safe Way, Proved by Emancipation in the British West Indies, and Elsewhere* (New York: 5 Beekman Street, 1860), pp. 5, 18, 30-31, 33, 55, 58-60, 67, 81, 95-96, quotations from pp. 55, 81, 95-96; Child, "Education of Children," in Carolyn L. Karcher, ed., *A Lydia Maria Child Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 131; Karcher, *The First Woman in the Republic: A Cultural Biography of Lydia Maria Child* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 428-430.

<sup>9</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, eds. Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 16-17, 26, 37; Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, pp. 407-408.

<sup>10</sup> For statistics in Southern journals detailing the West Indian economy after emancipation, see "Emancipation in Jamaica—Its Workings," *DeBow's Review*, 16:6 (June 1854): 581-588; and "The West India Islands," *DeBow's Review*, 5:6 (June 1848): 455-500.

<sup>11</sup> David E. Swift, *Joseph John Gurney: Banker, Reformer, and Quaker* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1962), pp. 205-231.

<sup>12</sup> Barker, *Captain Charles Stuart*, pp. 133, 160-161, 165-168, 179-181, 236-237, quotations from pp. 161, 165, 167, 179; Charles Stuart to Theodore Dwight Weld, October 10, 1839, in Barnes and Dumond, eds., *Letters*, pp. 802-803.

<sup>13</sup> Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, p. 409. See also Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, pp. 219-258.

<sup>14</sup> On perspective as it relates to the profitability see Harold D. Woodman, "The Profitability of Slavery: A Historical Perennial," *Journal of Southern History*, (August 1963): 303-325.

<sup>15</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, p. 119; Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, p. 407; Emerson, "An Address. . . On. . . the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies," in Gougeon and Myerson, eds., *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, 8, 9, 21. See also the excellent article by Maurice Gonnaud, "The Predicament of Progress in the Period of Transcendentalism," *Prospects: The*

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*Annual of American Cultural Studies*, Vol. 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980 [?? check date]), pp. 17-29.

In interpreting Emerson's West Indian emancipation speeches, it is important to recognize that the sources he relied on—principally Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament* (1808, 1839), and James A. Thome and J. Horace Kimball, *Emancipation in the West Indies: A Six Months' Tour in Antigua, Barbadoes, and Jamaica, in the Year 1837* (1838)—were written prior to the end of apprenticeship and obviously did not dwell on the possibility of sharp declines in sugar production. See Len Gougeon, *Virtue's Hero, Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 69-85; Gougeon and Myerson, *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, pp. xxvii-xxxii.

<sup>16</sup> Gerrit Smith to Gen. John H. Cooke, December 11, 1840, Gerrit Smith Papers (hereafter GSP). My discussion of Gerrit Smith is drawn in part from my forthcoming book, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, February 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Gerrit Smith to Gen. John H. Cooke, December 11, 1840, GSP.

<sup>18</sup> Gerrit Smith to the Rev. Theodore S. Wright, Rev. Charles B. Ray, and Dr. J. McCune Smith, August 1, 1846, GSP; Smith, *An Address to the Three thousand Colored Citizens of New-York. . . September 1, 1846* (New York, 1846), pp. 1-9; Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Gerrit Smith: A Biography* (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1878), pp. 101-108; Ralph Volney Harlow, *Gerrit Smith: Philanthropist and Reformer* (New York: Henry Holt, 1939), pp. 242-245.

<sup>19</sup> Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, pp. 192-226, 231-279, quotation from p. 219; Thomas C. Holt, "'An Empire Over the Mind': Emancipation, Race, and Ideology in the British West Indies and the American South," in J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, eds., *Region, Race, and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 283-313; Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, 3-178.

<sup>20</sup> George Henry Evans, "To Gerrit Smith," *The People's Rights*, July 7, 1844; "Second Letter From *The Working Man's Advocate*, August 10, 1844. On Evans and the National Reform Association (NRA) see Jamie L. Bronstein, *Land Reform and Working-Class Experience in Britain and the United States, 1800-1862* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 15-18, 40-43, 87-96, 119-122, 146-149; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Carl J. Guarneri, *Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 296-313; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso Press, 1991), pp. 77-80.

Smith made clear to Evans his priority of abolitionism over land reform for Northern white workers:

When you tell abolitionists that the order of doing good is, first, to those near you, and then to those afar off; they will. . . tell you, that an infinitely more important order of benevolence is, first, to labor for the total repudiation of the Heaven-forbidden idea of property in man, and for the establishment of man's right to himself; and then, for the establishment of his right to that which by Heaven's ordination, is the subject of property.

See "Gerrit Smith's Reply," *Working Man's Advocate*, July 20, 1844.

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<sup>21</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), pp. 67-68, 235; Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, pp. 274-279; McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, pp. 238-259.

<sup>22</sup> On McCune Smith as the foremost black intellectual of his day, see Vernon Loggins, *The Negro Author: His Development in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 182; Frederick Douglass, "Dr. James McCune Smith," *Douglass' Monthly*, March 1859. My discussion of James McCune Smith is drawn in part from my forthcoming book, *The Black Hearts of Men*.

<sup>23</sup> The only eligibility requirements for the recipients of Smith's land were: they had to reside in New York State; be between the ages of twenty-one and sixty; own no freehold property or have the means to it (they had to be poor); not "drunkards," though Smith tolerated occasional drinkers; and they had to be black. Although Gerrit did not want to put a "bounty on color," he concluded that blacks were "the poorest of the poor, and the most deeply wronged of our citizens." See Gerrit Smith to Wright, Ray, and McCune Smith, August 1, 1846, GSP.

<sup>24</sup> McCune Smith to Gerrit Smith, December 17, 1846, GSP.

<sup>25</sup> McCune Smith, "Letter From Communipaw" [McCune Smith's pseudonym], *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, February 26, 1852.

<sup>26</sup> Douglass's first speech resembles in its structure and tone Emerson's 1844 West Indian emancipation speech: He traced the history of British emancipation from the beginning of the slave trade to its abolition, the rise of British immediatist thought (highlighting Elizabeth Heyrick's 1824 pamphlet), and the triumph of liberty. Like Emerson, Douglass focused on the perspective of slaves and freed people, regarded the event as "the greatest and grandest of the  
d compared British emancipation to conditions in America. In West Indian emancipation, Douglass (also like Emerson) saw "the downfall of Slavery in our own  
*The Frederick Douglass Papers*, 1:2 (1847-54) ed. John Blassingame (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 69-84, quotations from pp. 69, 83-84.

<sup>27</sup> *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, 1:2 (1847-54), pp. 145-146.

<sup>28</sup> *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, 1:3 (1855-63) ed. John W. Blassingame (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 190-191, 193, 196-198, 219.

<sup>29</sup> *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, 1:3, pp. 198, 472, 552; Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, 128-129, 158. I develop the millennialism of Douglass, McCune Smith, and Gerrit Smith in *The Black Hearts of Men*. See also Gonnaud, "Predicament of Progress in Transcendentalism," pp. 18-21; David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), pp. 1-58; Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), pp. 55-108.