

CHAPTER 9

Quasi-Free Blacks

■ American Anomaly

With the prohibition of slavery in several Northern states and with programs for gradual emancipation in others before the end of the eighteenth century, it was only natural that free blacks would in due time become a substantial element of the population. Slavery, moreover, had been excluded from the Northwest Territory, though it persisted there for several decades after 1787. There had been some free blacks during the entire colonial period, but for the most part they were inconsiderable in number and inconsequential in influence. The Revolution, with its philosophy of egalitarianism, had served to increase the number of free blacks not only in the North but in the South too, where some masters put the philosophy into practice. But in the South the existence of a large group of free blacks proved to be a source of constant embarrassment to slaveholders, for it tended to undermine the very foundation on which slavery was built. The perpetuation of relations between the whites and blacks in the South was predicated upon the indisputable control of the latter by the former. Free blacks, regardless of what their rights were theoretically, could not be an exception. It became necessary, therefore, for Southerners to carry on a campaign of vilification against free blacks in order to "keep them in their place." In the heat of this campaign one antagonist went so far as to describe free blacks as "an incubus upon the land."

Despite Southern opposition to the presence of free blacks, white people themselves were frequently responsible for the increase. Masters, stricken by conscience, impelled by affection, or yielding to the temptation to evade

responsibility, manumitted their slaves in large numbers until legislation either discouraged or prevented them from doing so. Many slaves were freed by their masters through deeds of manumission. In some instances the manumitted were children of a master by one of his slaves. Others were manumitted through wills, like the slaves of John Randolph, numbering more than 400, who were set free upon his death in 1833. There were stipulations in some wills that slaves should be set free upon reaching a certain age or upon the death of the testator's heirs. Either individual owners or the state manumitted slaves occasionally for meritorious service. The slave who saved the Georgia capitol from destruction by fire was set free in 1834. Pierre Chastang of Mobile was bought and freed by popular subscription because of his outstanding service in the War of 1812 and in the yellow fever epidemic of 1819.

Enterprising slaves were able to amass sufficient capital to purchase their freedom, especially if their masters were willing to cooperate. There are several examples of masters who set up programs of self-hire for slaves who looked toward purchasing themselves. Some slaves, regardless of their masters' attitude, saved enough money to purchase their freedom. Lunsford Lane of Raleigh, for example, spent his spare time making pipes, raising chickens, and engaging in other tasks in order to realize his ambition of becoming free. A slave could not always trust an owner who promised freedom upon the payment of a certain amount of money, as one of Lane's friends found out after he had given his owner \$800 and then had had to run away. Indeed, thousands of slaves secured their freedom by running away.

As the number of free blacks increased by these various methods of obtaining freedom, it also multiplied through the natural excess of births over deaths. Children born of free black mothers were also free, and as the free black family achieved a degree of stability, children became an important factor in adding to their numbers. There was some increase, moreover, from the birth of mulatto children to white mothers. The practice of white women mixing with black men was fairly widespread during the colonial period and had not entirely ceased by 1865.

There were 59,000 free blacks in the United States at the time of the first decennial census in 1790. Slightly more than 27,000 were in the Northern states, and 32,000 in the South. In the next decade they increased by approximately 82 percent, and in the following decade by 71 percent. After 1810 the rate of increase fell sharply, a trend that continued up until 1860. This decline was due largely to laws against manumission and to the opposition of those who viewed their increase with great alarm. Many states required blacks to leave the state upon being manumitted. By 1830 there were 319,000 free blacks in the United States, and thirty years later the number had climbed to 488,000, of whom 44 percent lived in the South Atlantic states and 46 percent in the North. The remainder were to be found in the South Central states and the West. Maryland led all other states with

I know all Men by these presents
 that I Ebenezer Rothwell of Newcastle and State
 of Delaware. do for Divers good Causes and
 Reasons to me well known ~~and~~
~~hence~~ me hereunto moving do
 Manumit Enfranchise and set at liberty
 My Negro Man Isaac now my son
 Aged about twenty years when he the
 said Isaac shall have arrived to the full
 age of thirty two years - and I do for my
 self my heirs Ex. adm' or assigns manumit
 enfranchise and set at liberty my s^r.
 Negro Man Isaac when he shall have
 arrive as aforesaid to a^r. age of thirty
 two -- years in witness whereof I have
 hereunto set my hand and seal this
 first day of April Anno. Domini. one
 thousand Eight Hundred
 Witnesses present
 Ebenezer Rothwell *Ebenezer Rothwell Seal*

DEED OF MANUMISSION. Ebenezer Rothwell of Newcastle County, Delaware, promised to set free his twenty-year-old slave, Isaac, when he reached the age of thirty-two. Other popular forms of emancipation were by will and by legislative act. (Original ms. The Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.)

83,900 free blacks in 1860, a figure only slightly smaller than the slave population. Virginia was next with 58,000, followed closely by Pennsylvania with 56,000, its entire black population.

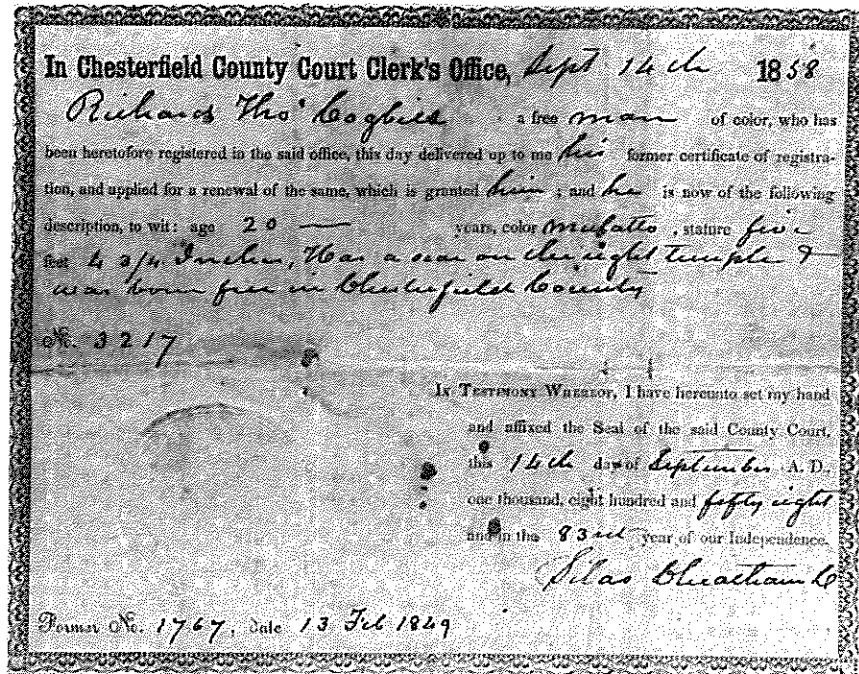
By 1860 free blacks were concentrated in six areas: the tidewater counties of Virginia and Maryland; the Piedmont region of Virginia and North Carolina; the Southern cities of Baltimore, Washington, Charleston, Mobile, and New Orleans; the Northern cities of Boston, New York, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia; isolated areas in the old Northwest like Cass County, Michigan,

Hammond County, Indiana, and Wilberforce, Ohio; and communities in which blacks had mixed freely with Indians, such as those in Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Florida. Free blacks were inclined to be urban. In 1860 there were 25,600 in Baltimore, 22,000 in Philadelphia, 12,500 in New York, 10,600 in New Orleans, and 3,200 in Charleston. The greater opportunities, both economic and social, doubtless accounted for their tendency to concentrate in cities.

Wherever free blacks settled, they lived somewhat precariously upon the sufferance of the whites. Their legal status was fairly high during the colonial period and was strengthened somewhat during the Revolutionary period. After that time, however, their status deteriorated, until toward the end of the slave period the distinction between slaves and free blacks had diminished to a point where in some instances it was hardly discernible. Free blacks found it especially difficult to maintain their freedom. A white person could claim, however fraudulently, that a black person was a slave, and there was very little he or she could do about it. There was, moreover, the danger of the black person's being kidnapped, as often happened. The chances of being reduced to servitude or slavery by the courts were also great. A large majority of free blacks lived in daily fear of losing what freedom they had. One slip or ignorance of the law would send them back into slavery. Several states, such as Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, and Mississippi, required registration. Florida, Georgia, and several other states compelled free blacks to have white guardians. All Southern states required them to have passes, and if one was caught without a certificate of freedom, he or she was presumed to be a slave.

The controls that the state and the community exercised over free blacks mounted year by year. One especially annoying regulation limited their movement. In no Southern state could they move about as they wished, and in some Northern communities it was dangerous to try, lest they be thought fugitive slaves. North Carolina prohibited free blacks from going beyond the county adjoining the one in which they resided. As early as 1793 Virginia barred them from entering the state, and by 1835 most of the Southern and several Northern states had restricted or prohibited free black immigration. Penalties for violations of these laws were severe. In Georgia, for example, the offender was fined \$100, and failing to pay it—which could be expected—was sold into slavery. There were also laws against free blacks leaving the state for any length of time, such as sixty or ninety days, and returning.

There was a mass of legislation designed to insure the white community against any threats or dangers from free blacks. Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina were among the states forbidding them to possess or carry arms without a license. This permit was issued annually, and only to those whose conduct was above reproach. By 1835 the right of assembly had been taken away from almost all free blacks in the South. They could not hold church services without the presence of a licensed and respectable white minister. Benevolent societies and similar organizations were not allowed to



CERTIFICATE OF FREEDOM. Most communities required free blacks to carry such a certificate on their person at all times. Not all of them provided printed forms such as this one, which was issued by the court clerk of Chesterfield County, Virginia. (Original ms. The Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.)

convene. In Maryland they could not have "lyceums, lodges, fire companies, or literary, dramatic, social, moral, or charitable societies." In many communities contact with slaves was kept at a minimum, and laws against entertaining slaves or visiting them were among those most strenuously enforced.

A number of proscriptions made it especially difficult for free blacks to make a living. In 1805 Maryland prohibited them from selling corn, wheat, or tobacco without a license. In 1829 Georgia made it illegal for them to be employed as typesetters. Two years later North Carolina required all black traders and peddlers to be licensed, while South Carolina forbade the employment of free blacks as clerks. A large number of states made it illegal for them either to purchase or to sell alcoholic beverages. Georgia free blacks could not make purchases on credit without the permission of their guardians. Despite these restrictions every state required free blacks to work, and their means of support had to be visible. As early as 1725 Pennsylvania had set the pattern by ordaining that "if any free negro, fit to work, shall neglect so to do and loiter and misspend his or her time . . . any two Magistrates . . .

are . . . impowered and required to bind out to service, such negro, from year to year, as to them may seem meet." Other states passed similar laws during the national period, some going so far as to require free blacks to post bonds as security against becoming public charges. Not only were adult free blacks hired or bound out, but their children were taken and placed in the care of white persons. Illegitimate children whose parents had violated some law or were without means of supporting them were apprenticed out to be taught a trade and to be given moral instruction.

In some states the constitutions written during the Revolutionary period did not exclude free blacks from voting. They voted to a considerable extent in Maryland, North Carolina, New York, and Pennsylvania for several years. All Southern states entering the Union after 1789, except Tennessee, excluded Negroes from the franchise. In a bill signed by President Jefferson in 1802 they were excluded from the franchise in the nation's newly established capital, Washington, D.C. Shortly after the beginning of the nineteenth century, as the campaign to reduce the free black's status got under way, states both in the North and South began to disfranchise them. Maryland's free blacks lost the ballot in 1810. Those in Tennessee were disfranchised in 1834, and in the following year those in North Carolina lost the ballot. Even Pennsylvania confined the privilege to white males in 1838. In its constitution of 1821, New York set up a property qualification of \$250 for blacks and a residence requirement of three years for free-black suffrage. Meanwhile, whites had no property requirements for voting and could qualify with only a one year's residency. In states that did not disfranchise blacks, their political influence was taken lightly and there was no extensive voting by blacks anywhere after 1830.

Despite these significant reductions in status, free blacks were expected to bear the burdens that other citizens bore, and in some instances they were expected to do even more. In Pensacola, Florida, they had to pay a tax of \$2 for putting on entertainments. In Baltimore in 1859 and in other places as well, they were expected to pay school taxes, but their children were not allowed to attend publicly supported schools. In general they were barred from serving in a state militia except as musicians or servants. Two significant exceptions were the New York law of 1814 raising two black regiments and the Louisiana laws of 1812 authorizing a militia corps of free men of color and, in Natchitoches, a police corps of free blacks.

The right to own and dispose of property was generally conceded to free blacks. When Texas was a republic there was some question as to whether they could own land there, but their right had at least been partially recognized by the time Texas entered the Union in 1845. Only Georgia, in 1818, forbade free blacks to own any real estate or slaves, but the following year the act was repealed, except for Savannah, Augusta, and Darien.

In courts of law the testimony of free blacks was not admissible in cases where whites were parties. Perhaps the clearest example of the disesteem in which free blacks were held was the general policy of permitting slaves,

viewed as wholly irresponsible before the law, to testify against them. In practice, however, the courts were fairly lenient toward them. Indeed, from the courts, especially the higher ones, they received the greatest protection. In rejecting the claims of a white person that a black person should be thrown out of court because he had not proved that he was free, the Maryland Court of Appeals said that, in pleading, he did not have to prove his freedom. A justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court went so far as to say that a free black could strike a white man in self-defense: "A free negro, however lowly his condition, is in the 'peace of the State,' and to deprive him of this right would be to put him on the footing of an outlaw."

Slaveholding states had a rather peculiar way of demonstrating their interest in the welfare of free blacks. Since their life was especially difficult, legislators were of the opinion that this class of people should be given the opportunity to choose their masters and reenslave themselves. In 1857 Tennessee enacted a law to facilitate reenslavement. In the following year Texas enacted such a law, and in 1859 and 1860, respectively, Louisiana and Maryland passed similar legislation. Several other states, including North Carolina, seriously considered such statutes, but for various reasons failed to enact them. Perhaps Arkansas went farthest: in 1859 the legislature passed an act to remove free blacks and mulattoes by compelling those who remained in the state at the end of a year to choose masters "who must give bond not to allow such negroes to act as free."

■ Economic and Social Development

It was only natural that free blacks should experience great difficulty in achieving anything resembling economic stability and independence. There was, first of all, the considerable psychological adjustment that had to be made in the transition from enslavement to freedom for all except those who were born free. The success and rapidity of this transition frequently depended upon the responsibility a person had been able to assume while still a slave. Another difficulty, almost insurmountable in some places, was the strong opposition of many white workers to blacks, especially in the artisan class. Whites sought legislation barring them from certain trades; failing in this, they frequently resorted to intimidation and violence in order to eliminate the competition of free blacks. Finally, there was legislation that restricted the movements of free blacks, barred them from certain occupations, and placed them at a disadvantage in other ways. The vast majority were without any special skills and had to content themselves with being agricultural workers or, in urban communities, common laborers. Thanks to the apprenticing system established in some states and to the practice of training many slaves as artisans, a considerable number of free blacks possessed skills that enabled them to achieve a degree of economic independence and affluence before the Civil War.

TABLE 4
Free Black Real Estate Ownership in Fourteen Cities in 1850

CITIES	VALUE OF REAL ESTATE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	AVERAGE VALUE OF HOLDING
New Orleans	\$2,354,640	650	\$3,623
Philadelphia	327,000	77	4,248
Cincinnati	317,780	118	2,693
Charleston	200,600	47	4,268
Brooklyn	145,785	98	1,488
Baltimore	137,488	101	1,361
New York	110,010	71	1,549
Washington	108,816	178	611
Louisville	95,650	63	1,518
Pittsburgh	74,200	38	1,953
Buffalo	57,610	41	1,405
St. Louis	49,650	16	3,103
Albany	44,400	32	1,388
Boston	41,900	13	3,223

Source: Leonard P. Curry. *The Free Black in Urban America 1800-1850: The Shadow of the Dream*. The University of Chicago Press (Chicago, Ill. 1983), p. 267. Reprinted by permission.

Despite the strong opposition of white workers, urban blacks followed their trades if they had any. Even the unskilled found some kind of work to do because they were concentrated in areas that were losing white workers to the West, and in the shortage that prevailed even the labor of the despised black was welcomed. In Charleston, Charles H. Wesley found free blacks engaged in more than 50 occupations, many of them requiring a high degree of skill. They worked in the building trades, made clothing and foods, operated machines, and piloted ships. There were more than 70 occupations in North Carolina in which they were engaged. Among those working in Baltimore in 1860 were several confectioners, druggists, and grocers. Though there were only slightly more than 2,000 free blacks in Boston in 1860, they were scattered among nearly 100 occupations, including paperhanging, engraving, quarrying, photography, and tailoring. They were also in the professions of the ministry, teaching, law, and dentistry. Practically the same can be said for those in New York City and, to a lesser extent, in Cincinnati. In Philadelphia in 1859, they engaged in more than 130 occupations, all of which involved the exercise of skills. Even in the deep South there were free blacks working in occupations and professions that would have disturbed those who were opposed to their progress and surprised those who were

convinced of their improvidence. In Atlanta, for example, Roderick Badger was practicing dentistry in 1859. In New Orleans, where in 1845 Norbert Rillieux had invented a vacuum pan for evaporating syrup in the manufacture of sugar, there were teachers, jewelers, architects, and lithographers in 1860. Almost every community had its free black carpenters, barbers, cabinetmakers, and brickmasons; many had shopkeepers, salespeople, and clerks, even where it was in violation of the law.

Aid given by some owners as well as by organizations such as the Society of Friends, the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, and the North Carolina Manumission Society helped free blacks get a start, and this assistance frequently amounted to enough for them to acquire their first piece of property, usually personal. One benevolent master in Baltimore gave his manumitted slave a house and a lot worth more than \$12,000 in 1859. Several gave their freed chattel as much as 100 acres of land. From these benevolences and from their own efforts, free blacks gradually accumulated property. As early as 1800 those in Philadelphia owned nearly 100 houses and lots. By 1837, in New York City, they owned \$1.4 million worth of taxable real estate and had \$600,000 on deposit in savings banks. In Cincinnati, the property of free blacks was valued at more than \$500,000. These evidences of economic stability caused one European observer to describe them as "shrewd and sensible blacks."

Free blacks in the Southern states also accumulated property. In Maryland they paid taxes on more than \$1 million of real property in 1860, and 12 owned property valued in excess of \$5,000. Luther P. Jackson found that in Virginia in 1860 they owned more than 60,000 acres of farmland and their city real estate was valued at \$463,000. In North Carolina they owned \$480,000 worth of real property and \$564,000 worth of personal property in 1860. In Charleston, 352 blacks paid taxes in 1859 on property valued in excess of \$778,000. Tennessee's free blacks owned about \$750,000 worth of real and personal property in 1860. The affluence of a large number of free blacks in New Orleans is well known. They owned more than \$15 million worth of property in 1860. Small wonder that in the preceding year the *Daily Picayune* was moved to describe them as "a sober, industrious, and moral class, far advanced in education and civilization."

The extent of slaveholding among free blacks has been a matter of only recent concern to the student of history. The majority of black slave owners had some personal interest in their property. Frequently the husband purchased his wife, or vice versa; or the slaves were the children of a free father who had purchased his wife; or they were other relatives or friends who had been rescued from the worst features of the institution by some affluent free black. There were instances, however, in which free blacks had a real economic interest in the institution of slavery and held slaves in order to improve their own economic status. This was true of Cyprian Ricard, who purchased an estate with ninety-one slaves in Louisiana, and of Charles Rogues and Marie Metoyer, who had forty-seven and fifty-eight slaves,

respectively. In the Charleston area, as well as around New Orleans, there were several free Negroes who had slaves in such great numbers as to indicate an economic interest in the institution. Free blacks on occasion also employed white people to work for them. Thomas Day, North Carolina's best-known cabinetmaker, employed a white journeyman for several years. Jim Dungey, a wagoner of Nashville, Tennessee, had labor-management problems of his own, for in October 1859 the *Republican Banner* reported that he "got into a fight with a white man in his employ."

Individual cases of affluence among free blacks are numerous. Solomon Humphries of Macon, Georgia, was a leading grocer in the city; before his death he accumulated property worth more than \$20,000, including several slaves. Jehu Jones, proprietor of one of Charleston's best hotels, amassed a fortune of more than \$40,000 and sent his son to Amherst. James Forten, who had started out as an errand boy on the docks of Philadelphia, became a sailmaker and accumulated a fortune of more than \$100,000. Thomy Lafon, the tycoon of New Orleans, was worth \$500,000 at his death. He had contributed so much to the development of the city that the state legislature ordered a bust of Lafon to be carved and set up in some public institution in New Orleans. Much closer to the average was James Boon, a North Carolina artisan who, despite his excellence as a carpenter, spent most of his time trying to remain solvent and whose property, what little there was, was in the hands of his creditors more often than in his own.

In the beginning little social distinction was made in America on account of race. As the racial justification for slavery developed, there began to creep into the mores of American society a distinction between blacks and whites. One of its first manifestations was the passage of laws against intermarriage. More and more, however, the real distinction came to be that between whites and those blacks who had some claim to freedom. In the nineteenth century, as the slaveholding class found it necessary to establish safeguards for effective control of free blacks, a veritable wall was erected around the blacks, who found it necessary to develop their own lives and institutions. There existed between them and the rest of the world a minimum of communication, and even this communication steadily decreased.

The free black family evolved as a result of three lines of social relations: marriage within the group; marriage to slaves; and relations, legal or clandestine, with whites and Indians. The free black was not always subjected to the social controls that affected the rest of society. As a result, the relations out of which the free black family sprang were frequently judged immoral and uncivilized according to prevailing social conventions. When free blacks married one another, however, they usually secured licenses and went through a civil or religious ceremony. The marriage of a free black to a slave, which could not be effected without consent of the slave's owner, was more frequently a rather informal union for which no license was secured. Relations with white people were equally informal and consisted of a free black "taking up" with a white person or, as in New

Orleans, a well-to-do white man maintaining a free black woman under a system of *placage*, or concubinage. These relations, together with the manumission of black children by white fathers, accounted for the 159,000 free mulattoes in the United States in 1850.

There was little in the way of organized recreation for free blacks. Their pleasures came from the rather simple experiences of visiting, singing, or attending meetings of organizations to which they belonged. There was considerable drinking, though hardly as much as many whites claimed. Gambling among themselves, with slaves, or with whites, all of which were criminal offenses, was another recreation for them. In urban areas they enjoyed the dances given by various societies and benevolent organizations. Cakewalks and balls were events in Baltimore to which many free blacks looked forward. The best known of the dances were the quadroom balls in New Orleans and a few other Southern cities. These can hardly be called recreation for them, however, since white men were the only males in attendance. Quadrooms were either young women whom white men were keeping as concubines or those who were eligible for such relations. Only New York blacks could boast of an "African Theater," which flourished for several years after it was founded in 1821.

Free blacks held their fraternal organizations and benevolent societies in high esteem. The Masons continued to flourish during the generation immediately preceding the Civil War. In Maryland, for example, by 1845 they had grown to the point where it became desirable to form the First Colored Grand Lodge, and two years later another was set up. In 1843, under the leadership of Peter Ogden, a group of them organized the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, which became one of the major black fraternal organizations. They found it desirable to bind themselves together for social and cultural uplift, economic advancement, and mutual relief. Thus, a large number of benevolent societies sprang into existence, some of which were secret. In Baltimore, there was one as early as 1821, composed of young men, and by 1835 there were thirty-five. The Friendship Benevolent Society for Social Relief, the Star in the East Association, and the Daughters of Jerusalem were some of the more prominent organizations with substantial savings accounts in Baltimore banks. In other cities there were benevolent associations of mechanics, coachmen, caulkers, and other workers, suggesting that blacks were organizing themselves into unions at about the same time as whites. In the deep South such organizations were frowned upon by most whites and were outlawed altogether in many communities. They persisted, however, in some places. As late as 1860 they were being organized in New Orleans, where the Band Society, with the motto Love, Union, Peace, had bylaws requiring its members "to go about once in a while and see one another in love" and to wear the society's regalia on special occasions.

Important to the free black, as to the slave, was the church. Religious services offered opportunities for social intercourse as well as spiritual uplift.

The independent church movement of the North continued to grow. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion church increased its membership and extended its areas of operation. As blacks moved west they founded new congregations of these religious communities. In 1847 the African Methodist Episcopal church began the publication of a weekly magazine, *The Christian Herald*, which was changed to *The Christian Recorder* in 1852. By maintaining national organizations black Methodists were able to make their influence felt through important institutions in American life.

More free blacks belonged to Baptist churches, but because their churches were decentralized, their influence was not as great as that of the Methodists. Where a black Baptist church was associated with other churches, it was usually with white churches in the same area rather than with black churches elsewhere. While this was an important step in Americanization, it left black Baptists without much force among their own people. There were strong Baptist churches in many Northern cities, including Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, and in some towns in the West, such as Cleveland, Cincinnati, Detroit, and Chicago.

The South generally proscribed religious life among blacks between 1820 and 1860. Although the African Methodist Episcopal church had made considerable headway in Charleston, for example, the organization was crushed by the weight of public opinion in 1822. Whites generally believed that black Methodists were implicated in the Denmark Vesey plot. Realizing the futility of trying to carry on against such odds, the Reverend Morris Brown, who later became a bishop, led his flock to the North. Other free black preachers in the South experienced even greater hardships. Although John Chavis was one of North Carolina's most beloved Presbyterian ministers, he was not allowed to preach after 1831. Henry Evans, who organized the first Methodist church in Fayetteville, North Carolina, would doubtless have been evicted from his post had he been alive in 1831. Ralph Freeman, a well-known Baptist minister, was so determined to preach after 1831 that the Pee Dee Baptist Association of North Carolina felt compelled to publish a notice warning him to "refrain from making evening appointments of his own." White Episcopalians and Presbyterians solved the problem of free blacks by admitting them to worship, usually in segregated sections of their churches. As an effective independent institution among free blacks, the church declined before the outbreak of the Civil War.

One unique service that black religious leaders rendered was ministering to whites. Lemuel Haynes, the Revolutionary soldier, had set the example by his long service to white congregations in several Northern towns. Others were Samuel Ringgold Ward, pastor of a white congregation in Cortlandville, New York, and Henry Highland Garnet, who served a white church in Troy, New York. Many Southern black ministers, such as Freeman, Evans, and Chavis, preached to white congregations before the proscriptive laws of the 1820s and 1830s.

In Northern communities the opportunities for blacks to secure an

education widened in the nineteenth century. In many places, however, separate schools were maintained. Boston established them for black children in 1820, followed closely by other Massachusetts towns. Antislavery sentiment soon attacked the practice, and by 1855 both Boston and New Bedford permitted black children to attend white public schools. Rhode Island and Connecticut maintained separate schools, but in the last decade before the Civil War, larger funds were given to them. Not until 1824 did the New York Common Council begin to support African Free Schools (see Chapter 6). The city took them over altogether in 1834. Although some communities in the state permitted black children to attend white schools, the legislature made it clear in 1841 that any district could establish separate schools. New Jersey also maintained schools for black children. The citizens of Pennsylvania continued to give both public and private support to schools for blacks as they increased in number, particularly in the western part of the state.

In the West, as more and more blacks migrated, the citizens there were also faced with the problem of education. Ohio excluded them from public schools by law in 1829. Twenty years later the state provided for separate schools, but never appropriated enough funds to set up anything creditable. Citizens of Indiana and Illinois were equally indifferent. Michigan and Wisconsin adopted more democratic policies, but most blacks in the West had to wait until after the Civil War before they could be educated in considerable numbers at public expense.

Free blacks in the South experienced far greater difficulty. Public interest in education was extremely low. Since the responsibility for educating youth was largely a private one, free blacks who would not have benefited directly from public education, did not receive even the indirect benefits of contact with a more educated white populace. There was, moreover, very strong sentiment against educating them. It was believed that they were likely to imbibe seditious and incendiary doctrines through their reading. All the Southern states made it very difficult for them to secure an education by passing laws making it unlawful to instruct free blacks. A surprisingly large number of them nevertheless learned at least the fundamentals. In Baltimore, for example, there were almost 200 adult blacks studying in 1820. Five years later a day and night school was being maintained where many subjects were taught, including Latin and French. The Bethel Charity School, founded by Daniel Coker in 1816 as a part of the enlarged program of the African Methodist Episcopal church, continued to flourish for a number of years. There were several other such schools in Maryland.

Shortly after the settlement of the District of Columbia, several white teachers, including Henry Potter and one Mrs. Haley, taught black children. Later, Maria Billings established a school in Georgetown. In 1807 several free blacks, among them George Bell, Nicholas Franklin, and Moses Liverpool, built the first schoolhouse for blacks in the District of Columbia. It was not until 1824, however, that there was a black teacher, John Adams, in the District. Then schools for blacks began to increase in number, and within a few years

James Thomas, Free Black, Attends School in Tennessee—1830s

A portion of the year (some years) the authorities allowed a school to be kept for teaching the children of Free persons. In that school I learned to read and write. It was surprising to a great many whites to see a colored boy or man with a newspaper. Often they would ask, "Can you read?" It was a question with many people whether it was the proper thing to have a school for the free people for two reasons. First they might write passes for the slaves. Second it might cause the slave to want the same. The law forbid the teaching of the slaves, but many families had servants that were taught by the children and the heads of the family made no objection, rather encouraged it. . . .

School was kept occasionally. It was regarded a great favor to have it allowed at any time. Each pupil or scollar paid one dollar per month. Often there was no school because there was no teacher. When I was quite young there was a colored man who taught school and was a fine scollar himself. One night he was taken out by what was termed the slicks and whipped pretty near to death. The leader of the gang was a son of the most distinguished Jurist in the state. . . . After that the colored teachers were afraid to try it. Finally a white man came in and taught. When Mother could spare me from her work I went to school.

From Tennessee Slave to St. Louis Entrepreneur: The Autobiography of James Thomas, ed. by Loren Schweninger (Columbia, Mo., 1984), pp. 31–32.

some of the best were to be found in Washington. Black students came there from Maryland and Virginia to study under teachers of their own race.

Free blacks in Virginia and North Carolina received private instruction from whites and other free blacks, but very little in schools. For almost thirty years John Chavis of Raleigh, North Carolina, maintained a school in which he taught whites during the day and free blacks in the evening, but after 1831 he confined his teaching to white children. The blacks of Fredericksburg, Virginia, sought permission from the state legislature in 1838 to send their children to school out of the state, but their plea was summarily rejected. There is plenty of evidence, however, that many free blacks in Virginia and North Carolina towns were being educated right up until the Civil War. In South Carolina their best opportunity to secure an education was provided in Charleston. As early as 1810 blacks had organized the Minor Society school for orphans, and others also attended. In Florida some free blacks sent their children away to school, while others hired teachers to instruct them, as in St. Augustine and Pensacola. New Orleans had several schools for free blacks. The *Ecole des Orphelins Indigents*, set up in 1840, was generously supported by such wealthy free blacks as Thomy Lafon, Madame Couvent,

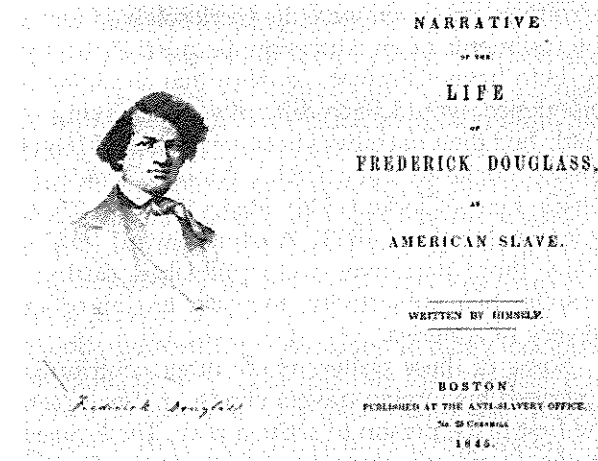
and Aristide Mary, who bequeathed \$5,000 to the school. Some went to France for an education, such as Edward Dede, who studied music in Paris.

From all this educational activity a better trained free black citizenry emerged. There is little doubt that they were eager to secure an education. Of 2,038 in Boston in 1850, almost 1,500 were in school. There were 1,400 at schools in Baltimore and 1,000 in New Orleans. In the states and territories as a whole 32,629 were in school in 1860. In every community they were studying, with an apparent belief that education would solve some of their problems. Where opportunities did not exist, they sought to create them and gave enthusiastic support to their institutions. Just as Lafon and Madame Couvent set examples of philanthropy in New Orleans, so did free blacks in other parts of the country. In several communities they organized Phoenix Societies with the special object of promoting the improvement of "Morals, literature and the mechanic arts." The "Mental Feast," a social occasion, survived thirty years later in the interior towns of Pennsylvania and the West. It was a sign that blacks were part of the great awakening that swept American education in the generation preceding the Civil War.

They also made a start in higher education. In 1826 Edward Jones and John Russwurm graduated from Amherst College and Bowdoin College, respectively, and before the Civil War blacks were attending Oberlin, Franklin, and Rutland colleges, Harvard Medical School, and other institutions of higher learning. The doors of several institutions that were to become predominantly black colleges opened during this period. In 1851 a young white woman from New York, Myrtilla Miner, went to Washington to establish an academy for black females. So much opposition developed that the school was maintained only with difficulty. At the outbreak of the Civil War, it was still a small institution, but the idea had already been conceived for the college in Washington that long bore her name. In 1839 plans were made for an Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia. The school was incorporated in 1842 and began to flourish ten years later under the leadership of Charles L. Reason of New York. A bequest for \$300,000 by the Reverend Charles Avery led to the establishment in 1849 of a college for blacks in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, that bore the benefactor's name. With enough funds and an efficient faculty of both races, the institution flourished. Meanwhile, Reason, William G. Allen, and George B. Vashon each taught for a time at Central College, a white institution in McGrawville, New York.

Two denominational institutions founded during the period that have continued to grow are Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and Wilberforce University in Ohio. Lincoln, beginning as Ashmun Institute under Presbyterian sponsorship, was incorporated in 1854 and admitted its first students two years later. In 1855 the Cincinnati Conference of the Methodist Episcopal church decided to raise money to establish a college for black youth which was incorporated the following year as Wilberforce University. Its early students were mainly the mulatto children of Southern planters. After a brief suspension at the beginning of the Civil War, it was reopened under the sponsorship of the African Methodist Episcopal church.

THE NARRATIVE OF
FREDERICK DOUGLASS.
This is one of many slave
narratives written in the
antebellum period.
Douglass wrote two other
autobiographies: *My Bond-
age and My Freedom*
(1855) and *The Life and
Times of Frederick
Douglass* (1881). (Courtesy
The Schomburg Center for
Research in Black Culture,
The New York Public Li-
brary, Astor, Lenox, and
Tilden Foundations.)



Blacks became much more articulate in the antebellum years than they had been during the previous century. There were poets, playwrights, historians, newspaper editors, and others who provided a black perspective to the world. In North Carolina, George Moses Horton, who was virtually free, wrote poems that were widely read. In 1829 he published a volume entitled *The Hope of Liberty*, and for the next thirty years wrote for students at the University of North Carolina and for various newspapers. Unfortunately, his interest in poetry diminished as he took to drink; perhaps he realized that for him there was no hope of liberty. Daniel A. Payne, who had a brilliant career as a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal church, published a small volume in 1850 entitled *Pleasures and Other Miscellaneous Poems*. Though they reveal little imagination, a critic said that "with his love of order and precision he had a sense of versification . . ." Frances Harper, whose *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects* appeared in 1854, made her most significant contributions after the Civil War. *Our Nig; Or Sketches From the Life of a Free Black*, the first novel by an African American and by an African-American woman appeared in 1859; its author, Harriet E. Wilson, a free black, probably lived in Massachusetts. In the words of its discoverer, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Our Nig* "stands as a 'missing link' . . . between the sustained and well developed tradition of black autobiography and the slow emergence of a distinctive black voice in fiction." The cultural life of blacks in New Orleans was best represented by a group of seventeen poets who issued a volume in 1845 entitled *Les Cenelles*. The editor, Armand Lanusse, and several contributors had lived or studied in France, and their work clearly shows the influence of Lamartine and Béranger.

The largest and perhaps most significant group of black writers consisted of ex-slaves—fugitive or manumitted—who told the stories of their experiences in narratives. Frequently they were inspired and assisted by abolitionists who desired to use their writings as arguments against slavery. Some

narratives, however, were the work solely of former slaves who had received the rudiments of an education. Because of the content of these works, most of them have a dramatic quality that the imagination alone, untutored by experience, would have difficulty in achieving. Among former slaves who published their narratives between 1840 and 1860 were William Wells Brown (1842), Lunsford Lane (1842), Moses Grandy (1844), Frederick Douglass (1845), Lewis Clarke (1846), Henry Bibb (1849), J. W. C. Pennington (1850), Solomon Northup (1853), Austin Steward (1857), and J. W. Loguen (1859). Many more narratives were published during and after the Civil War. Despite their subjectivity, they are an important source for the study of slavery in America.

Some of these writers made other contributions. William Wells Brown described his foreign travels vividly in *Three Years in Europe* (1852) and was the first black person to write a play, *The Escape* (1858), and a novel, *Clotel; or the President's Daughter* (1853). J. W. C. Pennington, even before he published his narrative, had written a *Textbook of the Origin and History of the Colored People* (1841). A more capable historian was William C. Nell, whose *Services of Colored Americans in the Wars of 1776 and 1812* first appeared in 1852. Three years later it was issued in a substantially revised edition under the title *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution with Sketches of Several Distinguished Colored Persons to Which Is Added a Brief Survey of the Condition and Prospects of Colored Americans*. Martin R. Delany, a leading black physician who had studied at Harvard Medical School, published in 1852 *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*. Seven installments of his novel, *Blake; or the Huts of America*, appeared in *Anglo-African* magazine in 1859. Similar books on the condition of blacks indicated that they were becoming introspective and self-critical, an unmistakable sign of maturity and adjustment. In a class by itself, perhaps, was the work of James McCune Smith of New York. In 1846 this graduate of the medical college at the University of Glasgow published a paper entitled "Influence of Climate on Longevity, with Special Reference to Life Insurance."

Most black newspapers of the period were concerned mainly with the antislavery crusade. Best known were the first one, *Freedom's Journal*, started by Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm in 1827, and the *North Star*, first published by Frederick Douglass in 1847. With its name changed in 1850 to *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, the latter enjoyed wide circulation for several years. Other short-lived periodicals were the *Mystery* (Pittsburgh, 1843), the *Colored Man's Journal* (New York, 1851), the *Mirror of the Times* (San Francisco, 1855), and the *Anglo-African* (New York, 1859).

■ The Struggle in the North and West

For thirty years before the Civil War, blacks were migrating north and west from the South. Not only were slaves running away, but those already free

were looking northward in the hope of finding greater opportunities and better treatment. They went to cities in the Northeast in large numbers and also to the old Northwest along with white immigrants from Europe. Between 1850 and 1860, for example, Michigan's black population jumped from 2,500 to 6,700, Iowa's more than tripled, and California's increased from 962 to 4,086. The reaction to this wholesale migration was not pleasant. Northern whites had shown no unusual hostility to blacks who were already in their midst, but they did not welcome the crude, rough type that came from the South. Indeed, they hoped to keep the North and West free not only of slavery but of blacks as well.

Racial animosity grew in both the North and West, and in many instances manifested itself in physical violence. In Philadelphia in 1819, three white women stoned a black woman to death. A few years later, the citizens adopted a policy of driving blacks away from Independence Square on the Fourth of July, since they were considered not to have had any part in establishing the nation. In 1831 the people of New Haven, Connecticut, became alarmed over the proposal of abolitionist Simeon Jocelyn to establish a college for blacks, and they resolved to oppose it with all their resources. When John Randolph's manumitted slaves were taken to Ohio, German settlers opposed their presence so vigorously that Randolph's executor had to find another place for them to settle. More than one interracial fight on the California mining frontier grew out of white resentment at blacks being there.

Sometimes violence reached the proportions of riots. In 1830 a mob drove eight blacks out of Portsmouth, Ohio. For three days in 1829, bands of white ruffians in Cincinnati took the law into their own hands and ran out of the city those blacks who did not have the bonds required by law. More than 1,000 found it advisable to leave. Blacks were also victims of the riot that occurred when the proslavery element of Cincinnati destroyed the office in which James G. Birney had published an antislavery newspaper, the *Philanthropist*. Defenseless blacks were attacked in their homes, and many left the city. The fugitive slave riot in 1841 also involved many blacks who were in no way connected with harboring fugitives.

In New York there were riots in Utica, Palmyra, and New York City in 1834 and 1839. The most serious antiblack outbreaks, however, took place in Pennsylvania. On August 12, 1834, a mob of whites marched into the black section of Philadelphia and committed numerous acts of violence. The following day they wrecked the African Presbyterian Church, burned homes, and mercilessly beat up several blacks. This reign of terror entered its third day before the police put an end to it. Similar uprisings occurred in 1835 and 1842. By the latter year a large number of whites were out of work because of the severe depression, and when blacks were celebrating the abolition of slavery in the West Indies, the unemployed broke up their parade, attacked scores of them, and burned the New African Hall and Presbyterian Church. State troops had to be called to assist the police in

quieting the city. In 1839 there had been an outbreak in Pittsburgh during which whites did considerable damage to the black section of the city by burning and tearing down houses.

The South enjoyed playing up Northern hostility toward blacks. When an observer said that in New York and Philadelphia blacks were noted chiefly for their "aversion to labor and proneness to villainy," he was quoted extensively in the Southern press. Southerners recounted with pleasure how a Georgia black returned after attempting to live in Ohio and Canada for two years, learning to dislike each place thoroughly. They also told of the Louisiana blacks who suffered so much in New York City that they begged visiting Southerners to take them back with them. When a North Carolina free black remarked that he had been kicked about and abused so much in Cincinnati that he would like to return to the South, a Greensboro paper not only reported the incident but reprinted the article five years later as though it had just happened.

There can be no doubt that many blacks were sorely mistreated in the North and West. Observers like Fanny Kemble and Frederick L. Olmsted mentioned incidents in their writings. Kemble said of Northern blacks, "They are not slaves indeed, but they are pariahs, debarred from every fellowship save with their own despised race. . . . All hands are extended to thrust them out, all fingers point at their dusky skin, all tongues . . . have learned to turn the very name of their race into an insult and a reproach." Olmsted seems to have believed the Louisiana black who told him that they could associate with whites more easily in the South than in the North and that he preferred to live in the South because he was less likely to be insulted there. Such points of view delighted slaveholders and confirmed their belief that slavery was better than freedom for blacks.

Southerners did not seem to realize, however, that the essential difference between the South and the North and West was that in the latter sections blacks had more of the law on their side and could therefore resist encroachments on their rights. Northern blacks could organize and fight for what they believed to be their rights, and there was a substantial group of white citizens who gave them both moral and material support. In 1830 a convention of blacks with delegates from New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia, met in Philadelphia "to devise ways and means for the bettering of our condition." James Forten, John B. Vashon, Samuel Cornish, and other leaders were present. They considered raising funds to establish a college and to encourage blacks to migrate to Canada. Many blacks were opposed to these measures as unsound solutions to their problems, and indeed there were some who opposed the idea of a black convention at all.

For several years, however, these conventions met regularly, and such leading white citizens as Arthur Tappan, John Rankin, and William Lloyd Garrison met with them. In 1847 several delegates, including William C. Nell, met in Troy, New York, and urged that blacks seek admission to white

colleges. Nell believed that diligent and outstanding black students would win the respect of enemies and convert them into friends. In 1850 a convention at Columbus, Ohio, resolved to resist all forms of oppression, promote universal education, and encourage blacks to aspire to mechanical, agricultural, and professional pursuits.

In the decade preceding the Civil War, there were more black conventions than ever before. They met in Rochester, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, and other cities. One of the most important, held at Rochester in 1853, saw the formation of a National Council of Colored People. A stirring memorial, signed by Frederick Douglass among others, was issued to the American people, asserting that "with the exception of the Jews, under the whole heavens, there is not to be found a people pursued with a more relentless prejudice and persecution, than are the free colored people of the United States." After reciting various ways in which they had been mistreated and humiliated, the memorial declared that no other race could have made more progress "in the midst of such an universal and stringent disparagement. It would humble the proudest, crush the energies of the strongest, and retard the progress of the swiftest. In view of our circumstances, we can, without boasting, thank God, and take courage, having placed ourselves where we may fairly challenge comparison with more highly favored men."

There were also conventions of special groups. In 1848 the Citizens Union of Pennsylvania was organized to fight for first-class citizenship for blacks. In 1850 the American League of Colored Laborers was formed in New York to promote cooperation and to foster the education of young blacks in agriculture, the mechanical arts, and commerce.

■ Colonization

The problem of what to do with blacks who would not "adjust" to American life was an old one. It arose shortly after the arrival of the first Africans in America. Banishment was an early punishment for the crimes of both whites and blacks. As the number of free blacks increased, it was felt that they must be sent out of the country if property in slaves was to be secure. Certainly there could be no complete discipline of slaves as long as free blacks were in their midst. Even Northern communities felt that emancipation and concessions of equality were insufficient because the two races could not always live together in harmony. The prevailing point of view was aptly summed up by J. C. Galloway of North Carolina, who said, "It is impossible for us to be happy, if, after manumission, they are to remain among us."

As early as 1714 a "native American," believed to be a resident of New Jersey, had proposed sending blacks back to Africa. The idea did not die. Just after the War for Independence, Samuel Hopkins and the Reverend Ezra Stiles discussed the possibility of putting this notion into practice. In 1777 a Virginia legislative committee, headed by Thomas Jefferson, set forth a plan

of gradual emancipation and deportation. Several organizations for manumission, such as the Connecticut Emancipation Society, had as one of their objectives the colonization of free blacks. Perhaps nothing brought colonization before the country more dramatically than the transporting of thirty-eight blacks to Africa in 1815 by Paul Cuffe, at his own expense. His act suggested what might be done if more people, or even the government, became interested. It suggested, too, that some blacks were indeed interested in leaving the United States.

Within two years after Cuffe's voyage, the American Colonization Society was organized, with Bushrod Washington as president and Henry Clay and John Randolph of Roanoke among its prominent members. Plans were immediately made to establish a colony in Africa, with the aid of federal and state governments, and to educate public opinion to support the project. Agents were sent out to raise funds and to interest free blacks in emigrating to Liberia, whose capital was honored with the name of President Monroe. Soon, thousands of dollars flowed into the society for the purchasing and chartering of ships to transport blacks. By 1832 more than a dozen legislatures had given official approval to the society—even slaveholding states like Maryland, Virginia, and Kentucky. North Carolina, Mississippi, and other states had local colonization societies. At first, only free blacks were transported to Africa. After 1827 some slaves who were manumitted expressly for this purpose were taken to Liberia. By 1830 the society had settled 1,420 blacks in the colony.

The society's first ten years were its best. In 1831 the abolitionists, led by Garrison, who was once a friend of colonization, renounced the scheme. Arthur Tappan, Gerrit Smith, and James G. Birney joined in the attack. Many auxiliary societies, desiring greater autonomy, seceded from the parent organization, which became insolvent in 1834. In Liberia, where the cost of living was high and the colony's affairs were mismanaged, many settlers were unhappy. Dark days thus descended upon the American Colonization Society, but it managed to struggle along for several years before it became moribund in the decade before the Civil War.

Although the American Colonization Society comprised the largest group of individuals interested in deporting blacks, there were other groups and individuals no less interested. Southern newspapers, for example, did what they could to banish free blacks. One Mississippi paper ran an advertisement of how pleasant a place Haiti would be for blacks emigrating from the United States. Indeed, the Haitians were anxious to attract free blacks to their island. A North Carolina newspaper urged free blacks to solve their problems by emigration. It suggested that they go to Canada, Mexico, South America, or the American West. Few whites, however, supported the idea that they should move west after white migration began at the close of the War of 1812.

Despite all the schemes to deport free blacks from the United States, not more than 15,000 migrated. The American Colonization Society was respon-

sible for most of them—approximately 12,000. To places other than Liberia there was less than a trickle. For several reasons all these schemes failed. In the first place, it was not economically feasible to send hundreds of thousands of blacks to Africa or anywhere else. The cost of transporting and maintaining several hundred thousand people would run far into millions if not billions of dollars, and there were not enough supporters of the idea to give it anything like a fair chance of success. In the second place, those who did support it were such a heterogeneous lot that in the long run they could not develop a program agreeable to all. Some advocates of colonization hoped to see an end to slavery and a return of all blacks to their native land. Others supported the schemes because of their conviction that blacks were basically incapable of adjusting to Western civilization and would be better off in their original habitat. Still others saw in colonization an opportunity to carry Christianity and civilization to Africa. Slaveholders hoped, of course, to drain off the free black population, thereby giving great security to the institution of slavery. Motives as varied as these doomed colonization. The attitude of blacks themselves had a great deal to do with its failure.

Shortly after formation of the American Colonization Society a group of free blacks had met in Richmond and mildly approved of the idea of colonization, but they preferred to live elsewhere in the United States, possibly in the Missouri River valley, rather than in Africa. Farther south, free blacks who were weary of fighting a hopeless battle resigned themselves to colonization. The great majority of those who went to Africa were from the slaveholding states. In the North, however, there was almost universal opposition to colonization, particularly in Africa. In Philadelphia 3,000 blacks, led by Richard Allen and James Forten, met in 1817 and registered their objections to colonization, urging the "Humane and Benevolent Inhabitants of Philadelphia" to reject the scheme altogether. They branded it as an "outrage, having no other object in view than the benefit of the slaveholding interests of the country."

Within ten years black opposition had risen to fever pitch. Meetings were held in Baltimore, Boston, New York, Hartford, New Haven, Pittsburgh, and many other cities. New York blacks referred to the supporters of colonization as "men of mistaken views," while those of Lyme, Connecticut, described colonization as "one of the wildest projects ever patronized by enlightened men."

Every convention of blacks opposed colonization, and the leaders spoke and wrote against the scheme. Martin R. Delany was especially hostile to the American Colonization Society, which he described as "anti-Christian in its character and misanthropic in its pretended sympathies." He denounced the leaders as "arrant hypocrites" who were conducting an organization that was obviously "one of the Negro's worst enemies." The main motive of colonization, he claimed, was to eliminate blacks from the United States, and for that purpose a government had been set up in Africa that was "not independent—but a poor miserable mockery—a burlesque on a government."

But not all Northern blacks were opposed to colonization. Even Martin Delany thought that blacks would prosper in Central and South America, and on one occasion he described these places as their future home in the New World. He also thought that Canada West (upper Canada) would be a satisfactory home if it were not annexed to the United States. Such an eventuality, he said, would mean that the "fate of the colored man, however free before, is doomed, doomed, forever doomed." Several outstanding ministers supported colonization on the ground that it would extend Christianity to heathen lands. Among them were Daniel A. Payne and Alexander Crummell, who went to Africa in the interest of Christianity and colonization. Lott Cary and Colin Teague went to Liberia in 1821 under the auspices of the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society and the General Baptist Missionary Convention. While Cary showed no enthusiasm for the policies of the American Colonization Society, he labored among the African settlers until his death in 1828. But colonization itself was doomed: African Americans were as permanent a fixture as there was in America.

Thus blacks went through the terrible ordeal of moving toward freedom. It cannot be said even of the most fortunate that they were entirely free. They suffered indignities and insults, legal disabilities and economic privations, and violent physical and verbal calumnies. Their reactions, even when sober and considered, were the reactions of a frustrated, stricken people. The mistreatment of free blacks was not sectional. At best the situation in the North was tolerable, but only in a relative sense: it was better than in the South. Small wonder there was so much despair. Small wonder, too, that in the South a few who were free became slaves again. Too few of them saw that in the growing intersectional strife between North and South there was opportunity for the downtrodden and hope for the faint-hearted.

CHAPTER 10

Slavery and Intersectional Strife

■ The North Attacks

The antislavery sentiment generated by the humanitarian philosophy of the eighteenth century never completely died out in America. To be sure, there was a period of quiescence as the South found new opportunities for the profitable employment of slaves and as the North became concerned with its own economic and political problems. But some people continued to oppose slavery as an institution, and long before militant abolitionists appeared on the scene around 1830 the most convincing arguments against slavery had already been developed. Soon after the War of 1812 sectionalism was apparent as the North swung to manufacturing and the South, still wedded to agriculture, came to see clearly that the interests of the two sections were becoming antagonistic. Indeed, the industrial development of the North changed the point of view of that section. As people there were brought closer together, they sought to solve their pressing problems through cooperation. In the South, however, the plantation system tended to preserve frontier independence: there was little communal life, only slight civic responsibility, and little interest in various programs for the improvement of humanity. The contest over Missouri, moreover, crystallized the sectional conflict and emphasized the importance of slavery as a national issue.

Antislavery sentiment in the North increased steadily after 1815 as more