

RECONSTRUCTION

Americans had faced no greater challenge than that of "reconstructing" the defeated South. Above and beyond the dilemma of politically reintegrating the states that had rebelled was the far more problematic task of dealing with the millions of African Americans who has been held in slavery by southerners. Should they be granted the full rights of political and economic citizenship? If so, how should this largely illiterate and impoverished mass be prepared for their responsibilities?

Addressing these issues launched one of the most remarkable -- and bitterly contested -- social experiments in the history of the nation: an unprecedented partnership between private initiative and the federal government that would profoundly shape the development of philanthropic institutions, public attitudes towards them, and -- perhaps most importantly --relations between the races for the next century.

Over the previous half century, Americans had offered a variety of opinions about what should be done with the Negroes once they were free. But no one had ever seriously thought about the problems of resettling or resocializing a population which, by 1860, numbered in excess of two million -- 90% of whom were slaves living in the southern states. Even Lincoln himself, though a long-time opponent of slavery, was far from sure about whether racial equality was either possible or desirable. As one northern congressman put it, "this is a government of white men, made by white men, for white men, to be administered, protected, defended, and maintained by white men" (Shaw, 310). Only gradually -- and with the greatest reluctance -- were Lincoln and other northerners won over to the idea that African Americans could and should become citizens.

As with so many other major public initiatives, Union policies towards the former slaves were developed incrementally and were shaped by a variety of contradictory forces. Even though the course of the war remained uncertain as battle lines shifted with victories and defeats, the North faced almost immediately the problem of dealing with slaves. Despite the demands of the more radical elements in the his own Republican Party, Lincoln resisted taking a definitive position on the legal status of slaves behind Union lines in order to retain the loyalty of border states. So abolitionist military commanders and political leaders took the initiative: in May of 1861, Massachusetts' General Benjamin Butler, commanding Fortress Monroe in Virginia, ruled that slaves escaping to his lines were "contraband of war" which he would not return to their owners; three months later, General John C. Fremont issued a proclamation freeing the slaves of Missourians who had taken up arms against the United States; in May of 1862, General David Hunter emancipated the slaves in areas of Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina under his control. Lincoln modified or nullified all of these orders and pushed instead for a plan of compensated emancipation, under which slaveholders would be paid for their human property.

Although Congress passed Lincoln's plan in August of 1861, anti-slavery sentiment in Congress was strengthened by the increasing brutality of the war and the unceasing agitation of the abolitionists. In April of 1862, Congress passed an act freeing all slaves employed in arms or labor against the Union and (with compensation) all slaves in the District of Columbia. In June, Congress acted to abolish slavery -- with compensation -- in all the territories of the United States. A month later, it liberated the slaves of all persons who committed treason or supported the rebellion. By the fall of 1862, sensitive to the growing power of anti-slavery opinion both here and abroad, Lincoln ordered "all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, whose people shall be in rebellion against the United States, shall

thenceforward be forever free" (Shaw, 248) -- a position he would spell out in greater detail in the Emancipation Proclamation of January of 1863.

To understand the process by which reconstruction policies were shaped, it is useful to understand the peculiar nature of the Union Army. To begin with, it was far more tied to the states -- and to state politics -- than the military is today. Though nominally under federal control, most units were recruited, equipped, and paid by the states. And their officers were more often chosen for their political skills than their military ones. Accordingly, units from states where abolitionist sentiment ran strong, were often led by officers with strong anti-slavery commitments and with close ties to abolitionist organizations. While neither Congress nor the Executive branch were committed one way or the other, each contained powerful leaders who part of the abolitionist network. Chief among these were Senator Charles Sumner and Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase. Working together, key congressmen, military men, Secretary Chase, and the anti-slavery organizations, would lay the foundations for the eventual reconstruction of the South.

In November of 1861, the Union Navy, under the command of Commodore Samuel F. Du Pont, took possession of the islands along the South Carolina coast. The planters, who included some of the South's wealthiest leaders, fled -- leaving behind their mansions, fields of maturing cotton, and some 10,000 slaves. Since Lincoln still favored policies of compensated emancipation, there were no clearcut guidelines for dealing with such abandoned property. But Treasury Secretary Chase, seeing both an opportunity for increasing government revenues and for advancing abolitionist schemes for emancipation, took charge of matters. In December of 1861, he sent Lieutenant William H. Reynolds, an officer with the 1st Rhode Island Artillery (an in civilian life, a cotton broker), to take charge of abandoned cotton in the islands.

In the meantime, Chase became aware of the desperate situation of the Sea Island slaves. In February of 1862, Commodore Du Pont wrote him that the 10,000 slaves were "almost starving and some naked or nearly so" (Rose, 20). Without masters, without work, without doctors, the slaves flocked to the army camps seeking help. While Du Pont and General Sherman wrote to northern charitable organizations requesting help, others, including New York *Tribune* correspondent George W. Smalley reported on the deteriorating situation for northern press and exerted their influence to move political leaders like Sumner.

One of the most influential articles on the problem was written by Boston attorney Edward L. Pierce. Although well-connected politically, having worked in Salmon P. Chase's Cincinnati law office and served as his secretary, Pierce had enlisted as a private in the Third Massachusetts Infantry. While serving in the Sea Islands, Private Pierce came face-to-face with the question of how the Union should deal with slaves in captured rebel territories. After returning to Boston in the fall of 1861, he wrote an influential article for the *Atlantic*, "The Contrabands at Fortress Monroe" (1861), which described their situation and outlined the political opportunities they presented to the Union. Pierce was, as his article makes clear, hardly a disinterested observer (he later became vice-president of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society and served on the governing board of the American Freedmen's Union Commission). A committed abolitionist, Pierce opposed Lincoln's cautious policies, strongly advocated immediate emancipation, and used his observations on the "contrabands" to support his arguments for permitting freed slaves to serve in the armed forces and to obtain full rights as citizens. He also suggested that the government undertake efforts to educate the freed slaves, to provide them with remunerative work, and to provide them with churches.

Edward L. Pierce, THE CONTRABANDS AT FORTRESS MONROE

On the morning of the 22d of May last, Major General Butler, welcomed with a military salute, arrived at Fortress Monroe, and assumed command of the Department of Virginia. . . . On the 23d of May General Butler ordered the first reconnoitring expedition, which consisted of a part of the Vermont Regiment, and proceeded under the command of Colonel Phelps over the dike and bridge towards Hampton. They were anticipated, and when in sight of the second bridge saw that it had been set on fire, and, hastening forward, extinguished the flames. The detachment then marched into the village. A parley was held with a Secession officer, who represented the men in arms in Hampton were only a domestic police. Meanwhile the white inhabitants, particularly the women, had generally disappeared. The negroes gathered around our men, and their evident exhilaration was particularly noted, some of them saying, "Glad [626] to see you, Massa," and betraying the fact that, on the approach of the detachment, a field piece stationed at the bridge had been thrown into the sea. This was the first communication between our army and the negroes in this department.

The reconnoissance of the day had more important results than were anticipated. Three, negroes, owned by Colonel Mallory, a lawyer of Hampton and a Rebel officer, taking advantage of the terror prevailing among the white inhabitants, escaped from their master, skulked during the afternoon, and in the night came to our pickets. The next morning, May 24th, they were brought to General Butler, and there, for the first time, stood the Major-General and the fugitive slave face to face. Being carefully interrogated, it appeared that they were field-hands, the slaves of an officer in the Rebel service, who purposed taking them to Carolina to be employed in military operations there. Two of them had wives in Hampton, one a free colored woman, and they had several children in the neighborhood. Here was a new question, and a grave one, on which the Government had as yet developed no policy. In the absence of precedents or instructions, an analogy drawn from international law was applied. Under that law, contraband goods, which are directly auxiliary to military operations, cannot in time of war be

imported by neutrals into an enemy's country, and may be seized as lawful prize when the attempt is made so to import them. It will be seen, that, accurately speaking, the term applies exclusively to the relation between a belligerent and a neutral, and not to the relation between belligerents. Under the strict law of nations, all the property of an enemy may be seized. Under the Common Law, the property of traitors is forfeit. The humaner usage of modern times favors the waiving of these strict rights, but allows, without question, the seizure and Confiscation of all such goods as are immediately auxiliary to military purposes. These able-bodied negroes, held as slaves, were to be employed to build breastworks, to transport or store provisions, to serve as cooks or waiters, and even to bear arms. Regarded as property, according to their master's claim, they could be efficiently used by the Rebels for the purposes of the Rebellion, and most efficiently by the Government in suppressing it. Regarded as persons, they had escaped from communities where a triumphant rebellion had trampled on the laws, and only the rights of human nature remained, and they now asked the protection of the Government, to which, in prevailing treason, they were still loyal, and which they were ready to serve as best they could.

The three negroes, being held contraband of war, were at once set to work to aid the masons in constructing a new bakehouse within the fort. Thenceforward the term "contraband" bore a new signification, with which it will pass into history, designating the negroes who had been held as slaves, now adopted under the protection of the Government. It was used in official communications at the fort. It was applied familiarly to the negroes, who stared somewhat inquiring, "What d'ye call us that for?" Not having Wheaton's "Elements" at hand, we did not attempt an explanation. The contraband notion was adopted by Congress in the Act of July 6th, which confiscates slaves used in aiding the Insurrection. There is often great virtue in such technical phrases in shaping public opinion. They commend practical action to a class of minds little developed in the direction of the sentiments, which would be repelled by formulas of a broader and nobler import. The venerable gentleman, who wears gold spectacles

and reads a conservative daily, prefers confiscation to emancipation. He is reluctant to have slaves declared freemen, but has no objection to their being declared contrabands. His whole nature rises in insurrection when Beecher preaches in a sermon that a thing ought to be done because it is a duty, but he yields gracefully when Butler issues an order commanding it to be done because it is a military necessity.

[628] On the next day, Major John B. Cary, another Rebel officer, late principal of an academy in Hampton, a delegate to the Charleston Convention, and a seceder with General Butler from the Convention at Baltimore, came to the fort with a flag of truce, and, claiming to act as the representative of Colonel Mallory, demanded the fugitives. He reminded General Butler of his obligations under the Federal Constitution, under which he claimed to act. The ready reply was, that the Fugitive Slave Act could not be invoked for the reclamation of fugitives from a foreign State, which Virginia claimed to be, and she must count it among the infelicities of her position, if so far at least she was taken at her word.

The three pioneer negroes were not long to be isolated from their race. There was no known channel of communication between them and their old comrades, and yet those comrades knew, or believed with the certainty of knowledge, how they had been received. If inquired of whether more were coming, their reply was, that, if they were not sent back, others would understand that they were among friends, and more would come the next day. Such is the mysterious spiritual telegraph which runs through the slave population. Proclaim an edict of Emancipation in the presence of a single slave on the Potomac, and in a few days it will be known by his brethren on the Gulf. So on the night of the Big Bethel affair, a squad of negroes, meeting our soldiers, inquired anxiously the way to "the freedom fort."

The means of communication with the fort from the open country became more easy, when, on the 24th of May, the same day on which the first movement was made from

Washington into Virginia, the Second New York Regiment made its encampment on the Segar farm, lying near the bridge which connected the fort with the main-land, an encampment soon enlarged by the First Vermont and other New York regiments. On Sunday morning May 26th, eight negroes stood before the quarters of General Butler, waiting for an audience. They were examined in part by the Hon. Mr. Ashley, M. C. from Ohio, then a visitor at the fort. On May 27th, forty seven negroes of both sexes and all ages, from three months to eighty-five years, among whom were half a dozen entire families, came in one squad. Another lot of a dozen good field-hands arrived the same day; and then they continued to come by twenties, thirties, and forties. They were assigned buildings outside of the fort or tents within. They were set to work as servants to officers, or to store provisions landed from vessels, thus relieving us of the fatigue duty which we had previously done, except that of dragging and mounting columbiads on the ramparts of the fort, a service which some very warm days have impressed on my memory. . . .

It was now time to call upon the Government for a policy in dealing with slave society thus disrupted and disorganized. Elsewhere, even under the shadow of the Capitol, the action of military officers had been irregular, and in some cases in palpable violation of personal rights. An order of General McDowell excluded all slaves from the lines. Sometimes officers assumed to decide the question whether a negro was a slave, and deliver him to a claimant, when, certainly in the absence of martial law, they had no authority in the premises, under the Act of Congress, that power being confided to commissioners and marshals. As well might a member of [629] Congress or a State sheriff usurp the function. Worse yet, in defiance of the Common Law, they made color a presumptive proof of bondage. In one case a free negro was delivered to a claimant under this process, more summary than any which the Fugitive Slave Act provides. The colonel of a Massachusetts regiment showed some practical humor in dealing with a pertinacious claimant, who asserted title to a negro found within his lines, and had brought a policeman along with him to aid in enforcing it. The shrewd colonel, (a Democrat he

is,) retaining the policeman, put both the claimant and claimed outside of the lines together to try their fleetness. The negro proved to be the better gymnast and was heard of no more. This capricious treatment of the subject was fraught with serious difficulties as well as personal injuries, and it needed to be displaced by authorized system.

On the 27th of May, General Butler, having in a previous communication reported his interview with Major Cary, called the attention of the War Department to the subject in a formal despatch, --inflicting the hostile purposes for which the negroes had been or might be successfully used, stating the course he had pursued in employing them and recording expenses and services, and suggesting the pertinent military, political, and humane considerations. The Secretary of War, under the date of the 30th of May, replied, cautiously approving the course of General Butler, and intimating distinctions between interfering with the relations of persons held to service and refusing to surrender them to their alleged masters, which it is not easy to reconcile with well- defined views of the new exigency, or at least with a desire to express them. The note was characterized by diplomatic reserve which it will probably be found difficult long to maintain.

The ever-recurring question continued to press for solution. On the 6th of July the Act of Congress was approved, declaring that any person claiming the labor of another to be due to him, and permitting such party to be employed in any military or naval service whatsoever against the Government of the United States, shall forfeit his claim to such labor, and proof of such employment shall thereafter be a full answer to the claim. This act was designed for the direction of the civil magistrate, and not for the limitation of powers derived from military law. That law, founded on *salus reipublicae*, transcends all codes, and lies outside of forms and statutes. John Quincy Adams, almost prophesying as he expounded, declared, in 1842, that under it slavery might be abolished. Under it, therefore, Major-General Fremont, in a recent proclamation, declared the slaves of all persons within his department, who were in arms

against the Government, to be freemen, and under it has given title-deeds of manumission. Subsequently President Lincoln limited the proclamation to such slaves as are included in the Act of Congress, namely, the slaves of Rebels used in directly hostile service. The country had called for Jacksonian courage, and its first exhibition was promptly suppressed. If the revocation was made in deference to protests from Kentucky, it seems, that, while the loyal citizens of Missouri appeared to approve the decisive measure, they were overruled by the more potential voice of other communities who professed to understand their affairs better than they themselves. But if, as is admitted, the commanding officer, in the plenitude of military power, was authorized to make the order within his department, all human beings included in the proclamation thereby acquired a vested title to their freedom, of which neither Congress nor President could dispossess them. No conclusive behests of law necessitating the limitation, it cannot rest on any safe reasons of military policy. The one slave who carries his master's knapsack on a march contributes far less to the efficiency of the Rebel army than the one hundred slaves who hoe corn on his plantation with which to replenish its commissariat. We have not yet emerged from [630]

the fine-drawn distinctions of peaceful times. We may imprison or slaughter a Rebel, but we may not unloose his hold on a person he has claimed as a slave. We may seize all his other property without question, lands, houses, cattle, jewels; but his asserted property in man is more sacred than the gold which overlay the Ark of the Covenant, and we may not profane it. This reverence for things assumed to be sacred, which are not so, cannot long continue. The Government can well turn away from the enthusiast, however generous his impulses, who asks the abolition of slavery on general principles of philanthropy, for the reason that it already has work enough on its hands. It may not change the objects of the war, but it must of necessity at times shift its tactics and its instruments, as the exigency demands. Its solemn and imperative duty is to look every issue, however grave and transcendent, firmly in the face; and having ascertained upon mature and conscientious reflection what is necessary to suppress the

Rebellion, it must then proceed with inexorable purpose to inflict the blows where Rebellion is the weakest and under which it must inevitably fall.

On the 30th of July, General Butler, being still unprovided with adequate instructions, -- the number of contrabands having now reached nine hundred, applied to the War Department for further directions. His inquiries, inspired by good sense and humanity alike, were of the most fundamental character, and when they shall have received a full answer the war will be near its end. Assuming the slaves to have been the property of masters, he considers them waifs abandoned by their owners, in which the Government as a finder cannot, however, acquire a proprietary interest, and they have therefore reverted to the normal condition of those made in God's image, "if not free-born, yet free-manumitted, sent forth from the hand that held them, never to return." The author of that document may never win a victor's laurels on any renowned field, but, depositing it in the archives of the Government, he leaves a record in history which will outlast the traditions of battle or siege. It is proper to add, that the answer of the War Department, so far as its meaning is clear, leaves the General uninstructed as to all slaves not confiscated by the Act of Congress. . . .

[632] A member of Brigadier-General Pierce's staff -- an efficient officer and a humane gentleman -- suggested the employment of the contrabands and the furnishing of them with rations, an expedient bast for them and agreeable to us. He at once dictated a telegram to General Butler in these words: --"Shall we put the contrabands to work on the intrenchments, and will you furnish them with rations?" An affirmative answer was promptly received on Monday morning, July 8th, and that was the first day in the course of the war in which the negro was employed upon the military works of our army. It therefore marks a distinct epoch in its progress and in its relations to the colored population. The writer -- and henceforth in this narrative I must indulge in the frequent use of the first person -- was specially detailed from his post as a private in Company L of the Third Regiment to collect the contrabands, record their

names, ages, and the names of their masters, provide their tools, superintend their labor, and procure their rations. My comrades smiled, as I undertook the novel duty, enjoying the spectacle [633] of a Massachusetts Republican converted into a Virginia slave-master. To me it seemed rather an opportunity to lead them from the house of bondage never to return. For, whatever may be the general duty to this race, to all such as we have in any way employed to aid our armies the national faith and our personal code of honor are pledged. Abandoning one of those faithful allies, who, if delivered up, would be reduced to severer servitude because of the education he had received and the services he had performed, probably to be transported to the remotest slave region as now too dangerous to remain near its borders, we should be accursed among the nations of the earth. I felt assured that from that hour, whatsoever the fortunes of the war, every one of those enrolled defenders of the Union had vindicated beyond all future question, for himself, his wife, and his issue, a title to American citizenship, and become heir to all the immunities of Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States. . . .

[634] The contrabands worked well, and in no instance was it found necessary for the superintendents to urge them. There was a public opinion among them against idleness, which answered for discipline. Some days they worked with our soldiers, and it was found that they did more work, and did the nicer parts -- the facings and dressings -- better. Colonels Packard and Wardrop, under whose direction the [635] breastworks were constructed, and General Butler, who visited them, expressed satisfaction with the work which the contrabands had done. On the 14th of July, Mr. Russell, of the London "Times," and Doctor Bellows, of the Sanitary Commission, came to Hampton and manifested much interest at the success of the experiment. The result was, indeed, pleasing. A subaltern officer, to whom I had insisted that the contrabands should be treated with kindness, had sneered at the idea of applying philanthropic notions in time of war. It was found then, as always, that decent persons will accomplish more when treated at least like human beings. . . .

[636] During our encampment at Hampton, I occupied much of my leisure time in conversations with the contrabands, both at their work and in their shanties, endeavoring to collect their currents of thought and feeling. . . .

[639] The conversations of the contrabands on their title to be regarded as freemen showed reflection. When asked if they thought themselves fit for freedom, and if the darkies were not lazy, their answer was, "Who but the darkies cleared all the land around here? Yes, there are lazy darkies, but there are more lazy whites." When told that the free blacks had not succeeded, they answered that the free blacks have not had a fair chance under the laws, -- that they don't dare to enforce their claims against white men. . . . Broken as was their speech and limited as was their knowledge, they reasoned abstractly on their rights as well as white men. Locke or Channing might have fortified the argument for universal liberty from their simple talk. So true is it that the best thoughts which the human intellect has produced have come, not from affluent learning or ornate speech, but from the original elements of our nature, common to all races of men and all conditions in life; and genius the highest and most cultured may bend with profit to catch the lowliest of human utterances.

There was a very general desire among the contrabands to know how to read. A few had learned; and these, in every instance where we inquired as to their teacher, had been taught on the sly in their childhood by their white playmates. Others knew their letters, but could not "put them together," as they said. I remember of a summer's afternoon seeing a young married woman, perhaps twenty-five years old, seated on a door-step with her primer before her, trying to make progress.

In natural tact and the faculty of getting a livelihood the contrabands are inferior to the Yankees, but quite equal to the mass of the Southern population. It is not easy to see why they would be less industrious, if free, than the whites, particularly as they would have the

encouragement of wages. There would be transient difficulties at the outset, but no more than a bad system lasting for ages might be expected to leave behind. The first generation might be unfitted for the active duties and responsibilities of citizenship; but this difficulty, under generous provisions for education, would not pass to the next. Even now they are not so much behind the masses of the whites. Of the Virginians who took the oath of allegiance at Hampton, not more than one in fifteen could write his name, and the rolls captured at Hatteras disclose an equally deplorable ignorance. The contrabands might be less addicted than the now dominant race to bowie-knives and duels, think less of the value of bludgeons as forensic arguments, be less inhospitable to innocent sojourners from Free States, and have far inferior skill in robbing forts and arsenals, [640] plundering the Treasury, and betraying the country at whose crib they had fattened; but mankind would forgive them for not acquiring these accomplishments of modern treason. As a race, they may be less vigorous and thrifty than the Saxon, but they are more social, docile, and affectionate, fulfilling the theory which Channing held in relation to them, if advanced to freedom and civilization.

If in the progress of the war they should be called to bear arms, there need be no reasonable apprehension that they would exhibit the ferocity of savage races. Unlike such, they have been subordinated to civilized life. They are by nature a religious people. They have received an education in the Christian faith from devout teachers of their own and of the dominant race. Some have been taught (let us believe it) by the precepts of Christian masters, and some by the children of those masters, repeating the lessons of the Sabbath-school. The slaveholders assure us that they have all been well treated. If that be so, they have no wrongs to avenge. Associated with our army, they would conform to the stronger and more disciplined race. Nor is this view disproved by servile insurrections. In those cases, the insurgents, without arms, without allies, without discipline, but throwing themselves against society, against government, against everything saw no other escape than to devastate and destroy without

mercy in order to get a foothold. If they exterminated, it was because extermination was threatened against them. In the Revolution, in the army at Cambridge, from the beginning to the close of the war, against the protests of South Carolina by the voice of Edward Rutledge, but with the express sanction of Washington, --ever just, ever grateful for patriotism, whencesoever it came,-- negroes fought in the ranks with the white men, and they never dishonored the patriot cause. So also at the defence of New Orleans they received from General Jackson a noble tribute to their fidelity and soldierlike bearing. Weighing the question historically and reflectively, and anticipating the capture of Richmond and New Orleans, there need be more serious apprehension of the conduct of some of our own troops recruited in large cities than of a regiment of contrabands officered and disciplined by white men.

But as events travel faster than laws or proclamations, already in this war with Rebellion the two races have served together. The same breastworks have been built by their common toil. True and valiant, they stood side by side in the din of cannonade, and they shared as comrades in the victory of Hatteras. History will not fail to record that on the 28th day of August, 1861, when the Rebel forts were bombarded by the Federal army and navy, under the command of Major-General Butler and Commodore Stringham, fourteen negroes, lately Virginia slaves, now contraband of war, faithfully and without panic worked the after-gun of the upper deck of the Minnesota, and hailed with a victor's pride the Stars and Stripes as they again waved on the soil of the Carolinas.

THE PORT ROYAL EXPERIMENT

Northern leaders realized that the Sea Island situation would be a precedent for the treatment of slaves in other areas coming under Union control. But they disagreed about the policies the government should adopt. Many believed that slaves should remain slaves, but should work for the government until Congress made some final determination of their fate. Others saw an opportunity to "bring Yankee industriousness to the Sea Islands" (Richardson, 1986, 18). They hoped to prove the freedmen's worthiness by demonstrating that, as free labor, could be more productive than slaves. This group included Edward L. Pierce and his colleagues who organized the Boston Educational Commission. A third faction, the New York-based American Missionary Society, combining abolitionist fervor with evangelical religion, felt that "growing cotton was secondary to inculcating good morals and faithful family life and teaching the alphabet to the freedmen" (18). Other groups, who pressed both religious and more pragmatic goals, including the National Freedmen's Relief Association of New York and the Port Royal Relief Committee of Philadelphia, joined in the emancipationist effort.

In December of 1861, Pierce, now discharged from the army, was dispatched by Treasury Secretary Chase to the Sea Islands under orders to initiate efforts to prepare the Negroes "for self-support by their own industry" (Rose, 22). In the meantime, Rev. Mansfield French, an agent of the American Missionary Association, an organization with strong abolitionist commitments, arrived in the Sea Islands to see what voluntary organizations could do for the "contrabands." The Association had already started day and Sabbath schools in September and, within months, had begun sending food and clothing to the Islands. These efforts increased as Pierce's written reports to Chase were published by the northern press and read on the floor of Congress.

On March 3rd, 1862, Pierce set out for the Sea Islands with a group of fifty two businessmen, clergymen, farmers, and teachers -- abolitionists determined to demonstrate that the slaves, if freed, could support themselves, could exercise the responsibilities of citizenship, and could, in wartime, be assets to the Union cause. Boston financier, John Murray Forbes, who happened to be travelling on the same ship, described his fellow passengers as a "'villainthropic' society, bearded and mustached and odd-looking men, with odder-looking women. You would have doubted," he wrote, suggesting that the group represented the extremes of Ante Bellum reformism, "whether it was the adjournment of a John Brown meeting or the fag-end of the broken-down phalanstery!" (Forbes 1899, I: 295-6).

Though the group faced skepticism and hostility, it was buoyed up by its own firm commitment to the cause -- and by the backing of Secretary Chase, Senator Sumner, and key military figures in the Islands. Its effort, which brought together volunteers, private philanthropic resources, and governmental support, would prove to be a paradigm of the whole reconstruction effort.

**THE NEGROES AT PORT ROYAL, S.C.
REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT AGENT**

SECOND REPORT.

PORT ROYAL, June 2, 1862.

To the Hon. S. P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury:

SIR: Upon the transfer of the supervision of affairs at Port Royal from the Treasury to the War Department, a summary of the results of this agency may be expected by you; and therefore, this report is transmitted.

Your instructions of February nineteenth intrusted to me the general superintendence and direction of such persons as might be employed upon the abandoned plantations, with a view to prevent the deterioration of the estates, to secure their best possible cultivation, and the greatest practicable benefit to the laborers upon them. The Department not being provided with proper power to employ upon salaries superintendents and teachers, under the plan submitted in my report of February third, enjoined cooperation with associations of judicious and humane citizens in Boston, New York, and other cities, who proposed to commission and employ persons for the religious instruction, ordinary education, and general and employment of the laboring population. Authority was given to the Special Agent at the same time to select and appoint applicants for such purposes, and assign each to his respective duty -- such persons when compensated, to draw their compensation from private sources, receiving transportation, subsistence, and quarters only from the Government. The Commission of Boston had already been organized and the organization of the National Freedmen's Relief Association of New-York followed a few days later. Still later the Port Royal Committee of Philadelphia was appointed.

On the morning of March ninth, forty-one men and twelve women, accepted for the above purposes and approved by the first two of the Associations, disembarked at Beaufort, having left New-York on the third of third of that month on board the United States transport, the

steamship Atlantic, accompanied by the Special Agent. The Educational Commission of Boston had commissioned twenty-five of the men and four of the women. The National Freedmen's Relief Association of New-York had commissioned sixteen of the men and five of the women, and three women from Washington City has received your own personal commendation. The men were of various occupations, farmers, men, teachers, physicians, ranging in age from twenty-one to sixty years. Not being provided with full topographical knowledge of the islands, it was necessary for the Special Agent to explore them for locations. At the close of the first fortnight after their arrival, the entire original delegation had been assigned to the districts which they had reached. Since then others have arrived, namely, fourteen on March twenty-third, fourteen on April fourteenth, and a few at a later date, making in all seventy-four men and nineteen women, who having been commissioned by the Associations, and receiving the permit of the Collector of New-York, have arrived here, and been assigned to posts. Of the seventy-four men, forty-six were commissioned and employed by the Boston Society, and twenty-eight by that of New-York. Of the nineteen women, nine were commissioned by the New-York Society, six by that of Boston, one by that of Philadelphia, and three others not so commissioned, but approved by yourself, were accepted. Except in the case of the three women approved by yourself, no persons have been received into this service not previously approved by the associations with whom you enjoined cooperation. Of the seventy-four men, twenty-four were stationed on Port Royal Island, a few of these doing duty at Beaufort, fifteen on St. Helena, thirteen on Ladies, nine on Edisto, seven on Hilton Head, three on Pinckney, one on Cat and Cane, one on Paris, and one on Daufuskie. A few of the above returned North soon after their arrival, so that the permanent number here at any one time, duly commissioned and in actual service has not exceeded seventy men and sixteen women. The number at present is sixty-two men and thirteen women. A larger corps of superintendents and teachers might have been employed to advantage, but as injurious results might attend the overdoing of the work of supervision, it was thought best not to receive more, until experience had indicated the permanent need. . . .

[321] The contributions of clothing from the benevolent associations have been liberal; but liberal as they have been, they have failed to meet the distressing want which pervaded the territory. The masters had left the negroes destitute, not having supplied their winter clothing when our forces had arrived, so that both the winter and spring clothing had not been furnished. From all accounts it would also seem that since the war began the usual amount of clothing given had been much diminished. That contributed by the associations cannot fall below ten thousand dollars. It has produced a most marked change in the general appearance, particularly on Sundays and at the schools, and tended to inspire confidence in the superintendents.

It would have been almost useless to attempt labors for moral or religious instruction without the supplies thus sent to clothe the naked. A small amount where there were an ability and desire to pay, has, with the special authority of the societies, been sold, and the proceeds returned to them to be reinvested for the same purpose. The rest has been delivered, without any money being received. In the case of the sick and disabled it is donated, and in case of those healthy and able to work it has been charged without expectation of money to be paid, that being thought to be the best course to prevent the laborers from regarding themselves as paupers, and as a possible aid to the Government in case prompt payments for labor should not be made.

It is most pleasing to state that with the small payments for labor already made, those also for the collection of cotton being nearly completed, with the partial rations on some islands and the supplies from benevolent sources on others, with the assistance which the mules have furnished for the cultivation of the crop -- the general kindness and protecting care of the superintendents -- the contributions of clothing forwarded by the associations -- the schools for the instruction of the children and others desirous to learn -- with these and other favorable influences, confidence in the Government has been inspired, the laborers are working cheerfully,

and they now present to the world the example of a well-behaved and self-supporting peasantry of which their country has no reason to be ashamed.

The educational labors deserve a special statement. It is to be regretted that more teachers had not been provided. The labor of superintendence at the beginning proved so onerous that several originally intended to be put in charge of schools, were necessarily assigned for the other purpose. Some fifteen persons on an average have been specially occupied with teaching, and of these four were women. Others, having less superintendence to attend to, were able to devote considerable time to teaching at regular hours. Nearly all give some attention to it, more or less according to their opportunity, and their aptitude for the work.

The educational statistics are incomplete, only a part of the schools having been open for two months, and the others having been opened at intervals upon the arrival of persons designated for the purpose. At present according to the reports, two thousand five hundred persons are being taught on week-days, of whom not far from one-third are adults taught when their work is done. But this does not complete the number occasionally taught on week-days and at the Sunday-schools. Humane soldiers have aided in the case of their servants and others. Three thousand persons are in all probability receiving more or less instruction in reading on these islands. With an adequate force of teachers this number might be doubled, as it is to be hoped it will be on the coming of autumn. The reports state that very many are now advanced enough so that even if the work should stop here they would still learn to read by themselves. Thus the ability to read the English language has been already so communicated to these people that no matter what military or social vicissitudes may come, this knowledge can never perish from among them.

There have been forwarded to the Special Agent the reports of the teachers, and they result in a remarkable concurrence of testimony. All unite universal eagerness to learn, which they have

not found equalled in white persons, arising both from the desire for knowledge common to all, and the desire to raise their condition, now very strong among these people. The reports on this point are cheering, even enthusiastic, and sometimes relate an incident of aspiration and affection united in beautiful combination. One teacher on his first day's school, leaves in the rooms a large alphabet card, and the next day returns to find a mother there teaching her little child of three years to pronounce the first letters of the alphabet she herself learned the day before. The children learn without urging by their parents, and as rapidly as white persons of the same age, often more so, the progress being quickened by the eager desire.

One teacher reports that on the first day of her school only three or four knew a part of their letters, and none knew all. In one week seven boys and six girls could read readily words of one syllable, and the following week there were twenty in the same class. The cases of dulness have not exceeded those among the whites. The mulattoes, of whom there are probably not more than five per cent of the entire population on the plantations, are no brighter than the children of pure African blood. In the schools which have been opened for some weeks, the pupils who have regularly attended have passed from the alphabet, and are reading words of one syllable in large and small letters. The lessons have been confined to reading and spelling, except in a few cases where writing has been taught.

[322] There has been great apparent eagerness to learn among the adults and some have progressed well. They will cover their books with care, each one being anxious to be thus provided, carry them to the fields, studying them at intervals of rest, and asking explanations of the superintendents who happen to come along. But as the novelty wore away, many of the adults finding perseverance disagreeable, dropped off. Except in rare cases it is doubtful whether adults over thirty years, although appreciating the privilege for their children, will persevere in continuous study so as to acquire the knowledge for themselves. Still, when books

and newspapers are read in negro houses, many, inspired by the example of their children, will be likely to undertake the labor again.

It is proper to state that while the memory in colored children is found to be, if any thing, livelier than in the white, it is quite probable that further along, when the higher faculties of comparison and combination are more to be relied on, their progress may be less. While their quickness is apparent, one is struck with their want of discipline. The children have been regarded as belonging to the plantation rather than to a family, and the parents, who in their condition can never have but a feeble hold on their offspring, have not been instructed to training their children into thoughtful and orderly habits. It has, therefore, been found not an easy task to make them quiet and attentive at the schools.

Through the schools habits of neatness have been encouraged. Children with soiled faces or soiled clothing, when known to have better, have been sent home from the schools, and have returned in better condition.

In a few cases the teachers have been assisted by negroes who knew how to read before we came. Of these there are very few. Perhaps one may be found on an average on one of two or three plantations. These, so far as can be ascertained, were in most cases taught clandestinely, often by the daughters of their masters who were of about the same age. A colored person among these people who has learned to read does not usually succeed so well as a white teacher. He is apt to teach the alphabet in the usual order, and needs special training for the purpose.

The Sabbath-schools have assisted in the work of teaching. Some three hundred persons are present at the church on St. Helena in the morning to be taught. There are other churches where one or two hundred attend. A part of these, perhaps the larger, attend some of the day school,

but they comprehend others, as adults, and still others coming from localities where schools have not been opened. One who regards spectacles in the light of their moral aspects, can with difficulty find sublimer scenes than those witnessed on Sabbath morning on these islands, now ransomed to a nobler civilization.

The educational labors have had incidental results almost as useful as those which have been direct. At a time when the people were chafing [under] the most deprivation and the assurances made on behalf of the Government were distrusted, it was fortunate that we could point to the teaching of their children as a proof of our interest in their welfare, and of the new and better life which we were opening before them.

An effort has been made to promote clean and healthful habits. To that end, weekly cleanings of quarters were enjoined. This effort, where it could be properly made, met with reasonable success. The negroes, finding that we took an interest in their welfare, acceded cordially, and in many cases their diligence in this was most commendable. As a race, it is a mistake to suppose that they indisposed to cleanliness. They appear to practice it as much as white people under the same circumstances. There are difficulties to obstruct improvements in this respect. There has been a scarcity of lime and (except at too high prices) of soap. Their houses are too small, not affording proper apartments for storing their food. They are unprovided with glass windows. Besides some of them are tenements unfit for beasts, without floor or chimneys. One could not put on face to ask the occupants to clean such a place. But where the building was decent or reasonably commodious, there was no difficulty in securing the practice of this virtue. Many of these people are examples of tidiness, and on entering their houses one is sometimes witness of rather amusing scenes where a mother is trying the effect of beneficent ablutions on the heads of her children.

The religious welfare of these people has not been neglected. The churches, which were closed when this became a seat of war, have been opened. Among the superintendents there were several persons of clerical education, who have led in public ministrations. The larger part of them are persons of religious experience and profession, who, on the Sabbath, in weekly praise meetings and at funerals, have labored for the consolation of these humble believers.

These people have been assured by the Special Agent that if they proved themselves worthy by their industry, good order, and sobriety, they should be protected against their rebel masters. It would be wasted toil to attempt their development without such assurances. An honorable nature would shrink from this work without the right to make them. Nor is it possible to imagine any rulers now or in the future who will ever turn their backs on the laborers who have been received, as these have been, into the service of the United States.

Special care has been taken to protect the property of the Government on the plantations. The cattle had been taken away in such large numbers by the former owners, and later by the army, the latter sometimes slaughtering fifty or head on a plantation, that the necessity of a strict rule for the preservation of those remaining was felt. For that purpose the Special Agent procured orders from the military and naval authorities, dated respectively April seventeenth and twenty-sixth, forbidding the removal of "subsistence, [323] forage, mules, horses, oxen, cows, sheep, cattle of any kind, or other property, from the plantations, without the consent of the Special Agent of the Treasury Department or orders from the nearest General Commanding." No such consent has been given by the Special Agent except in one case, as an act of mercy to the animal, and in another where he ordered a lamb killed on a special occasion, and has charged himself with the same in his account with the department Your instructions which expressed your desire to prevent the deterioration of the estates, have in this respect been sedulously attended to. The superintendents have not been permitted to kill cattle, even for

fresh meat, and they have subsisted on their rations, and fish and poultry purchased of the negroes.

The success of the movement, now upon its third month, has exceeded my most sanguine expectations. It has had its peculiar difficulties, and some phases at times, arising from accidental causes, might on a partial view invite doubt, banished however at once by a general survey of what had been done. Already, the high treason of South-Carolina has had a sublime compensation, and the end is not yet. The churches which were closed have been opened. No master now stands between these people and the words which the Savior spoke for the consolation of all peoples and all generations. The Gospel is preached in fullness and purity, as it has never before been preached in this territory, even in colonial times. The reading of the English language, with more or less system, is being taught to thousands, so that whatever military or political calamities may be in store, this precious knowledge can never more be eradicated. Ideas and habits have been planted, under the growth of which these people are to be fitted for the responsibilities of citizenship, and in equal degree unfitted for any restoration to what they have been. Modes of administration have been commenced, not indeed adapted to an advanced community, but just, paternal, and developing in their character. Industrial results have been reached, which put at rest the often reiterated assumption that this territory and its products can only be cultivated by slaves. A social problem which has vexed the wisest approaches a solution. The capacity of a race, and the possibility of lifting it to civilization without danger or disorder, even without throwing away the present generation as refuse, are being determined. And thus the way is preparing by which the peace, to follow this war shall be made perpetual.

Finally, it would seem that upon this narrow theatre, and in these troublous times, God is demonstrating against those who would mystify his plans and thwart his purposes, that in the councils of his infinite wisdom he has predestined no race, not even the African, to the doom of eternal bondage.

There are words of personal gratitude which it is not easy to suppress. To the superintendents, who have treated me with uniform kindness and subordination; to the Rev. Dr. Peck, to whom was assigned the charge of the general interests of Port Royal Island; to the Rev. Mr. French, who was charged with special duties; to the benevolent associations in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, without whose support and contributions, amounting, in salaries and donations of specific articles, to not less than twenty thousand dollars, this enterprise could not have been carried on or commenced; to the Flag Officer of the Squadron and the Generals commanding, for facilities cheerfully afforded, particularly to Brigadier-General Stevens, to whom, as Port Royal Ladies', and St. Helena Islands, were all within his district, it was necessary often to apply; to the Collector of New-York, without whom the business operations have been conducted; to yourself, for confidence intrusted and continued, I am under special obligations.

But, more than all, in parting with the interesting people who have been under my charge, I must bear testimony to their uniform kindness to myself. One of them has been my faithful guide and attendant, doing for me more service than any white man could render. They have come, even after words of reproof or authority, to express confidence and good resolves. They have given me their benedictions and prayers, and I should be ungrateful indeed ever to forget or deny them. I am your friend and servant,

EDWARD L. PIERCE

Special Agent of the Treasury Department

Pierce's initial reports on the efforts of the "Gideonites," as they came to be known, were sanguine. And even dubious contemporaries like John Murray Forbes were impressed by their efforts. In May of 1862, Forbes wrote to fellow Bostonian Edward Atkinson his appraisal of events in the Sea Islands.

J.M. FORBES TO EDWARD ATKINSON.

BOSTON, May 23, 1862.

MY DEAR SIR,-- . . .I would gladly do anything, except come before the public, to help your good work. You may use my testimony in any other way than over my signature, and the indorsements of the "Daily" and other journals would seem to answer all purposes. I have watched the Educational Commission from its very inception with the greatest interest, and, while in *Secessia*, had every opportunity to gauge it, not only by the criticisms of its many enemies, and by the statements of its friends, but by personal observation. It was started very late, and when only the most prompt and even hasty measures gave it a chance of success. These measures were taken chiefly at Boston, with that efficiency which marks our good city and State. A large number of [310] volunteers were hurried from various pursuits, down into South Carolina, where, in about ten days after the enterprise was first thought of, they found themselves landed, with bare floors to sleep upon, soldier's rations to eat, and the obloquy and ridicule of all around them for "sauce piquanter"

Under all their inexperience, and all these disadvantages, they have worked their way quietly on, and up to the time when I left, May 14th, when the new rule of military governor was about beginning, they had accomplished the following results.

First and foremost. They had inspired confidence in the blacks by their kindness, and especially by their bringing the first boon which these forlorn creatures had received from us, namely, an opportunity for education. In all else the negroes have been materially worse off than

under their old masters, - with only their scanty ration of Indian corn, no shoes, blankets, clothing, molasses, or other necessaries, and no luxuries given them, of which they formerly had a moderate allowance. Against all this they had only the doubtful advantage of idleness or precarious employment, and the promises of the cotton agents. It was a great point to put over them intelligent and Christian teachers, and this they have fully appreciated.

Second. The material benefits which have resulted, namely: beginning very late, the forces of the plantation have been organized to reasonably steady labor; a full crop of food has been planted in common, besides many much larger private, or, as [311] these are called, "Negro Grounds," planted than ever before. I saw repeatedly whole gangs who had finished their plantation work by ten A. M., and had all the rest of the day for their own patches, some of which are four or five times as large as usual.

Third. In addition to the food crop, enough cotton land has been planted to give the negroes, if they are allowed to take care of the crop and enjoy its fruits, more of the necessaries and indeed comforts of life than they have ever had before.

To sum up, we have then for some of the results

The confidence of the blacks;

The education, so far as it goes;

The encouragement of industry; and

The material advantage of food and cotton crops;

instead of leaving the negroes alone to run into vice and pauperism, or turning them over to the tender mercies of hard speculators.

Of course, the agents of the commission have made mistakes in some cases, and some of them have been ill chosen, and have helped the enemies of the enterprise to bring it into local discredit; but generally the whole has been a most successful undertaking, and most of those

Sent from this quarter have, by their patience, faithfulness, and disinterested zeal, been a credit to Massachusetts. They, as a whole, form a noble band of men and women. They have had everything to contend with especially the opposition of many with whose [312] interests they interfered, and of others whose prejudices they offended. Their predecessors on the plantations, the cotton agents and militarys had begun to look upon themselves as the successors to the planters, entitled to the use of all that was left, houses, horses, negroes, crops.

When the agents of the commission came down to take charge of the plantations, they were looked upon as interlopers, and in most cases every obstacle, short of absolute disobedience to the orders of the commanding general, was thrown in their way. All the little mistakes of the new-comers were magnified; all the good they did ignored, and a local public opinion thus created against them, which many of our own soldiers, who ought to have known better, gave in to. "What a ridiculous thing for these philanthropists to come down and teach the stupid negroes, and occupy the plantations, and use the secesh ponies which had been so convenient for our pickets!"

Such was the natural feeling of the unthinking, and of some who ought to have reflected. This false opinion was largely availed of by the "Herald" and other kindred papers, to create prejudice at the North against an enterprise aiming to improve the condition of the blacks. How much more satisfactory to this class would it have been to have had the negroes left to their own devices, and then given all the enemies of improvement a chance to say, "We told you so! The negroes are worse off than before, -- idle, vicious, paupers. The sooner you reduce [313] them to slavery again, and the more firmly you bind the rest of their race to eternal slavery, the better! " It would take too long to go into the question of what is to be done hereafter; but there was an emergency three months ago which has, in my opinion, been successfully met; and among other results I believe you will have the testimony of all who have been engaged in the experiment, that it has distinctly proved that the negro has the same selfish element in him which induces other men to labor. Give him only a fair prospect of benefit from his labor, and he

will work like other human beings. Doubtless hereafter this selfish element must be appealed to more than it could be by the agents of the commission. There must be less working in common, and more done for the especial benefit of each laborer. It is much to establish the fact that this element of industry exists.

In conclusion, I consider the Educational Commission up to this time a decided success. I congratulate you and your associates upon having added another to the good deeds of Massachusetts, not by any means forgetting the share which New York has had in the good work; and I sincerely hope that General Saxton, cooperating with you, may in a manner worthy of his high reputation complete what has been so well begun.

In fact, opinions about the success of the Port Royal Experiment differed. While skeptics like Forbes became enthusiastic supporters and would use their considerable influence to push for the government to use its efforts as a model for more ambitious reconstruction efforts throughout the South, many others remained unconvinced -- and in many cases openly hostile. It seems clear that the kinds of racist attitudes that fueled the 1863 Draft Riots in New York, in which hundreds of blacks were killed by mobs, were common in the lower levels of the military -- and through much of the political establishment as well. Thus, while advocates like Pierce emphasized the positive in writing of the experiment, the unreported realities were far grimmer. Freed blacks were subjected to constant abuse and physical threat from Union soldiers, who raped and stole their crops. The threat of being returned to slavery -- despite the promises of the "Gideonites" -- hung over their heads. Further, many blacks not unreasonably resisted the paternalism of the reformers, questioning efforts to make them plant cotton, when they would have preferred to cultivate crops which they themselves could use and sell. Still, most were persuaded that even this limited form of freedom was

preferable to slavery and most leapt at the chance to bear arms for the Union -- another major goal of the abolitionists -- once the opportunity was offered.

Later historians of the Port Royal Experiment also differ in their appraisal of its success. Forbes's daughter, echoing the views of elite Boston reformers, would acclaim the contributions of the effort in commenting on her father's observations. "The commission did turn out a practical success and a 'positive good to the blacks," she wrote, "as any one can learn who will pay a visit to their descendants on the Sea Islands at the present day" (Forbes 1899, I:301). But Willie Lee Rose, whose *Rehearsal for Reconstruction* (1964) is the most detailed account of the effort, provides a far more critical view. She believes the northern reformers, who believed that freedom and education could alone "make another Massachusetts of South Carolina" (385), were hopelessly naive. Perhaps their efforts would have succeeded had the government been more firmly committed and more generous. As it was, the government gave only a lukewarm endorsement and provided almost no material support at all. Almost everything that was done was based on private resources -- and these tended to diminish over time. In effect, northern philanthropists declared the experiment a success and walked away, leaving the volunteers in the field to fare as best they could against the resistance of the blacks and the open hostility of the military. By the 1870s, the old slavocracy was back in power and the freedmen were little better off than they had been before the war. Thus, as Rose suggests, the experiment was indeed a rehearsal for Reconstruction, both in the high hopes with which it was launched and in the betrayal and failure that marked its collapse.

WITH MALICE TOWARD NONE? WITH CHARITY FOR ALL?

The turning of the tide of war in the Union's favor after McClellan's victory at Antietam in the fall of 1862 and Grant's capture of Vicksburg in the spring of 1863,

rather than uniting the nation behind Lincoln, only served to intensify differences over how the defeated South -- and its millions of former slaves -- should be treated. The lawyerly and politically astute Lincoln was reluctant to confiscate southern properties, to punish citizens of the Confederacy, or to enfranchise former slaves. Democrats, who remained the majority party in key states of the North despite the treason of their southern brethren, as well as many moderate Republicans, endorsed Lincoln's cautious policies. But the Radical Republicans in Congress were increasingly unhappy. Arguing that the southern states had forfeited their civil liberties when they seceded, pushed ever harder for immediate emancipation and enfranchisement of the freedmen, and for punitive policies towards the captured South.

In the meantime, confusion reigned, with officers in the field dealing with the blacks as they saw fit: Generals Halleck and Williams prohibited slaves from entering military camps; General Buel allowed slave-owners to come within Union lines to recover their human property; General Fremont, in command of Missouri, and General Hunter, in command of Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina, proclaimed the slaves under their jurisdiction free; General Butler refused to return slaves to their owners and put them to work for the army. This confusion not only reflected the weakness and ambiguity of Lincoln's position, under which he evidently hoped to save the Union without destroying the South's "peculiar institution," but also the peculiarity of a citizen army in which many of the officers had been politically active in their civilian lives and had carried their convictions into the field.

Although Congress acted in March of 1862 to prohibit the military from returning fugitive slaves to their masters, their legal status remained unclear. More seriously, as ever greater numbers of blacks either fled behind Union lines and as Union forces

advanced into the Confederacy, their situation became ever more desperate. As General Oliver Howard would write,

millions had left their places of work and abode and had become indeed nomadic, wandering wherever want drove or untutored inclination enticed them. They had drifted into nooks and corners like *debris* into sloughs and eddies; and were very soon to be found in varied ill-conditioned masses, all the way from Maryland to Mexico, and from the Gulf to the Ohio River. An awful calamitous breaking-up of a thoroughly organized society; dark desolation lay in its wake" (Howard, 1907, II: 164).

Despite this, Congress and the President seemed unable to react effectively -- and initiative was left to the army. Fortunately, rising stars like U.S. Grant were not unsympathetic to the plight of the "contrabands." After occupying Grand Junction, Mississippi in November of 1862, where hundreds of slaves, abandoned by their owners, fled to the Union Army for protection, Grant introduced a plan of relief. Selecting John Eaton, Chaplain of the Twenty-seventh Ohio Volunteers as Chief of Negro Affairs for the district under his jurisdiction, Grant ordered the fugitive put to work harvesting crops, cutting fuel, and doing other essential tasks in support of the military effort. For this work they were paid wages and supplied with housing, clothing, and medical care. Later, in his memoirs, Grant would claim that the idea for the Freedmen's Bureau originated with him.

Though this is certainly not the case, Grant's sponsorship of these initially modest -- but subsequently more ambitious -- initiatives unquestionably made a difference, since the efforts of the nation's greatest military hero could not be so easily dismissed as the work of abolitionists. Again, Grant and his subordinates took an experimental approach. While many fugitives work directly for the government, others worked on plantations which the army leased to private owners. Still others were, called "Freedmen's Home Colonies," leased to the blacks themselves. In the meantime, Grant invited the assistance of northern benevolent associations to build schools, churches, hospitals, and orphanages.

Certainly the most dramatic steps were taken by General William T. Sherman in the course of his devastating march to the sea through the Carolinas and Georgia. Undertaken with the explicit purpose of destroying the South farms, factories, and railroads, Sherman was keenly aware of the impact his march would have on the black population -- and he proceeded without hesitation to grant it economic and political rights.

FORTY ACRES AND A MULE

War Department Archives. Special Field Order no. 15, Mil. Div. of the Mississippi.
Savannah, Georgia, January 16, 1865.

I. The islands from Charleston, south, the abandoned rice fields along the rivers for thirty miles back from the sea, and the country bordering the St. John's river, Florida, are reserved and set apart for the settlement of the negroes now made free by the acts of war and the proclamation of the President of the United States.

II. At Beaufort, Hilton Head, Savannah, Fernandina, St. Augustine, and Jacksonville, the blacks may remain in their chosen or accustomed vocations, but on the islands, and in the settlements hereafter to be established, no white person whatever, unless military officers and soldiers, detailed for duty, will be permitted to reside; and the sole and exclusive management of affairs will be left to the freed people themselves, subject only to the United States military authority and the acts of Congress. By the laws of war and orders of the President of the United States the negro is free, and must be dealt with as such. He cannot be subjected to conscription or forced military service, save by the written orders of the highest military authority of the department, under such regulations as the President or Congress may prescribe. Domestic servants, blacksmiths, carpenters, and other mechanics, will be free to select their own work and residence, but the young and able-bodied negroes must be encouraged to enlist as soldiers in the service of the United States, to contribute their share towards maintaining their own freedom, and securing their rights as citizens of the United States. . .

III. Whenever three respectable negroes, heads of families, shall desire to settle on lands, and shall have selected for that purpose an island or a locality clearly defined, within the [351] limits above designated, the inspector of settlements and plantations will himself, or by such subordinate officer as he may appoint, give them a license to settle such island or district,

and afford them such assistance as he can to enable them to establish a peaceable agricultural settlement. The three parties named will subdivide the land, under the supervision of the inspector, among themselves and such others as may choose to settle near them, so that each family shall have a plot of not more than forty (40) acres of tillable ground, and when it borders on some water channel, with not more than 800 feet water front, in the possession of which land the military authorities will afford them protection until such time as they can protect themselves, or until Congress shall regulate their title. The quartermaster may, on the requisition of the inspector of settlements and plantations, place at the disposal of the inspector one or more of the captured steamers, to ply between the settlements and one or more of the commercial points heretofore named in orders, to afford; the settlers the opportunity to supply their necessary wants, and to sell the products of their land and labor.

IV. Whenever A negro has enlisted in the military service of the United States he may locate his family in any one of the settlements at pleasure, and acquire a homestead and all other rights and privileges of a settler, as though present in person. In like manner negroes may settle their families and engage on board the gunboats, or in fishing, or in the navigation of the inland waters, without losing any claim to land or other advantage derived from this system. But no one, unless an actual settler as above defined, or unless absent on government service, will be entitled to claim any right to land or property in any settlement by virtue of these orders.

V. In order to carry out this system of settlement, a general officer will be detailed as inspector of settlements and plantations, whose duty it shall be to visit the settlements, to regulate their police and general management, and who will furnish personally to each head of a family, subject to the approval of the President of the United States, a possessory [352] title in writing, giving as near as possible the description of boundaries, and who shall adjust all claims or conflicts that may arise under the same, subject to the like approval, treating such titles altogether as possessory. The same general officer will also be charged with

the enlistment and organization of the negro recruits, and protecting their interests while absent from their settlements, and will be governed by the rules and regulations prescribed by the War Department for such purposes.

VI. Brigadier General R. Saxton is hereby appointed inspector of settlements and plantations, and will at once enter on the performance of his duties. No change is intended or desired in the settlement now on Beaufort island, nor will any rights to property heretofore acquired be affected thereby.

On December 8, 1863, Lincoln announced his plan of Reconstruction, calling for amnesty for southerners who took a loyalty oath, recognition of governments in states where 10% of the 1860 electorate had taken the oath, and emancipation of all slaves. Lincoln's plan would have left state laws and institutions intact (except those laws relating to the continued establishment of slavery) and would have left the southern economic and political structure basically untouched. Unwilling to treat the South so tenderly, Radical Republicans in Congress refused to seat representatives from the two states (Arkansas and Louisiana) that fulfilled Lincoln's conditions and proceeded to draft their own Reconstruction policies. The essence of the Radicals' position was summarized by Pennsylvania Senator Thaddeus Stevens. The southern states, Stevens declared,

ought never to be recognized as capable of acting in the Union, or of being counted as valid States, until the Constitution shall have been so amended as to make it what its framers intended; and so as to secure perpetual ascendancy to the party of the Union; and so as to render our republican Government firm and stable forever. The first of those amendments is to change the basis of representation among the States from Federal numbers to actual voters. . . . With the basis unchanged the 83 Southern members, with the Democrats that will in the best times be elected from the North, will always give a majority in Congress and in the Electoral College. . . I need not depict the ruin that will follow. . . .

But this is not all we ought to do before inveterate rebels are invited to participate in our legislation. We have turned, or are about to turn, loose four million slaves without a hut to shelter them or a cent to their pockets. The infernal laws of slavery have prevented them from acquiring an education, understanding the commons laws of contract, or of managing the ordinary business of life. This Congress is bound to provide for them until they can take care of themselves. If we do not furnish them with homesteads, and hedge them around with protective laws; if we leave them to the legislation of their late masters, we had better have left them in bondage. . . . If we fail in this great duty now, when we have the power, we shall deserve and receive the execration of history and of all future ages (Stevens [1865], in Fleming, 1906, 1:148-9).

In July of 1864, Congress passed its own more punitive Reconstruction plan -- the Wade-Davis Bill -- which Lincoln vetoed. This further angered the Radicals, though they put their animosity aside to ensure Lincoln's reelection in the fall of 1864. With the election out of the way, the debate resumed and took on greater intensity -- though Lincoln's increasing stature and his resounding electoral mandate made him a more formidable adversary. His assassination in April of 1865, improved the Radicals' prospects. Though Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, pledged to continue the martyred president's policies, the Radicals rose in open rebellion and, through the Joint Committee of Fifteen, took control of Reconstruction policies.

Once under the Radicals' control, Congress ratified the Thirteenth Amendment, abolishing slavery in the United States. A month later, it acted to establish the Freedmen's Bureau, an agency of the War Department that would take charge of abandoned lands in the South, would provide for the needs of the freedmen, and would have the power to try by military commission persons accused to depriving freedmen of their civil rights. President Johnson vetoed the bill, asserting that Congress had no power to pass legislation affecting unrepresented states and that the provisions for military trials were unconstitutional. Congress overrode Johnson's veto -- and then went on to pass an act which granted to the freedmen full civil rights. Johnson also vetoed this bill, which he condemned as an unwarranted invasion of states' rights.

Again, his veto was overridden. Shortly thereafter, Congress drafted the Fourteenth Amendment, which extended all the rights guaranteed by the federal Constitution to the states. Finally, at the end of June 1866, the Joint Committee of Fifteen issued a report which recommended that the southern states be denied representation in Congress and that Congress, rather than the Executive Branch, retain control of the Reconstruction process.

President Johnson hoped that these actions would be repudiated in the congressional elections slated for the fall of 1866 -- and set out to organize a new political party -- the National Union Party -- which would bring together moderates from both Republican and Democratic folds. Johnson's plans were dashed by energetic Radical propaganda activities which focused public attention on violence and oppression against freed slaves (especially the notorious Black Laws which virtually reinstated slavery), as well as bloody race riots in New Orleans and Memphis. The National Union effort failed and the Radicals succeeded in capturing two-thirds of the membership of both houses of Congress. When the new Congress convened in March of 1867, it proceeded to give Reconstruction its final shape: the First Reconstruction Act, again passed over Johnson's veto, divided the South into five military districts and placed the region under martial law. To achieve restoration, the Southern states would have to call new constitutional conventions, elected by universal manhood suffrage, which were to establish new state governments which guaranteed the rights of freedmen and ratified the Fourteenth Amendment. Ex-Confederates were disqualified from voting and Congress reserved to itself the power to review cases, seat representatives, and end military rule.

The Radicals had been trying to establish a "Bureau of Emancipation" since early in 1863 . Despite intense lobbying from the freedmen's aid associations, the first bill died in committee. Reintroduced in December of 1863, the revised bill proposed a bureau to

be located in the War Department and entrusted with responsibilities for "all questions concerning persons of African descent and all persons who by proclamation, law, or by military order, had, or should, become entitled to their freedom" (Pierce, 1904, 35). The bureau would be authorized to "make all needful rules for the general superintendence and treatment of such persons," ensure that their rights be "determined and maintained," and regulate the cultivation of abandoned and confiscated lands. The bill aroused intense opposition from northern Democrats, who argued that the bureau would "open up a vast field for corruption, tyranny, greed, and abuse" and (with the Pierce Veto doubtless in mind) was "a measure too sweeping and revolutionary for a government of limited and express powers" (38). After squeaking through the House, the bill went to the Senate where Sumner and his allies pushed to have the bureau attached to the Treasury Department. Though the proposal passed by a resounding majority, it proved impossible to reconcile the Senate and House versions and, in July of 1864, the matter was postponed until the next session of Congress. The bill was not taken up again until December, when it was referred to a conference committee. The committee did not issue its report until February of 1865.

The Freedmen's Bureau (or, as it was officially known, the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees, and Abandoned Lands) was finally established in March of 1865. Envisaged as a temporary measure -- the Bureau was to exist for but a single year -- its existence was ultimately extended through 1868 -- and its educational efforts continued until 1872. The Bureau's responsibilities were to include distribution rations and medical supplies, establishing schools and aiding benevolent societies in setting up schools and churches, administering confiscated lands, and levying justice in all cases concerning freedmen. The legislation authorizing the creation of the Bureau constituted a remarkable blueprint for public-private cooperation: the government proposed to economically empower the freedmen by redistributing to them confiscated lands; using revenues

derived from these lands, the Bureau was to make available buildings, transportation, and protection to the private agencies to whom would be entrusted the task of educating the freedmen. In effect, the act institutionalized the paradigm developed in the Sea Islands.

SECOND FREEMEN'S BUREAU ACT

Acts and Resolutions, 39th Congress, 1st Session

Be it enacted. . . That the act to establish a Bureau for the relief of Freedmen and Refugees, approved March third, eighteen hundred sixty-five, shall continue in force for the term of two years from and after the passage of this act.

Sec. 2. . . The supervision and care of said bureau shall extend to all loyal refugees and freedmen, so far as the same may be necessary to enable them as speedily as practicable to become self-supporting citizens of the United States, and to aid them in making the freedom conferred by the proclamation of the Commander-in-Chief, by emancipation under the laws of the States, and by constitutional amendment, available to them and beneficial to the Republic. . . .

Sec. 5. . . The second section of the act to which this is an amendment shall be deemed to authorize the Secretary of War to issue such medical stores or other supplies and transportation and afford such medical or other aid as may be needful for the purposes named in said section: *Provided*, that no person shall be deemed "destitute," "suffering," or "dependent upon the Government for support," within the meaning of this act, who is able to find employment, and could, by proper industry and exertion, avoid such destitution, suffering, or dependency. . . .

Sec. 12. . . The Commissioner shall have power to seize, hold, use, lease, or sell all buildings, and tenements, and any lands appertaining to the same, or otherwise, formerly held under color or title by the late so-called Confederate States, and not heretofore disposed of by the United

States, and any buildings or lands held in trust for the same by any persons or persons, and to use the same or appropriate the proceeds derived therefrom to the education of the freed people; and whenever the bureau shall cease to exist, such of said so-called Confederate States as shall have made provision for the education of their citizens without distinction of color shall receive the sum remaining unexpended of such sales or rentals, which shall be distributed among said States for educational purposes in proportion to their population.

Sec. 13. . . . The Commissioner of this bureau shall at all times co-operate with private benevolent associations of citizens in aid of freedmen, and with agents and teachers, duly accredited and appointed by them, and shall hire or provide by leave, buildings for purposes of education whenever such associations shall, without cost to the Government, provide suitable teachers and means of instruction; and he shall furnish such protection as may be required for the safe conduct of such schools. . . .

Congress placed the Freedmen's Bureau under the charge of General Oliver O. Howard. Unlike political generals like Fremont, Butler, and Hunter, Howard was an army "regular" -- a professional military man. A native of Maine, Howard had attended Bowdoin College and graduated from West Point in 1854. Howard saw service on virtually every front during the war, losing an arm at the Battle of Fair Oaks, while serving under General Sherman. Although intensely religious, Howard had not started out his war service as an abolitionist. However, experiences in the field -- including most importantly his witnessing first-hand the desperate conditions facing the freedmen during Sherman's march to the sea -- led him to favor more and more the Radicals' viewpoints.

Early in May of 1865, Howard was summoned from the field (he was still serving under Sherman in the Army of Tennessee) to report to the Secretary of War, Edwin M.

Stanton. Stanton, now the Radicals' point man in the Cabinet since Treasury Secretary Chase's appointment to the Supreme Court, offered Howard the post of Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau.

On the morning of May 12th, I returned to Mr. Stanton and said, "I have concluded to accept the duty you offer me." He briefly expressed his satisfaction and send for the papers, chiefly letters from correspondents, widely separated, and reports, official and unofficial, touching upon matters which pertained to refugees and freedmen. The clerk in charge brought in a large, oblong, bushel basket heaped with letters and documents. Mr. Stanton, with both hands holding the handles at each end, took the basket and extended it to me and with a smile said: "Here, general, *here's your Bureau!*" (Howard, 1907, II: 208).

Thus Howard took command of a completely disorganized effort that would deal with the affairs of four million people over 500,000 square miles of territory and administering nearly a million acres of abandoned and confiscated property. Congratulating -- and cautioning -- him, Howard's old commander, General Sherman, would write, "I fear you have Hercules' task. God has limited the power of man, and though in the kindness of your heart you would alleviate all the ills of humanity, it is not in your power to fulfill one tenth part of the expectation of those who formed the Bureau. . . . It is simply impracticable. Yet you can and will do all the one good man may, and that is all you are called on as a man and a Christian can do. . . (Howard, 209-10).

As he assembled his staff and surveyed the task, Howard was awed by its scope and scale. The daunting political obstacles aside, he found that in its relief efforts alone, the military was issuing some 144,000 rations a day to freedmen and refugees throughout the country. Using his powers to requisition assistants from throughout the armed forces, he had soon put together a multidivisional operation (Records, Land, Financial Affairs, Medical, Commissary Supplies, Education) which employed more than 2,000 staffers. Fortunately, Howard was able to count on the help of fellow officers like

Rufus Saxon, who had been closely involved with the Port Royal Experiment, and John Eaton, who had administered freedmen's affairs for Grant -- as well as the financial and political resources of the benevolent societies and their hundreds of volunteers, many of whom had been actively working in the South since 1862.

Placing Freedmen's affairs under the control of a single consolidated bureau altered the task facing the thirty or so private organizations working with freedmen and refugees. The provisions of the statute creating the Bureau gave their activities a quasi-official status and, as they sought to avail themselves of the government's offer of financial and other forms of aid, generated pressures for them to operate more efficiently and effectively.

GENERAL HOWARD ON THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETIES

May 19, 1865

. . . May 18, 1865, the Rev. Lyman Abbott, then a vigorous young minister, paid a visit to the new Bureau. He came to Washington as a delegate from New York to speak in behalf of several volunteer freedmen's societies. There had already been some effort among them to consolidate. I at once favored a plan for a general union of forces, which would evidently make them both more effective and more economical in administration.

Mr. Abbott, agreeing with this view, promised to do all in his power to bring about such a union. As he was greatly interested in the work of education among the freedmen, I consulted him with reference to the first important circular issues from headquarters May 19, 1865. It announced well-defined principles of action. Mr. Abbott's aid and advice have ever since been gratefully remembered. The following words met his special approval: "I invite, therefore, the continuance and cooperation of such societies. I trust they will be generously supported by the people, and I request them to send me their names, list of their principal officers, and a brief

statement of their present work. . . . The educational and moral condition of these (the freed) people will not be forgotten. The utmost facility will be afforded to benevolent and religious organizations and State authorities in the maintenance of good schools for refugees and freedmen until a system of free schools can be supported by the recognized local governments. Meanwhile, whenever schools are broken up by any authorized agent of the Government, it is requested that the fact and attendant circumstances be reported to this Bureau.

"Let me repeat, that in all this work it is not my [270] purpose to supersede the benevolent agencies already engaged in it, but to systematize and facilitate them."

The next step after public announcement was to introduce in the field some practical systematic arrangement. So much overlapping and interference one with another were found among the workers that I hastened to appoint a school superintendent for each State. He was generally a commissioned officer detailed from the army and placed under the direct authority of the State assistant commissioner of the Bureau. The majority of the schools throughout the South were elementary. They were more flourishing in those localities which had been for six months or more within the lines of our armies. After peace many Government schools were added to those of the benevolent societies, being brought into existence by Bureau officials. These were self-supporting from the start. The educational work was in every way helped by the extraordinary ardor of the pupils and the enthusiasm of the teachers, fed by the societies behind them, who at this time voiced the generous devotion of benevolent people everywhere. . . . [271] The entire number of pupils in the schools for freedmen at the close of 1865 in the States that had been in insurrection, adding Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, amounted to 90,589; teachers 1,314, and schools 740. . . . The Bureau gave transportation to teachers from their homes to their field and back during necessary vacations. It also carried all their books and furniture, and to a considerable extent while the abandoned property remained available, provided buildings for the dwelling places of teachers and for the schools themselves. I came early to the conclusion that our school work was best promoted by

placing one dollar of public money by the side of one of voluntary contribution. The Bureau gave to any benevolent society in that proportion. The society which undertook the most in that manner received the most."

As is so often the case with efforts to rationalize voluntary organizations, ideas that looked good on paper proved to be difficult to achieve in practice. Issues of personality and organizational turf aside, both sectarian and sectional differences proved especially difficult to overcome. Some groups, especially those which viewed their educational initiatives as serving evangelical goals, were reluctant to cooperate with less religiously committed organizations. Western organizations feared domination by eastern ones. These tensions were reflected in the freemen's societies publications.

Early in 1865, two of the major freedmen's societies, the New York National Freedmen's Relief Association and the American Union Commission, together with elements from New York's Women's Center Relief Association, a branch of the United States Sanitary Commission, consolidated themselves as the American Freedmen's and Union Commission (New York National Freedmen's Relief Commission, 1866, 14). This brought together the eastern elite liberal protestant -- primarily Unitarian and Congregationalist -- elements of the freedmen's advocates who had closely allied themselves with General Howard's push for rationalization of the benevolent societies' efforts. (It was led by such men as Yale professor Leonard Bacon, the "pope" of New England Congregationalism, Francis G. Shaw, New York Unitarian philanthropist and reformer -- and father of Union martyr Robert Gould Shaw and charity organization leader Josephine Shaw Lowell --, and Bostonian Edward H. Hooper, a lawyer and financier who would soon be elected Treasurer of Harvard).

By the spring of 1866, they were pushing to expand the consolidation effort and called a meeting to convene in Cleveland to work for "the more perfect and satisfactory organization and adjustment of the work in the Western States" (*American Freedman*, 1866a, 4).

From *The American Freedman*, Vol. I, No. 3 (June 1866)

THE CLEVELAND MEETING.

THE resignation of Bishop Simpson (owing to the pressure of his other duties) rendered necessary a meeting of the Commission to elect a president in his place. At the same time, it was desirable to secure a conference of delegates from the various undenominational societies engaged in the work of education and relief in the South. The fundamental principle of our organization, no distinction of caste or color, had been fully discussed in the East at meetings called for that purpose. No such discussions had taken place west of the mountains. Our principles and purposes were not well understood by our co-laborers there. And while all the Eastern societies had formally ratified our constitution, and several of the Western societies had done so, several of the western branches of the late Freedmen's Aid Commission declined, or at least delayed to do so. Believing that a mutual conference between the East and the West was all that was necessary to remove the misunderstanding which had arisen, and to secure the hearty and unanimous co-operation of the East and the West in our common work, the Executive Committee issued a call for a meeting of this Commission at the City of Cleveland on the 16th of May, to which also were invited representative and undenominational societies.

THE OBJECT OF THE MEETING

The object of this meeting is set forth in the following resolution:

Resolved, That the General Secretary be directed to call a meeting of the Commission in the city of Cleveland at such time as may be agreed upon by correspondence with the branch at that place; that he incorporate in the call a notice that a President will be elected in place of Bishop Simpson, resigned, and that such amendments to the Constitution may be submitted as are necessary for the more perfect and satisfactory organization and adjustment of the work in the Western States; and that he invite all the Societies hitherto acting as auxiliary to either the Commission to send delegates to confer with the Commission upon the general interests of the work and the best methods of its prosecution. . . .

The Business Committee, through Rev. E.H. Canfield, D.D., made a report, in part as follows:

Resolved, That all the delegates to the meeting, and other friends of the cause, be invited to sit as corresponding members, and take part in its deliberations.

Resolved, That the Chairman of this Committee be requested to submit to this meeting such facts in regard to the history of the Commission as may be instructive and needful to their guidance.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to enquire into the best method of promoting the unity and efficiency of all the organizations in the United States for the benefit of the freedmen.

The first and second resolutions were unanimously adopted.

Under the second resolution, J.M. McKim, Corresponding Secretary of the Freedmen's and Union Commission, gave the following report of which we copy from the *Cleveland Leader*:

HISTORY OF THE FREEDMEN'S AND UNION COMMISSION.

He said this movement originally grew out of capture of Port Royal, some four years ago. It was seen that provision must be made for the care of the poor blacks who came into our hands, and small societies were created to effect this purpose. The first was at New York, the second at Boston -- called the New England Educational Commission -- and the third at Philadelphia, called the Port Royal Society. Afterwards, as Grant gave us victories in the West, Freedmen's societies sprang up in Chicago, Cincinnati, and the West; and these became strong bodies. Then the necessity of union between these different societies became apparent, and those of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Chicago, and elsewhere were partially united, with a general headquarters at Washington. This *quasi* union was found to be unsatisfactory, and a genuine union anxiously desired. Various informal propositions were made, and finally it was deterred to organize a strong National Association. Gentlemen from the West said they would unite with us of the East, and we were glad to undertake the project of a strong, *bona fide*

national organization. We of the East held preliminary meetings, and created the "American Freedmen's Aid Union," including all local branches from Boston west to Pittsburgh, and south to Washington. This movement was tolerably successful, yet we had not gained what we wanted -- A REALLY NATIONAL COMMISSION. Accordingly, we had conference and correspondence with men from all parts of the country, and just as we were going to bring the work to a close, we were requested not to go on until the West should be more fully consulted. We awaited the arrival of our friends from the West, and then organized the "American Freedmen's Aid Commission." This was an excellent movement, but we soon felt it was not enough. It was exclusively, a *Freedmen's* Commission; on its face devoted to a class. We were at work on expediency, and not on principle -- that is, the highest principle. We wanted to spread our arms wider, to occupy, broader ground.

At this time there was also in existence another institution, the "American Union Commission." It was not so well arranged as ours, and did not work so well; but it had a good basis, and was doing something. At a meeting of our Commission (attended by Bishop Simpson, Judge Bond, Mr. Beecher, Dr. Thompson, Generals Fisk and Swayne) it was asked, Why, have *two* organizations for the same purpose -- why such complex and multiplied machinery? It was answered, there were no good reasons for this, if we could possibly unite our forces. The proposition for a union was referred to a committee, who reported in its favor both as to sentiment and practicability. At last a meeting was held to bring about our object. We met opposition, and had a hard struggle. Mr. Garrison dissented from our view. He said the "Union Commission" was formed for the Southern whites, and *his* first duty was to the freedmen. He presented several arguments against the fusion; but we said, granted that the colored men have the first claim upon us, we ought also to remember all necessitous people without regard to race or color. We ought not to have a commission founded on class in name or theory. Thus we debated the question, until from all our struggle came out a hearty endorsement of the plan of union, and on the 31st of January the consolidation was effected,

and the nuptials triumphantly celebrated. This established the "American Freedmen's and Union Commission."

Shortly afterward, we learned with some surprise and very deep regret that some of our friends in the West were not prepared to cooperate with our new society. This being the case, we have called this meeting in a spirit of conciliation and Christian sympathy, for a free and frank interchange of sentiment. Our Commission is strong, and we of the East are fully united in its support. We have the approval of Chief-Justice Chase, of Senators and Representatives, of business men and scholars, of the great and good everywhere in the East, and we ardently desire the co-operation of and fraternity of all our Western co-laborers in the great cause.

Mr. McKim then traced the proceedings of the new Commission and its Executive Committee from the 31st of January to the present time, fully explaining, its constitution and transactions. Its corner stone is this declaration:

"This Commission is constituted to aid and co-operate with the people of the South, without distinction of race or color, in the improvement of their condition upon the basis of industry, freedom, education, and Christian morality. No schools or supply depots shall be maintained from the benefits of which any shall be excluded because of their color.

DISCUSSION.

The third resolution was then taken up. Its author, Dr. Peck, asked for a full expression upon it, in order to lay the groundwork for harmonious action.

In accordance with this request, a lengthy discussion ensued. . . . This discussion elicited some difference of opinion on minor points, but a substantial agreement in principle and purpose, and an earnest desire to waive all minor difficulties and unite in a broad, liberal, and Christian policy of benevolence. A few observations by Dr. Burroughs toward the close of the

meeting were received with hearty and unanimous approbation. He said he felt most deeply against our having two organizations for the same purpose. If this goes on, we shall soon have more conflicting interests. We shall soon have denominational projects brought out. Our several religious constituencies are up and doing, and we must move so as, if possible, to concentrate all these activities -- to merge all our co-laborers in one grand organization. We must subordinate all personal preferences and prejudices to the main purpose, and, if necessary, let us stay here a week to accomplish our benevolent object.

The third resolution was then adopted, and the following committee announced to enquire into the best method of promoting the unity, harmony, and efficiency of all the organizations in the United States for the benefit of the freedmen. . . .

Despite the liberal protestants' pleas for cooperation between the freedmen's societies and for a Christian but unsectarian emphasis in their education and relief efforts, the denominationally tied associations -- the American Missionary Association, the Methodists' Freedmen's Aid Society, the Baptists' Home Mission Society, and the Quakers' Friends' Association for the Aid and Elevation of the Freedman -- resisted consolidation efforts. As one Methodist minister put it, "Methodist hands should have handled Methodist funds, and been appropriated to pay Methodist teachers, to found Methodist schools, and carry on a work for which the denomination should have due credit" (quoted in Swint, 1967, 13). This conflict between religious and secular (or nonsectarian) philanthropy both paralleled the wartime conflicts between the United States Sanitary Commission and the United States Christian Commission and foreshadowed the divergence of philanthropic orientations that would occur in a more pronounced fashion in the last years of the nineteenth century.

From *The American Freedmen I: 6 (September 1866), 94-6.*

EDUCATION AND RELIGION

We desire for the present consideration of the public, and especially of Christian philanthropists, the question: What method will best promote the cause of popular education and pure religion in the South? The necessity of both is almost universally recognized. Neither can take the place of the other. Education unsanctified by religion issues in infidelity and anarchy. Religion unenlightened by education begets superstition and despotism. The school-house without the church produces China; the church without the school-house, Italy; the church *and* the school-house, Republican America.

How to combine these two is an important problem. There are two possible solution. The religious denominations may undertake the double work. They may plant the parochial school by the side of the church; they may teach at once the rules of arithmetic and the lessons of the catechism, the laws of grammar and the doctrines of theology. Such a system give parochial schools. On the other hand, the various religious denominations may assume as their peculiar province the work of religious instruction. To that they may confine themselves, while the whole community unites in a common effort for the education of the masses, not only in secular knowledge, but in those precepts of morality and teachings of Christian religion in which all agree. This system is the common-school. It is the almost universal system of Protestant Republicanism. . . .

[95] When Emancipation first rendered dependent upon us so many sufferers, all Christians made haste to their assistance, and ecclesiastical societies vied with unsectarian associations in the work of physical relief and secular education. To the honor of the church be it said that no denomination was deaf to the call of humanity and God. These special and localized efforts have done much for the relief and education of the Freedman. But now, in order to perpetuate the results already attained, to secure the greatest amount of good with the least expenditure in

the future, to avoid duplication of charities and rivalries of societies, and, above all, to establish a permanent self-sustaining and growing system of popular education, modelled upon the patterns afforded by past experience, a more perfect organization and a more systematic [96] division of labor are required; and especially is it necessary that we should draw with some precision the lines which separate the work of the ecclesiastical from that of the philanthropic associations, and determine whether acting through denominational agencies we will content ourselves with such parochial schools as they may establish, or whether, assigning to them that more distinctly missionary work which is quite sufficient to absorb all their energies, we will combine in one national and unsectarian organization for the establishment in the Southern States of that common-school system which is the glory and safety of our country. Already the various undenominational Freedmen's societies have united to form such an organization, in the American Freedman's Union Commission, a commission which embraces representatives of all denominations, includes constituent societies in all parts of the North, and during the past year has sustained over seven hundred teachers, and instructed over forty thousand pupils. Recognizing no distinctions of caste or color, it devotes its energies mainly to this one work, the promotion of popular education in the South.

The education of the South, especially of the Freedmen, is a truly religious work; none the less so because it is undenominational. Cousin rightly says, "The less we desire our schools to be ecclesiastical, the more they ought to be Christian." Called to this work not only by the claims of country and of humanity, but also by the voice of God, recognizing it as His work, entering upon it in humble trust on Him, aiming by it to render the subjects of our education better fitted to be not only citizens of the Republic but children of our Father in heaven, we desire the more that our schools may be truly Christian because they are unecclasiastical. For this purpose we aim to commission only teachers possessing the spirit of true religion, by which we do not mean persons of any particular doctrinal views, but such as are attracted to the work, not by curiosity, or love of adventure, or its compensation, but by a genuine spirit of love

for God and man; for this purpose our schools are opened with such general religious exercises as our experience in the North proves it practicable for all Christians to unite in; for this purpose in all the schools instruction is afforded in the fundamental duties of the Christian religion as inculcated in the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself;" no less for this purpose do we jealously maintain their unsectarian character, not allowing the peculiar tenets of any particular denomination to be taught in the schools.

While we thus aim to establish a school system which, strictly uneclesiastical and yet genuinely Christian, shall afford a sure foundation for sound morality and pure religion, we rejoice in all the good which the churches are doing by the inculcation of more specific religious truth, for the redemption of the suffering, down-trodden, and degraded in the South. We recognize the importance of their work. Individually participating in their labors in our respective churches, we are always ready as a commission to co-operate with them in all legitimate ways. We are not and can not be their rivals. We are their coadjutors in a common cause. For every faithful church promotes the cause of popular education; and popular education is the ally of the Christian church.

As reviving industry renders less imperative the demands for physical relief, the cause of education increases in relative importance, and the establishment of common schools open to all classes in all the Southern States becomes our most important work. The want is pressing, the necessity urgent, the work gigantic, the difficulties many. Only a united effort can accomplish a task so difficult. We ask, then, the careful attention of friends of religion and education to the distinction which we have in this paper attempted to set forth, and cordially invite all to unite with us in one common effort to secure this great end -- the establishment throughout the Republic, upon permanent foundations, of COMMON SCHOOLS for the education of all without distinction of sect, caste, or color.

On behalf of the American Freedman's Union Commission.

REV. LYMAN ABBOT,

REV. E.H. CANFIELD, D.D.

REV. O.B. FROTHINGHAM, Special Committee

FRANCIS R. COPE

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Reasoned argument having failed, the "unsectarian" Freedmen's Union Commission began attacking the religious societies, suggesting that their efforts were actually destructive to the overall relief effort, discouraging the establishment of common schools and stimulating the hostility of southern whites -- most of whom, as this anonymous correspondent in *The American Freedman* pointed out, were already practicing Christians.

From the *American Freedman*, I:9 (December 1866), 130.

A BONE OF CONTENTION

[The following article is from the pen of an earnest Christian and an active and successful teacher in the South. We commend it to the attention of our readers because it discusses an old question from a new standpoint, the practical view of a Southern worker.--ED. AMERICAN FREEDMAN.]

WHATEVER may be the political views of *Christian* men at the North, whether Radical or Conservative, in one thing *they* should agree, namely: That the influence of such men and institutions from our section should be exerted in the direction of peace and reconciliation; so far as this can be done without the sacrifice of principle.

The education of the freedmen, following in the wake of the army, was the first introduction of well-organized Yankee good will to the people of the South. The first associations formed were most of them secular rather than religious; and so far as the observation of the writer has extended such teachers were commissioned by these organizations, where they attended strictly to the duties of their calling, were, as a general thing, unmolested. Sympathy they had no right to expect, indifference was toleration, and toleration permitted their work to thrive and prosper.

Notwithstanding the almost entire withdrawal of the army, most of their school stations are still occupied, and outrages upon teachers are by no means of common occurrence.

Within a few months, a "change of base" has taken place among some of the friends of this cause, and we find churches and sects forming associations to establish parochial schools in connection with their own peculiar religious organizations.

In the practical carrying out of their plans, they aim to "extend the borders of their church" by connecting with it all making the same profession, and to add wherever practicable a denominational school to each distinct church or organization.

With reference to the introduction of Northern clergymen to religious labor at the South, it is notorious that nearly all the white population professing Christianity have since the war returned to their old organizations.

There is a population of "poor whites" in the mountains, and scattered up and down through the country, who need and should have from every source religious aid, but real "church extension" in the Southern States must find most of its material among the freedmen.

Nearly all the members of the colored churches have hitherto been counted in membership with the larger denominations of the South. To connect individual churches with other associations holding the same doctrine and discipline, and once working in harmony, is to keep alive a sectarian feud, which can not but result injuriously to the cause of religion and of a united country.

Its tendency to increase the sectarian feeling which the experience of all teachers among the freedmen shows to be already exceedingly strong; in some localities almost preventing the harmony of action with reference to the support of the poor, the care of the sick, etc.

Its tendency to widen yet further the breach between the late owner, the *present employer* of the colored man, and himself, and thus it may add another drop to the cup of bitterness of which the latter in his transition state has been so often compelled to drink.

The permanent occupation of the pulpits of the colored churches by a white clergy tends to perpetuate the slave education of the negro, by continuing his dependence upon the brains of the Anglo-Saxon for guidance.

Many of the places of worship occupied by freedmen at the South are held in law by Southern conferences and associations. Will not the new connection be likely to provoke annoyance in this direction of a very trying character?

Such schools as are organized in connection with this movement will doubtless be made so far as they can be with propriety, *self-supporting*. Let us suppose that in the course of a few years they be opened all over a single State, and the question of a system of free schools come before the legislature of that State. If such schools (the parochial) are generally attended and *supported* by the freed-people, will not the opponents of a free-school bill have the vantage ground? Will not even the societies maintaining such be passively opposed?

Doubtless the schools for freedmen thus established will be of good character, and the children will make progress in learning; but will not institutions under such auspices be more likely to excite prejudice against the instructions of the blacks than the simple unsectarian schools of the secular associations?

Toward the latter in many places a better feeling exists than formerly. . . .

The work of the secular associations has been of such character as not to come in competition with other organizations [in the] South. Conducting *free* schools as a general rule, it has introduced some capital in a small way, and if ever obliged to retire before religious propagation it will have the honor of pioneer efforts and disinterested motives.

Despite these efforts, the consolidation effort ultimately failed. The American Missionary Society and the Baptist, Methodist, and Quaker organizations had held aloof from the 1865 merger of the American Freedmen's Aid Association and the American Freedmen's Union Commission -- the two major "unsectarian" societies. By the spring of 1867, the western branches of the American Freedmen's Union Commission, which had been drawn back into the fold at the Cleveland meeting a year earlier, again withdrew -- primarily over the question of parochial versus free schools. Though all these groups still worked with the Freedmen's Bureau in the field, the resulting fragmentation and duplication of efforts not only impaired the effectiveness of educational and relief work, but, more seriously, competing fund-raising efforts tended to delegitimize the whole cause in the eyes of donors. As the private relief movement broke up, contributions to all the associations began to drop off. Even such magnificent gestures as the establishment of the Peabody Fund -- the largest charitable donation of the period -- failed to stem the decline broad support.

The Peabody Educational Fund, a charitable trust established by international banker George Peabody in 1867, was notable not only for its size -- in excess of two million dollars -- but also for its unique form. Rather than being a gift to an already operating eleemosynary organization or an endowment on which a new operating entity would

be based, it was a free-standing trust whose purpose was to give support -- at the discretion of its trustees -- to other organizations. As such, it was the first grant-making foundation in the United States. A similar fund, the Slater Fund, would be set up by Connecticut industrialist John F. Slater in 1882. Like Peabody, Slater specified that his gift should be used for "Christian education" in the sense in which the Freedmen's Union used the term: "when asked the precise meaning of the term. . .," he replied, "in the sense that the common school teaching of Massachusetts and Connecticut was Christian education. That it is leavened with a predominant and salutary Christian influence" (quoted in Bolton, 1896, 337).

Although the Freedmen's Union Commission was quick to claim kinship to Peabody's effort, the Fund in fact with remarkable --and perhaps understandable -- independence from both the freedmen's societies and the Freedmen's Bureau. None of its trustees had abolitionist connections, nor were any involved with the societies. The Fund conducted its own investigations of the South's educational needs and, though conceding the need for educating blacks, emphasized the importance of serving the needs of the white population.

From *The American Freedman* I:12 (March 1867), 178.

GO AND DO LIKEWISE

MR. PEABODY'S munificent gift is the theme of universal comment and admiration. It certainly is unrivalled in the history of christian beneficence. At the close of a long a terrible war, a citizen of the Union, whose loyalty is above suspicion, gives a million of dollars in money, and a further gift of stocks whose value it is perhaps difficult to estimate, to educate the very people who had united to destroy the land he loved. Surely this is obedience to

Christ's law of love: "But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you."

For this gift is not an expression of accord with Southern ideas and institutions. On the contrary it is the effort of a Christian philanthropist on a grand scale, to combat and overcome those ideas by the power of love; by supplanting them by a true education.

By this gift Mr. Peabody declares his faith in the power of right principles, and by an act which speaks louder than words, his belief that it only needs that the Southern people should receive universal education, to imbibe those principles of Republicanism which necessarily accompany it.

If the munificence of this benefaction has deservedly attracted public attention, the principles upon which it is to be administered, are no less worthy of note, It is in the interest of no sect or party. Northerner and Southerner, united in one board for its administration. Thus the co-operation of the Southern people is invited by the very conditions of the trust created. It is in the interest of no denomination. While it is given in a genuinely Christian spirit, and as a means of promoting the cause of true religion, it is administered by no sect, and is not to be made, cannot be made, the means of building up any particular denomination. It is in the interest of no race. Without words Mr. Peabody has affixed the seal of his own condemnation on the cant, "This is a white man's government." Education is like the Gospel, for all God's children, and the benefits of this trust fund, are by the terms of its creation to be shared by all classes, without distinction of cast[e] or color.

In and by this gift Mr. Peabody does but give expression to the almost universal sentiment in the North; to its absolutely universal Christian sentiment. Schemes of revenge find no favor with us. Plans and policies of sweeping confiscation are condemned. We demand guarantees

for the future, but not vengeance for the past. On the contrary it is our sincere desire to do what in us lies, to give help and succor to the suffering South. This city [New York] alone has recently raised \$30,000, and the subscription is far from complete, to send bread to the famine-stricken. The appeal of the Southern Relief Commission, signed by men never suspected of Southern sympathies, in the political sense, lies before us as we write. And to this appeal the Northern heart and the Northern pocket generously respond. In the country at large, we have raised and distributed through this commission during the years 1865-'6, nearly a million of dollars in the work of relief and education. This money is contributed upon the conditions and administered upon the principles which characterize Mr. Peabody's donation. It is in the interest of no sect or party. The co-operation of the Southern people is cordially invited and gradually obtained. It is in the interest of the Christian religion, and so of all Churches, but in that of no particular denomination. Its benefits are for all, of whatever class and race, who will accept them. Mr. Peabody is but one of a great army of philanthropists whose aims are the same, though of necessity their gifts are less than his.

Reader, if you commend the spirit and character of Mr. Peabody's gift, go and do likewise. Give according the Lord hath prospered you. Follow the example you admire. Five hundred dollars will support a teacher. Send one. Ten will give a year's schooling to a single pupil.-- How many will you take at the price? And remember, that however men estimate gifts, God measures them not by their absolute magnitude, but by the spirit which actuates them. You may rival in divine contemplation, even the munificence of Mr. Peabody.

As the private societies did battle with one another, the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau itself began to falter. Its activities stimulated growing opposition throughout the South: teachers were beaten and schools were burned. The continuing battle between President Johnson and Congress took its toll of the Bureau's most competent officers. The President, Howard stated, "was very anxious to be rid of every prominent officer who was reported to have been long the freedmen's friend" (Howard, 1907, II: 283). At the same time, Johnson launched a well-publicized investigation of the Bureau intended to discredit it. "The inspectors have pursued an extraordinary course," Howard complained. "They took as clerks several newspaper reporters, who gave to the press the substance of their reports, and sometimes the reports themselves" (II: 298). Although Congress supported the Bureau's work, appropriating \$7 million in 1866, Howard found it increasingly difficult on the one hand to protect its agents and facilities from violence by southern vigilantes and, on the other, from internal corruption.

Despite these problems, Congress extended the life of the Bureau, which had been slated to cease operations in 1868. However, it decided limit its activities, authorizing the Secretary of War to curtail its judicial, property management, and relief operations in states which had been restored to constitutional relations in the union (as of 1868, these included Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, and South Carolina; by 1870, these would be joined by Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia). Decisions about the continuance of the Bureau's educational work, its hospitals and orphanages, and its claims division (which provided benefits for black veterans) were to be left to the discretion of Congress. Gradually, the Bureau's functions were curtailed or transferred to other agencies -- and it formally ceased to exist at the end of June 1872.

Certainly education was the Bureau's most enduring contribution to Reconstruction. Although it advocated the establishment of publicly-supported free schools, its dependence on northern philanthropic and voluntary organizations -- as well as the hostility with which southerners viewed the agency -- led to the establishment of some two dozen privately supported high and normal (teacher training) schools and colleges. These included the National Theological Institute, Howard University, St. Martin's School, and Miss M.R. Mann's School, in the District of Columbia; Richmond Normal and High School and the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia; St. Augustine's Normal School and Biddle Memorial Institute in North Carolina; South Carolina High and Normal Schools in South Carolina; Atlanta University in Georgia; Alabama High and Normal Schools in Alabama; Wesleyan College, Fiske University, Roberts College, and Maysville College, in Tennessee; Berea College in Kentucky; Wilberforce University in Ohio; Quindaro High School in Kansas; Storer College in West Virginia; St. Bridget's Parochial School, Lincoln University, Avery College, and the Institute for Colored Youth, in Pennsylvania (Pierce, 1904, 78). Ironically, the Peabody Fund, though a private endowment, proved to be a more important force in the establishment of public education in the South -- in part because the Fund's trustees included influential southerners, in part because it avoided involvement with the benevolent societies and the Freedmen's Bureau.

The role of the Bureau in the establishment of so many private educational institutions in the South serves to highlight the importance of its work as part of a unique and unprecedented public-private partnership. Although private benevolence supported all of these schools, government contributions were generous:

The annual amount which the bureau devoted to school purposes rapidly increased from \$27,000 in 1865 to nearly one million in 1870. Between June 1, 1865, and September 1, 1871, the total reached \$5,262,511.26. This sum represented considerably more than half the total expense of schools under bureau supervision; but benevolent associations always sustained a liberal share of the financial burden, and the annual contribution of the freedmen gradually

increased." The bureau maintained a nominal supervision over negro schools until its abolition in 1872. But its real efficient assistance ceased before July, 1870, when the last congressional appropriation had been expended. At that time there were under its direction 2,677 day and night schools with 3,300 teachers and 149,581 pupils; 1,562 Sabbath schools with 6,007 teachers and 97,752 pupils, or a grand total of 4,239 schools, 9,307 teachers, and 247,333 pupils. These were irregularly distributed over the southern and border states. Reports from all quarters showed a marked increase in attendance, an advance in scholarship, and a record for punctuality and regularity which compared favorably with schools of the north (Pierce, 1904, 82-3).

At the same time, the Reconstruction experience demonstrated the fundamental weakness of private provision -- especially its tendency to fragmented and partial addressing of problems:

the freedmen's bureau had fallen far short of a solution of the problem of negro education. Of the four million eight hundred and eighty thousand free colored people in the United States in 1870, nearly 1,700,000 were of school age. In 1869 only one-tenth of these were attending school. When deductions are made for names duplicated in the reports, it is probable that no greater proportion received instruction of any kind in 1870. More than half a million black children were unprovided with the slightest educational facilities. Setting the number annually taught at the highest possible figure, it did not greatly exceed the annual increase in negro population. Of course the mass of adult negroes were densely ignorant and many of the school children were making but the slightest acquaintance with the three "r's." Even the adults knew little of the management of schools and were unfit to judge of the qualifications of teachers. Not all states had made provision for negro education, and in many states, such provision was inadequate (Pierce, 1904, 82-3).

Despite the fact that General Howard was compelled to defend the Bureau's record by depicting its activities -- and those of the private organizations it worked with -- in the most favorable possible light, it seems quite clear that he understood that even the generous resources of the public purse would not be sufficient to fully address the challenge of reconstructing the South. Looking to the longer-term solution of using

educational institutions to create a black middle class of teachers, lawyers, physicians, and other professionals, he began to shift the resources of the Bureau towards establishing high schools, normal schools, and other institutions capable of producing cadres of black leaders.

From Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General United States Army* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1904), II:390-401.

BEGINNING OF HOWARD UNIVERSITY

In my earlier interviews with Mr. Stanton in May, 1865, I claimed that the education of the freedmen's children, and of adults, as far as practicable, was *the true relief*.

"Relief from what?" asked Stanton, glancing toward me over his colored glasses.

"Relief from beggary and dependence," I replied.

I had the same opinion with reference to our numerous "white refugees" of the South, though it was believed that they would naturally be incorporated in ordinary schools there without such prejudice to their interests as existed against the negro population.

Very soon all my assistants agreed with me that it would not be long before we must have negro teachers, if we hoped to secure a permanent foothold for our schools. This conclusion had become plain from the glimpses already given into Southern society. Naturally enough, the most Christian of the Southern people would prefer to have white teachers from among themselves. Feeling a sympathy for this seeming home prejudice, quite early in 1866, I tried the experiment in one State, in cooperation with the Episcopal Bishop of that State, to put over our school children Southern white teachers, male and female, but the bishop and I found that their

faith in negro education [391] was too small, and their ignorance of practical teaching too great, to admit of any reasonable degree of success. After trial and failure it was given up. But faith and enthusiasm combined to give the negro teachers a marvelous progress. Of course, in the outset there were few negroes in the United States who were properly fitted to teach. The most who had a smattering of learning could not speak the English language with a reasonable correctness. It was then a plain necessity to have schools which could prepare teachers. My own sentiment often found vent when I was visited by men of opposite convictions -- the one set saying that *no* high schools or colleges were wanted for the freedmen, and the other declaring their immediate and pressing necessity. My own thought favored the latter, but not with haste. It was given in this form: "You cannot keep up the lower grades unless you have the higher." Academies and colleges, universities and normal schools, had long been a necessity in all sections where the free schools had been continuously sustained.

A brief experience showed us that the negro people were capable of education, with no limit that men could set to their capacity. What white men could learn or had learned, they, or some of them, could learn. There was one school diagonally across the street from my headquarters, named the Wayland Seminary. The pupils were from fourteen to twenty years of age. It was taught in 1866 by a lady, who, herself, was not only a fine scholar, but a thoroughly trained teacher. One day the Hon. Kenneth Raynor, of North Carolina, whom I had long known and valued as a personal friend, came to my room to labor with me and show me how unwise were some of my ideas. [392] He said in substance about this educating the freedmen:

"General Howard, do you not know that you are educating the colored youth above their business? You will only destroy them. Those young girls, for example; they will be too proud or vain to work, and the consequence will be that they will go to dance houses and other places of improper resort."

"My friend," I replied, "do you really think that? I am astonished! That is not the way education affects the Yankee girls. Come with me to the Wayland school, across the street."

We went together to the large school building and entered the commodious room where the school was just commencing its morning exercises. After extending a pleasant welcome, the teacher gave us seats well back, where we could see the blackboards, which were near her desk, and the open school organ at her left, ready for use. She first sent up two nice-looking girls, of about fifteen years, to the instrument. One played, and the other, like a precentor, led the school in singing. There was evident culture in the singing and playing, and none of the melody was wanting. My friend's eyes moistened; but he whispered: "They always could sing!"

Next, we had a class of reading. It was grateful to cultured ears to have sentences well read and words correctly pronounced. Spelling and defining followed, with very few mistakes. The recitations at the blackboard in arithmetic that next came on were remarkable. To test the pupils beyond their text, I went forward and placed some hard problems there. With readiness and intelligence they were solved. The politeness and bearing of these young people to one another, to the [393] teacher, and to us, struck my good friend with astonishment. Such a school, even of whites, so orderly, so well trained, and so accomplished, Mr. Raynor had seldom seen. As we returned across the street, arm in arm, he said to me: "General, you have converted me!" This fine seminary was tantamount to a normal school. It was preparing many excellent teachers for their subsequent work.

Miss M. R. Mann, a niece of the Hon. Horace Mann, through the aid of Massachusetts friends, had a handsome school building constructed in Washington, D.C., and it had the best possible appliances furnished -- all for her own use. She charged tuition, except for those whose purpose was avowed to become teachers. She commenced at the foundation of instruction, and led her pupils step by step, class by class, as high as she could conveniently

take them. She began the enterprise in December, 1865. Pupils of different ages were admitted, so that teachers, still in embryo, might learn by experiment. It became before long the model school of the District of Columbia. The neatness and order, the elegant rooms for reciting, and the high grade of Miss Mann's classes in recitations always attracted and surprised visitors. From this school, also, several teachers graduated and proved themselves able and worthy in their subsequent successful career.

There were various other schools, as we know, in the United States which had been long in existence, preparing colored teachers, physicians, ministers, lawyers, and others for the coming needs of the new citizens -- notably Oberlin College; Wilberforce University, of Xenia, O.; Berea Academy, Ky.; The Theological Institute (Baptist) at Washington, D. C., and [393] Ashmun Institute at Oxford, Pa. The institute also for colored youth in Philadelphia, founded in 1837 by the bequest of a Friend, Richard Humphreys, was designed to teach agriculture and mechanical arts, and prepare teachers for their profession. By other gifts, and by the help of benevolent and friendly associations, this institute had come, in 1866, to have a capacity for three hundred (300) pupils; it was fairly endowed and doing well, giving excellent results. Its teachers were all colored persons. It had that year 48 graduates, 31 of whom became teachers. Still, notwithstanding these sources of supply, the need for more teachers was constant, and if any general system of free schools should be adopted, the demand would be a hundred times beyond the possibility of meeting it by competent instructors.

As the work of carrying forward the schools developed, the old negro clergymen of every name became inadequate for the religious instruction of the more enlightened people. Many ministers felt themselves to be unlearned, and so sought such knowledge of books as they could get. Negro pharmacists and other medical men were soon required, and contentions with white men in the courts demanded friendly advocates at law.

Under the evident and growing necessity for higher education, in 1866 and 1867, a beginning was made. Various good schools of a collegiate grade were started in the South, and normal classes were about this time added, as at Hampton, Charleston, Atlanta, Macon, Savannah, Memphis, Louisville, Mobile, Talladega, Nashville, New Orleans, and elsewhere.

In every way, as commissioner, I now encouraged the higher education, concerning which there was so [395] much interest, endeavoring to adhere to my principle of Government aid in dealing with the benevolent associations. These, by 1867, had broken away from a common union, and were again pushing forward their denominational enterprises, but certainly, under the Bureau's supervision, nowhere did they hurtfully interfere with one another.

Each denomination desired to have, here and there, a college of its own. Such institutions the founders and patrons were eager to make different from the simple primary or grammar schools; these, it was hoped and believed, would be eventually absorbed in each State in a great free school system. The educators naturally wished to put a moral and Christian stamp upon their students, especially upon those who would become instructors of colored youth. My own strong wish was ever to lay permanent substructures and build thereon as rapidly as possible, in order to give as many good teachers, professional men, and leaders to the rising generation of freedmen as we could, during the few years of Governmental control.

One of the institutions for the higher education of the negro which has maintained ample proportions and also bears my own name, warrants me in giving somewhat i*ia detail its origin and my connection with it.

The latter part of 1866, a few gentlemen, at the instance of Rev. F. B. Morris, who held an important Governmental office at the capital, and was a benevolent and scholarly man, came together at the house of Mr. A. Brewster, on K Street, Washington.

There had been two or three of such informal meetings, consisting mainly of residents of Washington, when Senators Wilson and Pomeroy, B. C. Cook, Member of the House, and myself were invited to this [396] respectable self-constituted council, November 20, 1866. Nearly all of the dozen or more gentlemen who were present, and among them Rev. Dr. C. B. Boynton, the pastor of the Congregational Church of the city, were Congregationalists. A preliminary organization was already in existence. The subject under discussion for this time was a place for a theological school for the colored preachers and those who were to become such that their teachings should be of value. Mr. H. D. Nichols moved that the new institution be entitled "Howard Theological Seminary." That name was adopted. Mr. Morris and some others were in the outset in favor of connecting with the seminary some industrial features; and, to show my good will, I made the same offer, being authorized by the law, that I had been making to other educational associations, that if they would furnish a proper lot, I would cause to be erected thereon, by the Bureau, a suitable building. I believed it wiser not to use my name, but it was remarked sportively "there are other Howards."

At a meeting December 4, 1866, there was in ideas and proposals considerable progress manifested. At first, I had desired delay, thinking that the time was hardly ripe for a large institution at the capital; but, seeing the enthusiasm and fixed purpose of this body of some fourteen gentlemen, a few of whom I now observed were Presbyterians and two or three of other persuasions, I participated in their discussions. "Howard Normal and Theological Institute for the Education of Teachers and Preachers," was the new title adopted.

On January 8, 1867, at another gathering, Dr. Boynton was elected the president of the preliminary board. At this session my brother, General C.H. [397] Howard, then assistant commissioner of the district and vicinity, moved a committee to plan a law department -- a medical department having already been favorably canvassed. Thus, little by little, the idea of a university grew upon the preliminary board, the project of an institution which should have

many separate departments acting together under one board of trustees. At this January sitting, an important committee was named to obtain a charter. It consisted of Senators Wilson and Pomeroy and Hon. B. C. Cook; and in anticipation of funds, General George W. Balloch was elected treasurer of the university. The institution had already stepped up into the dignity of another name, to wit: "Howard University." I had, during the discussion, continued to oppose that name, not only from modesty, but from my feeling that I could do more privately and officially for an enterprise that did not bear my own name; I did not wish to be suspected and accused of raising a monument to myself. But the universal voice was against me; in fact, the naming did little harm, for it was not long before the name, even in a public address to the students, was imputed by a distinguished English divine to John Howard, the philanthropist. The charter was easily obtained, having seventeen charter members. The incorporation title was: "An Act to incorporate the Howard University in the District of Columbia." It was approved by the President of the United States March 2, 1867.

The enactment required a board of trustees of not less than thirteen members to be chosen by the incorporators.

The scope of the university, in keeping with my own plan for that institution, is indicated in the charter: to consist of six designated departments and such [397] others as the trustees may establish -- first, normal; second, collegiate; third, theological; fourth, law; fifth, medicine; sixth, agriculture. Under this charter, Howard University was set in motion.

General Whittlesey and I were very soon appointed a committee to look up a site. We had visited various parts of the District of Columbia without being able to get an option for our purpose, when, one day, we were standing near the place where the largest structure of Howard University now is. Whittlesey had been there before and liked the site. It was now evident to us both that we could not find a more appropriate place. The outlook, taking in the city of

Washington, the monument, the Capitol, the White House, and other public buildings, and a grand expanse besides, including miles of the Potomac, could not be better. To locate good structures there would make weight for the manhood of those whom we especially purposed to benefit by a university education.

Together we went to the house of the owner of the estate, Mr. John A. Smith; it was situated just beyond the present location of the President's house. The cottage was almost hidden by a small grove of trees. We found Mr. Smith, with his wife and two or three members of his family. As we sat together, I tried to get Mr. Smith to promise a third of his farm. He claimed to have 150 acres. Some time before this the Bureau had purchased a small lot nearer the city of this Mr. Smith, with an old dance house on it, to use it for educational purposes, and had rented the same to the trustees for the first university school. It would unify the proposed departments if we could now make a favorable bargain with Mr. Smith. But he insisted on selling the whole at one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per [398] acre, or none at all. General Whittlesey was of the opinion that in a few years*[@] time enough of such a property could be sold to pay Mr. Smith's price, and still leave us a reasonable portion as a reserve for our use. I, too, felt sure of it. Suddenly, I said: "Mr. Smith, what terms will you give us on the whole tract?"

He answered: "One third down and the balance in one and two years."

"All right," I answered, "we will take the land provided you give us a clear title."

His wife turned pale at the suddenness of the bargain, and there was evident excitement in all the company present. After we had left the house, General Whittlesey, who was a good business man, remarked with a smile: "Well, general, if the trustees do not sustain us in this purchase, we can handle it without them."

We were sustained by our board, though the question of money troubled them. Time was gained by finding that there were several encumbrances which required negotiation and settlement. At last, Mr. Smith deducted on this account two thousand dollars (\$2,000) and the settled price became one hundred and forty seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$147,500). General Whittlesey and Mr. R. M. Hall were constituted our land agents with power to advertise and convey. The trustees authorized them to make surveys and maps, and instructed them to sell all the lots over and above the University Reservation.

Later, in his report to our board, which unkind criticism had drawn out, Whittlesey made several interesting statements; for instance he wrote: "When appointed the agent of the board the task was set [400] Howard before me of solving the financial problem of making one half or two thirds of the land purchased pay for the whole. This I have done. My success has been a happy surprise to myself. My work is open to fair criticism, but I am not willing to be subjected to unjust censure." He just then demurred at the yoke of extraordinary surveillance that was sought to be imposed upon him, and he asked them to find another agent in whom they could repose ordinary confidence exercised among business men.

In the same paper, Whittlesey said: "The truth is the board of trustees have had very little to do with the purchase of this property. They did not encourage it. Several members expressed opposition to the whole project.

"The work was done by General Howard and by me, acting under his authority. The entire responsibility was thrown upon us. Had it been a failure, we should have borne the disgrace, and the board would have declared itself free from all blame. It has not failed, and every person in the land, who has at heart the welfare of the university and the good of those for whom it is designed, must rejoice."

How to meet the primary payment was my first problem. Some gifts had come to our university treasury, but they were not enough. The university treasurer showed that the first amount to be paid to Mr. Smith was twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000). To meet that and other expenses in starting this enterprise, there was in the hands of the Bureau disbursing officer a residue of "the refugees and freedmen's fund." And as I had the authority of law in the Appropriation Act for March 2, 1867, to use it at my discretion for education, after reflection, I resolved to [401] transfer thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) to the Howard University treasury, and did so by a carefully drawn order dated April 15, 1867. The university treasurer, being duly authorized by the trustees, receipted for the same. Thus the treasurer now had ample means to meet the first payment.

July 2d of this same year the executive committee of Howard University wrote to the board: "The number of lots sold is 245, and their average value, as estimated by Mr. R. M. Hall, their agent, is six hundred dollars (\$600) each, and the total value one hundred and forty-seven thousand dollars (\$147,000)," so that the university treasury was fairly well supplied, as the deferred payments from lots, from time to time, came in.

Able instructors, meanwhile, were selected. A normal department and a preparatory to fit young men and women for teachers and for college courses were well under way before the end of the year. More than 100 pupils were enrolled, and a small college class formed. Theological lectures and careful teaching were given to an assembly of colored ministers of various denominations, who had been but partially prepared for their work in their churches. The task of planning suitable structures, and of erecting them, went steadily on. Applications were numerous for the admission of students from all parts of the country.

Thus I have indicated the beginnings of that large institution, which has already given to intelligent youth at the nation's capital, whatever might have been their previous condition, the benefits of a complete collegiate course and of a thorough professional training.

The Freedmen's Bureau finally closed out its operations in 1872. By 1876, as a part of the compromise which decided the presidential contest between Democrat Samuel Tilden and Republican Rutherford B. Hayes, the federal military presence with withdrawn from the South and Reconstruction was declared completed. Though the northern freedmen's societies continued their work, now unprotected from white terrorism, they became increasingly discouraged. Even those whom they had hoped to help -- the freed slaves -- seemed to show diminishing interest in being educated. The following documents, one an article which appeared in the 1875 annual report of the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the other of which was written by J.L.M. Curry, a southerner long active in negro education, reveal both the demoralization of northern volunteers by the mid-1870s and the emergence of philanthropic attitudes which are curiously tainted by racism and paternalism.

DESIRE FOR EDUCATION FAST WANING

Report of Freedmen's Aid Society, M. E. Church, 1875, p. 59.

WHILE . . . the children of freedmen are still zealous in acquiring knowledge, this desire, which was once full-orbed, is fast waning with the masses of those who have passed their childhood. There was a time during the war and shortly after, when groups of colored men in middle life, and even in life's decline, could have been seen gathered about field stumps on which pine knots were blazing, trying thus to acquire the rudiments of an education. The enthusiasm was then at fever-heat. But this sight is at present rarely, if ever, witnessed. Said one of the speakers at the last anniversary of Fiske University, Nashville: "At the close of the war the people rushed into the schools -- old gray-headed men and almost helpless children. There was an impulse that carried everything before it. Our own institution numbered at one time (1866) twelve hundred students. Then it dropped down to less than three hundred." There are ample data upon which to establish on general grounds these deductions. We need, perhaps, refer to but a single instance, inasmuch as it is one that furnishes an illustration which is almost an exact parallel to the case before us. When the blacks of the British West Indies were emancipated they manifested a zeal for education only second to that shown by the freedmen of America; but to-day, especially in Jamaica, the liberated slaves," says Colonel Baylor, "have relaxed into degrading sloth, if not also into barbarism." No one who has investigated this case questions but it might have been other-wise. The fatal mistakes were in diminishing their wages to such a pittance as required all their energies to eke out a mere subsistence; also, the withdrawal of all government aid by way of educational provisions; likewise the absence of personal encouragement to people so much needing it, and without which the emancipated will seldom, if ever, do otherwise than lapse gradually from their first ambitions and aims into idleness and indifference.

J.E.L. Curry, THE MISTAKES OF THE RECONSTRUCTION EDUCATION

[*Race Problems of the South. Proceedings of the
First Annual Conference at Montgomery. (1900), p. 108*]

I HAVE very little respect for the intelligence or the patriotism of the man who doubts the capacity of the Negro for improvement or usefulness. The progress made by the Negroes in education, considering their environments, their heredity, the abominable scoundrels who have come here from other quarters to seduce and lead them astray, is marvelous. . . It is not just to condemn the Negro for the education which he received in the early years after the war. That was the period of reconstruction, the saturnalia of misgovernment, the greatest possible hindrance to the progress of the freedmen, an immitigable curse, the malignant attempt to use the Negro voter as a pawn in the corrupt game of manufacturing members of Congress. The education was unsettling, demoralizing, pandered to a wild frenzy for schooling as a quick method of reversing social and political conditions. Nothing could have been better devised for deluding the poor Negro, and making him the tool, the slave of corrupt taskmasters. Education is a natural consequence of citizenship and enfranchisement, I should say of freedom and humanity. But with deliberate purpose to subject the Southern States to Negro domination, and secure the States permanently for partisan ends, the education adopted was contrary to common-sense, to human experience, to all noble purposes. The curriculum was for a people in highest degree of civilization; the aptitude and capabilities and needs of the Negro were wholly disregarded. Especial stress was laid on classics and liberal culture -- to bring the race *per saltum* to the same plane with their former masters, and realize the theory of social And political equality. A race more highly civilized with best heredities and environments, could not have been coddled with more disregard of all the teachings of human history and the necessities of the race. Colleges and universities, established and conducted by the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern churches and societies, sprang up like mushrooms, and the teachers, ignorant, fanatical, without self-poise, proceeded to make all possible mischief. It is irrational, cruel to hold the Negro, under such strange conditions, responsible for all the ill consequences of bad education, unwise teachers, reconstruction villainies and partisan schemes. To educate at all, slowly, was a gigantic task.

Though the southern states had been compelled to extend suffrage to all males, regardless of race, and had been persuaded (largely through the work of the Peabody Fund) to establish public school systems, these advances were rapidly reversed without federal oversight. Uncontrolled terrorism by the Klan and other groups drove blacks from the schools and from the polls. Thousands were lynched and brutalized. Black elected officials were murdered. Many black farmers lost their land and were reduced to peonage and share-cropping. Northern reformers, preoccupied with other problems, largely shut their eyes to what was going on and left the South to solve its own problems. And even those northerners who maintained philanthropic commitments to southern blacks did so in a frame of mind which assumed their inferiority. In the decades after 1870, the thinking of educated Americans was profoundly influenced by the ideas of biologist Charles Darwin, whose evolutionary ideas were used as the basis for justifying the stratification of society both by class and by race ("the struggle for existence" and the "survival of the fittest"). Eventually such doctrines would be used to justify imperialist adventures as well ("the white man's burden").

Although the kinds of institutions of higher learning favored by General Howard continued their work, a new form of education which trained blacks for agricultural and industrial occupations attracted support from southerners and northerners alike. Pioneered by another Union General, Samuel Chapman Armstrong, "industrial education," was geared both to teaching blacks needed skills while also teaching them their subservient position. "The thing to be done was clear," Armstrong would write in 1868, "to train selected Negro youths who should go out and teach and lead their people, first by example, by getting land and homes; to give them not a dollar that they could earn for themselves; to teach respect for labor, to replace stupid drudgery with

skilled hands, and to those ends to build up an industrial system for the sake not only of self support and intelligent labor, but also for the sake of character" (quoted in Fleming, 1907, II: 209). In 1868, Armstrong, an agent of the Freedmen's Bureau, established the Hampton Institute, with assistance from the American Missionary Association. Hampton's curriculum, which educated "blacks to achieve within the narrowly defined limits of their social and economic sphere," helped to persuade southerners of the value of educating the freedmen (Webb, 1989, 450).

One of Hampton's best-known graduates was Booker T. Washington, who went on to establish the Tuskegee Institute, with both public and private support. "Unlike Hampton and other new black schools," writes historian Robert Norrell, "Tuskegee was staffed entirely by blacks. In the following, Washington summarized the "accommodationist" thinking of his mentor, General Armstrong.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON ON ARMSTRONG'S PLANS FOR NEGRO EDUCATION.

I think I might state his objects briefly as follows: First. He was anxious to give the colored people an idea of the dignity, and the beauty and civilizing power of intelligent labor with the hand. He was conscious of the fact that he was dealing with a race that had little necessity to labor in its native land before coming to America, and after coming to this country were forced to labor for two hundred and fifty years under circumstances that were not calculated to make the race fond of hard work.

Second. It was his object to teach the Negro to lift labor out of drudgery and toil by putting thought and skill into it.

Third. He saw that through the medium of industrial education he could bring the two races in the South into closer relations with each other. He knew that in other matters there were differences which it would take years to change, but he knew that industrially the interests of the two races were identical in the South, and that as soon as he could prove to a southern white man that an educated skilled Negro workman was of more value to the community than an ignorant, shiftless one, the southern white man would take an interest in the education of the black boy.

Fourth. Through the industrial system at the Hampton Institute it was his object to give the students an opportunity to work out a portion of their boarding expenses. In this way he meant to prevent the school becoming a hothouse for producing students with no power of self-help or independence. I have often heard him say that the mere effort which the student put forth through the industries at Hampton to help himself was of the greatest value to the student, whether the labor itself was of very much value or not. In a word, he meant to use the industries as a means for building character -- to teach that all forms of labor were honorable and all forms of idleness a disgrace.

The idea of industrial education, beginning for our people at Hampton, has gradually spread among them until I am safe in saying that it has permeated the whole race in every section of the country. There is not a State in the Union where there is any considerable proportion of our race whose influence counts for anything in which they are not interested in industrial education and are manifesting this interest by the establishment of a school or by other substantial helps. They now realize, as never before, that the education of the head, the heart and the hand must go together. That while we need classical and professional men, we need a still larger number trained along industrial lines.

Not only has General Armstrong's belief in industrial education spread among our people in the South, but its influence is felt in the West Indies and Africa and other foreign countries, to such an extent that there are many calls coming from these countries for industrial education.

The work at the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute is simply one of the results of the work of the Hampton Institute. There are a number of industrial schools, either small or large, in every State where there are any considerable number of our people.

Perhaps the most interesting thing in connection with the influence of General Armstrong is the rapid growth and spread of industrial education among the southern white people. For a number of years after the Hampton Institute was started the southern white people gave no attention to the subject, and rather took for granted, I think, that it was something in which the Negroes only should receive training. But as they realized from year to year the rapid growth of industrial education among the colored people and the skill and intelligence which they were acquiring, southern white educators here and there began to make investigation and to inquire whether or not the same kind of education was not needed for the southern white boy and girl, and very carefully and modestly at first industries were introduced into a white school here and there. These schools, however, were not very popular among the white people at first, but the idea of industrial education among the southern white people has spread until at the present moment I think every southern State has one or more institutions established for this kind of training for white youths, and the industrial idea has become almost as popular among the white people as among the colored people.

I think I am not going too far when I make one other suggestion, and that is that the whole country owes General Armstrong a debt not only for the rapid and permanent growth of industrial education among the colored people and white people of the South, but it is to him that all are indebted more than to any one man for the growth of the hand training in the

northern and western States. It is seldom . . . that one individual has had the opportunity through a single idea to revolutionize the educational thought and activity of so large a proportion of the world as has been true of the founder of Hampton.

The Reconstruction experience profoundly shaped the future of American philanthropy in a number of ways. First, because it sought to engage a problem of enormous scale and scope, it forced the more thoughtful philanthropists to think strategically. Despite their initial optimism, it quickly became apparent to most of those trying to deal with the freedmen that there were far more people in need of aid than could possibly be helped --even with the combined resources of government and private benevolence. Thus, if they hoped to do any good at all, they would have to target resources and energies carefully. Doing this required thinking about social and economic causation in ways that had not previously been done -- thinking about "root causes" rather than simple relief or almsgiving. While the Sanitary Commission had certainly provided a precedent for this kind of thinking, the challenges which it had faced -- with the exception of its efforts with regard to the future of disabled veterans -- had been relatively short-term in character and did not involve an attempt to fundamentally restructure social, economic, and political relationships. This new orientation to "root causes" and to strategic solutions would be a keynote of the truly modern forms of philanthropy that would begin to emerge by the 1880s.

Secondly, the Reconstruction experience emphasized the divergence -- already evident by the end of the Civil War -- of religious and secular philanthropy. While the charitable, educational, health-care, and other eleemosynary activities churches and religious institutions would continue to be a crucially important part of American philanthropy, more scientific (in style, at least), efficiency-oriented secular agencies -- most of them connected to the rising universities and professions -- would come to

dominate the philanthropic mainstream. There was a certain irony in this, since many of the key figures in the creation of secular philanthropy like Barnabas Sears, General Agent and chief architect of the policies of the Peabody Education Fund, and Frederick W. Gates, John D. Rockefeller's chief philanthropic advisor, were clergymen. But, whatever their private religious convictions, their institutional commitments led in distinctly secular directions.

Thirdly, the Reconstruction experience led to an important redefinition of the relation between philanthropy and government. The public-private partnership represented by the Freedmen's Bureau, despite the amazing amount of work that it did, proved ultimately to be a bitter disappointment to most reformers. Despite the unquestionably integrity and unswerving commitment of officers like General Howard and his associates in the Bureau, evidently widespread corruption and malfeasance at the local levels of the Bureau's operations combined with the uncertainties of Congressional support, made it clear that government could simply not be depended on. While there would be many other forms of public-private partnerships in the decades following Reconstruction -- primarily involving government contracting with private agencies, the Reconstruction experience seems to have convinced many philanthropists that solutions to society's problems were more likely to emerge from the private rather than the public sector.

Fourthly, the Reconstruction experience led to the discovery of new forms of philanthropic activity -- the most important of these being the grantmaking foundation. The Peabody Education Fund inspired other similar efforts. Some, like the John F. Slater Fund, founded in 1882, were directed to southern problems. Others, like that which Samuel Tilden attempted to establish under his contested 1887 will, sought to empower trustees to act at their discretion for the more general benefit of mankind.

Though foundations of the latter type would not gain firm legal footing until the twentieth century, the success of the Peabody Fund -- and the unquestionable prominence of its trustees, which included the likes of J.P. Morgan and Theodore Roosevelt -- would certainly play an important role in blazing the trail for those that would follow.

Finally, the Reconstruction experience established a paradigm -- and at the same time set forth the problematic nature of -- international aid and development efforts by Americans. Though the Freedmen's Bureau certainly drew on the experience of earlier domestic and foreign missionary efforts (the Hampton Institute's General Armstrong was the son of New England missionaries to Hawaii), none of them had attempted the reorganization of a region's political, economic, and social institutions -- the kind of comprehensive development effort that would characterize American foreign adventures through much of the twentieth century. To the extent that it pursued such a broad agenda, Reconstruction really created the template for an entirely new kind of initiative. In doing so, however, it raised many of the dilemmas that would bedevil such efforts, especially the tensions between paternalism and empowerment.

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