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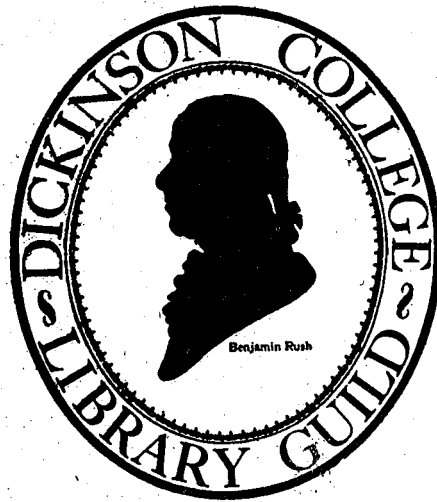
JAMES MILLER, MCKIM: PENN-
SYLVANIA ABOLITIONIST.

William Cohen, 1968

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ABOLITIONIST.

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James Miller McKim: Pennsylvania Abolitionist

by

William Cohen

A dissertation in the Department of History
submitted to the faculty of the Graduate
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ment of the requirements for the degree of
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Approved,
Thomas P. Levan
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PREFACE

In 1872, William Still, who had long been involved in efforts to aid fugitive slaves in the Philadelphia area, wrote an account of the Underground Railroad. In it he included a brief biographical sketch of James Miller McKim in which he said that McKim was "one of the earliest, most faithful, and ablest abolitionists in Pennsylvania, [who] occupied a position of influence, labor and usefulness, scarcely second to that of Mr. Garrison."¹ Despite this contemporary evaluation McKim has received but little notice from historians. Lacking the fiery pen of a Garrison, the platform eloquence of a Wendell Phillips, or the charisma of a Theodore Weld, his activities seem almost pedestrian in comparison to theirs. And yet, he was the sort of man who keeps social movements going. It was his day to day work as a

¹William Still, The Underground Rail Road . . . (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1872), p. 655. In a private letter to McKim, Still had earlier outlined the basic elements which he felt a description of his former employer should contain saying: "Of course it would not be just to confine you to any special department of the work [,] but to represent you as a general laborer. For instance [,] I would be glad to show you as a worker with your pen; on the platform; in committee meetings; in conventions; in petitioning Congress and our State legislatures; in counselling [sic] and Corresponding with anti-slavery members of Congress & --; furnishing documents [and] statistics to the drive in combatting prejudice and opposition in various ways -- in Slave Cases -- U.G.R.R cases, the cause of education; the rights of colored people in the [street] cars &-- &-- &--." William Still to James Miller McKim, November 10, 1871, James Miller McKim Papers, (hereafter cited as McKim Papers), Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

paid functionary of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society that kept the cause of abolition and the immorality of slavery continuously before the public eye; and though his talents as an organizer and administrator were unusual in a movement crowded with impractical visionaries, such undramatic activities seldom attract the attention and interest of historians.

Of even greater interest than McKim's work as an anti-slavery functionary from 1840-1860 is the story of how he came to be an abolitionist in the first place, and the fact that his emancipationist views emerged directly out of his religious evangelism sheds light on the origins of the movement as a whole. In 1933, Gilbert Hobbs Barnes' The Anti-slavery Impulse brought about a major revision in the historiography of the radical anti-slavery cause by focusing for the first time on the religious antecedents of the movement. Through the character of Theodore Weld he showed conclusively that the agitation for immediate emancipation could be traced directly to the evangelistic religion of the Second Great Awakening. But Barnes also advanced two other, and more dubious, propositions. He argued that abolition was primarily a rural and western phenomenon, and he read William Lloyd Garrison and his eastern followers out of the movement as unrepresentative irresponsible fanatics who, somehow, came from a different tradition than Weld and his western adherents. The manner in which McKim, who was both an easterner and a Garrisonian, came to hold his abolition views presents quite another picture and suggests that the divisions among abolitionists have been exaggerated, while the common themes which united them have been given insufficient attention.

McKim's life spans virtually the entire history of the radical

anti-slavery cause, from the first convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society which he attended, through his work as a member of Theodore Weld's band of Seventy, and on into the 1840's and fifties when some abolitionists turned their attention to politics. Others, including McKim, continued to hew to the ways carved out in the 1830's and insisted that moral, rather than political, agitation marked the true road to emancipation. McKim's life serves as an excellent prism through which the entire anti-slavery cause may be viewed, for his career typifies and makes sharper the major trends which shaped the movement. It illustrates the importance of evangelism in shaping not only the emancipation efforts of those in the West, but of easterners as well, and it highlights the perfectionism and moral absolutism which were shared by all the major abolitionists.

The significance of McKim's life was first brought to my attention by Professor John Hope Franklin (who is now the Chairman of the Department of History at the University of Chicago). It was as a result of his American Studies seminar at Brooklyn College that I decided to enter the field of history, and he has been unfailingly generous with his support and encouragement ever since.

When I began working on this study of McKim's life, it quickly became apparent that materials on his career prior to 1840 were sparse indeed. On the off chance that there might be a few letters in the old McKim home at Llewellyn Park, West Orange, New Jersey, I contacted Mrs. Hendon Chubb, a member of the family who currently lives there. Much to my surprise and pleasure, I found extensive McKim materials there including a manuscript autobiographical fragment and a diary. Mrs. Chubb went far beyond the normal hospitality encountered by

CHAPTER I

RELUCTANT CONVERT

One day early in 1833, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, a young Presbyterian ministerial student stopped off at the barbershop for a haircut and there had a conversation that would eventually lead him to give up his career in the clergy, and to devote all of his energies to the struggle to abolish slavery. Looking back upon this critical day in his life, James Miller McKim later remembered that in 1833 all that he knew about the institution of human bondage in America was

that such a thing as slavery existed in this country, that its victims were very numerous and that the general impression was that plans for its abolition were hopeless. The Colonization scheme . . . was considered the only feasible [sic] plan for benefitting the race, whether bond or free that was before the public.¹

While waiting his turn in the barber's chair McKim glanced through some works by abolitionists that John Peck, the Negro proprietor, had put out for his patrons to read. Afterwards McKim talked to Peck who vigorously challenged his rather nebulous conviction that the only solution to the problem was the expatriation of the Negroes

¹[James Miller McKim], MS Autobiographical Fragment for the years 1831-1836, p. [27]. Internal evidence on p. [92] indicates that it was written in late 1848 or in 1849. It is currently in the possession of Mrs. Hendon Chubb of Llewellyn Park, West Orange, New Jersey. It will be cited hereafter as, McKim, Autobiography and, despite the fact that there is no pagination in the original manuscript, page references will henceforth be given without brackets. Future references to materials in the possession of Mrs. Chubb will be cited as the Chubb Collection.

to Africa. When they parted Peck gave his customer a copy of William Lloyd Garrison's, Thoughts on African Colonization to read at his leisure.²

McKim studied it carefully, and by the time he finished he was completely converted to the cause of abolition. His new beliefs stood out in stark contrast to the inchoate views he had espoused a few days earlier. He now believed

that slavery was a sin and should be immediately abandoned. That immediate emancipation was the right of every slave and the duty of every master: that the colored man was created by God, and should stand before the law the equal of the white man. That God had made of one blood all the nations to dwell on the face of the earth, and that the prejudice which would prescribe [sic] any class of men as inferior because of their complexion was absurd and impious.³

The sudden and complete nature of this transformation in his outlook is striking, and what is perhaps even more arresting is the fact that at about the same time other such rapid conversions to radical abolitionism were taking place among earnest young northern ministerial students who, like McKim, had been swept up in the evangelical upsurge of the Second Great Awakening. As will become apparent later, there was a direct connection between their theological position and the anti-slavery views they so quickly embraced.⁴

On the whole, the young men who made the jump from evangelism to abolitionism were New Englanders, or the sons of Yankees who had migrated

²William Lloyd Garrison, Thoughts on African Colonization: or An Impartial Exhibition of the Doctrines, Principles, and Purposes of the American Colonization Society: Together with the Resolutions, Addresses and Remonstrances of the Free People of Color (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832).

³McKim, Autobiography, pp. 32-33.

⁴Gilbert Hobbs Barnes explores the relationship between revivalism and the rise of the radical anti-slavery movement in, The Antislavery Impulse, 1830-1844 (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1957). See especially, pp. 64-73.

to the West a generation earlier. They were native Americans long removed from the tides of English immigration that had brought their forefathers to this country, and they held in common a Calvinist heritage that had already been eroded almost beyond recognition by the increasing secularization of American society.⁵ James Miller McKim did not fully share this heritage. Instead he typified the polyglot character of his native state of Pennsylvania in which citizens of English stock constituted only a minority of the population at the time of his birth. In order to understand how far McKim's background was removed from that of the men who were to be his co-workers, and how he came to be involved in the abolition movement, it will be necessary to discuss his ancestry and his early life in Carlisle.

McKim shared equally the blood of the two most important non-English groups in the Quaker state: the Scotch-Irish and the Germans. His grandfather, James McKim left Ulster and made his way to Cumberland County, Pennsylvania when he was little more than eighteen years of age. He arrived in the early 1770's, and by 1781 he had acquired a wife and children along with a two hundred acre farm located near Newville in

⁵David Donald, "Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," in Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 27. Donald concludes that 85 per cent of the leaders of the anti-slavery movement of the 1830's were from the Northeast and that over 60 per cent were from New England. The figure for this section is even higher when only top rank leaders are considered. Most of the leaders traditionally associated with the western or middle states were in fact born in New England. Among those who were active in the West or in the middle states, but were born in New England were: Joshua Leavitt (Heath, Massachusetts), Lucretia Mott (Nantucket, Massachusetts), Henry B. Stanton (Griswold, Connecticut), Arthur and Lewis Tappan (Northampton, Massachusetts), Theodore Weld (Hampton, Connecticut), and Elizur Wright (South Caanan, Connecticut). This list has been compiled on the basis of the entries for each individual in Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), Dictionary of American Biography (22 vols.; New York: Scribner's, 1928-1944).

Cumberland County. During the Revolution he served the patriot cause for two years (1778-1780) as a ranger on the western frontier.⁶

It was this experience, perhaps, that led him to sell his farm and move West. In 1786 he and his family established a farm in Hempfield Township of Westmoreland County. Life here was primitive and the new settlers had to fend off indian attacks as they cleared the land. Nor were Indians the only savages on the frontier. In 1793 or 1794 James McKim was robbed and murdered as he was returning from a trip to the East. His wife died within a year after this event leaving nine minor children orphaned. Six of these were placed with "kind and judicious neighbors," but James McKim [Jr.] and his two youngest sisters

⁶Geneological data on the McKim Family was gathered by James Miller McKim, his brother John Linn McKim and other members of the family in the early 1870's. In the early 1890's John Linn McKim wrote a Memoranda of the McKim Family which drew upon the results of these investigations and also included family recollections. The resulting MS Memoranda of the McKim Family was accurate in essential details. It is to be found in the Chubb Collection.

The "Memoranda" dates the arrival of James McKim in Pennsylvania as taking place in 1770 "or shortly afterwards." There is, however some evidence to the contrary. A James McKim (variously spelled as McKim, McKimm and McKim) appears on the tax lists of East Fallowfield Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania for the years 1753, 1765-1769 and 1771, but not thereafter. J. Smith Futhey and Gilbert Cope (eds.), History of Chester County, Pennsylvania: With Geneological and Biographical Sketches (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everets, 1881), p. 176. Samuel Hazard and others (eds.) Pennsylvania Archives, series III, vol. XI, pp. 90, 148, 362-363, 411, 630; vol. XII, pp. 82, 166, 266. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that all of his children were "infants in law" when James McKim died in 1793 or 1794, it seems more probable that there were two James McKim's than that he was a taxpayer as early as 1753.

In 1775 he was listed as taxpayer in Newtown, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania for the first time and the tax records indicate that by 1781 he held two hundred acres. Cumberland County Tax Rates, Cumberland County Courthouse. McKim's service as a ranger is indicated in a list of soldiers who served as rangers on the frontiers, 1778-1783, in Pennsylvania Archives, series III, vol. XXIII, p. 274.

were sent to the home of their maternal grandparents in Cumberland County.⁷

James McKim had already reached the age of sixteen, and he was immediately apprenticed to a local currier and tanner in the town of Carlisle so that he might have a trade by which to make his own way in the world. Upon the completion of his apprenticeship James rented a tannery on North Hanover Street in Carlisle opposite "The Bull Dog Tavern" operated by Jeremiah Miller. McKim may have decided to take his board at this inn because of its proximity to his place of business, but it proved to have other attractions. The tavernkeeper was the father of three unmarried daughters, and James soon became enamoured of Catherine Miller. On January 14, 1808 they were married.⁸

This union is symbolic of the way in which old world differences faded with the passage of time, for Catherine Miller was the descendent of a Palatine German named Jeremiah Miller who arrived in Philadelphia on October 16, 1727 aboard the ship, Friendship of Bristol. Jeremiah eventually settled among his fellow Germans in Rapho Township of

⁷J. L. McKim, MS Memoranda of the McKim Family, Chubb Collection. In 1793 James McKim joined his neighbors in petitioning the Governor of Pennsylvania for the return of troops that had been sent to protect the settlers in the area of Hanna's Town and had been removed to Fort Kittaning, twenty-five miles away. Pennsylvania Archives, series VI, vol. XIV, 298-300. For the move to Westmoreland see Warranties of Land, County of Westmoreland in ibid., series III, vol. XXVI, p. 470, and William Siebert to James Miller McKim, January 1, 1874, Chubb Collection.

⁸List of marriages in the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, Pennsylvania Archives, series II, vol. VIII, p. 581. J. L. McKim, MS Memoranda of the McKim Family, Chubb Collection.

Lancaster County where in addition to farming, he plied the trade of a cobbler. It appears that he spent most of his life within the confines of the German community and never learned to handle the English language with fluency.⁹

His son, Jeremiah Miller [Jr.] seems to have been quite Americanized. He was among the first to volunteer to serve the patriot cause in the Revolution, and his unit, the Pennsylvania Rifle Regiment, saw action with Washington at the Battle of Long Island, and retreated with him through New Jersey where it joined in administering a stinging defeat to the redcoats at Trenton.¹⁰

Upon his release from the army in 1781, Miller married Mary Shade of Millerstown on the Juniata River and settled in Carlisle where he worked as a stocking weaver. A little more than a decade later he abandoned this trade and opened "The Bull Dog Tavern." The atmosphere at this inn must have been lively and filled with talk of politics, for the tavernkeeper soon gained the reputation of being a passionate Jeffersonian, and he even went so far as to name his horse in honor of the famous Virginian. After the marriage of his daughter Catherine and James McKim, Jeremiah and the young tanner seem to have

⁹In 1769 Jeremiah Miller sold a plot of land to one Valentine Grenier and signed the deed in German script. Deeds, vol. 0, p. 57, Lancaster County Courthouse. In 1759 Jeremiah Miller was listed as a shoemaker in the Rapho Township Tax Assessment List, Lancaster County Historical Society. Daniel Rupp, A Collection of Upwards of Thirty Thousand Names of German, Swiss, Dutch, French, and Other Immigrants in Pennsylvania from 1727-1776 . . . (Philadelphia: I. G. Kohler, 1876), p. 54. See also, I. D. Rupp to James Miller McKim, December 13, 24, 1873, Chubb Collection.

¹⁰A skeletal outline of Miller's military history may be obtained from Pennsylvania Archives, series II, vol. X pp. 193-194; series V, vol. II, pp. 399, 407-408, 413; vol. VI, p. 617; vol. VII, pp. 27, 296. He left the army as a sergeant in 1781.

gotten along well, and when Jeremiah died in 1817, McKim received a major share of his estate.¹¹

In December 1808, James and Catherine McKim became the parents of a son (Samuel Patterson McKim), and shortly thereafter they left Carlisle to open another tannery in rented premises twenty miles to the North at a place called Sherman's Valley. It was here that their second son, James Miller McKim, was born on November 14, 1810.¹² He gained his middle name in honor of his maternal grandfather, and throughout his life, friends and associates would refer to him as Miller.

Thus, although Miller McKim's ethnic origins were almost monotonously typical of early nineteenth century Pennsylvania, they were quite different from those of most of the men with whom he would work in the radical anti-slavery movement of the 1830's. Apart from the Quakers, only a very few of these radical abolitionists came from Pennsylvania, and most of these could trace their roots back to New England.¹³

¹¹In his last will and testament dated June 3, 1817, Jeremiah Miller [Jr.] left a large part of his estate to James McKim and named him as one of the executors of the estate. The will is filed in the Cumberland County Courthouse. [J. L. McKim], MS Memoranda of the McKim Family, Chubb Collection. Apparently, Jeremiah Miller [Jr.], got the funds to open the tavern when his father sold his farm in Lancaster County and moved to Carlisle. Tax Assessment Lists of Rapho Township, Lancaster County Historical Society; Triennial Tax Rate Records of Cumberland County, Cumberland County Courthouse. John Miller, Old Taverns (n.p.: privately printed, n.d., located in the Cumberland County Historical Society) p. 21.

¹²[J. L. McKim], MS Memoranda of the McKim Family, Chubb Collection.

¹³Among the most prominent New England born non-Quaker abolitionists in Pennsylvania were: Thaddeus Stevens (Danville, Vermont), William H. Furness (Boston, Massachusetts), and Thomas Earle (Leicester, Massachusetts). Furness was a Unitarian clergyman whose church was located in Philadelphia and Earle was the vice-presidential candidate

Less than a year and a half after Miller's birth there occurred an event which would be of great significance for his future. In April 1812 James McKim seized the opportunity to purchase at a Sheriff's Sale the "large and valuable tanning establishment" in which he had served his Carlisle apprenticeship. The price of the tannery was rather high, but the transaction proved to be a wise one, and within two years the note had been paid off in full and McKim was making a tidy profit.¹⁴

The return of the family to Carlisle meant that Miller would grow to manhood in an urban setting as the son of a fairly prosperous businessman. Located a scant fifteen miles from the state capital of Harrisburg, and standing in the shadow of the Appalachian barrier that had diverted the westward flow of settlement into the Great Valley of Virginia, Carlisle was, by 1820, a thriving town of more than 2,900 persons. Although it was clearly not destined to become a major

of the Liberty Party in 1840. Other New Englanders who were active in the anti-slavery movement, but spent only a portion of their careers in Pennsylvania were: Charles Calistus Burleigh and his brother Cyrus M. Burleigh (Plainfield, Connecticut) and Oliver Johnson (Peacham, Vermont). Aside from McKim and several Negro abolitionists, this writer has been able to locate only one non-Quaker Pennsylvania anti-slavery man of any prominence who was not born in New England. Francis Julius Le Moyne, a physician who was active in forming the abortive Western Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society was born in Washington, Pennsylvania. See the Dictionary of American Biography and the index to, Wendell P. Garrison and Francis J. Garrison, William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life, Told by His Children (4 vols.; New York: The Century Co., 1885-1889), IV, 329-425. This work will hereafter be cited as, Garrison, Life of Garrison.

¹⁴J. L. McKim, MS Memoranda of the McKim Family, Chubb Collection. Cumberland County Record Book, book AA, vol. I, pp. 28-29; Grantee Index to Deeds, vol. McK, p. 187, Cumberland County Courthouse.

metropolis, it did offer considerably more intellectual fare to stimulate a growing mind than might have been the case in Sherman's Valley. At this time the town and the surrounding area supported five weekly newspapers, but two of these soon proved to be ephemeral ventures. Eight churches served the religious needs of the community, and functioned as cultural and social centers as well. While the town had no public library, by 1824 the combined resources of the local college library and of the two literary societies attached to the school amounted to more than 5,600 volumes including a substantial number of rare seventeenth century books donated by John Dickinson. In addition to the college, several grammar schools served the educational needs of the community.¹⁵

Little is known about Miller's early schooling. He may have preceded his brother John Linn McKim as a student at Murray's Grammar School, but this is a matter of conjecture. During these early years he did gain an appreciation of Latin which never left him. Writing to his daughter Lucy more than thirty years later, he spent twelve pages explaining how the study of this language disciplines the mind and encourages clarity of thought. By 1824 he had satisfactorily completed the course of instruction in grammar school, and in September of that year he was admitted to Dickinson College, a small interdenominational institution located on the edge of Carlisle.¹⁶

¹⁵"The Borough of Carlisle - 1824," in, The Hamilton Library and Historical Association of Cumberland County, Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Notes Published From Time to Time for the Members, June 1947 / United States, Office of the Census, Fourth Census of the United States, 1820 (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1821), p. 19.

¹⁶J. L. McKim, MS Memoranda of the McKim Family, Chubb Collection. James Miller McKim to Lucy McKim, March 24, [1858 or 1859], Chubb Collection.

At this time Dickinson had reached a near nadir in its history as an educational institution. Its charter provided that the forty member Board of Trustees be selected from throughout the state and that no single religious group should control the school, but these provisions had been nullities almost from the birth of the school in 1786. In practice, the decisions of the Board were made by those members who lived close enough to Carlisle to attend meetings regularly. This resulted in policies which were often narrow and provincial. Those members who were active tended to be Presbyterians, and Dickinson functioned as though it were a Presbyterian school despite the fact that it was partially supported by the state of Pennsylvania.¹⁷

During McKim's first semester at Dickinson the school had only fifty-seven enrolled students. Forty-four of these came from outside of Carlisle and were required to live on campus, but Miller and twelve other local boys were permitted to live at home with their families. Even those students who boarded at the college were from nearby areas, however, and eighteen of the twenty-two students in McKim's graduating class were native Pennsylvanians. The remaining four were from nearby Maryland.¹⁸

¹⁷James Henry Morgan, Dickinson College: The History of One Hundred and Fifty Years, 1783-1933 (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Dickinson College, 1933), pp. 14, 18, 131-132.

¹⁸George Leffingwell Reed (ed.), Alumni Record, Dickinson College (Carlisle Pennsylvania: Dickinson College, 1905), pp. 82-84. The Dickinson College Student Accounts Book, 1821-1832, Dickinson College Library, shows that McKim and twelve other students paid only for their tuition during the Fall semester of 1824. The same pattern holds true for subsequent years as well.

As a student at Dickinson, Miller was required to adhere to a set of regulations which required students to be present at the beginning and the end of each class day and which forbade those who boarded at the college from going into town at night. No student was permitted to attend dancing classes or balls even though the college itself provided little in the way of recreation for the students. These rules were promulgated directly by the Board of Trustees which intervened in even the most petty campus matters. The board members were unwilling to share their power with the faculty, even to the extent of allowing the professors to establish the penalties for breaches of the rules. The result was that during the four years that McKim spent at the school the faculty was relatively impotent in the face of frequent student riots and rebellions which included an invasion of the quarters of the language professor and disorders in both the dining room and chapel. These became so serious that at one point all students were forced to sign a pledge that they would abstain from such activities in the future.¹⁹

It would be a mistake, however, to attribute these incidents exclusively to the undeniable mismanagement and bungling of the Board of Trustees. American life at this time was generally characterized by violence and tension, and this condition was reflected in the colleges by frequent student riots and disorders. Even Harvard University was not immune to the virus, and several future abolitionists who were attending the Cambridge school during these years (Edmund Quincy,

¹⁹Morgan, Dickinson College, pp. 218-220.

Wendell Phillips, and Charles Sumner) lived through scenes similar to those which were taking place at Dickinson.²⁰

If Miller McKim was involved in the turmoil on his campus he was never apprehended for any serious misdeeds and the records of the college do not mention any such involvement on his part. On the other hand, these same records do not mention him in many other connections either, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in certain respects living at home made McKim a rather marginal member of the college community as a result of the fact that he lived home rather than on the campus.²¹

McKim was, however, fully involved in the activities of the school's Belles Lettres Society which served the combined functions of an honorary literary society and a fraternity, and an examination of the activities of this group will suggest the intellectual climate in which he spent his college years. Membership in the organization was highly prized and those who belonged to it were expected to do a good deal of reading and to attend the weekly gatherings of the group without fail. At each of these meetings a topic was agreed upon for discussion the following week, and the subject that had been assigned at the previous session was thoroughly explored. Some of the members

²⁰Oscar Sherwin, Prophet of Liberty: The Life and Times of Wendell Phillips (New York: Bookman Associates, 1958), pp. 26-29.

²¹See for example, the Minutes of the Faculty, 1826-1829, Dickinson College Library, in which McKim is listed as being recommended for graduation, August 29, 1828, but in which his name does not otherwise appear. The minutes contain several detailed accounts of disciplinary cases, but McKim was not involved in any of them. Nevertheless it seems unlikely that McKim was totally uninvolved in the campus chaos, for shortly after he graduated from Dickinson he was embroiled in a serious escapade for which he was nearly prosecuted. See p. 29 below.

were required to debate the subject formally, while the remainder either wrote compositions, or gave prepared speeches on the matter at hand.²²

The topics taken up by the Belles Lettres Society ranged widely from issues of purely historical interest to matters of immediate political relevance; from speculative political questions to moral dilemmas that were even more abstruse. At one meeting the members discussed the theoretical right of one nation to interfere in the concerns of another, and some time later they argued over whether the United States government ought to aid the "suffering Greeks." The dying issue of primogeniture was explored with as much intensity as was given to the newly emerging question of whether women (with property) ought to be permitted to vote, and the impact of the urban growth which was just beginning to affect America at this time is shown in the debate entitled: "Can a great poet be born and live in a city." The rural bias of the members of the society is evidenced by their negative vote on this proposition. Such hardy perennials as the problems of whether man was "happier in a civilized than in a savage state," and whether all human action could be "accounted for on the principle of self love," were also thrashed out. Almost everyone was agreed that selfishness was not a sufficient explanation for the varieties of human conduct. Some of the propositions presented for debate have a pompous and fatuous air

²²The operations of the Belles Lettres Society can be pieced together from the Minutes of the Belles Lettres Society, Dickinson College Library, but see also, Morgan, Dickinson College, p. 406.

about them. The society decided in the negative by a three vote majority on the question: "May a man in any situation tell a lie," and they sought to find an answer to the problem of whether "recollections of the past or anticipations of the future afford the more pleasure."²³

As has already been briefly noted, McKim later claimed that prior to his conversion to radical abolitionism in 1833 he knew little about slavery other than that its victims were numerous and that the only hope for its eradication seemed to lie in the plan for colonizing them in Africa. This vague general sympathy with the plight of the Negro together with the belief that the problem could only be solved by the deportation of the blacks seems to have been reinforced, or perhaps even created by his experiences in the Belles Lettres Society. In July 1825 the organization debated the question: "Ought the elective franchise to be extended to Free Blacks." The vast majority of those present were opposed to such a grant of suffrage. Two years later the racial problem arose again, and on June 9, 1827 they took up the question, "Does the general stupidity of Negroes stem from any defect in mental abilities, or from external causes?" A resounding majority voted their belief that environment rather than heredity had shaped the mental condition of the blacks. The debate at this meeting must have been of absorbing interest, for the society took the unusual step of scheduling a discussion of a related topic for the following week. This time the

²³Minutes of the Belles Lettres Society, October 24, November 6, December 18, 1824; April 21, 1826; January 13, February 3, August 25, November 24, December 22, 1827, Dickinson College Library.

issue was whether abolition or colonization societies ought to be encouraged, and almost all of those present voted in favor of the establishment of such groups. McKim did not attend either of these last two meetings, but despite this fact, it seems highly likely that he was aware of the subject under discussion and that he talked about it with his friends.²⁴

In addition to participating in the meetings of the Belles Lettres Society, McKim also made frequent use of the organization's thirteen hundred volume library which was separate and distinct from that of the college itself. The circulation records of the society indicate that during the four years he spent at Dickinson, McKim withdrew about two hundred volumes from its private collection. The selections he made are of particular significance because they were not chosen to meet course requirements and, therefore, give some indication of his tastes and interests at this time.

The most striking pattern that emerges from a consideration of the works borrowed by Miller is his heavy emphasis upon books that were highly romantic in nature. He took out Rob Roy, Kenilworth, Waverley, The Monastery, Red Gauntlet, Ivanhoe, Tales of the Crusaders, Guy Mannering and several other novels by Sir Walter Scott; and it seems likely that during his college years he devoured every work of fiction produced by the famous Scotch author.²⁵ Despite his reputation

²⁴Ibid., July 9, 1825; June 9, 16, 1827.

²⁵Circulation Records of the Belles Lettres Society of Dickinson College, 1824-1829, Dickinson College Library. Since McKim entered only the titles of these works on the record, information is not available as to which editions he used. For this reason no attempt has been made to give bibliographical data on these volumes.

as a British man of letters, Scott was far more strongly influenced by the heady brew of German romanticism than he was by purely English trends, and in his novels he cast a glamorous patina over the Scotland of a bygone era.

Like the works of his German counterparts, Scott's books conveyed a sense of yearning for a lost unattainable past in which man had not yet been defiled by the newer currents of leveling and mechanization, and still retained his capacity for heroic suffering and unalloyed gallantry. In a manner similar to that of the Germans the works of the Scottish novelist and poet sought to elevate simultaneously the unique heroic individual and the organic national community. The exact effect of these books upon McKim cannot be determined, but it is worth noting that while in his twenties Miller would go through a prolonged and agonizing period which was marked by a constant yearning for a seemingly unattainable perfect union with God. Furthermore, the role into which he would later cast himself as an abolitionist was perfectly consistent with that of a romantic hero breasting tides of adversity in behalf of a noble but seemingly hopeless cause.

McKim appears to have had as great an affinity for the works of Washington Irving as he did for the writings of Scott, and he withdrew from the library of the Belles Lettres Society copies of Salmagundi, A History of New York, The Sketch Book, Bracebridge Hall, and (in all probability) Tales of Traveller. In view of McKim's affection for the works of Scott, it is less than surprising that he should have been taken with the works of Irving as well, for the American author had been very much influenced by the Scottish bard and even visited him

in 1817.²⁶ At this time Scott introduced Irving to German literature, and this in turn was to have a profound impact upon the American's later work. One volume which deserves special attention in terms of its possible impact upon Miller is Bracebridge Hall which drew a highly romanticized picture of English life. McKim (and most of his fellow abolitionists as well) would later be an enthusiastic anglophile, and there can be little doubt that works of this tenor helped to shape his impression of life across the Atlantic.

McKim's appetite for accounts of foreign travel went beyond the works of Irving, and during the time he spent at Dickinson he read several works of this genre, the most notable of which was Captain James Cook's account of his voyages and explorations. In later years this interest would take the form of a consuming passion to do missionary work in foreign lands. McKim also seems to have had a mild interest in history and he read two volumes devoted to the life of George Washington, another two devoted to Napoleon, and one on the subject of Greek history. Here again, however, his interest in things English is apparent for he read a six volume account of the affairs of that nation.

Although McKim did read twelve volumes of Samuel Johnson's Lives of the Poets, and three works by Johnathan Swift, he appears to have had little interest in works which might loosely be termed "the classics." The only book he withdrew which fits into this rather

²⁶Ibid. The record does not list McKim as having taken out Tales of a Traveller, but it does list a volume with the title of Tales of a Voyager, and in view of the fact that McKim was frequently inexact in the titles he listed, it has been assumed that he probably meant Tales of a Traveller. Irving's debt to Scott is described in the Dictionary of American Biography.

arbitrary category is a single volume by Shakespeare. It must be added however that he may have taken such books out of the regular college library which was well stocked with them.²⁷

In view of the fact that there is no information available about the other books that Miller may have borrowed from the Dickinson library, and in light of the absence of information about the works that he read for his courses, it is difficult to generalize about the overall impact of his reading upon him. Nevertheless, it seems clear that his later career did reflect the impact of the romantic movement and it also showed the effects of the pro-English literature to which he was exposed. Even so, it was religious evangelism which, more than any other single factor, would ultimately lead McKim to join the anti-slavery crusade.

Like many of those who came to play a role in the revival movement which swept through the North in the late 1820's and early 1830's, Miller grew up in a religious milieu, but his early life showed few traces of the piety and zeal that would characterize his later activities. His family attended the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle which numbered among its congregation the most influential families in town and which could trace its history as far back as 1737. During McKim's early childhood the fortunes of this church were in a state of decline as the old divisions between "old lights" and "new lights" which

²⁷Circulation Records of the Belles Lettres Society of Dickinson College, 1824-1829, Dickinson College Library.

had divided the Presbyterian congregations of Carlisle in the mid-eighteenth century threatened to reassert themselves. The breach had been healed in 1785 when the two groups merged into one, but the need to choose a new minister brought the old tensions to the surface once again.²⁸

The post was finally offered to George Duffield III, whose grandfather had been the pastor of "new light" faction in the 1760's, and whose strong personality seemed to promise that the congregation would get the dynamic leadership which it so sorely needed. Duffield hesitated before accepting the post, because he knew that his strong religious views were at variance with those of some members of the church who desired a more easygoing ministry than he was prepared to give. In the end, however, he accepted the pastorate, and for the next nineteen years (1816-1835), the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, and many other institutions in the town as well, would bear the impress of his strong, vibrant and domineering personality.²⁹ More than any other

²⁸The early history of the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle is detailed in, Conway P. Wing, A History of the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, Pa. (Carlisle: Valley Sentinel Office, 1877), pp. 1-121. For a shorter account see, Alfred Nevin, Churches of the Valley: or, An Historical Sketch of the Old Presbyterian Congregations of Cumberland and Franklin Counties in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, 1852), pp. 233-238.

²⁹Wing, History of the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, pp. 152-154. The estimate of Duffield's personality is based upon the strong influence that he had over McKim and the thirty-eight other young men whom he brought into the ministry. See ibid., p. 165 and the MS Diary of George Duffield in the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library (hereafter cited as the Duffield Diary). This fifteen volume record covers Duffield's life during the years 1828-1836 and 1846-1868, and is prime source material for the study of nineteenth century Presbyterianism. The diary is described and analyzed in L. G. Vander Velde's, "The Diary of George Duffield," Mississippi Valley

figure with the possible exception of Lucretia Mott, Duffield would shape the direction of Miller McKim's life.

Upon assuming his post the new spiritual shepherd quickly made it evident that the easy tolerance of the previous pastor was a thing of the past. From this point on, religion would no longer be merely a Sunday affair for his parishioners. The new minister proposed to deny the right of baptism to the children of those whose professions of religion were not "credible," and to deny communion to those who "refuse to set up the worship of God in their families or to desist from those pursuits which are inconsistent with a godly walk." The clergyman soon made it a practice to visit the members of his congregation in their homes and to inquire carefully as to their religious attitudes in order to determine whether their professions of belief were indeed credible.³⁰

No record remains of the results of his first visits to the McKim household, but twelve years after his arrival in Carlisle he described the spiritual and moral state of the McKim family and this

Historical Review XXIV (June 1937), 21-34. One of the most interesting descriptions of Duffield appears in Mrs. Royall's Pennsylvania: or, Travels Continued in the United States (2 vols.; Washington: Printed for the author, 1829), by Mrs. Anne Royall. This venomous, sometimes inaccurate, but always colorful account of Carlisle depicts the town as the Pennsylvania headquarters of the "blue skins" (blue stockings), and Duffield as the leader of "the priests, or what do you please," who had "established the reign of terror at Carlisle." While the picture she draws is certainly a gross exaggeration, it is nevertheless true that Duffield was the sort of crusader for moral purity who tried to impose his values on all of those around him. See I, 189-222. The quotation is to be found on I, 194.

³⁰Wing, History of the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, pp. 155-156.

may be suggestive of an earlier pattern. Catherine McKim is depicted in Duffield's diary as a long-suffering, deeply religious woman who held prayer meetings in her home and whose professions of piety had the ring of truth about them. James McKim, on the other hand, had a weakness for drink, and Duffield claimed that although the tanner was "personally attached" to him, he was "a man of wretched bad habits and a source of misery to the whole family."³¹ It would appear that, while James McKim did not reject his religion, he never gave it much thought, and did not allow it to interfere with his pleasures.

On the whole, young Miller seems to have been following in his father's footsteps in his attitude toward religion. He was a Presbyterian and he took the tenets of his faith for granted, but he appears to have been too busy growing up to give them much thought. As he reached toward manhood, George Duffield remained a familiar figure to whom McKim could turn in time of trouble, but whose fervent pleas that the young man adopt a more godly walk were usually ignored.³²

³¹Duffield Diary, January 1, February 17 and 27, 1829; March 26, 1830. In view of Duffield's narrowminded puritanical attitudes, his evaluation of the sins and bad habits of others requires some further corroboration. Unfortunately, no other evidence of James McKim's character has been found. Nevertheless one piece of evidence in Duffield's hand strongly suggests that his evaluation of the senior McKim was accurate. On January 21, 1830 Duffield wrote James Miller McKim that: "On the subject which interests you I feel happy in being able to give you cheering information. I do not mean to say that there are any symptoms of a radical change but there seems to have been a greater [,] more determined and more successful effort to resist the baneful appetite since you left him than before." McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. This letter suggests that McKim was concerned enough over his father's condition to have asked Duffield for a report.

³²On August 16, 1828, just prior to McKim's graduation, Duffield wrote a letter to the young man imploring him to look to God for his

In 1823, when Miller was almost thirteen years old there occurred an event which, for a brief period won Miller over to the cause of piety. Two boys, the sons of prominent townsmen, died suddenly of typhus and cholera, and under the leadership of Duffield the emotional outpouring which took place at the funeral was transformed into a religious revival in which McKim and eight of his young companions pledged their souls to Christ. Miller's dedication seems to have cooled rapidly, however, and by the time he entered college his conversion was a thing of the past.³³

The tension between Duffield's desire to bring McKim to God, and the boy's absorption in the secular world is symbolic of the dilemma that confronted religion in general, and Calvinism in particular in nineteenth century America. For well over a century the harsh Calvinism of the Presbyterians and Congregationalists had been on the defensive fighting off an unending stream of critics who seemed to spring from the very citadels of orthodoxy. At the heart of the controversy were the doctrines of predestination and original sin.

Traditionally, Calvinists had argued that all men sprang from the seed of Adam and thus carried the vileness of Adam's sin within

salvation and clearly implying that it had been many years since McKim was in good standing at church. McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. The very fact that Duffield felt it necessary to write McKim a letter despite the fact that they were both in Carlisle shows the distance between the two at this time. Duffield's repeated pleas to McKim are recorded in the Duffield Diary, 1828-1831.

³³Wing, History of the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, p. 164. Morgan, Dickinson College, p. 213. The Duffield Diary, February 4, 1829, refers back to the 1823 revival and notes that six of the nine boys involved are still in good standing with the church but "there yet remain to be brought in my two giddy wandering friends A. B. [Armstrong Briggs] and J. M. McK."

themselves. If indeed, original sin was transmitted genetically, then all men, even infants, were defiled and damned in the sight of God. The mass of humanity could look forward to spending an eternity in Hell doing penance for the sin of Adam. Through no merit of their own a few individuals might be "elected" by the Lord to receive a "special calling" to repent of their sins. Those who truly did repent would be cleansed of sin and granted salvation. But the opportunity for such a conversion would be offered only to a few persons who were foreordained to receive it, and leading an exemplary life would not guarantee entry into heaven although this might be a sign of God's favor.

Such a stark vision of man's relationship to his Maker, in which the individual was merely the pawn of an inscrutable God, left man impotent to affect his own destiny. It gave all but the most hardy of believers little incentive to strive for holiness since the outcome was predetermined in advance. Such views could not long go unchallenged in a world that was giving increasing currency to scientific explanation, and more and more concern to the events of this life. Thus, by the early eighteenth century the defenders of Calvinism were caught in the midst of an insoluble dilemma. They could hold fast to their beliefs and watch their numbers shrink still further, or they could modify their beliefs enough to give all men a chance to attain salvation. They tried to do both through the use of religious revivals.

While the theology espoused at Calvinist evangelical meetings during the eighteenth century appeared to differ little from that of an earlier day, in practice a great change had taken place. By creating an atmosphere which encouraged repentance and heightened emotional

tensions, the revivalists produced a situation in which ordinary men could feel that they had received a "special calling" to salvation and that they were members of the elect.³⁴⁻³⁵ In fact, although not yet in theory, conversion was made available to all men. It was now possible for the individual to determine whether he would go to heaven by responding to the atmosphere of these meetings and accepting God's saving grace.

The evangelists often failed to see that their "new measures" belied the concept of predestination, but other churchmen did notice the contradiction, and it is in this conflict that the roots of the division within Presbyterianism may be traced. During the eighteenth century adherents of the evangelistic position came to be known as "new lights," while their opponents were known as "old lights." When the dispute broke out anew in the nineteenth century the issues would be similar but this time the revivalists would be called "new school" men while the traditionalists would be termed "old school" men.³⁶

The first major outburst of evangelism upon the American scene followed a period of religious decline and came to be known as the Great Awakening (ca. 1720-1770). Another era of religious change took place in the wake of the American and French Revolutions when many left their traditional church affiliations to embrace the doctrines of rationalism

³⁴⁻³⁵Bernard A. Weisberger, They Gathered at the River: The Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact upon Religion in America (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1958), 39-41, 43, 53-59.

³⁶Ibid., p. 154.

and deism. In New England, Unitarianism swept through the Congregational churches challenging and weakening Calvinist theology as it went. The Presbyterian churches of the middle states proved somewhat more resistant to the rationalist virus, but here too interest had declined and for many parishioners religion had ceased to be a vital part of their daily lives.³⁷

It was this condition that faced George Duffield III when he accepted the Carlisle ministry. The spiritual lassitude of James McKim and his son Miller was symptomatic of a much wider malaise that Duffield was determined to combat. Until 1830 when his views became somewhat more liberal, the clergyman's theological position was a curiously inconsistent mixture of rock ribbed Calvinism which denied that man could do anything to achieve his own salvation, and fervent evangelism which seemed to offer hope to all sinners if only they would repent and give themselves unreservedly to Christ.³⁸ Duffield was deeply conservative in the values he sought to preserve, but in order to do this he was willing to use the most modern means available. Revivalism represented one such technique, and benevolent reform still another.

³⁷Ibid., p. 15. William G. McLoughlin, Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1959), pp. 8-9.

³⁸On March 8, 1829 Duffield wrote that Christ's willingness to grant salvation depended entirely on Christ's "infinite benevolence," and not at all upon the actions of the individual. Such a predestinarian view would seem to imply that the individual could do nothing for his own salvation, but on many occasions (e.g., December 22, 1828 and February 27, 1829) he made impassioned pleas to McKim asking the youth to save his soul by embracing God. See the Duffield Diary for the dates mentioned above. It seems likely that if Duffield was aware of the contradiction in his position he reasoned that God would not allow the individual to repent if he did not want to save the person in question.

In the years after 1812 there had come into being a number of evangelistically oriented interdenominational reform organizations which came to be known collectively as "the benevolent system." Their purpose was to preserve and extend Protestantism and its values and to roll back the rising threat of moral corruption and disbelief that seemed to endanger the nation. Non-sectarian societies were formed to encourage missionary enterprise, distribute Bibles and tracts, finance Sunday schools, and to fight intemperance. In addition, other units were established to promote such projects as peace, Sabbath observance, the reformation of prostitutes, and the colonization of American Negroes in Africa. During the latter half of the 1820's two of the leading evangelists of the period, Lyman Beecher and Charles Grandison Finney, both came to link the cause of reform with salvation. They redefined sin as selfishness, and held that regeneration could be attained by embracing Christ and preferring him to all worldly things. Such a commitment implied a willingness to engage in acts of "disinterested benevolence" designed to further the interests of God's kingdom on earth. Salvation was to be attained then, not merely by professions of faith, but by good works as well.³⁹

³⁹Barnes, Antislavery Impulse, pp. 3-19. John L. Thomas, The Liberator: William Lloyd Garrison, A Biography (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1963), pp. 57-58.

There was conflict between Finney who represented western revivalism, and Beecher whose strength was in the East, but their differences appear to have been more personal than doctrinal in nature. Both men advocated a theological position which might be termed, Calvinism with its fangs removed. Lip service was given to the doctrines of predestination and election, but Beecher added that God would "send to hell none who are not opposed to Him and to holiness, and to heaven." Cited in Weisberger, They Gathered at the River, p. 75.

The benevolent organizations which were to be the vehicles for these good works were independent of any particular church, but they were loosely linked together by the fact that the leading figures in the movement were often active in more than one cause. In effect, there was an interlocking directorate which controlled matters of policy. Despite the fact that this network of organizations was supposed to be non-denominational in character, the dominant voices in its counsels were those of new school Presbyterians who favored evangelistic methods. Two of the leading figures in this movement were the wealthy New York merchant brothers, Lewis and Arthur Tappan who played an important role in all of the causes mentioned above. The structure of most of these groups was designed to maximize their effectiveness at the grass roots level by the use of state and town auxiliaries.⁴⁰

Thus, in Carlisle, George Duffield was responsible for founding several such organizations. In September 1823 he established a Young Men's Missionary Association to encourage foreign and domestic missions, and in February 1829 he was instrumental in creating a local temperance

Finney took a similar stand and insisted that salvation was open to all men who would choose to benefit from God's beneficence, and that the Lord knew beforehand who would accept salvation. Ibid., pp. 95, 98. Finney defined conversion as a change of heart "from selfishness to benevolence," and he understood benevolence to be a tendency to action or action itself. Anne C. Loveland, "Evangelicalism and 'Immediate Emancipation' in American Antislavery Thought," Journal of Southern History, XXXII (May 1966), 177. Thus, both men believed that salvation was open to all men, but they insisted that only concrete actions could demonstrate the genuineness of a sinner's conversion. On the strained relations between Finney and Beecher see, McLoughlin, Modern Revivalism, pp. 35-46.

⁴⁰Barnes, Antislavery Impulse, pp. 17-19. [Lewis Tappan], The Life of Arthur Tappan (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1871), passim.

group. In July 1830 he assisted in the formation of an auxiliary branch of the American Colonization Society. It is likely that Miller McKim belonged to the missionary society which was founded shortly after the boy had been converted, but there is no evidence to show that he belonged to either of the other organizations.⁴¹ Nevertheless, he grew to manhood in an atmosphere where vital religion was indissolubly linked to reform causes.

This evangelical religious background seemed to count for little when, in September 1828, McKim graduated from Dickinson College and took up the study of medicine under the tutelage of a local physician. A month earlier Duffield had written a long letter to McKim expressing his "tender solicitude" and urging the young man to consider the state of his soul at the "present interesting and critical period of your life." McKim appears to have ignored the minister's advice, and two months later he received another more urgent communication in which Duffield took note of the fact that he had already begun his medical training and that this would lead him to study the human body which God had "so wisely and wonderfully" adapted to the purposes of life. The worried minister felt that since McKim had not been saved, such studies might have an adverse effect upon the boy.

⁴¹Wing, History of the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, p. 170. Duffield Diary, February 11, 1829, July 22, 1830. Mrs. Royall who despised Duffield and all he stood for, and who was equally unhappy with the apparent female domination she observed in Carlisle mockingly imitated the end of one of Duffield's sermons when she wrote: "But to the sermon. When the preacher was done - 'the female tract society will meet Monday night, the female Bible society will meet on Tuesday night, the female education society will meet on Wednesday night, and then he ran on with the female foreign and female domestic missionary societies'" Royall, Mrs. Royall's Pennsylvania, I, 196. Her portrayal was one-sided, for there were also young men's societies for these same purposes.

and he cautioned: "Do not allow your mind to be polluted and your heart to be debauched by the investigations of science, much less by the conversations of your friends."⁴² There was still another reason for the pastor's concern, and it was one which he apparently did not share with Miller. Duffield had grave misgivings about the moral standards of the physician under whom McKim was studying, and he feared that the hostility of the doctor's family to vital religion might undermine his own ability to influence McKim.⁴³

Duffield's pleas apparently had little impact upon Miller, for early in December the minister noted in his diary that he had

heard some things relative to my poor young friend McK that quite overcame me. . . . I told him what I had heard --he frankly confessed his guilt. I told him of his being threatened with a prosecution and tried to alarm him and during an hours conversation with him, to press his conscience or work upon his sensibilities.⁴⁴

Whatever McKim's offense was, Duffield was unsuccessful in his attempt to use the boy's fear to make him see the error of his ways. As soon as it appeared likely that he would not be prosecuted for his transgression McKim lost whatever contrition he might have had and his clergyman dolefully observed: "The prospect of escape from his entangling situation seems to have cheered his spirits --- no sense of sin. I never saw one so utterly dead."⁴⁵

⁴²George Duffield to McKim, August 16, October 23, 1828, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

⁴³Duffield Diary, January 1, 1829.

⁴⁴Ibid., December 3, 1828.

⁴⁵Ibid., December 4, 1828.

In the months and years to come Duffield continued his efforts to convert the youth and to awaken him from his spiritual torpor. Despite Miller's resistance, his friendship with the older man was strong enough to afford the pastor many opportunities to work for conversion. After one of their talks Duffield anxiously noted that Miller "allows me to plead with him, but I can see no symptoms of the Spirit's presence in his mind. Yet I do believe the Lord will have mercy on him."⁴⁶ Their conversations did not always pertain to religion for the minister realized that too much persistence might frighten his quarry off. Nevertheless, he kept a hawklike vigil over the spiritual vacillations of the young man, and was quick to seize upon the slightest changes in demeanor as evidence either of backsliding or an impending spiritual transformation. Observing McKim's response to a sermon entitled, "Indecision," he noted that, "some things moved my poor young friend McK." Later, at a time when he felt Miller was going "sadly astray," Duffield observed that "he seemed as if he was ashamed to take his usual seat [during an evening lecture] but placed himself close by the door and during the exercises I thought that he manifested some uneasiness."⁴⁷

Despite his constant exertions in McKim's behalf, by October 1829 he had won little more than he had a year earlier: the boy would talk with him, but he drew no closer to accepting God on Duffield's

⁴⁶Ibid., December 22, 1828.

⁴⁷Ibid., February 17, 1829; December 7 and 13, 1828.

terms. It was at this time that Miller and his college chum, Armstrong Briggs who was also planning to become a physician, decided to attend the medical lectures at the University of Pennsylvania. Before leaving they called upon Duffield and asked him for letters of introduction which he supplied in the hope that if the two young men came under the eye of respectable persons this would prevent them from going astray amidst "the very dangerous temptations to which they will be exposed while in the city." They assured the minister of their good intention after he warned them against "the billiard room, the theatre and other dangerous haunts of dissipation."⁴⁸⁻⁴⁹

Whether the boys totally avoided these "dangerous haunts" has not been recorded, but their distance from Carlisle brought no let-up in Duffield's attempts to bring them into a closer relation with God, and he was in frequent correspondence with both. When they returned home in March 1830 the pastor redoubled his efforts to break through their spiritual torpor. One day in May, while returning from making some visits in Harrisburg, Duffield learned that the two boys had gone fishing in a nearby stream, and he decided to join them. He found Miller and Armstrong sitting at the water's edge after an unsuccessful morning in which they had caught nothing. Immediately, he brought the conversation around to the subject of their salvation and

⁴⁸⁻⁴⁹Ibid., October 22, 1829. In one of the letters of introduction he wrote Duffield said: "He McKim is desirous of obtaining some place to board where he might live retired and not be exposed to the interruptions and temptations incident to the situation of a student of medicine in some of the boarding houses of your city." George Duffield to Johnathan Smith, October 20, 1829, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

drew a rather heavy-handed biblical parallel between their bad luck with the fish and his failure to interest them in religion. He then asked Miller directly, "why do you not embrace the salvation offered in the gospel?" When the young man did not reply, the pastor made further appeals and then took his leave and clambered up the rocks to his horse. Just as he was about to ride off, Armstrong came after him with the offering of a freshly caught trout. For lack of saddlebags in which to carry it the minister declined the gift and again expressed the wish that he might catch one of the boys for the Lord.⁵⁰ In little more than a month his wish would begin to come true.

Although he did not confide the extent of his heresy to Duffield, Miller considered himself "an infidel" at this time. Shortly after their meeting at the stream he wrote a strong letter to his pastor in which he firmly rejected the clergyman's appeal that he embrace the Lord. Within a fortnight Duffield summoned him for a visit and expressed grave concern that the youth was "sceptically inclined." McKim, although embarrassed, held his ground, and his stance seemed to confirm the worst fears of his pastor who prayed with him and extracted a promise that he would begin to read the Bible. When asked to give his word that he would begin praying, McKim refused on the ground that he had not prayed in years and "that it would be a great boldness on his

⁵⁰Duffield Diary, May 21, 1830. Duffield doubtless had in mind one or more of the following biblical passages: Matt. 4:19, Luke 5:10, and Mark 1:17. George Duffield to McKim, January 21, February 15, 1830. McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

part to attempt such a thing."⁵¹

On June 23, of his own volition, McKim dropped in on his minister, and for three hours they discussed his spiritual lassitude. Miller "was constrained to acknowledge the excellence of religion and admitted the unsatisfying nature of all selfish enjoyment. He said that he thought often about these things and sought to cherish such thoughts, but that he was himself surprised at his own indifference." After he left, Duffield speculated that there was "something at work with him," and indeed there must have been, for a week later Miller went off into the woods by himself and prayed.⁵²

A few days earlier, Armstrong had fallen seriously ill, and McKim's concern for the health of his friend may have been the catalyst which prompted his change of heart. He made daily visits to the invalid and frequently met Duffield in the sickroom and had long talks with him as they made their way home. Despite Miller's fear that "the distance between me and redemption is immense," his minister was so encouraged that he permitted himself the hope that his charge would be "so thoroughly imbued with the love of Christ as to renounce all for His sake and become an herald of the cross."⁵³

⁵¹Duffield Diary, June 5, 1830. Almost ten months later McKim admitted that he felt himself to be an infidel in mid-May of 1830. Ibid., March 18, 1831.

⁵²Ibid., June 23, 1830. McKim's trip to the woods is mentioned in the diary entry for July 1, 1830.

⁵³Ibid., July 2, 1830. The McKim quotation is from the entry for July 1, 1830.

Such hopes were premature, however, for before long Duffield was worrying that Miller's convictions were too intellectual and that they might be merely a transient reaction to the deteriorating health of Armstrong. During the remainder of the summer McKim's newly found religious interest seemed to conflict with his attraction to a young lady, and on several occasions he expressed the desire to break up "certain associations" that he had in Carlisle. At other times he expressed the fear that he cared for earthly pleasures more than he loved God.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, he did not give up his interest in matters of the spirit and indicated that to him religion represented a means of attaining the happiness he was so desperately seeking. Throughout these months McKim kept looking for some tangible sign of God's favor, and he spoke of wanting his heart changed as though this could only happen through the action of some force outside of himself.⁵⁵

In the Fall Miller travelled to Philadelphia to continue his medical education, but, despite Duffield's fear that he would backslide, he returned to Carlisle in December fully resolved to continue along the path to a complete communion with God. In January 1831 the minister noted approvingly that, "he seems to be growing in the divine life but deems himself unworthy to aspire to the privilege of communion."⁵⁶ The final steps in the young man's conversion would,

⁵⁴Ibid., July 11, 12, and 18, 1830; August 31, 1830.

⁵⁵Ibid., July 11, August 13, 1830.

⁵⁶Ibid., January 7, 1831. See also, George Duffield to McKim, December 6, 1830, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection New York Public Library. In this letter Duffield said that he knew that McKim's heart had now been "drawn more powerfully and engaged more decidedly to love the Blessed Redeemer."

unhappily, coincide with a family tragedy.

In early February Mrs. McKim fell seriously ill, and by the seventh of the month it became clear that she could not survive. Two and a half weeks later Miller announced his intention to seek full membership in the church. He had been working up to such a step for almost a year, but it seems likely that the serious condition of his mother accelerated the decision. On February 28th Mrs. McKim died and Duffield expressed grave concern for the fate of the family without her. She was the one member of the family who had never been derelict in attending to her religious duties.⁵⁷

The weeks following the death of his mother must have been difficult ones for Miller. The natural grief which follows such a loss was combined with a state of acute spiritual distress growing out of his desire to feel that he was a Christian in the fullest sense of the word. On March 17th he came to Duffield's study "sobbing as if his heart would break." He claimed to have seen "the Spirit of God all around him," and said that he now believed that he had deceived himself into believing that he was a Christian when he had never actually felt the love of Christ.

Throughout the day he remained in a highly emotional state, and that evening he attended a prayer meeting at the church where he watched the minister confess his own faults before the congregation. The pastor then called upon the elders to make their comments, and two of them rose to confess their sins. "One of them, . . . was so overcome that he had

⁵⁷Duffield Diary, February 7, March 1, 1831.

to sit down and could proceed no further." After this, all those who felt they had been cherishing a false hope were asked to renounce it. At this point Miller rose and explained to the meeting the relation in which he stood to the church. He then went on to declare that he had been fooling himself into the belief that he was a Christian, and begged those present to pray for him. He was immediately followed by several others who confessed their sins. Several conversions were reported to have taken place in the wake of the meeting.⁵⁸

When the gathering ended Miller at first refused to leave the lecture room saying that he was intent upon spending the night there. He finally consented to come home with Duffield where he spent the night in the study, "weeping groaning and praying." The next day he felt as if he must pray and went off into the woods where he might "roar and groan out without fear of being heard."⁵⁹ Later that day Miller was brought before a meeting of the session where he narrated the story of his spiritual transformation, and ascribed his previous difficulties to the fact that he had not really been able to place his trust totally in Christ. He indicated that he had now learned this and said he was fully at peace within himself.⁵⁹

On the basis of a talk with Miller, Duffield attributed the young man's conversion to the "strong excitement of his mind that had been produced by contrasting his feelings with the very vivid

⁵⁸Ibid., March 17, 1831.

⁵⁹Ibid., March 17 and 18, 1831.

experience of some that had recently turned to God." This change would have a permanent effect, and within a few days he would set his heart upon a career in the ministry. Nevertheless, it was not long before some of his old doubts recurred. He longed for some tangible sign that his conversion was genuine. He considered such an indication as necessary to qualify him for entrance into the clergy, and he wondered how he could explain the evils of sin, the plan of redemption, and the peace and joy of believing unless he "had some bright revelation made of these in . . . [his] own soul."⁶⁰

⁶⁰McKim, Autobiography, p. 1. Duffield's estimate of the reasons for McKim's conversion is given in Duffield Diary, March 18, 1831.

CHAPTER II

ANOTHER CONVERSION

McKim's conversion together with the doubts he entertained about his own worthiness combined to make him particularly receptive to Duffield's guidance, and he readily accepted the elder man's advice that he prepare himself for a career in the clergy. He abandoned his plan to become a physician, and under Duffield's tutelage undertook a course of studies designed to prepare him for entrance into a seminary in the Fall.¹ Although McKim was unaware of it at the time, his decision to enter the ministry proved to be a critical step which would ultimately lead him to become an abolitionist.

While Miller was immersing himself in his ministerial studies during the Spring and Summer of 1831, his preceptor was becoming a central figure in the rising controversy between partisans of the old and new schools within the Presbyterian Church. McKim knew little (and cared less) about the issues in question; but even so, there was no way he could avoid being identified with his mentor, and the conflict was destined to have a strong impact upon his career. The first signs of trouble came when Duffield became embroiled in a dispute with the faculty of Dickinson College over his insistence that revivals be permitted and encouraged on campus. In 1831 the dispute came before the Board of Trustees of the College and the pastor (who was also a board member) was charged with exerting a "malign influence" to

¹Ibid., February 24, 1831. McKim Autobiography, pp. 6 and 15.

disaffect a small number of students in Dickinson College, and with having departed from the doctrines of the Confession of Faith." At the same time, bitter attacks sponsored by two Carlisle lawyers who opposed the minister's public prayer meetings, appeared in a town newspaper, the American Volunteer.²

Although McKim attempted to steer a neutral course between the contending parties, he was naturally influenced by Duffield's opinions far more than he realized at the time. He later described his minister's effect upon him by saying:

Brought up in the Presbyterian Church and converted under its influence, it was natural for me to receive its distinctive doctrines without much question. Perhaps if these doctrines had another or less liberal exponent than my friend Mr. Duffield I should not have so readily embraced them: but with his interpretations and explanations they seemed to me sufficiently rational and it never once occurred to me to call any of them in question.³

Thus, without fully realizing it, Miller was becoming imbued with the most liberal ideas of the new school. He preferred to steer a neutral course between the contending factions, and even believed himself slightly inclined to favor the "good old way" rather than to "risk anything in a new path."⁴ Nevertheless, an examination of those elements in Duffield's thought which McKim later believed to be most

²The quotations are given in an anonymously written pamphlet defending Duffield entitled, History of the Proceedings of the Carlisle Presbytery: In Relation to a Work Entitled Duffield on Regeneration in a Series of Letters from a Person Present to His Friend (Philadelphia: William F. Geddes, 1832), p. 4. Duffield Diary, February 26, 1829; January 11 and 22, February 25, 1830.

³McKim, Autobiography, p. 12.

⁴Ibid., p. 16.

noteworthy shows that there was a good deal of similarity between the ideas of the new school and religious views of many of the abolitionists with whom he would later work.

In describing the ideas of his mentor, McKim gave the greatest emphasis to Duffield's opinions on the subjects of original sin and rejuvenation. According to McKim, the minister denied that the sin of Adam could be imputed to man or that there was anything "actually sinful" in man's moral being. Instead he argued that man was born with a "proclivity to sin" which was due to a deterioration in man's physical nature stemming from Adam's lapse. This weakness, in combination with the "untoward circumstances" that surround man at birth and

during his development as a moral being was sure to lead him into sin. If the child could be born amid circumstances and afterwards be surrounded by influences altogether favorable to holiness he [Duffield] saw no reason why he should not grow up and be developed a perfectly holy being.⁵

Because men were not born and raised in such a perfect environment it was necessary for them to be reborn. Since Duffield denied that Christ died only for the elect, or that this regeneration

⁵Ibid., p. 8. It should be noted that Duffield's views had undergone a marked change during the years he spent in Carlisle and were considerably more liberal by 1831 than they had been in 1816. He set forth his new opinions in a controversial book entitled, Spiritual Life: or, Regeneration; Illustrated in a Series of Disquisitions Relative to its Author, Subject, Nature, Means & c. (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: George Fleming, 1832). The dedicatory page of this work said: "To the members of his [Duffield's] charge the following disquisitions are affectionately dedicated as an atonement for occasional attempts in the early period of his ministry among them to explain the great fact of a sinner's regeneration by the aid of a philosophy imbibed in his theological education, and interwoven in many of his exhibitions of scriptural truth, but for years past repudiated by their much attached pastor." [Capitalization deleted, punctuation added.]

was produced by the direct intervention of God transforming the human soul, he had to explain how rejuvenation could be accomplished through natural (i.e., non-miraculous) means. He argued that such a rebirth or conversion was accomplished indirectly "by means of truth operating upon the mind according to natural laws, inducing first a change of the purpose or will and consequently a new action in the whole heart and life."⁶ This interpretation of rejuvenation came to be called the moral suasion doctrine, and would come to play a critical role in shaping the direction of the radical anti-slavery movement.

If regeneration were to be achieved by truth operating upon the mind then those whose duty it was to spread the gospel were obligated to use the most efficacious means of making converts, and therefore such devices as protracted meetings (religious revivals) and the anxious bench were not only justifiable, but desirable ways of spreading light. Such ultra views were hotly contested by the old school which claimed that the innovators were straying from the Westminster Confession of Faith, but the new school men contended that they were not deserting the Confession, they were merely giving it a necessary reinterpretation.⁷

Even a cursory examination of the ideas described above will reveal the strong influence of Enlightenment thought upon the new school approach. Many of the Presbyterian churches which had remained largely immune to the rationalist infection of the eighteenth century would

⁶McKim, Autobiography, p. 10.

⁷Ibid., p. 7.

succumb to it during the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. One can see in Duffield's revisionism the impact of human perfectionism together with the belief that man is shaped by his environment. It would be a mistake however to view the new revivalism merely through the prism of the Enlightenment, for it was also profoundly romantic in its emphasis upon faith and feeling. Despite McKim's neutrality toward the religious controversy he was upset by the acrimony with which the dispute was conducted and distressed that Duffield "showed a good deal more temper than I expected to see manifested by so good a man." Several of the church elders with whom Miller was on good terms attempted to undermine his confidence in his minister, and while they did not succeed in winning the young man over to their side, they did manage to make him fear that his friend's doctrines were unsound, if not dangerous.⁸

In view of his lack of interest in the theological dispute between the two sides it was "a matter of comparative indifference" to Miller as to whether he should attend a new or an old school seminary. He finally settled upon Princeton which was firmly in the hands of the traditionalists because he felt more inclined to prefer the "good old way," than to "risk anything in a new path." On November 4, 1831 he left for Princeton, and he arrived there on the sixth. A week later he received word of his father's death after a sudden illness, and immediately gave up his studies and returned to Carlisle

⁸Ibid., pp. 13-14. The quotation is on p. 14.

by the next stage.⁹

The eight McKim children were now orphans, and the responsibility for the care of the family came to rest upon the shoulders of Miller and his elder brother, Samuel. Miller took on the task of running the house and superintending the education of the boys and girls while Samuel kept the tannery in operation. James McKim had died without leaving a will, and all of his property passed to the children. The total value of the estate came to a little less than ten thousand dollars and included two lots located at Louthier and East Streets. On this land was located a log barn and the two story stone house in which the family had lived since at least as early as 1817. On the lot adjacent to that on which the house stood there was a "second rate" tanyard and "necessary buildings."¹⁰

In the year that followed Miller's return to Carlisle the controversy between local supporters of the old and new schools reached a fever pitch of intensity as the result of Duffield's authorship of a

⁹McKim was informed of his father's illness (which was described as "bilious pneumonia") and death by the attending physician, J. Paxton, in two letters dated November 11, 1831 and Saturday night /November 12, 1831/. Both are in the McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. McKim Autobiography, pp. 15-17. McKim erroneously dates his departure for Princeton as having taken place on November 4, 1832. This was obviously a slip of the pen. See, Edward Howell Roberts (compiler), Biographical Catalogue of the Princeton Theological Seminary, 1815-1932 (Princeton, New Jersey: Published by the Trustees of the Princeton Theological Seminary, 1933), p. 73.

¹⁰Administration Account of James M. McKim on the Estate of James McKim, Deceased, Filed on October 31, 1835, Cumberland County Courthouse. Cumberland County Triennial Tax Rates for Carlisle, 1817, 1829, 1832, Cumberland County Courthouse. McKim, Autobiography, p. 17.

book entitled, Spiritual Life which was published early in 1832. In this work he moved sharply away from some of his older Calvinistic opinions, and clearly identified himself with the most radical new school positions. Perhaps in the belief that the pastor had finally overreached himself, his clerical opponents brought charges of heresy against him on the grounds that his views clearly deviated from the Confession of Faith.¹¹

The ensuing church trial was long, complicated, and tedious. It began in April 1832 with an investigation by the Carlisle Presbytery which resulted in a vote of censure by that body. This decision was appealed to the Synod which declined to rule on the merits of the case, but held that a retrial was in order on procedural grounds. On November 28, 1832 the Carlisle Presbytery drew up a new list of charges, and on April 11, 1833 a new verdict was finally reached. The committee found Duffield guilty of setting forth erroneous doctrines, but in view of his expressed desire to "live at amity with his brethren," and his claim that his work had been misinterpreted, it decided against censure. Instead, the committee voted to warn him "to guard against such speculations as may impugn the doctrines of our Church."¹²

Of greater importance than the verdict itself was the damage done to the First Presbyterian Church which acrimoniously split into opposing camps over the position of their minister. In December 1832 the Board of Trustees of the church met without Duffield and voted to donate \$2,500 in church funds for the erection of a new Presbyterian

¹¹History of the Proceedings of the Carlisle Presbytery, pp. 5-9.

¹²Duffield and the committee are both quoted in Nevin, Churches of the Valley, pp. 244-245. See also, Wing, History of the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, pp. 177-187.

house of worship. After taking this action a majority of the board resigned to become officers of the new church they had endowed.¹³

As the controversy developed, Miller's role changed from that of a neutral observer to that of a quiet partisan. Upon his return from Princeton he had resumed his studies for the ministry under Duffield's guidance, and this continuing association was, by itself, enough to identify the young man as an adherent of the new school position. He was so completely won over by the older man's arguments that when he decided to return to school the following Fall, he chose to attend the theological seminary at Andover which was under the control of the revivalists.¹⁴

McKim left for Andover on October 10, 1832, and arrived there six days later. He was not admitted immediately, however, because of a deficiency in his knowledge of Hebrew. He spent the next two weeks preparing for another examination in the language, and after passing it was permitted to begin his studies. The year that McKim had spent at home after his return from Princeton had been a profitable one and he brought to his studies at Andover a much clearer idea of his vocation than he had had in 1831. During the interim he had been reading the biographies and journals of men who had served as missionaries in foreign lands, and he "became possessed with a strong desire to follow their example. There seemed to be something noble and divinely heroic

¹³Ibid., pp. 187-188. Duffield Diary, September 18, December 25, 1832.

¹⁴McKim, Autobiography, p. 18.

in a work of this kind," and Miller prayed that he might be chosen for such a vocation.¹⁵

This interest in missionary work was probably sparked initially by his childhood contacts with the Young Men's Missionary Association which Duffield had formed at the time when McKim and eight other Carlisle boys had experienced a conversion in 1823. His inclinations in this direction may also have been derived in part from the romantic novels and travel accounts he consumed so voraciously while he was a student in college. During the months that Miller spent at Andover his interest in missions continued to grow, and he became acquainted with several other young men who shared his enthusiasm. On one occasion he addressed a social gathering of his fellow students on the subject of missions and he later expressed the opinion that Horatio Southgate who became a missionary to Persia had been influenced to choose his career by this talk.¹⁶

Despite his avid interest in the subject of missions and his strong desire to succeed in his studies, McKim's work did not progress easily, and during the year he suffered from a recurrence of the ill health that had previously plagued him. He described his illness as "disordered nerves" and said that he was "oppressed by an unmanly melancholy" which he could neither resist nor shake off. Throughout

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 17-18.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 20-21. Daniel Jewett to McKim, March 6, 1833; Horatio Southgate to McKim, December 16, 1834, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

November and December he fought the temptation to neglect his studies and applied himself as diligently as he could under the circumstances. Shortly before the new year, however, he was so miserable that he felt it necessary to ask the school for a temporary leave of absence until his health was restored, and he took a room in Boston in the hope that a week or two of relaxation would cure him.¹⁷

Within a few days after he left Andover word arrived that the cholera epidemic which had been moving westward had reached Carlisle and stricken three of his brothers including Samuel, the family breadwinner. It was not long before he learned that the disease had been fatal in Samuel's case and that the responsibility for the care of the family now rested on his shoulders alone. McKim returned to Andover, packed his belongings, and on January 18, 1833, left for Carlisle. Due to the poor condition of the roads he did not reach home until the fifth of February. When he got there he found that under Samuel's management the value of their father's estate had remained stable, and it was still worth close to ten thousand dollars. Nevertheless, a large part of the estate consisted of unfinished stock which would sell

¹⁷McKim Autobiography, pp. 19-22. McKim's psychological state at this time would probably be characterized today as an acute depressive reaction triggered by the deaths of his parents. This condition went beyond the normal limits of grief, and he suffered from it throughout the remainder of the decade. Among his complaints at various times were an inability to work, or to write and such physical symptoms as dyspepsia and nausea. See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 35-36, 74-75. These conditions are often associated with reactive depressions. See, Emil A. Gutheil, "Reactive Depressions," in Silvano Arieti (ed.), *American Handbook of Psychiatry* (2 vols.; New York: Basic Books Inc., 1959), I, 345-352. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," trans. Joan Riviere, in Ernest Jones (ed.), *Sigmund Freud: Collected Papers* (4 vols.; New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1959), IV, 152-170.

at a loss unless it was first processed and prepared for market. Thus, with the combined responsibility of providing for his brothers and sisters and seeing to their education McKim was forced to abandon his plans for the ministry and to devote his energies to his family.¹⁸

Throughout the winter and spring he worked to get the stock ready for sale, but his mind was preoccupied with religious thoughts. His interest in missionary work remained undiminished and he continued to read avidly anything related to the subject.¹⁹ Taken altogether then, the Spring of 1833 was a dismal time in the life of Miller McKim. Within the space of less than two years death had taken the three members of his family upon whom he had relied most, and saddled him with the unwanted responsibility of caring for his six brothers and sisters. Plagued by ill health and depressed spirits his burdens must have seemed even heavier than they were. To make matters worse, his career plans were in a state of suspension at the very moment when his experience at Andover had kindled his desire to enter the field of missionary work. It was at this dreary time that he came to believe that slavery was an evil which must be abolished immediately, and began to focus his missionary zeal upon the cause of the Negro.

As has already been noted, in early 1833 McKim knew relatively little about slavery. It is true that the institution still existed

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 22-26. George Duffield to McKim, December 23, 1832; January 4, 1833, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

¹⁹McKim, Autobiography, pp. 26-27, 34.

in Cumberland County while he was growing up, but as the result of the implementation of Pennsylvania's gradual emancipation law its victims were now few and tended to be older persons born before the passage of the law in 1780.²⁰ Thus, McKim grew to manhood knowing little of their plight, and even less about the conditions in which black men lived to the South. According to his own account McKim accepted the prevailing northern attitudes toward slavery, and he viewed it as an unjust system which had been fastened upon the nation in the long distant past. He believed that it could not be eradicated as long as the two races existed together within the same body politic because of the natural inferiority of the Negroes. To emancipate the blacks and allow them to remain within American society would be to invite disorders and convulsions which would ultimately result in the destruction of one race or the other. It will probably never be known whether McKim accepted these ideas before he went to college or not, but it is fairly certain that he held them by the time he left Dickinson.²¹

²⁰In 1810, the year of McKim's birth there were 307 slaves in Cumberland County. By 1820 the figure was down to seventeen and by 1830 there were only seven slaves in the county. Of the seventeen slaves in 1820, only two were less than forty-five years of age. United States Office of the Census, Third Census of the United States, 1810 (Washington: 1811), p. 40a; Fourth Census of the United States, 1820, p. 19; Fifth Census of the United States, 1830 (Washington: 1832), p. 62. On McKim's ignorance of slavery see p. 1 above.

²¹McKim Autobiography, pp. 27-29. The attitudes which McKim described himself as holding in early 1833 were the same as those to which he was exposed at Dickinson (see Minutes of the Belles Lettres Society, July 9, 1825, June 9, 16, 1827), and there is no indication in the record that he was touched by any other influences during the years 1828-1832 which might have shaped his thinking in another direction.

Even the most sincere anti-slavery men shared the attitude that co-existence between the races on a basis of equality was impossible, and it was for this reason that the American Colonization Society was called into being in 1816. Composed of both northerners and southerners and endorsed by such prominent figures as Clay, Monroe and Madison, the organization advocated the expatriation of the Negroes to Africa. Northern proponents of abolition viewed this platform as a prelude to emancipation which would answer the objections of slaveholders who genuinely desired to see an end to the system of bondage, but feared the consequences of having a large population of free blacks. The motives of many southerners who supported the society were quite different. They sought to preserve slavery by getting rid of the troublesome population of free Negroes who seemed to threaten its existence, and for this reason they too advocated expatriation. In the years after the American Colonization Society was formed it grew rapidly and soon took its place beside the American Temperance Society and the American Bible Society in the arsenal of benevolent reform.²² Thus, it was natural that McKim came to take it for granted that the colonization group represented the only feasible solution to the slavery

²²Barnes, Antislavery Impulse, pp. 17-18. In The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), P. J. Staudenraus shows that despite the differing outlooks of northerners and southerners on the slavery question, they were agreed upon the fact that Negroes were inferior beings who could not be assimilated into American society on a basis of equality. Hence, many northerners came to favor expatriation as a means of ending slavery, while many southerners wished to deport only the free Negroes because they threatened the system of bondage. See especially, pp. 12-14, 18-20, 28-29, and 201.

problem, and that the road to emancipation would be slow and gradual.

Little is known about the effect that the few months which McKim spent at Andover had in shaping his anti-slavery opinions, but it is certain that he came into contact with New Englanders who were becoming increasingly concerned about the question of emancipation and who were beginning to believe that slavery should be ended immediately. When he returned to Carlisle, however, his major interest was still in the subject of missions and as soon as he was settled he wrote to one of his former classmates who shared his enthusiasm for missionary work describing his ambitions in this regard and discussing the need for men to carry the gospel to the heathen. In early March 1833, Daniel Jewett replied with a letter which probably did much to lay the groundwork for McKim's subsequent receptivity to the idea of immediate abolition.²³ This communication is of particular interest because it so clearly illustrates the belief of many young evangelists at this time that global reform was both necessary and possible.

Replying to McKim's remarks about missionary work Jewett wrote that he had read these portions of the Pennsylvanian's letter to a meeting of the campus missionary society, but the Andover student evidently felt that his friend's interests were not broad enough and he went on to say.

But I wish to say something in regard to other great objects, or rather other departments of the one great cause of our Lord which looks at the conversion of the world; I refer to the efforts for the cause of temperance, -- the emancipation

²³Daniel E. Jewett to McKim, March 6, 1833, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

of the oppressed, -- the reformation of the cities and the promotion of pure vital godliness and genuine revivalism everywhere.

Jewett then discussed the subject of temperance in some detail and went on to turn McKim's attention to the subjects of prostitution, war and slavery by noting that,

many are now beginning to feel aroused to the objects of the Magdalen Society in prayerful effort that our country may be redeemed from the curse which has well nigh ruined many of our cities, - the same principles are found at work in the efforts now making for banishing War from the earth [,] and again in labours of the anti-slavery societies, for the utter abolition of the trade and the emancipation of the oppressed Africans; and I hope that like principles will be a means of wiping away the mass of pollutions and thick cloud of national guilt which have been giving fearful token of our speedy downfall. Then shall African and Indian oppression cease from our land. Then from the world shall war and slavery flee before the zion of the Lord . . .²⁴

Jewett concluded his letter by asking McKim to gather and transmit whatever information he could about such questions as: the intellectual and religious character of the Negroes of Carlisle, the degree to which the free Negroes were making efforts for their own improvement, and the state of anti-slavery sentiment in the town.

It may have been the quest for answers to these queries that led McKim to the barbershop of John Peck at some time between March and May 1833, but even if he was merely coming for his regular haircut Jewett's inquiries must have been at the back of his mind. Nevertheless, nothing in his experience, or in the letter he had recently received led him to challenge his belief that colonization was one of the most important religious reform causes of the day. Thus, when he fell into

²⁴Ibid.

conversation with the Negro barber after reading some of the abolition literature which he found in the shop, he was doubtless shocked to learn from Peck that the northern blacks were almost unanimous in their opposition to this plan which was so widely favored in the white community. Confronted with an articulate Negro protesting against a scheme that would have deprived him of the only homeland he had ever known solely on the ground of his race, McKim could only protest his ignorance on the subject. At Peck's urging he agreed to take home and read a copy of William Lloyd Garrison's, Thoughts on African Colonization.²⁵

McKim was later to say that a careful study of Garrison's pamphlet had wrought a "complete revolution" in his opinions and feelings on the subject of slavery. He was now convinced that since all the races were equal in the sight of God they should be so on earth, and that slavery was a sin and, therefore, should be abolished immediately. There can be no doubt that McKim's conversion to the anti-slavery cause was triggered by his encounter in the barbershop, but the roots of this change were sunk deeply into his religious beliefs and were nourished by the evangelistic milieu in which he had been operating for the past two years. Jewett's letter captures accurately the sense of urgency which impelled the young men caught up in the Great Awakening to attempt to remake and perfect the world immediately. Many of them believed literally in the imminence of the second coming of Christ, and they hastened to make the world ready for his arrival. McKim like Garrison and the other young men who were rallying to the abolition

²⁵McKim Autobiography, pp. 30-31.

standard at this time believed that it was the duty of those who would be saved to prove their merit by good works designed to extirpate sin and install the reign of Christ on earth.²⁶

McKim also held in common with his future colleagues a belief in the doctrine of moral suasion which held that religious conversions were brought about by means of truth operating upon the mind according to natural laws. This resulted first in a change in one's will or purpose, and consequently in an entirely new outlook which would be accompanied by a corresponding change in behavior. With their religious point of view, it was a comparatively simple matter for these evangelistically oriented reformers to apply this doctrine to the process of making converts to the abolition cause. Furthermore, the doctrine of salvation through works made it imperative for anyone who became convinced of the truth of the abolitionist argument to work to end slavery once he realized that it was sinful. It was the fact that Garrison shared this complex of beliefs with the others who would join the anti-slavery causes that made them so responsive to his message.²⁷

Thoughts on African Colonization which was the catalyst which

²⁶Ibid., pp. 32-33. Among those who believed literally in the second coming of Christ was George Duffield who wrote two books in defense of this position: Dissertations on the Prophecies Relative to the Second Coming of Christ (New York: Dayton and Newman, 1842), and Millenarianism Defended: Reply to Prof. Stuart's "Strictures on the Rev. G. Duffield's Recent Work on the Second Coming of Christ . . ." (New York: Mark H. Newman, 1843).

²⁷Loveland, "Evangelicalism and 'Immediate Emancipation' in American Antislavery Thought," pp. 172-188. This article is a most important contribution to the literature on the anti-slavery movement because it recognizes the fact that Garrison shared the same religious outlook as did his colleagues from the West and New York. See also, Thomas, The Liberator, pp. 54-57. On McKim and moral suasion see his Autobiography, p. 10.

brought McKim and so many others into the anti-slavery movement was designed primarily as an attack upon the American Colonization Society. The Boston abolitionist sought to unmask the organization as a tool of the slaveholding interest that was getting unmerited support from those northern reformers who sincerely wanted to end the system of bondage. Drawing extensively (and sometime inaccurately) upon the society's newspaper, the African Repository he demonstrated that despite its anti-slavery pretensions in the North, it did not challenge the right of one man to hold another in bondage, and he proved that it was more concerned with getting rid of the free Negro population than with freeing the blacks still in bondage.²⁸

The true importance of Garrison's tract, however, does not lie in its attack upon colonization, but in his challenge to the underlying assumptions upon which the society was based. The question was not,

whether the climate of Africa is salubrious, nor whether the mortality among the emigrants has been excessive, nor whether the colony is in a prosperous condition, . . . but whether the doctrines and principles of the Society accord with the principles of the gospel, whether slaveholders are the just proprietors of their slaves, whether it is not the sacred duty of the nation to abolish the system of slavery now, and to recognize the people of color as brethren and countrymen who have been unjustly treated and covered with unmerited shame. This is the the question -- and the only question.²⁹

²⁸William Lloyd Garrison, Thoughts on African Colonization, pp. 68-74, 111-124. The accuracy of Garrison's use of sources is challenged by Thomas in The Liberator, pp. 148-149. Nevertheless, Thomas does not dispute the truth of Garrison's general interpretation of the nature of the colonization society.

²⁹Garrison, Thoughts on African Colonization, preface, pp. iii-iv.

Garrison was, therefore, challenging the entire complex of racist assumptions upon which slavery and the doctrine of colonization were based and insisting that there were no significant differences between the races. He was also moving the issue from a practical to a moral and religious plane. He expressed confidence that the land would "be redeemed and regenerated by an enlightened and energetic public opinion," and indicated that he would not despair of the social and political elevation of his countrymen, "as long as there remains among us a single copy of the Declaration of Independence, or of the New Testament."³⁰

These comments indicate the most important sources of his thought. He interpreted the natural rights doctrine of the Declaration of Independence literally, and he insisted that his fellow Americans do so as well. He believed these doctrines to be accurate manifestations of the will of God as embodied in the Bible. With the evangelistic fervor of a Jonathan Edwards or a Charles Grandison Finney he called upon the slaveholders to "REPENT! REPENT! now in sackcloth and ashes . . . Your only alternative is either to redress the wrongs of the oppressed now, and humble yourselves before God or prepare for the chastisements of heaven. I repeat it REPENTANCE OR PUNISHMENT must be yours."³¹

No longer was the slaveholder to be protected by the argument that he was the unfortunate beneficiary of a system for which he had

³⁰Ibid., p. 146.

³¹Ibid., p. 103. See also pp. 12, 142-143. This interpretation of the basic sources of Garrison's thought is drawn from John Thomas' treatment of the Boston editor's "Park Street Address" of July 4, 1829 in The Liberator, pp. 97-100. Most of what Thomas says about the origins of this speech is equally applicable to Garrison's colonization tract.

no responsibility. Garrison was identifying slavery as, "an individual CRIME, embracing in its folds robbery, cruelty, oppression and piracy."³² Since bondage was sinful, the Boston editor called upon the perpetrators of the crime to give it up immediately and repent. Nevertheless, Garrison was not a heedless visionary. While he argued that immediate emancipation meant giving slaves their personal freedom, exempting them from arbitrary punishment, and paying them for their labors, he also believed that the rights to vote and hold office should be withheld while the freedmen underwent an intermediate period of tutelage "and benevolent supervision on the part of their employers."³³

Garrison's basic mode of attack was through the use of the doctrine of moral suasion originated by the evangelists. With his pen as a bludgeon he would bring the nation to recognize the sin of slavery and repent. He was under no illusion, however, that it would be easy to convert the masters, and he recognized the fact that they felt themselves blameless and free from sin. For this reason he put forward a program designed to increase the difficulties of slaveholding. "Our only ground of hope," he suggested, "is in increasing the difficulties of holding their slaves, in multiplying the causes of their apprehensions, in destroying the value of slave labor and in making their situation full of disquietude and distress."³⁴ In this design

³²Garrison, Thoughts on African Colonization, p. 20.

³³Ibid., pp. 80-85.

³⁴Ibid., p. 105. On moral suasion see p. 146. Garrison's proposal for an intermediate stage of tutelage, and his plan to multiply the apprehensions of the slaveholders suggest that his understanding of slavery and of the tactical problems which would beset those who tried

he would be far more successful than he could possibly anticipate in 1832.

As McKim read through Thoughts on African Colonization, it must have struck many responsive chords within him. Garrison's emphasis on the twin themes of repentance and salvation, his insistence upon the individual's responsibility to divorce himself from sin regardless of the external circumstances, and his faith in the power of moral exhortation; all of these elements were reflected in McKim's own experience as a recent convert. Nevertheless, this community of attitudes would not have been enough to make him an abolitionist were it not for his willingness to accept Garrison's central assumption that the races of man had a common antecedent and that they were indeed equal. Without this premise Garrison's assertion of the sinfulness of slavery would have to stand unproven.

The origins of McKim's receptivity to the idea of racial equality are obscure and will probably never be known. Although he shared the belief in Negro inferiority that was so prevalent during this period, he had grown up in an area where race was a matter of peripheral importance and his attitudes did not reflect a deep sense of conviction growing out of experience.³⁵ Thus, it seems likely that his contact

to destroy it was far more sophisticated than has usually been thought. On this point see, Donald G. Mathews, "The Abolitionists on Slavery: The Critique Behind the Social Movement," Journal of Southern History, XXXIII (May 1967), 163-182. Especially pp. 167-168.

³⁵In both 1820 and 1830 Negroes constituted only five per cent of the population of the Borough of Carlisle. See, United States Office of the Census, Fourth Census of the United States, 1820, p. 19; Fifth Census of the United States, 1830, pp. 60-63.

with John Peck was sufficient to bring him to challenge his belief in white supremacy. Perhaps the very fact that the Negro barber could argue so cogently against colonization brought McKim to question the notion of racial inferiority.

At first, McKim's new attitude toward slavery made little difference in his life. Throughout the Spring of 1833 he continued to work in the tannery preparing the stock for sale. At the same time, he fitfully continued to read works on religious subjects and to prepare himself for the ministry. Nevertheless, his mood of melancholy did not abate, and his health did not improve. It was for this reason that, in July 1833 he set out on a trip to the West to visit his relatives. He hoped that the journey would have a salubrious effect, but its result was the opposite and he got no further than the town of Bedford which was only two days ride from home. He remained in this town recuperating for six weeks before returning to Carlisle.³⁶

During the months that followed McKim began to act upon his newly found anti-slavery convictions, and he tried to interest others in the cause of abolition. On about December 1, 1833 he received another letter from Daniel Jewett, and this one indicated that his former Andover classmate had become even more interested in the problem of slavery than he had been six months earlier. It told of a National Anti-Slavery Convention which was to be held at Philadelphia on December 4.

³⁶ McKim, Autobiography, pp. 34-36. George Duffield to McKim, August 2, 1833, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

Jewett was planning to attend the meeting and he asked his friend to join him there. McKim had apparently been trying for the past several months, to interest the free Negroes of Carlisle in taking an active part in the fight for abolition, and he showed the letter to his anti-slavery friends and urged them to go to Philadelphia for the meeting. They declined, however, and "insisted" that since he was "more deeply interested in the subject than anyone else, and had the time to represent the anti-slavery of Carlisle," he was the proper person to go. Without much resistance McKim agreed to attend the meeting.³⁷

³⁷Ibid., pp. 37-38. There is some question about the racial identity of the anti-slavery group in Carlisle that delegated McKim as its representative. In his autobiography he describes these individuals as, "some of my friends whom I had succeeded in interesting somewhat in the cause." It would be natural to assume that by this he meant white friends since the implication of the statement is that they were friends of his before he succeeded in interesting them in the cause, and it is doubtful that he could have been as ignorant about slavery as he was if he had had Negro friends earlier. Nevertheless, when McKim described these events thirty years after they occurred he stated that all of the Carlisle abolitionists except himself were Negro. In view of the highly specific nature of this statement, and the ambiguity of his earlier description, it seems warranted to conclude that his Carlisle co-workers were all Negroes. American Anti-Slavery Society, Proceedings of the American Anti-Slavery Society at its Third Decade: Held in the City of Philadelphia, December 3d and 4th, 1863 . . . (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1864), p. 33.

CHAPTER III

A MINISTRY OF FAITH or A MINISTRY OF WORKS?

Having been delegated as the representative of the Carlisle abolitionists, McKim promptly set out for Philadelphia. As he made his way toward the meeting he was only vaguely aware of the underlying forces that had converged to bring about a convention whose major purpose was the creation of a nationwide organization dedicated to the principle of immediate emancipation. The roots of this development are to be found in such diverse factors as the growing recognition that slavery would not die of its own accord, the pervasive spirit of secular and religious perfectionism, and the imminent success of the movement for West Indian emancipation.

For both the North and the South the Missouri Compromise had marked the beginning of a growing consciousness that the hopes which the founding fathers cherished for the gradual extinction of slavery were not destined to be fulfilled. Below the Mason and Dixon line this new awareness led to a growing acceptance of the doctrine that bondage was a positive good, while above the invisible barrier criticism of slavery began to sharpen. Political issues like the tariff and public lands, which once might have been primarily economic in nature, began to take on new dimensions as they became intertwined with slavery. At the same time, even as the American Colonization Society grew in size during the 1820's, it was becoming steadily more apparent to many that its solution was chimerical since the rate of increase of the Negro population was almost certain to outstrip the rate at which

the blacks could be transported to Africa.¹

During these same years reform on both the secular and religious planes was increasingly pervaded by the spirit of perfectionism. The liberties Americans had already gained seemed to hold the promise of creating an even more just society in the future. As universal manhood suffrage (for whites) became an accomplished fact new goals were set forth and new causes such as free public education vied for attention with plans to end imprisonment for debt and to aid the mentally ill. Measures against the standard of a corrupt and decadent

¹Thomas Jefferson was one of those who demonstrated an awareness of the practical limitations of the colonization scheme. See his letter to Jared Sparks, February 4, 1824 in Paul Leicester Ford (ed.), The Works of Thomas Jefferson (12 vols.; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904-1905), XII, 334-339.

One indication of the sharp impact of the Missouri controversy upon the development of sectional feeling in the North came from Carlisle, Pennsylvania where Congressman Fuller was burned in effigy by an angry crowd of constituents who objected to his support of the compromise. John Bach McMaster, A History of the People of the United States (8 vols.; New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1924) IV, 592. Whether nine year old Miller McKim saw or understood this protest is not known.

In both the North and the South there was a clear awareness of the fact that the dispute over the issue of slavery might well lead to disunion or even to civil war. Jefferson expressed the fear that the controversy marked the death knell of the union. Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820 in Ford, Works of Jefferson, XII, 158. John Quincy Adams reluctantly decided to support the compromise for the sake of preserving the Union, but he was by no means certain that this would prevent a schism between the two sections. Charles Francis Adams (ed.), Memoirs of John Quincy Adams: Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848 (12 vols.; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1875), IV, 529-531; V, 11-12. James Tallmadge whose motion had brought the issue out into the open responded to southern threats of civil war by saying: "If a dissolution of the Union must take place, let it be so! If civil war, which gentlemen so much threaten, must come, I can only say, let it come!" James Tallmadge, Speech of the Hon. James Tallmadge of Dutchess County, New York in the House of Representatives of the United States, on Slavery (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1849), p. 11. William S. Jenkins in, Proslavery Thought in the Old South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), shows that the major body of works defending slavery as a positive good were produced in the period beginning immediately after the compromise.

Europe, America seemed to hold the vision of a regenerate mankind.

Even the most despised class in the nation, the free Negroes were infected by the promise of the United States, and instead of welcoming the plans of the colonization society as a means of escape from a land which had treated them with contempt, they denounced the plan and invoked the principles enunciated in the Declaration of Independence to demand equality here. McKim was one of the few white men to be moved by their plea, but other (and more influential) future abolitionists like Garrison and the Tappan brothers were also stimulated by the protests of the Negroes to abandon their support of colonization.²

Perfectionism was an even more powerful force in the religious world than it was on a secular level, and it was particularly strong among those who had been influenced by the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening. Believing that it was both possible and necessary to create the kingdom of God on earth, these individuals were prone to throw themselves into the fight against any form of sin with a righteous certainty that the Lord was on their side and that if the forces of good would only mobilize, evil could be put to rout. Once individuals like Garrison, the Tappans and McKim became convinced of the justice of the demands of the Negroes for equality, it took but a short step further for them to conclude that slavery was a sinful denial of the fundamental rights of man which violated the teachings of the Bible. To men who

²For McKim see above, pp. 1, 3, 49, 58. For Garrison see below, p. 69, and for the Tappans, see below, p. 73. On the pervasive impact of perfectionism see, Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1944), pp. 2-3, 15-22. The best discussion of the relationship of perfectionism, both secular and religious, to the anti-slavery movement is in Thomas, The Liberator, pp. 452-455.

accepted the message of the evangelists and believed firmly in the possibility of perfecting human society the conviction that slavery was a sin could lead to only one conclusion: that it was imperative to end the system of bondage immediately. It was not enough, however, merely to recognize the evil. Believing that the salvation of the individual was directly dependent upon good works, those who accepted the evangelist frame of reference and who considered slavery a sin were obligated to crusade actively against it if they wished to be saved.³

Thus, the groundwork for the doctrine of immediate emancipation already existed in the United States independently of events abroad. But similar currents were at work in England where the movement for West Indian emancipation was already far ahead of its American counterpart. As the drive to free England's Caribbean bondsmen reached its climax in the years 1830-1833, the men behind it abandoned their earlier gradualistic approach and began to demand immediate emancipation. American opponents of slavery observing the British movement's success determined to emulate its methods.⁴

³Ibid. See also, Loveland, "Evangelicalism and 'Immediate Emancipation' in American Anti-Slavery Thought," pp. 180-185, and Barnes, Anti-Slavery Impulse, pp. 3-16.

⁴Gilbert H. Barnes views immediatism as almost wholly a British import, and he treats it as a doctrine that was not truly relevant to American conditions. Ibid., pp. 29-37, 49 and especially p. 34. Anne C. Loveland disputes this position and emphasizes the doctrine's purely American roots which grew out of the fertile soil of revivalism. See, "Evangelicalism and 'Immediate Emancipation' in American Anti-Slavery Thought," pp. 173-174. Miss Loveland is, no doubt, correct in placing her stress upon the American origins of immediatism in this country. Nevertheless, it remains true that there was an interaction between the British and American movements, and the success of the English in using the idea of immediatism certainly gave it an added impetus in the United States. David Brion Davis makes a very useful distinction between the primarily secular origins of British abolition and the essentially

The convergence of the English abolition movement with the new found American awareness of the permanency of slavery and with perfectionist reform impulses on both the secular and religious levels created the preconditions for the growth of a radical anti-slavery crusade which would break sharply from the gradualist tradition of earlier abolition efforts. The major distinction between the new movement and older ones was the fact that slavery would now be characterized as sinful by men whose evangelistic zeal would make them demand that the sin be abandoned immediately, regardless of practical obstacles. The rhetoric of abolition would now shift from the calm reasoning and gentle pleas that had been so ineffective to the strident hellfire and damnation tone of the evangelists. Moreover, the new movement would also differ markedly from its predecessors in insisting that the races were inherently equal and that Negroes were entitled to the same rights as white men.⁵

religious nature of the American anti-slavery movement. See, "The Emergence of Immediatism in British and American Antislavery Thought," Mississippi Valley Historical Review XLIX (June 1962), 209-230. Also useful is, Howard R. Temperly, "British and American Abolitionists Compared" in Martin Duberman (ed.), The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 351-355.

⁵The official position of the American Anti-Slavery Society may be found in The Declaration of Sentiments and Constitution of the American Anti-Slavery Society: Together with All Those Parts of the Constitution of the United States Which Have Relation to Slavery (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1835). Since most manifestations of anti-slavery sentiment in the 1820's were related to colonization and gradualism in one way or another, the radicalism of the movement is obvious. Nevertheless, this should not be allowed to obscure the fact that there were a few voices calling for immediate emancipation even before the Missouri Compromise. A notable example of this early radicalism is The Book and Slavery Irreconcilable: With Animadversions upon Dr. Smith's Philosophy (Philadelphia: J. M. Sanderson and Company, 1816). This work by George Bourne, a Presbyterian minister, anticipated many of the later arguments of the radical anti-slavery men, but it was

When McKim arrived at the convention which had been called to inaugurate the new movement he found that many of the other delegates to the meeting were veteran campaigners for the various causes that comprised the benevolent system. Realizing that he was one of the youngest and least experienced persons present he decided to listen and learn while saying little. The account of the convention which McKim wrote fifteen years after the event suggests that he observed the proceedings in a state of wide-eyed awe, and that as he perceived it, the delegates present showed an almost total unity of thought and action on the slavery question. In this description William Lloyd Garrison was alluded to as "the master spirit of the occasion."⁶

McKim's portrayal of the convention is in almost perfect accord with the traditional view of the radical anti-slavery cause which gave the credit (or blame) for its emergence to Garrison and ignored or minimized the work of others from outside of New England in creating the new movement. The historians who put forward this traditional interpretation tended to treat Garrison as a purely secular figure even

ahead of its time and did not have the same kind of electric impact upon those who read it as did Garrison's Thoughts on African Colonization. Bourne's work antedated by eight years Elizabeth Heyrick's, Immediate, Not Gradual Abolition: or, An Inquiry Into the Shortest, Safest, and Most Effectual Means of Getting Rid of West Indian Slavery (London: no publisher given, 1824) which was the first work of major importance on the subject to be produced in England. It is worth noting, however, that her work was published in Philadelphia in 1824 and in New York the following year.

⁶McKim Autobiography, p. 39. American Anti-Slavery Society, Proceedings of the American Anti-Slavery Society at its Third Decade, p. 31. The median age of the delegates to the convention was thirty-two years. This figure is based upon David Donald's estimate that the median age of the abolitionists was twenty-nine at the time when the Liberator was first published. See, "Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," pp. 26-27.

though they often quoted writings of his which were liberally sprinkled with religious references.⁷ More recently, however, revisionist scholars have argued that the anti-slavery crusade grew directly out of the western religious revival movement and that Garrison and his small band of eastern urban followers played a negligible role in creating and developing the radical abolition movement. Indeed, the Garrisonians are depicted by these writers as a disruptive force whose primary role was to sow discord within the cause and to give it a bad name by the harshness of their rhetoric. Revisionist historians tended to see the eastern urban abolition movement which centered about the editor of the Liberator as irreligious; and hence a perversion of the true anti-slavery spirit which was profoundly evangelical in tone and western in origin.⁸

In view of the fact that McKim's account was written fifteen

⁷The most perfect distillations of the traditional interpretation are to be found in, James Ford Rhodes, History of the United States (8 vols.; New York: Macmillan and Company, 1902), I, 53-60; and in, Jesse Macy, The Anti-Slavery Crusade: A Chronicle of the Gathering Storm (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), pp. 54-56 et passim. Albert Bushnell Hart, Slavery and Abolition, 1831-1841 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1906), was the first full length scholarly treatment of the subject. While it is basically traditional in its approach, it does make brief mention of the contribution of religion to anti-slavery thought. See especially, pp. 166, 174. It does not, however, say anything about evangelical religion.

⁸Barnes, Antislavery Impulse, pp. 88-99 et passim. Dwight Lowell Dumond, in Antislavery Origins of the Civil War in the United States (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1939), virtually ignores Garrison who is discussed on only two pages of this work and mentioned on only two others. See, pp. 2, 47, 86-87. Dumond's later work, Antislavery: The Crusade for Freedom in America (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1961), gives more space to Garrison but is equally harsh in its judgment of him. See pp. 167-182. Dumond's emphasis upon the importance of western revivalism as the major causative factor which was responsible for the radical anti-slavery movement emerges clearly in ibid., pp. 151-157.

years later at a time when he was clearly identified with Garrison it would be easy to dismiss his description of the convention as the special pleading of a very interested observer. Nevertheless, certain questions would remain unanswered. The manner in which McKim came to hold his anti-slavery views is fully consistent with the revisionist emphasis upon the importance of revivalism, and yet he was neither from the West nor from a truly rural background. Furthermore, if the revivalist brand of abolitionism was as antithetical to the Garrisonian variety as these writers allege, then McKim's later identification with the Boston reformer would require considerable explanation. If problems like these make it impossible to fully accept the revisionist interpretation, it is even more difficult to fall back upon the traditional view which fails to deal with the steadily mounting evidence that revivalism was directly related to the birth of the anti-slavery movement and to the manner in which it subsequently developed.

The questions raised by McKim's early career suggest that the revisionist position requires substantial modification if it is to stand as a valid explanation of the origins and nature of the anti-slavery crusade. The evidence of McKim's activities together with the materials on which the traditional and revisionist interpretations have been based indicates that revivalism was indeed critical to the development of the movement, but that the influence of the evangelist upsurge was by no means limited to the West. Easterners also felt its pull, and reacted to it with just as much vigor as did their brothers beyond the mountains, and William Lloyd Garrison was as much the product of the Second Great Awakening as Theodore Weld who led the western abolitionists. If the traditionalists erred in failing to emphasize

the importance of religion in shaping Garrison's opposition to slavery they were, nevertheless, correct in seeing him as the catalytic agent which brought the anti-slavery movement into being.

In 1826, soon after he came to Boston in search of work as a printer, Garrison began to attend Lyman Beecher's Hanover Street Church. There, he absorbed the great eastern revivalist's message that salvation could only be achieved through works, and he soon became a zealous advocate of the program of benevolent reform with which Beecher was so closely associated. At first Garrison's reformist zeal was concentrated upon the temperance and sabbath issues, but he soon began to turn his attention to slavery. His initial confidence in the colonization plan was undermined by his contact with William Watkins, a free Negro who opposed the scheme, and as Garrison read George Bourne's, The Book and Slavery Irreconcilable he came to favor immediate emancipation.

Although he was not the first American to espouse this doctrine he was to be its most important popularizer at a time when most anti-slavery men were gradualists and colonizationists. In 1829 he became the co-editor (with Benjamin Lundy) of the Genius of Universal Emancipation, and his immediatist views began to reach the religious reformers who subscribed to this journal. In 1830 Garrison and Lundy ended their partnership and on January 1, 1831 the Boston editor published the first number of the Liberator.⁹⁻¹⁰

⁹⁻¹⁰Thomas, The Liberator, pp. 56-68, 89-90, 104-105, 127-128. On Watkins and Garrison see, Garrison, Life of Garrison, I, 145n, 147-148.

The same currents of religious reform which led Garrison to accept Bourne's immediatism were creating a similar receptivity among other religious reformers who had formerly been content with the colonization society's approach to slavery. A month after the Liberator was founded Charles B. Storrs, the President of Western Reserve College in Ohio, became a subscriber. About a year and a half later, two other faculty members, Elizur Wright and Beriah Green, were (like McKim) converted to immediate abolition after reading Garrison's Thoughts on African Colonization. It was not long before Storrs, Wright and Green were preaching the new anti-slavery doctrine to the student body and to the surrounding community as well. In October 1832 the school was visited by Theodore Weld, a revivalist who had been preaching in behalf of evangelistic religion, temperance and manual labor ever since his conversion in 1826 by Charles Grandison Finney. Although opposed to slavery, Weld was a colonizationist and a gradualist when he arrived at the college. By the time he left, however, he had been converted to immediatism by Wright and Green. Within another year Weld would become the leader of the western anti-slavery forces.¹¹

¹¹Barnes alleges that it was Weld who converted Wright, Green, and Storrs; but the very opposite is true. In Theodore Weld: Crusader for Freedom (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1950), Benjamin P. Thomas demonstrates convincingly that these three faculty members had been converted to immediatism by the works of Garrison and Charles Stuart before Weld came to the college on October 12, 1832. See, pp. 36-37, 271. On September 27, 1832, fifteen days before he visited the college, Weld wrote a letter to James Gillespie Birney which demonstrates that at that time, either he had no knowledge of the immediatist movement, or he had no faith in it. He praised Birney's decision to take a position with the American Colonization Society and added: "I am ripe in the conviction that if the Colonization Society does not dissipate the horror of darkness which overhangs the southern country, we are undone. Light breaks in from no other quarter."

Garrison was, therefore, directly responsible for the growth of anti-slavery thought beyond the mountains by virtue of the impact which his writings had in shaping the immediatist approach of the westerners, and it is by no means accidental that their reaction was quite similar to McKim's. The westerners and McKim shared the same evangelistic frame of reference as Garrison, and it was this similarity of outlook which made them respond so dramatically to his appeal.

Thoughts on African Colonization was not, however, the only link connecting the westerners with the East, for both Weld and Garrison were also associated with the Tappan brothers who would, in 1833, take a leading role in creating the American Anti-Slavery Society. For years Lewis and Arthur Tappan had been among the foremost supporters of the benevolent system and they had contributed substantial sums of money to such causes as: the American Bible Society, the American Temperance Society, the General Union for the Observation of a Christian Sabbath,

Dwight L. Dumond (ed.) Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831-1857 (2 vols.; Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1966), I, 27 (cited hereafter as Birney Letters). On January 10, 1833, almost three months after he left the Western Reserve, in reply to a letter from Wright, Weld wrote that he desired and prayed for "abolition immediate universal," and he went on to say that "since I saw you my soul has been in travail upon that subject. I hardly know how to contain myself. If I was not positively pledged for two or three years to come, and I had finished my education, I would devote myself to the holy work come life or death." Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond (eds.), Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844 (2 vols.; Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965), I, 99. (Hereafter cited as, Weld-Grimké Letters). This is one of four letters cited by Barnes to demonstrate that it was Weld who converted Wright and his associates. The other three are from Wright to Weld (December 7, 1832, February 1 and September 5, 1833). A close reading of the first two letters shows that it was Wright rather than Weld who was the activist at this time. Ibid., I, 94-97, 101-104, 114-117. For the views of Barnes see, Antislavery Impulse, pp. 39-40, 214-215.

the American Colonization Society, and the Magdalen Society of New York. As the financial angels of the benevolent network they maintained contacts with such leading evangelists as Charles Grandison Finney, the most important western revivalist, and Lyman Beecher whose influence was predominant in eastern circles. By 1830 the Tappans had developed a special interest in the West, and were planning to establish a theological seminary there which would be presided over by Beecher. The task of raising funds for the new school was delegated to Finney's talented disciple, Theodore Weld.¹²

At the same time the interest of the Tappans in the subject of slavery was growing. In all probability they were familiar with the immediatist views which Garrison was espousing in the pages of the Genius of Universal Emancipation, for when Arthur Tappan learned, in May 1830, that Garrison had been tried and imprisoned in Baltimore for libelling a slave trader he paid the young editor's fine and sent a contribution of one hundred dollars to the Genius. The enthusiasm of the two merchants for the colonization society had already begun to sour after they heard that the society was shipping rum and guns to Africa, and when they learned of the protest of the free Negroes against the deportation scheme, the Tappans soon became convinced by their arguments that the plan was indeed evil. Thus, Garrison's immediatist arguments fell upon receptive ears and Arthur Tappan later credited the Bostonian with converting him to immediatism. The support that the New

¹²Ibid., pp. 17-28, 39. Thomas, Theodore Weld, pp. 30-31.

York philanthropists gave Garrison is also evidenced by a one hundred dollar check they sent him in August 1830, after they received his prospectus for the soon to be published Liberator.¹³

Events across the ocean reinforced the message of the still obscure newspaperman from Boston, for in July 1830 the English Parliament began to debate the slavery issue and the forces of British abolition adopted a militantly immediatist position. Early in 1830 the Tappans had joined with some of their fellow merchants to form the New York Association of Gentlemen in order to carry out certain religious and charitable projects, but the growing interest in the slavery question sparked by the English debates led them to use this organization for anti-slavery purposes. In the Spring of 1831 the association formed a committee to inquire into the feasibility of organizing a national American anti-slavery society along the lines of the British organization. The committee report was made in June 1831, and it was favorable to the idea, but a series of anti-Negro and anti-abolitionist events that took place in the Summer and Fall of 1831 convinced the Tappans that such a step was somewhat premature and they decided to await the outcome of

¹³Thomas, The Liberator, pp. 113-117. [Tappan], Life of Arthur Tappan, pp. 127-136. Historians have largely overlooked the role that the Negro protest against colonization played in bringing about the birth of the radical anti-slavery movement. Lewis Tappan's description of its impact suggests that it may be entitled to more attention than it has hitherto received. Tappan wrote: "Meetings of people of color were held in most of the cities and towns in the United States, at that time, and it was their united and strenuous opposition to the expatriation scheme that first induced WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON and others to oppose it.

"No wonder such an appeal when it became known to Arthur Tappan, and when he became personally acquainted with the leading men who adopted it, touched his keenest sensibilities." Ibid., p. 136.

the English campaign before proceeding further. Nevertheless, their interest in abolition continued. In September 1831 they sent Garrison another hundred dollars and encouraged him to keep up his attacks on colonization which were now appearing regularly in the Liberator.¹⁴

In the meantime, Garrison and a dozen others formed the New England Anti-Slavery Society in January 1832. In the Spring of that year he wrote and published Thoughts on African Colonization and it immediately had a wide circulation within evangelistic reform circles. In the first nine months after it was issued 2,750 copies were sold. Arthur Tappan ordered one hundred, and, as has already been shown, they were being read in the West as well. Within two years after it was first published a colonization agent who travelled to Boston to assess the state of the cause in that area reported that "colonization is dead, in all this region; and the principles of our parent society will never revive here any more."¹⁵ A decade later the same statement could be made for the nation as a whole.

In the Spring of 1833 Garrison sailed for England as an agent of the New England Anti-Slavery Society. The ostensible purpose of his trip was to raise funds for a manual labor school for Negroes which the society hoped to establish, but Garrison probably had other motives as

¹⁴Garrison, Life of Garrison, I, 237n. Barnes, Antislavery Impulse, pp. 33-36.

¹⁵Cited in Staudenraus, African Colonization Movement, p. 231. Thomas, The Liberator, pp. 140-154. Although the principles of the American Colonization Society were becoming less and less attractive to the public, the organization itself continued to exist until after the Civil War.

well. There can be little doubt that his voyage was partly inspired by a desire to publicize the American cause and his own role in it and to undercut the reputation of the colonization society which was currently soliciting funds in England.¹⁶

At the very time when Garrison was crossing the ocean, the Tappan brothers and Elizur Wright (of Western Reserve College) were independently laying the groundwork for the creation of a nationwide anti-slavery organization. When it became clear that the passage of the West Indian emancipation bill in England was assured, they decided that the time was ripe to formally call the new society into being and agreed to hold a meeting for this purpose on October 2, 1838 in New York City. Garrison arrived back in the country just in time to attend it, but he never got there for mob violence had disrupted the proceedings just before they were to get under way. In the wake of this disappointment, the New Yorkers urged that the founding convention be postponed until the Spring, but Garrison argued that delay meant capitulation to the spirit of the mob and persuaded the reformers to reschedule the meeting for December 4 in Philadelphia.¹⁷

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 155-163.

¹⁷In The Antislavery Impulse, pp. 54-55, Barnes states that Garrison pressured the organizing committee into calling the convention at an earlier date than they thought wise, and he implies that the committee went along with Garrison in spite of their own better judgment. The evidence lends itself more easily to the interpretation that Garrison convinced the committee that it was urgent to demonstrate that the new movement would not be intimidated by mob violence. On November 2, 1833 Elizur Wright wrote to Theodore Weld saying: "The most cool and collected friends of the cause here felt this [early meeting] to be a necessity, after a full view of the case. Had not the public expectation been excited as it was, it might have been better to wait." Weld-Grimké Letters, I, 119.

Thus, it is apparent that, like McKim, the men who were as responsible for the creation of the new movement shared the revivalist frame of reference regardless of their geographical origin, and they saw abolitionism as the logical extension of their religious beliefs. Moreover, Garrison and the Tappan brothers who would spread their ideas to many others shared the experience of learning that Negroes were entitled to the same rights as white men through their exposure to the protests of the blacks against colonization. Here too McKim's experience was similar. Finally, it has been shown that while other factors were at work as well, the westerners and the Tappans were directly or indirectly converted to immediatism by the work of Garrison. The fact that Garrison was able to successfully convince them of the need to hold the convention immediately without waiting for the Spring is a further indication of the respect which these men had for the intemperate Bostonian.

When McKim arrived in Philadelphia on the evening of December 4 he had already missed the proceedings of the first day in which committees had been established to draw up a Declaration of Sentiments and a Constitution for the new organization. Unaware that the delegates were gathered in the home of Evan Lewis discussing the events of the day McKim took lodgings for the night and got some rest. In the morning he sought out Lewis (who was in charge of local arrangements) and was escorted to the Adelphi Building on Fifth Street below Walnut. Precautions against violence were in evidence as McKim entered the building, and a sizable body of police were stationed near the door. Indeed, anti-abolitionist sentiment was so intense that the Mayor warned the organizers that he could not guarantee the safety of night meetings.

Despite the rigor of the external safeguards, however, some colonizationists and even a few southern medical students were permitted to sit in on the proceedings.¹⁸

In view of McKim's later identification with William Lloyd Garrison, it is especially significant that the very first session he attended was devoted to speeches of praise for Garrison and other notable anti-slavery leaders. Lewis Tappan rose to defend Garrison against charges in the public press that he was an extremist, and he said:

There is good evidence to believe that many professed friends of abolition would have been here, had they not been afraid that the name of William Lloyd Garrison would be inserted prominently in our proceedings. Sir, I am ashamed of such friends. We ought to place that honored name in the forefront of our ranks. The cause is under obligations to him which such an evidence of respect will but poorly repay.

.....
 He is not perfect. He is frail, like the rest of human flesh. But if God had not endowed him as he has, and smiled propitiously on his imprudences, we should not now be engaged in the deliberations of this most interesting and important Convention. God has raised up just such a man as William Lloyd Garrison to be a pioneer in this cause. Let each member present feel solemnly bound to vindicate the character of Mr. Garrison.¹⁹⁻²⁰

To McKim, who had been converted to abolitionism by Garrison's writings, speeches of this tenor must have verified his impression that Garrison was indeed abolition incarnate. Throughout his life the Pennsylvanian would be unswerving in his personal loyalty to Garrison, and it seems reasonable to infer that the adulation for the Boston editor which McKim

¹⁸Garrison, Life of Garrison, I, 398. McKim, Autobiography, pp. 38-40.

¹⁹⁻²⁰Garrison, Life of Garrison, I, 402, 404.

observed in 1833 had a profound impact upon him. Moreover, Tappan's remarks are illustrative of the fundamental unity of purpose and outlook which bound the radical abolitionists together. Garrison was the hero of the hour precisely because of the evangelistic vigor with which he broke away from those who would excuse or justify the sin of slavery.

While the convention was marking time by listening to eulogistic statements the committee charged with preparing a Declaration of Sentiments was going over a draft of this document which Garrison had prepared the night before. Aside from deleting most of a long attack on the American Colonization Society, the changes made by the committee were of a minor nature; and in the afternoon McKim listened as the Declaration of Sentiments was read to the convention and discussed. One delegate objected to Garrison's indiscriminate application of the term "man-stealer" to all slaveholders, but was mollified when it was pointed out that the Bible used these words. Other than this, the delegates seemed quite satisfied and after making a few more minor changes in phrasing, they unanimously voted to adopt it.²¹

The Declaration of Sentiments to which McKim would sign his name the following morning was fundamentally a restatement of the radical abolitionist views that Garrison had expressed in Thoughts on African Colonization. Slavery was described as a sin and a crime which was both "an audacious usurpation of the Divine prerogative," and "a daring infringement on the law of nature." Statutes which supported the institution were, therefore, null and void, and the slaves were entitled

²¹Ibid., pp. 400, 406-408.

to immediate emancipation without compensation to owners. The slaveholders were held personally responsible for the system and were denounced as criminals and man-stealers. Furthermore, the Declaration affirmed the belief that Negroes were entitled to equal treatment in all areas of life.²²

The Declaration of Sentiments pledged that its signers would actively work to extirpate the evil by forming organizations, sending out agents, circulating anti-slavery literature, and enlisting the support of the churches. They bound themselves to use non-violent means in their crusade and promised that their only arms would be

the opposition of moral purity to moral corruption--
the destruction of error by the potency of truth--
the overthrow of prejudice by the power of love--
and the abolition of slavery by the spirit of repentance.²³

Above all else, McKim and his fellow signers of the Declaration of Sentiments were religious crusaders setting out to reawaken the spirit of Christ in their fellow men.

After endorsing the Declaration the convention went on to adopt a constitution which formally brought the American Anti-Slavery Society into being. This document admitted that in legal terms each state had the sole right to legislate on the question of slavery within its borders, but it pledged that the society would work to convince their fellow citizens that slavery was "a heinous crime in the sight of God, and that the duty, safety, and best interests of all concerned require its immediate abandonment, without expatriation." The constitution

²²Ibid., pp. 408-412.

²³Ibid., p. 409.

further bound the society to work for the moral, intellectual and religious improvement of the Negroes so that prejudice might be erased and "thus they may, according to their intellectual and moral worth, share an equality with the whites of civil and religious privileges." Despite the fact that Garrison took no part in the writing of the constitution, its definition of purpose was substantially the same as that in the Declaration of Sentiments and this is a clear illustration of the degree to which the divisions among the abolitionists at this time have been exaggerated.²⁴

Nevertheless, it seems clear that although the founders of the society were in substantial agreement with the Boston firebrand in their theoretical approach to slavery and abolition, they were loathe to entrust Garrison with a key policy making position within the organization. Many of the delegates were men of conservative temperament who had been driven to radical abolitionism by the imperative of remaining true to their religious convictions, and even though they could find no fault with his arguments, they were discomfited by his provocative tone. Furthermore, it seemed obvious that Arthur Tappan whose credentials as a reformer antedated Garrison's by many years and who was primarily responsible for the present convention had first claim upon the office of President. This left the problem of what to do with the Boston reformer who would probably chafe under the restraints of a subordinate position. It was finally decided to offer him the post of Secretary of Foreign Correspondence which would give recognition to the links he had established with English abolitionists on his recent trip. He resigned

²⁴Ibid., p. 111.

from this post six weeks later after learning that he had to submit all communications to the Executive Board of the Society.²⁵⁻²⁶

McKim was, no doubt, blissfully unaware of these minor undercurrents, and to him the convention represented the unfolding of a whole new world of which he had previously been unaware. Here, as he was later to recall:

I saw for the first time persons of all varieties of complexion, and as many diversities of religious belief mingling together in the most loving Christian fellowship. I saw those who bore the hitherto abhorred names of Unitarian and Universalist and Quaker, exhibiting the highest evidences of Christian character and proving themselves by their spirit and works to be the sincere followers and accepted children of the most High. . . . I here became divested of prejudices which I had long been unconsciously entertaining; prejudices first against my brother in the flesh because of his complexion and second against my brother in the Lord because of his creed. It was a glorious deliverance to be freed from these prejudices. My mind expanded with exultation in its new liberty; and my heart was filled with peace and good will to all men.²⁷

Of even greater significance in bringing McKim to question the narrow parochialism of his background was his acquaintance with Lucretia Mott which began when he dropped in to visit his friend Daniel Jewett who was staying at the home of the Philadelphia Quakeress. McKim was invited to remain for the evening, and the conversation soon turned to religious subjects. Despite the differences that emerged during the course of the evening, Mrs. Mott was impressed with the young man and when he rose to leave she invited him to have his baggage sent over from the hotel and to be her house guest for the duration of the convention. He accepted the offer, and the company was so congenial that it was

²⁵⁻²⁶Ibid., p. 415. Thomas, The Liberator, p. 175.

²⁷McKim, Autobiography, pp. 41-42.

almost two weeks before he finally took his leave and returned to Carlisle.²⁸

Although Lucretia Mott had not yet achieved the renown she would later hold as the result of her activities in behalf of abolition and women's rights, she already had a reputation among her fellow Quakers as a woman of great religious zeal with a strong interest in reform causes. Born in 1793 in Nantucket, Massachusetts, she had attended school for several years in New York before moving with her family to New York in 1809. There, in 1811 the heavy featured square jawed young schoolteacher met and married James Mott, a tall blond and taciturn Friend from Long Island who, even as a youth, was described as dignified, grave and reserved. Mott was soon in business for himself as a commission merchant dealing in such staples as cotton and wool. By the late 1820's, however, his own misgivings and those of his wife led him to abandon all commerce in goods produced by slave labor despite the financial sacrifices that this step entailed. Henceforth, the Motts became dedicated supporters of the free produce movement, and no southern goods were consumed in their household. Even the candy they gave their children was made only from sugar grown and manufactured by free men.²⁹

As devoted Friends the Motts were forced to take sides in the religious controversy which sundered American Quakerism in 1827-1828. While the ostensible causes for the dispute were said to be such doctrinal questions as the divinity of Jesus, the source of inspiration of the

²⁸Ibid., pp. 43-44.

²⁹Otelia Cromwell, *Lucretia Mott* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 3, 18-21, 45-46.

Bible, and the nature of the atonement; the real roots of the schism went far deeper than matters of doctrine. By the early nineteenth century secularism seemed to be eating away at the very innards of American Quakerism in much the same way as it had penetrated into the heart of Calvinism; and in both cases, as worldliness grew, faith declined. The religious persuasion of the Friends which had been born in revolt against the excessive institutionalization and formalization of Protestant worship, and which stressed the idea that divine inspiration was to be found within each individual, had itself become institutionalized, formal, and even doctrinaire.

Thus, in the 1820's there arose among the Friends a movement to resist the worldliness and complacency which some thought to be predominant characteristics of established Quakerism. Sparked by Elias Hicks, and composed of a curious amalgam of rural traditionalists, urban artisans and a sprinkling of liberal Quakers, the Hicksites sought to purify their faith and return to the ways of old, and for this reason they might well be styled as conservatives. Nevertheless, such a return also brought with it a willingness to bear witness in the Quaker tradition against the evils of the world, and this led many Hicksites (and especially those from rural areas) to identify themselves with a radical abolitionism and other reform causes.³⁰⁻³¹

Even though they didn't realize it, the Hicksites had a good deal in common with the Presbyterian evangelists. Both groups sought to

³⁰⁻³¹ Robert W. Doherty, "A Response to Orthodoxy: The Hicksite Movement in the Society of Friends," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XC (April 1966), 233-246. Bliss Forbush, Elias Hicks: Quaker Liberal (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), pp. 241-252. Otelia Cromwell, Lucretia Mott, pp. 33-36.

revive the piety of an earlier time, and found that in order to do so they would have to burst the bonds of frozen doctrines that had long since lost their meaning and become mere ritual to many who adhered to them. Furthermore, Hicksites and new school Presbyterians alike shared the conception that a return to the faith required the individual to work actively against sin. At the root of this similarity of outlook lay a common belief in the perfectability of man. Thus, for both groups doctrine was less important than works. Among some Hicksites, however, doctrine became almost totally unimportant as the concept of the "inner light" left each individual almost completely free to interpret the Bible as he saw fit. When the schism came it was natural that Lucretia Mott should choose the Hicksite side, for she had long been dissatisfied with the formalism and rigidity of the orthodox believers, and her own bent for reform inclined her toward those who promised to be most active in this regard.³²

As the radical anti-slavery movement began to take shape the Orthodox Friends shunned it because of its extremism, but many Hicksite Quakers and most particularly Lucretia Mott, enthusiastically embraced the new approach. The strong-willed Quakeress soon became a central figure in the dissenting sect, and she made her home the Philadelphia gathering place for the foes of slavery. William Lloyd Garrison spent several days as her guest in 1830 after his release from Baltimore jail. At this time he was still quite orthodox in his Calvinistic beliefs, and he later described himself as having been "uncharitable" toward those of differing opinions; but Mrs. Mott and her husband "manifested a most kind, tolerant, catholic spirit,

³²Ibid., pp. 30-33.

and allowed none of these considerations to deter them from giving . . . him their cordial approbation and cheering countenance as an advocate of the slave."³³

Miller McKim was exposed to this same atmosphere of disarming tolerance during the course of his visit in December 1833, and most of the conversations he had with Mrs. Mott centered about religious questions. Their talks were frank and friendly, and Miller felt as though he had relieved his hostess of many of her misconceptions about Presbyterians, and after hearing his explanations she had to admit that some of her views were unjust. Nevertheless, it was Mrs. Mott who got the better of the argument for she not only succeeded in bringing him to believe that his own impressions of Quakerism were "still more erroneous," but she also forced him to doubt the truth of the whole system of Calvinist theology. After she brought Miller to agree that those who denied the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement might still be good Christians, she led him to question the validity of his belief in the total depravity of man, the divinity of Christ and the primary inspiration of the Scriptures. Faced with her arguments McKim "could hardly repress the impulse" to discard his previous beliefs entirely, but he contented himself with merely acknowledging his inability to meet her objections and promised to reconsider the whole subject upon his return home.³⁴

During the months that followed, McKim's mind was preoccupied

³³Garrison, Life of Garrison, I, 204.

³⁴McKim, Autobiography, pp. 44-48.

with the twin subjects of abolition and theology. He read all that he could on the issue of slavery and his opposition to the institution steadily grew stronger. He spoke of it wherever he went, and while some of those who heard him were convinced, others were irritated and became his enemies. He was less outspoken, however, about his religious views after he dropped a few small hints that his opinions were undergoing a change and found his friends responding with alarm.³⁵

When he mentioned to several of his fellow church members that the Unitarians and Hicksites he had met in Philadelphia "were as true Christians as any I had ever met," one of them said: "What! do you believe Mr. McKim that a Unitarian can be a Christian?" After he replied in the affirmative his friend asked how it was possible that those who denied the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, including the divinity of Christ, could be Christians. McKim floundered, and could only answer that despite their rejection of these beliefs, "the evidences which they furnished of Christian character were to my mind too conclusive to be resisted." This reply provoked his questioner to express the fear that the trip to Philadelphia had done a "serious injury" to McKim and he was advised not to disseminate such sentiments among his friends. This lesson was not lost on the young ministerial student, and he noted that: "Admonished by this demonstration, I was careful afterwards how in my then unsettled state of mind - I expressed myself."³⁶

Although he fell into silence on these issues, McKim read all the

³⁵Ibid., pp. 49-50.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 50-51.

arguments he could find for and against his old theological views, and prayed for divine guidance. For almost three months he continued to vacillate, weighing the conclusions which his reason seemed to be forcing upon him against the weight of scripture and "historical authority." His uncertainty prevented him from enjoying the sermons of his friend and mentor, George Duffield, and it even made it difficult for him to pray. He could not decide whether to approach the Deity as a Trinity, or as "One Infinite Divine Mind - A Univer[sal] Loving Father, who . . . was to be approached without sacrifice - who needed no propitiation - but who of his own mercy was ready and willing to bestow all needed gifts upon those who sincerely asked for them." Lucretia Mott had done her work well and the seeds of doubt she had sown were taking deep root.³⁷

³⁷Ibid., pp. 53-54. The extent of Mrs. Mott's influence over McKim is suggested by the remarks of George Duffield's wife to McKim after he renounced the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church in 1838. She wrote: "I have now realized my fearful foreboding with respect to you - the day you called to see us in Philadelphia with Mrs. Mott as you left the parlor with her after having heard her pleasant conversation and seeing how much there was about her to grow [?] on you I felt a sinking heart as if you were in danger from that woman's arguments. I fear Miller that like Adam of old it has been the influence of woman that has led you from the paths of truth - " Isabella G. Duffield to McKim, July 8, 1838, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. Although Mrs. Duffield was by no means an objective observer, her perception of Mrs. Mott's ability to influence McKim was quite accurate.

Mrs. Mott's evangelistic zeal did not diminish with time. In 1861 she met a young man named Christopher Hussey who was going through the same sort of spiritual crisis McKim had endured a generation earlier. She wrote McKim asking that he introduce Hussey to William Furness and to Edward M. Davis, her son-in-law. She also asked McKim to look after the young spiritual wanderer "and if 'way opens for free conversal' between you, thy own experience, out of the darkness of orthodoxy, into 'marvellous light' of the gospel of truth and freedom may encourage him in this hour of trial." Lucretia Mott to McKim, May 31, 1861, James Miller McKim Papers, Cornell University Library (hereafter cited as McKim Collection, Cornell).

Unable to come to any firm decision after almost three months of spiritual agonizing, McKim finally decided to seek Duffield's advice. Fearful of the consequences that would result from a rejection of his Presbyterian beliefs, he hoped that Duffield would be able to restore his old faith. He knew that if he adopted heretical views he would lose the confidence of the community and "blast forever my prospects as a Christian minister." When the two met, Duffield assured his protégé that he himself had struggled with a similar problem of disbelief, and it was these doubts that had led him to adopt the liberal new school opinions which he currently professed. McKim asked Duffield to refute the views contained in the anti-Calvinist sermons of the Unitarian minister, William Ellery Channing, which he had been reading at the urging of Mrs. Mott. Duffield responded by claiming that Channing misinterpreted Calvinist teachings, and by restating his theological position in the most liberal terms possible he soon succeeded in overcoming most of McKim's objections. At the same time, Duffield was leading another religious revival at the church, and the confused young man became so caught up in the excitement that he "insensibly lost sight of all. . . [his] objections to orthodoxy." When it was over he found that his "old habits of thought and feeling" had returned to him.³⁸

McKim thought that it was his ardent desire to return to the safer ground of orthodox belief that was responsible for Duffield's

³⁸McKim, Autobiography, pp. 55-59. The quotations are to be found on pp. 58-59.

success and he later wrote:

I meant to be impartial in my inquiries, but I was conscious at the same time of a latent desire to be safely reestablished in my old faith. It would be better, I thought, if I could be [safely reestablished], both for my own spiritual comfort, and my usefulness as a minister.³⁹

Despite the fact that he would never again think of Quakers and Unitarians as beyond the pale of Christianity, his return to his old theological position appears to have led him to avoid contact with those who had so unsettled his mind. He wrote to Lucretia Mott telling her of his return to orthodoxy and on April 8, 1834 she replied in a letter which took note of the fact that he was "satisfied in what thou considers the infallibly inspired doctrines of the scriptures." She claimed to be "far from wishing to disturb" his new spiritual peace. Nevertheless, she went on to ask how it was possible for there to be so much disagreement among truth seekers if the Bible was indeed infallibly inspired. She then spelled out her own belief that the inner light within each man was as true a source of divine revelation as the scriptures. McKim appears to have taken deliberate steps to prevent the tenacious Quakeress from again leading him to doubt the truth of his faith. Although he visited Philadelphia on several occasions over the next two and a half years, he stayed at public inns, or with a friend and did not avail himself of her hospitality.⁴⁰

³⁹Ibid., p. 57.

⁴⁰The inference that McKim did not see Mrs. Mott until October 1836 is drawn from ibid., pp. 92-93. At least one letter did pass between them during this time, but in it Mrs. Mott seems to have studiously avoided any discussion of theological issues. Instead, it is devoted almost exclusively to news related to the anti-slavery

McKim's reaffirmation of faith did not lessen his interest in the cause of the Negro and during the course of the Summer of 1834 he delivered two lectures in his church on the subject of slavery. He later observed that these talks (the first ever given in Carlisle on the topic of abolition) added more to his notoriety than to his popularity. In addition, he taught Sunday school classes for both the adults and children of the small community of free Negroes who lived in Carlisle, and occasionally held meetings for the promotion of Kin Finance. This group was organized by McKim and appears to have had as its purpose the accumulation of funds to purchase relatives still in bondage. By this time Miller had abandoned his plan to become a missionary in some foreign land. Believing that two and a half million slaves were excluded by law from learning to read the Bible, and that another six hundred thousand northern Negroes were "held in circumstances of extreme moral, intellectual and social degradation," he concluded that he "had no right to go to a foreign land, to look for subjects of missionary labor." Instead, he determined to become a missionary in his own land.⁴¹

movement. Lucretia Mott to McKim, September 25, 1834, McKim Collection, Cornell. The letter of April 8, 1834 is to be found in the same place.

⁴¹McKim, Autobiography, pp. 60-63. The quotation is to be found on page 62. It should be noted that McKim's figures were somewhat in error. In 1830 there were almost two million slaves in the nation, but there were less than one hundred forty thousand free Negroes outside of the South. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, D.C., 1960), pp. 12-13. In addition to his attempts to aid the Negro community of Carlisle, McKim was probably responsible for the creation of the Carlisle Anti-Slavery Society which was formed at some time between September 1834 and May 1835. The organization must have been quite weak, however, for within two months after he left Carlisle it was reported to be "dragging a miserable existence." Henry Duffield to McKim, June 29,

With abolition and religion inextricably intertwined in his own mind, and secure once more in his orthodox convictions, the way seemed clear for McKim to take the first formal step toward ordination by requesting a license to preach within the bounds of his Presbytery. Although this would enable him to preach to a congregation, it would not permit him to perform the marriage ceremony, administer the sacraments, or vote in meetings of his synod. These privileges would only be open to him after he had been formally ordained. In view of his scanty training the path to obtaining a license might have been difficult in any event, but it was further complicated by his identification with the new school approach.

The Carlisle Presbytery was dominated by men who adhered to the old school position, and it soon became apparent that these individuals would not be favorably disposed to issue a license unless McKim changed his opinions. In 1831, shortly before he made his decision to enter the ministry the Moderator of the Presbytery had said that McKim would not be licensed because he was studying with Duffield. Later, a member of the Presbytery approached McKim and informed him that if he persisted in studying under Duffield and was found upon examination to hold the latter's views, he would not be permitted to pass. McKim did not abandon his preceptor, and when the examination did take place in October 1834, Duffield, who was not present, characterized it as "severe and

1835, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. Nevertheless, McKim's work on behalf of the Carlisle Negroes was not in vain for he had succeeded in interesting others in their cause. On June 15, 1835 the first school for free Negroes was opened in the town by his close friend, Mary Knox. Rev. Conway P. Wing and others, History of Cumberland County: With Illustrations (Philadelphia: James D. Scott, 1879), p. 233. Miss Knox is described as a very close friend in the McKim Autobiography, p. 52.

shamefully unkind." McKim was denied the permission to preach by a strict party vote.⁴²⁻⁴³

Indignant at McKim's rejection on grounds they considered insufficient and partisan, several members of the new school group which had supported the candidate advised him to leave the Carlisle Presbytery and to apply for admission to the Presbytery of Wilmington which was controlled by the evangelistic party. McKim took this counsel and requested a dismissal so that he might properly ask the Delaware group to admit him. After attempting to convince the disappointed ministerial student to remain, the Carlisle Presbytery ignored his plea, and McKim finally decided to write a letter announcing his unilateral withdrawal. At the same time, George Duffield sent a detailed explanation of the facts of the case to the Delaware group.⁴⁴

This letter was enough to convince the Wilmington Presbytery to accept McKim into their religious fellowship with the understanding that he would be a candidate for the ministry. They assigned him several "trial pieces" (short essays on theological subjects) which had to be completed by April 1835 when he was to return for his examination.

⁴²⁻⁴³Duffield Diary, November 9, 1834. Duffield was absent from the October meeting of the Presbytery which refused to license McKim because he was holding a revival in Perry County. Minutes of the Carlisle Presbytery, October 7, 10, 1834, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. McKim Autobiography, pp. 63-65.

⁴⁴George Duffield to the Presbytery of Wilmington, November 20, 1834, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. McKim Autobiography, pp. 65-66. Minutes of the Wilmington Presbytery, November 1834, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

When the time arrived, he passed easily, and was granted a license to preach the gospel within the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Wilmington. He was then designated as a home missionary and assigned to Kent County, Maryland where he was to attempt to breathe some life into the moribund Presbyterian Churches of the area. McKim eagerly accepted this post as much because of his desire to witness slavery at first hand and to work directly for its abolition, as from his wish to revive the flagging fortunes of the Maryland churches.⁴⁵

Before taking up his new duties, however, it was necessary for him to make arrangements for the care and training of his brothers and sisters. The four youngest children were sent to live with an aunt, and Wilson McKim was apprenticed to a local tanner in the hope that he would eventually take over the family business. William was apprenticed to a Philadelphia printer, and John Linn McKim who was only Miller's junior by two years had already married and was training to become a minister in the Episcopal Church. The woman he married was a former Catholic, and this probably accounts for his conversion to the Episcopalian persuasion. Miller's tolerant attitude toward Hicksites and Unitarians did not extend to Catholics, and as late as 1848 he was still expressing regret "that John did not wait till he had reached riper years, before taking a step so serious as that of marriage."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ McKim Autobiography, pp. 69-70. Minutes of the Wilmington Presbytery, April 14-16, 1835, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

⁴⁶ McKim, Autobiography, pp. 70-72.

In early May 1835 McKim set out for his new pastorate which was located near Georgetown Maryland, a short sixty miles from Philadelphia. He took lodgings in the home of Freeman Woodland whose wife was a member of the Presbyterian Church and began the laborious job of reinvigorating the religious life of the area. The two houses of worship over which he officiated were about six miles apart, and both of them were "miserable dilapidated buildings." Despite the outward shabbiness of the church edifices, McKim described their congregations as being composed of "the most respectable people." Believing that his flock would "hardly have listened to a written discourse," he delivered his sermons extemporaneously. He was still inexperienced in public speaking and found the task of delivering these talks most trying and embarrassing. Nevertheless, he believed that his flock was quite satisfied with his performance.⁴⁷

Although his parishioners may have been pleased with him, living in a slave state was far different from what McKim had imagined, and he was unhappy in his new surroundings. He had come south partly because he wanted to see slavery for himself, but even more because he believed that somehow he would be able to do something concrete for the cause of abolition. He was indeed able to witness the system of bondage at first hand, but his dreams of bringing light to the master class began to crumble as he came to realize the pervasiveness of the slaveholding mentality. His otherwise hospitable hosts, the Woodland family, were themselves the owners of slaves and refused even to discuss

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 73-75.

the subject of human bondage. They, and most of their neighbors, were bitterly opposed to abolitionism, and the climate of opinion was so hostile to any such idea that McKim refrained from mentioning the issue in his sermons. It was only on rare occasions that he was able to find an individual who was willing even to talk about the problem with him. Thus, the Pennsylvanian soon came to believe that "it would be vain to stay here in the hope of doing any good in the matter of slavery - or indeed in any other - as long as in this I was forced to put a padlock upon my lips." On July 1, 1835, less than two months after his arrival, he left Maryland for good.⁴⁸

Another factor that may have influenced McKim's decision to leave was the deteriorating condition of his health which had been fragile ever since the death of his mother. The exact nature of his ailment is difficult to determine, but it seems to have been at least partly psychological in nature. He variously referred to it as "disordered nerves," or as his "shattered nervous system." As has already been noted he once described it saying that "I was oppressed by an unmanly melancholy which I could neither resist nor shake off."⁴⁹ This fragmentary evidence suggests that during these early years he was subject to spells of depression, especially when he was in the midst of a tense situation.⁵⁰ This would explain the recurrence of these symptoms in Maryland where he was under the double strain of trying to make good in his first ministerial position and keeping silent about a

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 73-76. The quotation is on p. 76.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 19, 74.

⁵⁰See footnote 17, on p. 47

system he abhorred.

In miserable spirits he travelled from Georgetown to Philadelphia where he sought the advice of a physician who suggested he spend a week or two at the seashore and then stay for the same amount of time at Saratoga Springs. After following this advice he was much improved and returned to Carlisle where he spent the remainder of the summer. While there he received a letter inviting him to take charge of a small Presbyterian Church in Berks County, Pennsylvania. McKim accepted the offer and he arrived at his new post in October 1835.⁵¹

His new pastorate was situated in the village of Womelsdorf which was located about sixteen miles west of Reading. Between five and six hundred persons lived in the village and most of these were the descendents of German immigrants. Nevertheless, English was the dominant tongue in the village. McKim's church had only recently been founded and the congregation was quite small, but even so, he seems to have been impressed with the caliber of his parishioners and he referred to them later as "the most intelligent people of the village."⁵²

McKim had scarcely adjusted himself to his new surroundings before he had to take time out to attend the Annual Meeting of the Presbyterian Synod of Philadelphia. It was known in advance that the session would feature a stormy headlong clash between the forces of the traditionalists and the evangelists when the heresy conviction of the Reverend Albert Barnes (a new school partisan) was appealed to the

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 76-78.

⁵²Ibid., p. 78.

Synod. McKim also expected that the old school party would make an issue of the irregular manner in which he had been licensed to preach after his own Presbytery had refused to grant him this privilege.⁵³

He was not disappointed. When he arrived he learned that the Carlisle Presbytery was petitioning the Synod for the revocation of the license which the Wilmington Presbytery had granted him. Thus, McKim's own fortunes were vitally linked to the case of Dr. Barnes, for the new school forces needed every vote they could get to sustain their position and obtaining a ballot for the Womelsdorf preacher became a matter of crucial importance. He had been licensed by the Wilmington Presbytery, but this did not give him the right to vote at the Synod meeting. This privilege was reserved to ordained ministers, and it was for this reason that the new school party decided to ordain McKim.

Such a step would have the added benefit of making it impossible for the Synod to act on the resolution of the Carlisle delegation that McKim be deprived of his license to preach.⁵⁴

⁵³Ibid., p. 79. The case of Dr. Barnes was symbolic of the growing tension between the new and old schools. In 1834 Barnes wrote a tract entitled, Notes Explanatory and Practical on the Acts of the Apostles: Designed for Bible-classes and Sunday-schools (New York: Leavitt, Lord and Co., 1834). This provoked his old school adversary George Junkin to bring heresy charges against Barnes and resulted in a series of church trials which ended with Barnes' vindication in 1837. Junkin set forth his views in The Vindication: Containing a History of the Trial of the Rev. Albert Barnes, by the Second Presbytery, and by the Synod of Philadelphia: To which are Appended New-schoolism in the Seventeenth Compared with New-schoolism in the Nineteenth Century (Philadelphia: W. S. Martien, 1836). The biographical entry for Barnes in the Dictionary of American Biography, I, 627-629, gives a good capsule summary of the case.

⁵⁴McKim, Autobiography, pp. 79-80. Minutes of the Carlisle Presbytery, October 6, 1835, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

It was, therefore, with rather unseemly haste that Miller McKim became an ordained minister. He objected that he was not yet fully prepared and that the proceedings would be of doubtful legality, but his protests were overruled and the Wilmington Presbytery examined, approved, and officially ordained him within the space of less than one hour. McKim's vote did not turn the tide, however, and Dr. Barnes' conviction on the heresy charge was upheld. Nevertheless, his ordination did prevent the revocation of his license even though the Synod voted to censure the Wilmington Presbytery for the irregular manner in which McKim had been granted the right to preach. He later claimed that the vote of censure "was more the concern of the Presbytery than my own," and he said that he did not allow it to give him much uneasiness.⁵⁵

"Heartily sick of party strife," McKim returned to Womelsdorf and immersed himself in his ministerial duties. He preached twice every Sunday, conducted a weekday Bible class, and held at least four social meetings a month. His "nervous disability" still prevented him from writing out his sermons, but he took great care to "think them out fully," and he gradually overcame the sense of embarrassment which had haunted him in Maryland. He felt as though he had the perfect confidence of his congregation, and elderly Miss Frances Moore who was perhaps the

⁵⁵McKim, Autobiography, pp. 80-82. The quotation is from p. 82. The Minutes of the Presbytery of Wilmington, give only the barest hint of the speed with which McKim was ordained. The entry for October 28, 1835 said: "The Pby proceeded to examine James M. McKim with a view to his ordination. He was examined in Eccl. History and Chh. Government, the only subjects on which he had not been previously examined; this examination being sustained, the Pby proceeded to ordain him as an Evangelist." The Minutes are located in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

most influential member of the congregation was his particular friend. When he began his ministry "everybody was opposed to abolition, and a temperance lecture had perhaps never been delivered in the place," but when he left a year later all of the members of the church "professed to be abolitionists," and all had signed temperance pledges.⁵⁶

Despite the fact that Miller's work seemed to be going well, the only satisfaction he derived from it was the knowledge that he was doing his duty. He felt as though he was "acting mainly from a sense of religious obligation" rather than from the "spontaneous impulses" of his own heart. Occasionally, the signs of his inner discontent would bubble to the surface and trouble the quiet calm of his life in Womelsdorf. Although the students in his weekday Bible class were more than content in their orthodoxy and knew little about the abstruse questions of theological disputation which separated Unitarians from Presbyterians, McKim was continually replying to the objections which a hypothetical Unitarian might raise to the orthodox doctrines he was preaching. As he later put it:

This so far as my hearers were concerned, was entirely a work of supererogation. They had no doubts whatever on the subject. The only one that needed the proof was myself. Not that I disbelieved the doctrines, but I found myself at fault so far as my perceptions were concerned - in their demonstration. The difficulty I then supposed lay with myself not with the doctrines.⁵⁷

McKim's habit of raising these objections became so noticeable that Miss Moore suggested that he refrain from doing this as he might be

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 83-85.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 85-86.

"putting weapons into the hands of an opponent . . . who would wield them to the injury of religion." Thereafter he was more cautious in his presentations.⁵⁸

McKim remained in Womelsdorf until July, 1836 when the heat of the summer led him to take a three week vacation at Saratoga Springs. He secured lodgings at Washington Hall, a resort which was a favorite among religious reformers who came to take the waters. The hotel was particularly crowded at this time because of the presence of many individuals who had come to participate in the National Temperance Convention which was being held there. Although temperance was the major focus of the meeting, the interests of those present went far beyond this single cause. As believers in the benevolent system most of these crusaders could be expected to be vigorous proponents of several other reform movements as well.⁵⁹

It was for this reason that Theodore Weld, who was scouring the North in search of men willing to serve as agents of the American Anti-Slavery Society, decided to attend the temperance meeting. He hoped to persuade some of the participants to give up their current occupations and to devote their time to travelling through the countryside giving anti-slavery lectures in every town and hamlet through which they passed. This technique had been perfected by the evangelists and had been the means by which they had spread their doctrines so effectively throughout the nation and Weld, as a former revivalist

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 86-87.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 87-88.

himself, hoped to use the same method as a means of 'abolitionizing' the nation.⁶⁰

Miller McKim was among those whom Weld asked to serve the cause by accepting a travelling agency. At first the young minister rejected the proposition out of hand, but after two days of earnest conversation with Weld he became convinced that he could do more for religion, humanity, and his own spiritual well-being by serving the cause of abolition than he could in his present ministry, and he accepted the offer. On August 10, 1836 he was commissioned as an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society and was informed that he could choose the geographical area in which he would labor. McKim selected eastern Pennsylvania as his field and began to make preparations for his new career.⁶¹

The principal obstacle which stood in the way of the Pennsylvania evangelist's plan to enter the anti-slavery field was his sense of responsibility to his congregation, and his reluctance to leave them without a spiritual counselor. Without much difficulty, however, he was able to find a substitute, and when he returned to Womelsdorf he told his parishioners of his plans to leave them and indicated that he believed he had found a suitable successor. Nevertheless, his flock was loathe to accept his resignation, and they reluctantly agreed to withdraw their objections only after he had fully explained his reasons for leaving.⁶²

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 88. Thomas, Theodore Weld, pp. 117-119. Barnes, Antislavery Impulse, pp. 104-105.

⁶¹Agents Commission of the American Anti-Slavery Society, made out to McKim and signed by Arthur Tappan and Elizur Wright, dated August 10, 1836 and effective for one year beginning October 1, 1836, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. See also, letters from Elizur Wright and Theodore Weld written on the back of the commission. McKim Autobiography, pp. 88-90.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 90-92.

On October 2, 1836 Miller McKim delivered his last sermon in Womelsdorf, and the next day he departed for New York where he was to get further instruction about his new duties. Although he remained an ordained minister of the gospel, he was now a full time paid abolitionist, and he finally felt as though he had found a field in which he could satisfy both his "inclinations" and his sense of duty.⁶³

⁶³Ibid., p. 90. See also the entries for October 2-7, 1836 in The Diary of James Miller McKim, 1836-1839, Chubb Collection (hereafter cited as, McKim Diary).

A curious fact about the diary and the McKim Autobiography should be noted at this point. Both of these manuscripts were found together in a closet in the house where McKim died in 1874. The first four pages of the autobiography have been torn out of the book as have the first twenty pages of the diary. The last of these twenty pages to be torn out of the diary was only partially removed, and that portion of the page which deals with the entry for October 2, 1836 was left intact. Thus, the diary begins at exactly the point where the autobiographical fragment ends. It seems likely that it was McKim himself who removed the pages of the diary, but his reason for having done so will probably never be known. Perhaps there was material in those twenty pages which he wished to conceal, or perhaps he decided not to carry his autobiography any further and was merely trying to make the record continuous. In the case of the four missing pages of the autobiography, it seems reasonably clear that McKim, or whoever removed them felt that they were too personal. It should be remembered that in 1831 when the autobiography begins McKim was extremely depressed, and his retrospective description of his feelings or behavior at this time may have contained material which he or his family felt was too personal to be passed on to posterity.

CHAPTER IV

THE WORKS OF AN AGENT

Almost three years had elapsed between the time when McKim attended the founding convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society and his decision to become an agent for it. The intervening years had seen the colonization society rapidly become a ghost organization while the forces of abolition grew by leaps and bounds. By May 1837 there were 1006 local societies scattered throughout the nation with 274 of these organizations reported for New York, 213 for Ohio, 145 for Massachusetts, and 93 for Pennsylvania.¹

Much of this increase could be attributed to the success of the agency system which the anti-slavery cause had copied from the revivalists. By sending travelling lecturers from county to county the evangelists had been able to get their message across to large numbers of people in an America that was still predominantly rural, and it is not surprising that the abolition movement which had such deep roots in revivalism should borrow its techniques. Shortly after the founding of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Theodore Weld and several other evangelists whose interests had come to focus upon abolition were granted commissions as agents of the organization. Weld's agency met with such great success that the society, at its annual meeting in May 1836,

¹American Anti-Slavery Society, *Fourth Annual Report . . .*
May 9, 1837 (New York: William S. Dorr, 1837), pp. 128, 134, 136, 140.

decided to mount a massive attack upon slavery by gathering a force of seventy lecturers who would canvass the entire North. As has already been noted, Weld was entrusted with the task of selecting, training, organizing, and deploying this army of righteousness. Its troops were to be composed almost exclusively of young men whose lives were committed to the cause of vital religion.²

Concurrent with the increasing success of the society in rousing the anti-slavery sentiments of northerners, there was a rapid growth of hostility toward the new movement. This was sparked largely by fears that such agitation would bring about the dissolution of the Union. In 1834 a New York mob left Lewis Tappan's house a gutted ruin, and in the following year rioters led William Lloyd Garrison through the streets of Boston with a rope around his neck. Weld and his co-workers who, in 1835 and 1836, had been canvassing Ohio and New York were repeatedly greeted by mobs hurling tomatoes, eggs, and rocks. It seemed as though the intensification of the campaign against slavery was producing an equally strong reaction against the reformers.³ Thus, when McKim accepted Weld's invitation to join the band of seventy he must have known that he was entering upon a dangerous and difficult career.

On October 7, 1836 McKim arrived in New York where he was scheduled to confer with leading representatives of the American Anti-Slavery Society in order to get the information he would need for

²Dumond, Antislavery, pp. 183-184. The agency system is thoroughly described in John L. Myers, "The Agency System of the Anti-Slavery Movement, 1832-1837, and its Antecedents in Other Benevolent and Reform Societies" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, University of Michigan, 1961).

³Dumond, Antislavery, pp. 218-220.

his lecturing duties. Little is known of what transpired during the course of the four day visit, but it does not seem as though he received much intensive training at this time. Even without such instruction, however, he must have gained a fairly clear picture of his duties from reading the "Particular Instructions" which were attached to his commission. This document specified that the duty of an agent was to preach "all the doctrines of immediate emancipation, with the simplicity which belongs to truth, and the zeal which the tremendous interests at stake are fitted to inspire--keeping back nothing for the sake of reaching the captious." Lecturers were to demonstrate "the SIN OF SLAVERY from its direct and inevitable tendency to the violation of all the moral precepts of the Bible and all the dictates of humanity."⁴

Zeal alone was not enough, however, and agents were enjoined to make certain that they had a thorough command of the facts regarding slavery and to be certain that they were familiar with the arguments of such abolitionist writers as Jay, Rankin, Phelps, Mr. and Mrs. Child, Garrison, Goodell and Birney. They were warned that overstating the facts "will do vastly more harm than good," and that rigid accuracy was a necessity. This was particularly important since the agents could expect to be confronted by individuals favoring schemes involving compensated emancipation or colonization, and they were urged to "allow no quarter to the ideas that this enormous iniquity [slavery] is to be

⁴"Particular Instructions" attached to Agents Commission of the American Anti-Slavery Society made out to McKim and dated August 10, 1836, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. McKim Diary, October 7-10, 1836.

either bought out, or drained off to a foreign coast, without repentance and restitution" right here on the slave's native soil.

The "Particular Instructions" also contained very specific practical guidelines which the lecturers were to follow. They were to seek out local people who lived in the area where they planned to speak and to use these contacts to gain the confidence of their neighbors, and thus neutralize the opposition. In those areas where such cooperation could not be secured, however, agents were to proceed as best they could. They were cautioned to avoid giving only one lecture in a town, for this might do little more than to arouse the prejudices of those they sought to convert. Instead, agents were asked to speak several times so as to leave no objection unanswered. In the event that the lecturer found himself faced with the opposition of a mob he was expected "to press calmly forward, strong in the truth and in that only. . . . The only way to put down mobs is, not to fear them."

The anti-slavery evangelists were authorized to advertise that no collection would be made if it were felt that the fear of a fund raising appeal would keep potential converts away. Once the meetings were held, however, the lecturers were to attempt to form local anti-slavery societies (even if they numbered no more than ten persons as members), and to solicit funds from the new group. Before leaving a town, the agent was to be sure that he left behind a selection of tracts "to work when you are gone."⁵

⁵"Particular Instructions" attached to Agents Commission of the American Anti-Slavery Society made out to McKim, and dated August 10, 1836, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

After having supplemented the knowledge he had gained from reading the "Particular Instructions" with the personal contacts he made in New York, McKim went on to Philadelphia where he spent two weeks as the house guest of Mrs. Mott before taking up his new duties. The details of this visit were not recorded, but the evidence suggests that there was a good deal of talk about religion and that McKim felt increasingly drawn to the Hicksite doctrines of his hostess. In the weeks that followed he showed a growing interest in the beliefs of these Friends and began to attend their meetings occasionally.⁶

During his stay in the Quaker city McKim went to see his old friend George Duffield who, in 1835, had left Carlisle in order to become the pastor of the Fifth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. Their meeting was unsatisfactory and marked the beginning of a growing estrangement between them. While Duffield professed anti-slavery sentiments he condemned "the bad spirit and temper" of the abolitionists, and made it quite clear that he did not approve of the new course his former protégé was following.⁷

On October 21, McKim left Philadelphia for Bucks County where he planned to deliver his first anti-slavery lectures. Over the next year and a half he would deliver his abolition message in more than 76 communities in and around the state of Pennsylvania. Altogether he would speak on at least 214 occasions during this period, 138 of these

⁶McKim Diary, October 11 and 30, November 13, 1836.

⁷Ibid., October 15, 1836.

talks were formal anti-slavery lectures, while the remaining 76 represented sermons which he preached on Sundays in those towns where the local minister invited him to take the pulpit. He spoke most frequently in the area immediately adjacent to Philadelphia which included Chester, Berks, Montgomery, and Bucks counties; but he also canvassed more distant areas. In late 1837 he made a tour which took him from the forks of the Susquehanna River to the northeastern corner of Pennsylvania, and in early 1838 he made a two and a half month trip to Pittsburg and the surrounding area.⁸

McKim's first tour as an agent, however, took him less than thirty miles from Philadelphia. He spent the three weeks from October 22 to November 13, 1836 working his way southward through Bucks County, giving abolition lectures and organizing anti-slavery groups in most of the places where he stopped. This initiation into the life of an agent was a mild one, for the area of his assignment was thickly populated by Quakers, and those of the Hicksite variety were especially numerous.⁹ Thus, his audiences were predisposed to embrace the message he carried, and he did not yet have to face the violent antagonism he would later meet in less friendly territory.

For the first two days he spoke in the company of Arnold Buffum, a more experienced agent, but on October 24 he went out alone and addressed a "deeply attentive" audience at the New Prospect School House. The next day he spoke at Pineville, and after the meeting was concluded

⁸Ibid., October 1836 - April 1838.

⁹Ibid., October 22, November 13, 1836.

"a respectable number of persons" agreed to form an anti-slavery society. Two days later he lectured in Buckingham and succeeded in forming a female anti-slavery society. On October 31 he spoke at New Hope to a "pretty good house," but four days later at Newtown his audience was "thin." He remained there for another day and the next night he addressed a rather better house. On November sixth and seventh he lectured in Tullytown where he organized another society. He reached Lower Makefield on the tenth and held one meeting for the men of the town and another for the women, and he succeeded in getting both groups to form their own anti-slavery societies.¹⁰

Altogether, McKim's Diary for the period October 21 to November 13 indicates that he delivered fifteen lectures in nine towns, and brought into being eight anti-slavery societies (including two female groups). In most cases he did not record the number of persons in the new organizations, but on those two occasions when he did the figures were twenty-one members at Fallsington and twelve at Penns Manor.¹¹

Day after day throughout the North other members of the Seventy selected by Weld were operating in much the same manner to carry the anti-slavery message into every possible village, hamlet and city. By the Fall of 1836 Weld had succeeded in recruiting sixty-five men whose religious zeal and compassion for the slave were great enough to induce them to endure the hardships of life as an itinerant lecturer in the

¹⁰Ibid., October 23 - November 10, 1836.

¹¹Ibid., November 11, 12, 1836.

service of an unpopular cause for the sum of eight dollars a week plus travelling expenses. After these lecturers began their work in the field it soon became apparent that there were wide differences in the background, ability and sophistication of the Seventy. Some of them (particularly, those who had been at Lane with Weld) had already had several years of experience in the field and were old hands, but most of the agents were, like McKim, neophytes.¹²

In order to train these newcomers and to reinvigorate the oldtimers, Elizur Wright, the Corresponding Secretary of the American Anti-Slavery Society suggested that a national conference of agents be held in New York during November 1836. In describing the need for such a meeting Wright expressed the belief that the benefits to be derived from exchanging experiences and from fanning the anti-slavery passions of the agents to a "welding heat" would be well worth the financial cost. He noted that if the abolition plan were to succeed, "some of us may be called upon to die for it. It takes a great deal of 'heart-work' to make a martyr. A general and solemn heart-warming before we begin would do good."¹³ In short, he was calling for a good old-fashioned revival meeting in which the focus would be upon saving the nation from the sin of slavery.

Virtually all of the society's agents except those who had been with Weld at Lane and Oberlin attended the meeting and McKim was no exception. He left Bucks County on November 14 and reached New York two

¹²Barnes, Antislavery Impulse, p. 105. Elizur Wright to Theodore Weld, November 4, 1836 in, Weld-Grimké Letters, I, 347. Dumond, Antislavery, pp. 180, 185.

¹³Elizur Wright to Theodore Weld, September 22, 1836, Weld-Grimké Letters, I, 338.

days later. The agents convention had already been in session for over a week when he arrived, but the marathon meeting would continue until December second.¹⁴ Under the leadership of Weld the agents came together three times a day taking only enough time out from their discussions to snatch a quick meal. The topics covered included: the nature of slavery, the nature of immediate emancipation, the consequences of emancipation for the North and for the South, Hebrew servitude, gradualism, compensation, colonization, prejudice, and the treatment and condition of the free colored population. McKim and his co-workers listened to speeches by such anti-slavery notables as Garrison, Beriah Green, C.C. Burleigh, Charles Stuart, H. B. Stanton, and Elizur Wright, but it was Theodore Weld who spoke most frequently and was the driving force behind the meeting. These addresses were delivered in the emotional manner characteristic of revival meetings, and were predicated on the belief that those involved in the anti-slavery crusade were fighting sin on behalf of the Lord.¹⁵

McKim welcomed this religious tone, for in the few weeks that he had spent as an anti-slavery agent he had renewed his association with Mrs. Mott, and had been thrown into contact with many persons whose beliefs were far more latitudinarian than his own. Just before he set out for the agents convention he had noted in his diary that:

Associating with good people who observe no [outward] forms of worship I have been gliding into the same habit. I am

¹⁴McKim Diary, November 14 - December 2, 1836. McKim's Diary says that the convention ended on December 2, 1836, but other writers give the final date as November 27. See, Dumond, Antislavery, p. 185.

¹⁵Garrison, Life of Garrison, II, 116. McKim Diary, November 27, 1836.

happy nevertheless and am conscious of no up-braiding of conscience. The Lord seems to direct my steps and I trust I enjoy his favour - yet I may be mistaken; my conscience may not be performing its office.¹⁶

Uncertain that he was following the true path, he welcomed the opportunity which the convention gave him for contact with "custodians of a more orthodox faith." On the nineteenth he noted that "at a meeting of a number of agents convened this morning for prayer an earnest devotional spirit prevailed and I felt renewed."¹⁷

When the convention ended on December 2, McKim returned to the Mott home in Philadelphia where he remained for almost a week. Although the New York gathering had increased his anti-slavery zeal and fired his religious dedication, it had not overcome the growing influence of Mrs. Mott upon his theological views. On January 7, 1837 he confided to his Diary that he felt "an increasing attachment to Mrs. Mott and her . . . family," and was increasingly in harmony with them on religious matters. In his desire to win the approval of his hostess he may have allowed her to think that his views had changed more than they actually had. Thus, after Mrs. Mott and her protégé visited the famous Unitarian minister, William Furness, McKim wrote:

Unitarianism is a beautiful system of philosophy but it lacks the vitality of True Christianity. I am not orthodox but I fear lest in the freedom of conviction and the use of over-strong expression, I may have given Mrs. Mott the idea that I am less orthodox than is really the case.¹⁸

¹⁶Ibid., November 14, 1836.

¹⁷Ibid., November 19, 1836.

¹⁸Ibid., January 7, 1837.

Despite the growing liberalism of his views, McKim was by no means ready to make a formal break with Presbyterianism. It would take him almost a year and a half of further soul-searching before he decided to take this drastic step. In the interim he devoted much study and thought to those aspects of church doctrine which troubled him, but he was unable to bring himself to believe again in the doctrine of vicarious atonement or in the plenary inspiration of the Bible. His growing alienation from the church to which he belonged however, was not an indication of a decline in his religious zeal. The focus was changing from an emphasis upon external manifestations of piety to a stress upon inner convictions unfettered by formal doctrine, but service to God remained his central objective, and he continued to believe that this could best be rendered through the cause of abolition.¹⁹

On December 8, 1836 McKim again took up his duties as an agent and began a canvass of Philadelphia and its surrounding counties that would occupy (with some interruptions) the next ten and a half months. During this time the major focus of his attention would not be upon the city itself, but upon the heavily populated suburban and rural areas which enclosed the urban center to the West and Northwest. Among the towns and villages he visited were Coatesville, Goodville, Morgantown, and East Fallowfield in Chester County; Pottstown, Trappe, Norristown, Abington, and Willow Grove in Montgomery County; and Womelsdorf, Stouchsburg, and Maiden Creek in Berks County.²⁰ On other

¹⁹For evidence of his religious soul searching, see ibid., May 18, 1837.

²⁰Ibid., December 1836-October 1837. Apparently, this pattern

occasions, when meetings or personal business called him away from his usual territory he spoke at places along the way whenever he was invited to do so. Thus, in the course of a trip he made to meet with the Presbytery of Wilmington in June 1837, he delivered one anti-slavery lecture in that city, and another in Salem, New Jersey.²¹

His usual mode of operation followed closely the pattern outlined in the "Particular Instructions" described above. Using introductions secured from friends of the cause in the surrounding area he would try to contact persons of good standing in the community who might be willing to assist him in setting up a meeting. The degree of respect which McKim's contact had in the neighborhood and the effort which the local man was willing to devote to advertising the coming meeting was sometimes of decisive importance in determining success or failure. For example, on December 12-14, 1836 McKim spoke on at least two occasions in Plymouth, but he had little success. He describes his audience as "poor material to work with," but it seems more likely that the cause of his failure was the fact that his host, George Corson was disliked by his neighbors. McKim gained a graphic lesson in the importance of pre-meeting publicity when he arrived in Holmesburg a few weeks later to find that his local sponsor had done almost nothing to

of stressing work in the rural areas was not accidental. Theodore Weld, who had organized the agency system believed that too much energy was wasted in large meetings in the cities at which six, eight or even ten anti-slavery agents would spend several days at a time. He believed that the efforts of the agents should be directed to the rural areas. "Let the great cities alone," he wrote, "they must be burned down by back fires. The springs to touch in order to move them lie in the country." Theodore Weld to Lewis Tappan, [April 5, 1836], Weld-Grimké Letters, I, 287.

²¹McKim Diary, June 23, 24, 1837.

advertise the lecture. The turnout was poor and he had little success in getting his message across.²²

Surprisingly, the anti-slavery lecturer met the first serious opposition to his agency among Quakers who did not seriously differ with him on the question of abolition. Arriving in Byberry on December 29 he learned that "the antipathy cherished toward Presbyterians and Presbyterian ministers is very bitter," and that he would not be permitted to deliver a talk in the school house. A month later Lucretia Mott wrote him that among the Friends there were those who feared that their "testimony to a free gospel ministry" would be violated by a "free intercourse with the ministers of other societies," and this undoubtedly explains his difficulties in Byberry.²³

He had better luck in Pottstown where he presented a letter of introduction to Joan P. Rutter, "a man of piety intelligence and influence" who was already an abolitionist by conviction. With the aid of this valuable contact he arranged to preach at a local church on Sunday, January 15, 1837, and he scheduled two anti-slavery lectures for Monday and Tuesday. Even on those occasions when he did not directly use the pulpit to preach an anti-slavery message, the Sunday sermons which he was often asked to deliver served a valuable function by publicizing his forthcoming abolition efforts. This was certainly the case in Pottstown, for when the time came for the anti-slavery lectures

²²Ibid., December 12-14, 1836; January 2, 1837.

²³Lucretia Mott to McKim, January 27, 1837, McKim Collection, Cornell. McKim Diary, December 29, 1836.

McKim was greeted by a full house on both nights. At the conclusion of his second talk he invited those in the audience who might disagree with him to state their own views.²⁴

Among those who accepted this challenge was the Reverend Mr. Henry Miller of the German Reformed Synod who made a twenty minute speech praising colonization and denouncing the "wild" and "visionary" schemes of the anti-slavery men. He said that they might make companions of the blacks if they chose, "but as for him he 'would rather associate with dogs.'" This remark prompted the Negroes in the audience to walk out. McKim made a few comments in response to the diatribe and he felt as though he had succeeded in thoroughly exposing the "fatuity and wickedness of the Reverend gentleman's speech."²⁵

A more reasoned dissent was entered by a Mr. Powell who had once served in the state legislature of Virginia, but was now teaching school in Pottstown. After a brief exchange, McKim and Powell agreed to hold another confrontation on the following evening at which time both men might more fully present their respective positions. Stimulated by news of the impending debate a large crowd jammed into the hall for the Wednesday meeting.²⁶

This was exactly the sort of situation that the abolitionist lecturers sought to encourage. Far from fearing confrontations with even the most articulate representatives of the opposition, they

²⁴Ibid., January 15, 17, 1837.

²⁵Letter from McKim dated February 22, 1837 in the Emancipator, March 9, 1837.

²⁶McKim Diary, January 17-18, 1837.

welcomed them. The American Anti-Slavery Society had been founded on the premise that when error was faced squarely by truth, the latter would triumph. Thus, the function of the agent was not merely to disseminate truth, but also to create the conditions which would provoke the greatest public interest in their message. It was for this reason that McKim assented to the debate with Powell. During the year and a half that he spent as a travelling agent for the society he would consistently seek out argument and controversy.

Powell turned out to be no mean opponent. McKim credited his speech with exhibiting "considerable talent, ingenuity and oratory," and he conceded that the ex-Virginian made "a deep impression" on the audience. The pro-slavery man spoke for an hour and a half, and the major focus of his talk was upon the harm to national unity that would come from raising a subject which was of purely local concern. McKim used an equal amount of time in reply, and when the meeting ended it was agreed to hold still another debate the next evening. Again, the house was filled to overflowing and this time the argument centered upon the nature of slavery and the innate capacities of the blacks. Thus, for four days the citizens of Pottstown were exposed to a public exploration of the abolitionist position, and the very fact that they were forced to give thought to beliefs they had previously taken for granted meant that the town would never be quite the same again.²⁷

Although direct evidence as to the precise content of McKim's

²⁷The quotations are from the Emancipator, March 9, 1837. See also, the McKim Diary, January 18-19, 1837.

anti-slavery lectures is scanty, it seems almost certain that they did not differ significantly from the official position of the radical anti-slavery movement that has been described above. His speeches seem to have emphasized the moral guilt of the entire nation for tolerating the sin of slavery. On one occasion he charged that the North was as guilty as the South, but he defended the right of citizens of one section to interfere (by moral suasion) with the institutions of another section. He repeatedly attacked the colonization society and doubtless drew heavily on Garrison's pamphlet for his arguments.²⁸

The moral and religious origins of the anti-slavery movement in general, and of McKim's abolitionism in particular are nowhere more clearly illustrated than in his condemnation of the churches for their failure to oppose slavery. Speaking in Woodbury, New Jersey on May 29, 1837 he attacked northern Presbyterians for failing to rebuke their southern brethren for holding slaves. He noted that below the Mason and Dixon line even ministers and elders bought and sold slaves, and that the highest bodies in his church had refused to take any action to indicate their disapproval of such practices. McKim said that he felt especially free to criticize the Presbyterian Church in view of the fact that he was a member of that body.

A member of the audience expressed the belief that the church was not as sinful as McKim depicted it, and suggested that attacks upon it were likely to do more harm than good to the cause of religion. The anti-slavery agent insisted that his charges were true, and noted that it was the existence of the sin of slaveholding within the church and

²⁸Ibid., June 3, October 17-20, November 8, December 25, 1837; March 23, 1838.

not his exposure of it, which was harming the cause of religion. He added that "on the contrary this is the very thing that is wakening up hundreds and thousands of our most influential and talented members and ministers, and enlisting their energies for the purification of the church."²⁹⁻³⁰ Thus, again and again, the issue of slavery was cast in religious rather than political terms, and those who listened to McKim were forced to examine the question of human bondage as a moral problem.

As has already been noted, in the course of his travels McKim was called upon to speak in two separate, but frequently overlapping, capacities: he delivered lectures in his role as an anti-slavery agent, yet since he was also a man of the cloth the ministers he met often asked him to preach Sunday sermons. Often he used these occasions to denounce slavery, and he only refrained from doing so only if his host specifically requested that he avoid the subject. Even at such times, he managed to allude to it indirectly. On one occasion he was not indirect enough, for his colonizationist host charged him with using his preaching opportunities to promote the cause of abolition, and promised to do all he could to keep the young anti-slavery evangelist from the pulpit in other places. McKim did not deny the charge, indeed he was rather proud of it.³¹

In many ways the life of an agent was far from easy. McKim was almost constantly on the move. Week after week he travelled from one town to another over roads which ranged in quality from fair to poor, and even though the persons with whom he stayed were doubtless generous

²⁹⁻³⁰ National Enquirer, June 10, 1837.

³¹ McKim Diary, November 8, 1837.

in their hospitality, the strain of being constantly in motion must have been great. But these hardships were similar to those which travelling judges and preachers had to endure. Even his eight dollar a week salary was not uniquely low for this was the same amount that the American Bible Society gave to its agents. Nevertheless, there was one aspect of the life of an anti-slavery lecturer which marked him off from others who made their livings by travelling or preaching. His duty was to stir up controversy over an emotionally charged issue at a time in the nation's history when violence was a not uncommon method of dealing with dissent that strayed beyond the limits of the American consensus.

In late February 1837, a month and a half after the first debate between McKim and Powell, the two men began another series of verbal confrontations. Meeting in Moroltin (not far from Pottstown) on February 28, and on the first two days in March, the two men continued to debate the slavery question. On March 2, Powell was joined by an associate named Lightner who was particularly bitter in his denunciations of abolitionism. When the last of the meetings in Moroltin was concluded the three men agreed to continue their dispute the next night in Pottsgrove. By this time public sentiment against McKim's anti-slavery position was on the rise and the Pottsgrove meeting was held in a tense and hostile atmosphere. Since the anti-slavery agent had held the floor for most of the previous evening, the plan was for Powell and Lightner to speak first and for McKim to reply if there was time. The two pro-slavery men arrived thirty-five minutes late thereby assuring themselves of possession of the platform for the remainder of the evening since it

would be late by the time they had completed their presentations. At the end of the evening Lightner launched into a vehement onslaught against the abolitionists which roused the crowd to a peak of hostility against McKim. In a vain effort to reply he tried to take the floor despite the late hour, but his words were drowned out by the audience. The supporters of the anti-slavery agent began to fear that violence would befall him on the way back to his lodgings, and later that night he himself expressed the belief that were it not for the presence of two ladies who escorted him home, he might have been assailed.³²

McKim and his two opponents were scheduled to resume their verbal duel on March 6, in Pettstown, but word of the events that had just transpired must have reached the townspeople even before McKim appeared. When he arrived on the sixth he found the town plastered with posters urging the people to "put down" amalgamationists. Furthermore, a colonization society had just been formed for the express purpose of combatting the dangerous doctrines which the anti-slavery agent was so assiduously trying to promote. After conferring with several local friends of the cause McKim reluctantly assented to their pleas that he cancel the meeting called for that evening. This decision appears to have been a wise one, for a mob had gathered at the meeting hall, and when the abolitionist failed to appear they sent one of their number to inform him that the hall was lit and ready. After they realized that he was not coming at all they held their own meeting and listened to several speakers who denounced abolitionism before returning to their homes. Despite this setback for the cause of the slave and for free speech McKim remained optimistic. That night he confided to his diary

³²Ibid., February 27 - March 3, 1837.

that "I am still of the opinion that we should have held our meeting. But things are working well for the cause. We shall organize an efficient society; at least so I think."³³

Two and a half weeks later, the opposition to McKim in the area had not yet subsided. He stopped for a couple of days in Pottsgrove and before the first day was over a sign had been erected which he described as saying:

'McKim the advocate of Amalgamation, Negro equality - & c. & c. has arrived & c. & c.' and then it went on to invoke the people in 'the language of the illustrious Jackson' to put down all resistance to the constituted authorities & c. & c.

McKim went on to observe that "there is still much excitement in this place and our friends are rather disheartened."³⁴

A month later, in the town of Upper Dublin, the threat of mob violence again prevented McKim from speaking. On April 24 he had taken up the gauntlet thrown down by a teacher at the local academy who challenged any abolitionist to meet him in public debate. Since the teacher was also the brother of the owner of the academy, that place was used for the meeting, and the two speakers debated the question: "Ought Abolition Societies To Be Encouraged?" When the meeting was over, McKim wished to schedule a second encounter, but his adversary declined, and the principal of the academy refused to allow his facilities to be used for this purpose again.

McKim was determined to hold another meeting anyway, and was encouraged in this plan by the offer of a room from the principal of a

³³Ibid., March 6, 1837.

³⁴Ibid., March 25, 1837.

school in another part of the village. There were soon threats of violence and mob action, however, and the offer was withdrawn. McKim was forced to abandon his plan to speak. Once it was learned that he would not appear at the school, the mob that had gathered there with drums and fifes to disrupt the proceedings made its way to the tavern where the anti-slavery agent was staying and created a great racket outside, but it made no attempt to harm the lecturer.³⁵

Mob action was not the only form of harassment that McKim suffered as he canvassed eastern Pennsylvania. On two occasions his good name was called into question by baseless rumours. At one point the story circulated that he stole Joseph Rutter's horse, while on another occasion he was accused of harboring the very prejudices he condemned in others. At a meeting of the Young Men's Colonization Society in New York the Reverend Mr. Reynolds of Montgomery County charged that an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society had refused to ride in the same railroad car with a colored woman. When pressed for the name of the agent he insisted that it was James Miller McKim. The target of this tale was so incensed by the falsehood that he sent an immediate denial to the New York Observer.³⁶

It is ironic that McKim should have been the object of such a story, for even within the framework of the abolition movement which held that all men were entitled to equal rights, McKim identified himself

³⁵Ibid., April 24-25, 1837.

³⁶Ibid., March 25, 1837, May 11-12, 1837. McKim's denial was not published. See, the New York Observer, May 20 - June 17, 1837.

with the most radical egalitarian position. On July 8, 1837 he attended a meeting of the Philadelphia Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society and participated in a discussion of whether the youth group should take in Negro members. He was among those who argued for their admission. Moreover, McKim often preached to Negro audiences. On July 9, for example, he wrote that he and a Mr. Landrum "crossed the street to a small court where we collected some of the wretched multitude of low colored people living in the neighborhood. We spoke to them in the open air. Some of them wept and seemed much affected. Poor outcasts - my heart yearned over them."³⁷

McKim was again met by violent opposition when he tried to speak in West Fallowfield on Sunday, June 5, 1837. When he and his friends arrived at the Friendship Meeting House where he was to give his address, they found the doors locked, and they were faced with a group of men armed with clubs and fortified with rum. They were led by the proprietor of the local tavern and they informed the anti-slavery men that no lecture would be delivered that day. McKim went among them and "heard their objections, and tried to show up their ignorance and wickedness." He listened as some charged him with being a hireling, while others alleged that he was seeking notoriety. A Dr. Dilworth who described himself as a "blue-stocking Presbyterian" charged that McKim was profaning the Sabbath day, and others expressed the belief that he was violating the Constitution and the laws of the nation.³⁸

³⁷McKim Diary, July 8-9, 1837.

³⁸National Enquirer, June 10, 1837. McKim Diary, June 5, 1837.

After about two hours of this discussion some of those present "became very anxious to hear an address," and they proposed that McKim speak out in the open air. Using the steps of the meeting house as his platform while his audience used a fence, the grass, and some benches (for the ladies) as their seats, he began to speak. Soon the hard core opposition began to make loud noises in an effort to drown out his voice, but he raised his voice and managed to make himself heard. One of the members of the mob then left the meeting briefly and returned with a good supply of eggs which he held up to McKim as he demanded that the latter stop speaking. The anti-slavery agent ignored him, and the heckler then stepped forward with an egg in hand and began to swing his arm menacingly, as he again insisted that the speech be cut short. McKim paused briefly and told the man that if he and his friends attempted violence the consequences would be upon their own heads. He pointed out that they would be violating the law and that their names were known. At the same time, other members of the audience made their displeasure at these disruptive tactics evident and the hecklers began to withdraw to a safe distance. Then they let loose with their missiles, but the eggs landed harmlessly, as they were thrown from quite a distance by men who had already had a good deal to drink. McKim then finished his lecture without further interruptions. Three weeks later an abolitionist from West Fallowfield wrote to the National Enquirer praising the agent's conduct in this difficult situation, and went on to add that the meeting "served to develope [sic] the various opinions and feelings of the people -- creating a greater interest than ever to

see and hear more on the subject."³⁹

News of episodes like this spread rapidly as did reports of the remarks McKim had made about the role of the churches in perpetuating slavery, and it was not long before there were some raised eyebrows among the members of the Presbytery of Wilmington which had ordained him. Learning that his religious brethren were disturbed at what they heard about his activities McKim, either as the result of an invitation or on his own initiative, decided to attend the meeting of the Presbytery which was being held in St. Georges, Delaware and to make his explanation in person.⁴⁰

On June 19 at a meeting that McKim described as friendly, he sat down with a committee of the Presbytery and outlined the reasons why he believed that his career as an agent was well within his path of duty as a minister of the gospel. The committee put many questions to him, and he apparently satisfied them that he was not transgressing beyond the bounds of propriety, for at the meeting's end they expressed the view that while they did not agree entirely with the abolitionists, they did not doubt that they were doing good. The committee then advised McKim to be "prudent," and wished him God speed in his work.⁴¹ Despite the

³⁹National Enquirer, June 10, 24, 1837. The quotation is from the issue of June 24.

⁴⁰McKim Diary, May 18, 1837.

⁴¹National Enquirer, July 1, 1837. See also, the McKim Diary, June 20, 1837. The Minutes of the Presbytery of Wilmington (June 19, 1837), say only that "Rev. James M. McKim gave a report of his labors as Agent for the Anti-Slavery Society, and of his continuing to preach the gospel as he had opportunity."

rather bland manner in which he depicted this event, it seems evident that the Presbytery was more than a little ill at ease with the zealot that had risen from their midst. The very fact that his activities were called into question and the final injunction that he be prudent appear to show that his brethren were deeply concerned about the consequences of his actions for the church.

On his way to the meeting of the Presbytery, McKim had stopped briefly in Wilmington where he delivered a Sunday sermon as a visiting minister. The topic of slavery was, of course, taboo, but McKim later noted that "they could not prevent me entirely from 'remembering them that are in bonds.'" Describing the attitudes of those he met in Delaware toward slavery he sadly observed that "there is a good deal of genuine abhorrence of slavery and kind feelings for the colored man, among our Presbyterian brethren of this place; but these feelings are so mixed up with colonization that, in my estimation, they avail less than nothing to the cause of freedom." The Quakers, however, were not fooled by the expatriation scheme and were good abolitionists in theory, but McKim felt that only "a small fraction of them reduce their principles to anything like practice."⁴²

Before he returned to Pennsylvania the anti-slavery agent made a detour to Salem, New Jersey to deliver a previously scheduled lecture. Arriving on June 21, he took lodgings with the Goodwin sisters who had been responsible for inviting him to give a talk in their town. At the

⁴² National Enquirer, July 1, 1837.

appointed hour a bell was rung to summon the audience to the courthouse where the lecture was to take place. At the same time, a second bell was sounded to call the opposition into action. When the audience was finally assembled it was composed primarily of individuals who were present to heckle and disrupt the proceedings. As soon as McKim began to speak some of those present became disorderly and it required the work of one or two policemen to restore order. The anti-slavery agent began to speak once more and was allowed to proceed for some time before there was another outburst. This time, as McKim described it, a drunken man arose and began to mumble something about the rights of "our southern brethering," and he suggested that the blacks be sent back to their "native country." The audience cheered this interruption lustily, but, with some difficulty, McKim succeeded in regaining their attention. In a few minutes, however, the drunk was at it again and this time the crowd became so uproarious that McKim could no longer make himself heard and a number of men and boys rushed into the room and began to threaten and insult the beleaguered agent.⁴³

Concerned for his safety his supporters urged him to withdraw, and he left the Courthouse amidst a din of confusion. A local newspaper described the events that followed saying:

He left the Court room in company with several of the most respectable ladies of our town. The mob followed drumming on tin kettles, blowing horns, threatening tar and feathers, and otherwise ill treating the lecturer and the ladies, and when they arrived at the dwelling of his stay, the mob assailed and threatened the house. -- After a time they left this part of the town and proceeded to a tavern. . . . Considerately the lecturer did not attempt a second lecture, but the evil spirit of the mob not yet satisfied, commenced

⁴³Ibid.

early in the evening with bon fires and parading the streets with an effigy of Mr. McKim on a rail, and burnt the effigy in the centre of the town. After this the more vile of the mob, about 12 o'clock at night, went and assailed the dwelling of the Miss Goodwin's, where the lecturer remained, with clubs & c., pelting the door and windows, and calling for that d--d abolitionist, stated if he would come out they would lecture to him, & c.⁴⁴

The hectic events of that evening prevented McKim from making his usual diary entry, and it was not until two days later that he got to do so. Describing his exit from the courthouse he expressed the belief that "perhaps" the presence of the ladies who escorted him home "saved me from violence, for I afterward learned that a pot of tar and the usual accompaniment of feathers were ready for me and respect for the ladies prevented any effort to seize me while in their company."⁴⁵

Unable to give a second talk in Salem as he had planned, McKim returned to his lecturing duties in and around the Philadelphia area. On the whole the summer months that followed seem to have been marked by a lull in McKim's anti-slavery activities. On July 3, he indicated his intention to take a respite until the hottest weather was past and added: "Perhaps by that time I shall see my way to get at something else."⁴⁶ As will become apparent later, he was by no means certain as to the course of his future career.

McKim's doubts and his plan to take a rest for the summer did not prevent him from completing some unfinished business in Wilmington,

⁴⁴The quotation from the Salem newspaper is given in ibid., but the paper is not named.

⁴⁵McKim Diary, June 23, 1837.

⁴⁶Ibid., July 3, 1837.

Delaware. When he had visited that city on June 18, while en route to the meeting of the Presbytery, he had done what he could to raise the slavery issue in a Sunday sermon and in private conversation. A week later while passing through the city again on his return to Philadelphia, he looked for an opportunity to give a lecture, but none offered itself. Nevertheless, the people he contacted must have been impressed with him and with his arguments, for they invited him to return on July 13 and 14 to attend the founding meeting of the Delaware Anti-Slavery Society.⁴⁷

The first gathering on the evening of the thirteenth was a business meeting at which the new organization was formally called into being. There was considerable debate over whether the name for the group should be the Delaware Abolition Society or the Delaware Anti-Slavery Society with the older persons present supporting the use of the term abolition and the younger ones favoring the word anti-slavery. This semantic difference was quite significant because it reflected a struggle between the conservative and radical approaches to abolition. The younger and more radical faction emerged victorious and the new group called itself the Delaware Anti-Slavery Society. The following evening McKim lectured to about sixty or seventy persons who had been called together by special invitation and his speech was well received by this audience.⁴⁸ The anti-slavery agent's success in delivering his message within the confines of a slave state was due in no small measure to the traditional opposition of the Quakers to human bondage, and to the weakness of the

⁴⁷National Enquirer, July 1, 1837. McKim Diary, June 24, 1837.

⁴⁸Ibid., July 13-14, 1837.

institution of slavery within the state. Nevertheless, McKim must be given considerable credit for helping to create an anti-slavery organization within a state in which Negroes were still viewed as a legitimate form of property.

After his business in Wilmington was completed, McKim returned to Philadelphia where he remained for the balance of the Summer except for a two week visit to Carlisle. Aside from the fact that he gave two anti-slavery lectures (to Negro audiences), and preached on ten occasions, little is known about his activities during the period from July 15 - September 9, 1837, but it seems as though he was making plans to abandon his position as an anti-slavery lecturer at the end of the year. When his agent's commission was renewed in September, Elizur Wright of the national office urged him not to follow his plan to retire from the field and added that "it is the unanimous and earnest request of the [agency] committee that you would continue [,] and really at this crisis of the battle we cannot afford to spare such a man as you."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Elizur Wright to McKim, [September 9, 1837, written on the back of McKim's agency commission], McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. McKim Diary, July 15 - September 9, 1837.

CHAPTER V

BREAKING NEW GROUND

In spite of the Elizur Wright's plea that McKim continue with his work for another twelve months, the lecturer set out on his second tour of duty without committing himself to remain beyond the first of the year. From September 10-26 he canvassed the familiar area just outside of Philadelphia to which he had devoted so much energy the previous Spring. By now this territory had been thoroughly covered by McKim and his colleagues. Despite some occasional hostility in the towns where he stopped, his task had been made relatively easy by the Quaker tradition which permeated much of the area. More often than not he had received a polite reception, and his hearers frequently agreed with him about the evils of slavery and the need for its abolition. To continue to work this area would be to invoke the law of diminishing returns, for there were other parts of the state that had not yet been exposed to the emancipation message of the American Anti-Slavery Society. To remedy this lack McKim was assigned to speak in the northeastern portion of the state which had rarely, if ever, been penetrated by abolitionist speakers.¹

¹The heavy coverage that the area around Philadelphia received is indicated in the *National Enquirer*, the *Emancipator*, and in McKim's diary for the period August 1836-August 1837. In "The Early Antislavery Agency System in Pennsylvania, 1833-1837," *Pennsylvania History*, XXXI (January 1964), 62-86, John L. Meyers convincingly demonstrates that there was a direct correlation between the increasing activity of agents in the state and the growth of the number of societies in the state. Thus, the absence of these societies in the northeastern portion of the

On September 28 he set out on a tour of this section which would last for fifteen weeks and would give him the opportunity to deliver 29 lectures and 25 sermons. The route he followed took him from Reading to Orwigsburg, Pottsville, and Northumberland. He spent almost six weeks (October 20-November 28) in the area around the forks of the Susquehanna River, and then he moved northeast through Wilkes Barre, and Carbondale, and into Susquehanna County.²

The trip began inauspiciously enough, with a total failure in Reading. He was unable to set up a meeting, and he dolefully remarked in his diary that "this place seems closed against all public anti-slavery effort." He had better luck in Orwigsburg a few days later when some of the residents overrode a decision of their town council to refuse him the use of the courthouse. Incensed at this denial of free speech they demanded that the building's custodian turn over the keys to them and when he complied they rang the bell to collect an audience, and gave McKim a fair hearing. A group of rowdies pounding on drums outside the meetinghouse was unable to disrupt the gathering.³

On October 4 McKim arrived in Pottsville, and it was not long before the free speech question arose again. The Presbytery of Philadelphia was then in session at this town, and when the local Presbyterian minister asked some of the visitors whether he ought to permit the anti-slavery evangelist to use his church they advised against it. While

state together with the absence of any accounts in the anti-slavery press of agents working this area would seem to prove that agents had not yet penetrated this region.

²McKim Diary, September 28, 1837-January 7, 1838.

³Ibid., September 28, October 1 and 3, 1837.

expressing high regard for McKim, they suggested that it would be "inexpedient" to lend the pulpit to such activities. On October 6 the town Burgess told McKim that any lecture he attempted to give would be suppressed. The abolitionist replied saying, "I have not proposed to deliver a lecture, but if I should feel disposed to do so I would look to you for protection in the exercise of my rights, and should regard you as liable to prosecution for misdemeanors in office if you failed to extend it to me." According to McKim this disturbed the Burgess greatly and his tone changed visibly. Nevertheless, McKim did not get the chance to speak in Pottsville. He was promised the use of the Methodist Church, but the pledge was quickly withdrawn, and after a week of fruitless effort he left the town without having given a single public address. The time was not totally wasted, however, for he did make a side trip to Orwigsburg on October 7 to deliver a previously scheduled lecture there.⁴

Ten days later, on October 17, he returned to Orwigsburg to attend a lecture being given by the Reverend Mr. Miller, an agent for the colonization society and when the latter had concluded his talk McKim requested the floor and attempted to refute the arguments that had just been presented in favor of the expatriation scheme. The anti-slavery man felt that by the time he had finished giving his arguments the audience fully sided with him. The next day the two opponents travelled together to Pottsville, and a day later they went on to Sunbury in Northumberland County. McKim viewed his companion as a weak man defending a weak cause, but there was a symbiotic relationship between this strange duo because their conflict was bound to heighten the interest

⁴Ibid., October 4, 6, 7 and 15, 1837.

of their listeners in what both men had to say. The communities which they visited were often far removed from the mainstream of urban life, and the arrival of these itinerant reformers broke the drab monotonous rhythm of rural life and offered entertainment as well as the opportunity to debate an important social question.⁵

On October 21 McKim arrived in the town of Northumberland and after preaching a sermon and teaching Sunday school on the twenty-second, he gave a lecture on slavery the next day. The gathering was disrupted by loud noises emanating from hecklers who had gathered outside, and while walking home with Dr. Jackson, the minister of the Unitarian church where the meeting had been held, McKim was hit by an egg and a mudball thrown by members of the opposition. Dr. Jackson was also hit and became highly indignant at the rudeness of his fellow townsmen. McKim, observing that the doctor's anger was directed at those who opposed the abolitionists remarked in his diary that "it all works well for our cause."⁶ He was right, for a frequent result of the attempt to stifle the free expression of anti-slavery sentiments was that the abolitionists gained the support of many whose primary concern was the

⁵Ibid., October 17 and 20, 1837. The conscious use of this symbiotic relationship between abolitionists and colonizationists is illustrated by a letter from F. Julius LeMoyné, a leader of the anti-slavery forces in western Pennsylvania, to McKim. LeMoyné advised McKim who was lecturing in the West in April 1838, to either precede or follow an agent of the colonization society in order to counteract the influence of the expatriation doctrine. April 4, 1838, McKim Collection, Cornell. Apparently, McKim already was aware of this technique for in addition to using it in the instances described above, he employed the same tactic in March 1838. See, the McKim Diary, March 24, 1838.

⁶McKim Diary, October 21-23, 1837. National Enquirer, November 2, 1837.

protection of free speech rather than the cause of the slave.

From Northumberland McKim moved on to Lewisburg where he called upon the Reverend Mr. Marr, pastor of the local Presbyterian church. Despite the fact that he was an old school man and a colonizationist the minister gave the traveller a hearty welcome and invited him to be his house guest and to preach to his congregations at New Berlin and Mifflinburg. McKim accepted these offers and over the next twelve days he preached frequently for the Lewisburg clergyman. The response to his sermon at Mifflinburg was so good that he was asked to lecture on abolition, and he spoke there on two successive evenings.⁷

Despite his old school allegiance, Marr was a believer in protracted (i.e., revival) meetings, and on November 2, two days after McKim had spoken against slavery at Mifflinburg, the Lewisburg clergyman asked his guest to assist him in conducting a revival meeting which was to begin the next day. The anti-slavery agent said that he would be glad to do so, but that he could not neglect his duties to the abolition cause. According to McKim, Marr replied that if he remained in Lewisburg he would doubtless have a chance to lecture after the revival was over, and went on to add that while he was opposed to abolition he had spoken to one or two gentlemen who proposed that the anti-slavery man should lecture in the town hall.⁸

⁷Emancipator, December 14, 1837. McKim Diary, October 25-November 6, 1837.

⁸Ibid., November 2, 1837. Emancipator, December 14, 1837.

McKim then agreed to participate in the revival, and three days later, after the meeting was concluded, he noted in his diary that he believed that in addition to promoting the cause of vital religion the revival would "facilitate my . . . operations for the anti-slavery cause." The evangelistic gathering was attracting many people from the countryside around Lewisburg, and McKim believed that making a favorable impression upon them in his role as a revivalist would predispose them to give him a "candid hearing."⁹

McKim's pride in the role he had taken in this revival must have been considerably tempered when he received a letter from his fellow agent and friend C. C. (Charles Calistus) Burleigh telling him that Henry C. Wright, another member of the Seventy, had not had his commission renewed because he insisted on giving his views on the subject of peace. Burleigh went on to say that the officials of the society believed that their agents ought not to "meddle with any controversial points" except those related to the anti-slavery cause. He then warned: "So I caution you to look out how you attend Scotch Presbyterian protracted meetings, to preach heresy, for that is meddling with controverted points." This advice was given in a friendly manner, for Burleigh added: "So keep a sharp eye to the windward, more especially when the wind is northeast!"¹⁰

⁹McKim Diary, November 6, 1837.

¹⁰Charles Calistus Burleigh to McKim, November 13, 1837, William Lloyd Garrison Collection (hereafter referred to as the Garrison Collection), Boston Public Library. In all probability Burleigh was thinking especially of the Tappan brothers when he used the term "northeast," for they were rather orthodox in their Presbyterian beliefs.

On the evening of November 7, after laying the groundwork for almost two weeks, McKim delivered an anti-slavery lecture at the Lewisburg Town Hall. It was a night of surprises for the young evangelist, for the very host who had lent him his home and pulpit became his most formidable opponent once the abolitionist mounted the rostrum. During the course of his talk McKim excoriated the noted Presbyterian clergyman, Robert Breckinridge, as a slaveholder. Marr rose to defend the Kentucky pastor claiming that he had emancipated his slaves. McKim then read from the deed of emancipation to prove that some had been left in bondage. The Lewisburg minister then asked for the floor again saying that he did not want the audience to suppose that because the abolitionist was his house guest, he had assisted in arranging the current meeting or had any sympathy with the doctrines espoused by McKim. He promised that he would spell out his own views at a colonization meeting to be held the following evening. The anti-slavery agent was stung to the quick by this attack emanating from a man who was ostensibly his friend, and he assured his listeners that Marr had had no part in setting up the meeting. He went on to say that since the clergyman seemed fearful that their association would taint him with the stain of abolitionism he would "take care that thenceforth that he should be in no danger from that cause."¹¹

After the meeting ended Marr tried to smooth matters over by making a distinction between their personal relations and their relations as proponents of two opposing causes, but McKim, feeling he had been

¹¹McKim Diary, November 8, 1837. Emancipator, December 14, 1837.

hit "below the fifth rib," would have none of it and moved out of Marr's house the next day. That evening he attended the colonization meeting at which the ubiquitous Mr. Miller and the Reverend Mr. Marr were the featured speakers. Miller led off with such a bitter and abusive attack against McKim and the cause he represented that Marr felt compelled to offer the anti-slavery man his own time as a speaker in order to reply. McKim accepted this gracious offer (which he acknowledged in his diary but not in his public account of the event) and spoke for almost an hour heaping ridicule upon his rude opponent. Three other anti-abolitionist speakers followed, but their short talks dealt with issues rather than in personalities. When they had finished there was still enough time left for Marr, and he made a forty-five minute plea that a damper he placed upon any more discussion of the slavery issue before passions were inflamed still further. Saying that "abolitionism wouldn't take in Lewisburg," he asked McKim to have the "courtesy to withdraw."¹²

But this was not the will of the meeting for, according to McKim, the people demanded that he have another evening in which to reply to the sweeping charges that had been brought against him and the cause he represented. It was, therefore, agreed that the anti-slavery agent would speak again on Friday, November 10, and that he would have the platform for the entire evening. When the appointed time came McKim found the town hall "crammed with people" many of whom came from the surrounding countryside. For three hours he spoke to a "deeply attentive"

¹² McKim Diary, November 8, 1837.

audience in answer to the remarks that Marr had made the previous Tuesday, and he later wrote that he considered it the best speech that he had ever made. He felt as though "the whole current of feeling in the audience seemed to be with me." When he had finished, his former host took the floor and after expressing the opinion that the discussion was shedding much light on an important subject, attempted to give a brief rebuttal to the remarks of the visitor and he promised to go into the problem in greater depth at still another meeting which was scheduled for the following Monday. McKim indicated that he would not be able to attend because of a previous speaking engagement. As the meeting ended Marr came up to the abolitionist, shook hands with him and invited McKim to be his guest once again.¹³

McKim accepted the offer, but he soon came to feel that the cordiality of his host was more apparent than real, for on Saturday he learned that Marr was still trying to undermine his influence. He heard that the Lewisburg clergyman had promised to do what he could to keep him out of the pulpit in other places. This rumour was apparently verified when, on Monday, November 13, McKim found that his previous engagement to speak at the church of Mr. Marr's brother had been cancelled. Despite some annoyance, he was actually relieved at this news for it would give him an opportunity to attend the anti-abolitionist meeting that had been scheduled for the same evening.¹⁴

The lead-off speaker at this affair was the Reverend Mr. Marr, and

¹³Ibid., November 10, 1837. A thorough search has revealed no trace of the text of this speech.

¹⁴Ibid., November 11-13, 1837.

this time he made a bitter and abusive attack upon the young man he had treated with such apparent friendship. He charged the abolitionist with "deceit and falsehood," and alleged that McKim's ultimate purpose was to divide the Union. He further associated his adversary with Fanny Wright, the Universalists, the Catholics, and Tammany Hall. Then, he told the audience that McKim had been refused a license to preach by his own Presbytery, and said that the reasons for this lay in his heretical views and his lack of intellectual attainments. McKim was granted the right to reply and he did the best he could, but his subsequent remark that he caused Marr's charges to recoil against him rings hollow when measured against the later actions of the meeting.¹⁵

After all of the speakers had finished the audience was asked to vote on two resolutions which were phrased in such a manner as to embarrass those with anti-slavery leanings. One of these motions asked all of those who favored "abolition, amalgamation, insurrection, and disunion" to say 'aye.' The other one asked those "opposed to immediate emancipation with all its attendant evils" to signify this by saying 'no.' Despite protests by McKim's few supporters against the unfair phrasing of the motions, the audience of more than forty persons voted overwhelmingly against the anti-slavery cause.¹⁶

One might think that by this time the residents of Lewisburg, whatever their position on the emancipation question, would have been

¹⁵Ibid., November 13, 1837. Emancipator, December 14, 1837.

¹⁶The text of the first resolution is taken from the McKim Diary, November 13, 1837. The text of the second is from the Emancipator, December 14, 1837.

thoroughly tired of these discussions, but such was not the case yet, for there were to be three more meetings before McKim left town. On Tuesday, before another "crammed" house the agent held a meeting of his own. Before he could begin, however, a member of the audience rose to ask that a vote be taken to find out whether those in the hall wished to hear the speaker. Others took to their feet to point out that this was an insult to those who had come to hear McKim and that those who did not wish to listen were at liberty to leave. Despite Marr's insistence that a vote be taken this was not done. Instead a motion was passed granting leave to withdraw to all those who did not wish to listen. After "a very few" persons left, McKim was allowed to deliver his address in peace.¹⁷

By this time McKim had again moved out of the Reverend Marr's house and he was now staying at the home of one of his ardent supporters. It was here, on November 15, that he learned that Marr was so upset about the pernicious doctrines that the anti-slavery man was preaching that he had exclaimed in the presence of several witnesses, "he has deceived me; they talk of mobbing him; he ought to be mobbed." As the news of this statement got around town feeling among McKim's partisans rose, and some of them determined to attend the anti-abolition meeting scheduled for that night and to seize the principal speakers and place McKim upon the platform. Either because McKim failed to attend the meeting, or for other reasons unknown, they failed to carry out this plan.¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid., McKim Diary, November 14, 1837.

¹⁸Ibid., November 15-16, 1837.

The anti-abolition meeting was somewhat sparsely attended, but its sponsors did succeed in securing the passage of a resolution demanding that McKim be denied the further use of the Town Hall. This action gave the anti-slavery agent and those who sided with him another chance to invoke the free speech issue and they did not fail to do so. McKim was slated to give his final address on Monday, November 20, and in view of the resolution against him he was offered a "commodious church" in which to speak. Instead of accepting this offer, however, the abolitionists insisted that his final talk be delivered at the Town Hall. The Lewisburg authorities made no move to stop the meeting, and McKim was able to deliver his lecture without incident. Indeed, by now interest was beginning to wane and the size of the audience appears to have dropped. Instead of describing the house as "crammed" he merely claimed that he spoke to a "respectable audience." After his talk was concluded McKim made an appeal for funds and collected almost forty dollars for the American Anti-Slavery Society.¹⁹

In concluding a letter he had written to the Emancipator describing the events at Lewisburg, McKim said that the opposition was in a small minority and that seven-eighths of the people favored a free discussion of the abolition issue and disapproved of the tactics that had been used by his adversaries. Furthermore, "not a few of them, besides, are decided abolitionists." Thus, when he spoke of the "opposition" he was referring less to those who differed with him than to those who would deny him a fair hearing, and he seems to have considered those who wished to give him a chance to speak as his supporters regardless of

¹⁹ Emancipator, December 14, 1837. McKim Diary, November 20, 1837.

where they stood on the abolition question.²⁰

Implicit in this stance was his belief that error could not long survive when confronted by truth. Overly optimistic though this view may have been, it was at the crux of the tenacity with which the abolitionists defended their right to free speech whenever it was threatened. The battle to be heard became the most valuable weapon in the arsenal of anti-slavery men like McKim for on this issue they could forge a link with the people they hoped to reach which transcended the differences that separated them. The conscious use of the free speech issue by the abolitionists is well illustrated in the advice which James Gillespie Birney of the American Anti-Slavery Society gave to McKim when he suggested that an emphasis upon the murder of Elijah Lovejoy and the attacks on freedom of the press might do much "for the restoration of the spirit of freedom among the Pennsylvanians."²¹ Thus, by linking the issue of free speech with abolition, the anti-slavery forces succeeded in injecting the question of human bondage into the public domain as a legitimate area for debate. Once this was done, it was only a matter of time before latent anti-slavery sentiment could be brought to the surface.

Altogether, during the twenty-six days that McKim spent in Lewisburg, he spoke at six meetings devoted to the slavery question and preached at least four sermons. But this was not the full extent of his activity, for he also made numerous trips to the small towns in the surrounding area, and during this period he delivered five lectures and

²⁰Emancipator, December 14, 1837.

²¹James Gillespie Birney to McKim, December 12, 1837, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

three sermons at New Columbia, Sodom, Milton, and New Berlin.

After leaving the area around the forks of the Susquehanna, McKim spent the next month travelling east and north through the towns of Danville, Wilkes-Barre, Carbondale and several intermediate points. This portion of his trip was relatively uneventful. He found that anti-abolition sentiment in Wilkes-Barre was so widespread as to make it impossible to lecture, but he received a warm welcome in Carbondale and other places where he stopped. On December 22 he arrived in Montrose just fifteen miles below the New York border. He learned with pleasure that all the ministers in the vicinity were abolitionists and that most of their parishioners shared these sentiments and he gave several talks in and around the town.²²

A few miles north of Montrose at Silver Lake lay the estate of Robert H. Rose, a wealthy proprietor who was engaged in an experiment designed to "show the practicability of raising coloured people to a level with the whites." On the invitation of Dr. Rose, McKim agreed to speak to the Negroes, and on December 26 he visited the estate.²³ There can be little doubt that the things he saw and learned at this place played a role, albeit a small one, in shaping the attitudes that the anti-slavery man would later bring to the question of Reconstruction during and after the Civil War.

Dr. Rose was a widely read man who had travelled abroad extensively, and who had early become impressed with the value of the share cropping or metayer system that had been practiced in parts of France and Italy.

²²McKim Diary, November 24-December 22, 1837.

²³Ibid., December 28, 1837.

He had attempted to create such a system using first English and then Irish tenants, and when these plans failed he conceived the notion of testing the sincerity of the protestations of the slaveholders that they would free their slaves if only ways could be found of indemnifying them for their losses and assuring the future of their bondsmen. Rose offered to let slaves come to his estate where they would work to accumulate the money to buy their freedom. When there were no takers he recruited free Negroes to work as share croppers upon the estate on a plan by which he supplied tools and the necessities of life to his tenants and they in turn gave half of their produce to him. The increased value of the stock and of all things raised on the farm by the tenants was to be shared equally between them and the proprietor.²⁴

The system that Rose established in 1836 was an essentially paternalistic one. Although he provided for the creation of an Association of Coloured People at Silver Lake, he kept tight control over it and insisted on having the prerogative to veto the decisions of the association to accept new members or expel old ones. In the beginning the enterprise was organized along "the community plan" with the Negroes sharing equally among themselves in the proceeds of their labor, but the proprietor was forced to abandon this plan, and by the

²⁴Ibid. This description of Rose's plans and activities has been pieced together from the diary entry noted above and from three letters from Rose to James Gillespie Birney, December 13, 20, 1834; July 15, 1836, in Birney Letters, I, 156-157, 159-160, 336-342. The last letter contains a printed enclosure with the heading, "Articles of Agreement between R. H. Rose and the Association of Coloured People at Silver Lake."

time McKim visited the estates each family was working for itself. It is interesting to note that despite McKim's interest in a wide variety of perfectionist schemes for reform, he had no faith in collectivist experiments. After noting that Dr. Rose began on the community plan he added, "but of course without success."²⁵

The switch to farming on an individual basis had done much to revive the flagging fortunes of the venture; nevertheless, when McKim saw it, it could not possibly be termed successful. Part of the reason for the lack of profitability may be attributed to the poor quality of the soil, for McKim reported that neighboring farmers and the doctor's business agent believed that the Negro farmers were the best tenants the estate had yet seen. On the other hand, Doctor Rose complained of the improvidence and indolence of his tenants. McKim's own impression of the Negroes was favorable and he described himself as "much pleased with their looks and behavior."²⁶

Dr. Rose's neighbors implied that his motives were more selfish than philanthropic, but McKim's characterization of him as a worldly but kindhearted man "given to experiments that are usually unsuccessful" is perhaps more accurate.²⁷ Rose was a forerunner of a breed of men he would come to know well during Reconstruction. Seeking to unite private interest and the public good, they hoped to make a profit while educating the Negro to the ways of white civilization.

²⁵Ibid. The quotation from McKim is taken from his diary, December 28, 1837.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

Upon completing his visit to Silver Lake, McKim headed south and spoke at Brooklyn, Harford, Gibson and Carbondale before concluding his trip and returning to Philadelphia on January 10, 1838. After taking a respite of less than a week, he was travelling again. This time his destination was Harrisburg where the First Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society was being held.²⁸

It was at this gathering that McKim's future field of labor was chosen. While he was making his northeastern tour he received word from James Gillespie Birney, the Corresponding Secretary of the American Anti-Slavery Society, that the western branch of the Pennsylvania society was in precarious condition and that it was even doubtful that five recently appointed agents from the Pittsburg area would accept their commissions. Birney asked McKim to make a lecture tour of the area in order to strengthen the influence of the national organization there and to raise money for the cause. At the time of the request McKim indicated that he was favorably disposed to make the trip, and the subject arose again at the meeting of the Pennsylvania society where it was definitely decided that the newly returned agent should make a western tour.²⁹

McKim, however, had been anxious to visit the nation's capital both as a sightseer and in order to once again witness slavery at first hand, and he decided to make a week long detour to Washington before

²⁸Ibid., December 30, 1837-January 16, 1838.

²⁹McKim to Joshua Leavitt, February 6, 1838, in the Emancipator, February 22, 1838. James Gillespie Birney to McKim, December 12, 1837, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. McKim Diary, February 6, 1838.

anti-slavery lectures is scanty, it seems almost certain that they did not differ significantly from the official position of the radical anti-slavery movement that has been described above. His speeches seem to have emphasized the moral guilt of the entire nation for tolerating the sin of slavery. On one occasion he charged that the North was as guilty as the South, but he defended the right of citizens of one section to interfere (by moral suasion) with the institutions of another section. He repeatedly attacked the colonization society and doubtless drew heavily on Garrison's pamphlet for his arguments.²⁸

The moral and religious origins of the anti-slavery movement in general, and of McKim's abolitionism in particular are nowhere more clearly illustrated than in his condemnation of the churches for their failure to oppose slavery. Speaking in Woodbury, New Jersey on May 29, 1837 he attacked northern Presbyterians for failing to rebuke their southern brethren for holding slaves. He noted that below the Mason and Dixon line even ministers and elders bought and sold slaves, and that the highest bodies in his church had refused to take any action to indicate their disapproval of such practices. McKim said that he felt especially free to criticize the Presbyterian Church in view of the fact that he was a member of that body.

A member of the audience expressed the belief that the church was not as sinful as McKim depicted it, and suggested that attacks upon it were likely to do more harm than good to the cause of religion. The anti-slavery agent insisted that his charges were true, and noted that it was the existence of the sin of slaveholding within the church and

²⁸Ibid., June 3, October 17-20, November 8, December 25, 1837; March 23, 1838.

whole family with me." Observing the pain inflicted by the slave trade even where family ties remained unbroken, McKim wondered to himself "what must be the agony of these poor victims where these ties are ruthlessly sundered."³¹

With such scenes fresh in his mind the anti-slavery lecturer arrived in Washington and took up lodgings at the boarding house of a Mrs. Wallace whose permanent guests included six members of Congress. Despite his interest in the condition of the slave in the capital city, McKim was also a tourist, and during the course of his nine day visit he heard John Quincy Adams address the House of Representatives on the question of relations between the United States and Mexico. He listened to William Rives addressing the Senate, and he spoke with David Potts, the congressman from his hometown of Carlisle. Like any newcomer to Washington on his first visit, McKim also stopped at the White House.³²

Despite his interest in seeing the tourist attractions in the capital city, McKim had sights of a more serious nature to view, for he was determined to witness the slave trade at first hand and intended to write an account of it for the anti-slavery press. In pursuit of this objective he visited the slave 'factory' run by Franklin and Armfield the largest firm engaged in the domestic slave trade, and he inspected a similar, although smaller establishment run by a W. H. Williams. He also took a brief trip to Alexandria in hopes of boarding the slave.

³¹Ibid.

³²McKim Diary, February 2, 3, and 6, 1838.

trading ship, the Tribune, but it had not yet arrived in port.³³

In two lengthy letters published in the Emancipator McKim described what he saw in Washington. The bulk of his report was concerned with the Williams factory since other anti-slavery writers had already described the establishment of Franklin and Armfield in great detail. McKim's account was equally specific. He described the size of the rooms in which the slaves were kept (30 slaves in a 25 foot square room), the number of blankets that were provided for each slave (two), and the number of meals provided each day (two). He gathered a good deal of information about the "licentiousness of the system of slavery," but "delicacy" forbade him to go into detail on this subject. McKim questioned the slave keeper closely about escapes and the means by which the slaves were kept in a state of subordination.³⁴

At the beginning of his visit he noticed the same family he had seen aboard the train coming to Washington, and he asked his guide where they were being taken. The slave keeper relayed question to the Negro father who replied "in tones of the deepest sadness" that he was being taken to Alabama. "Not feeling at liberty to ask questions of these poor things," McKim turned away. Nevertheless, just before he ended his visit he did put questions directly to two slaves. "'Would you like to go and live along with me'" he asked. One of the slaves replied that he didn't know and McKim then said "'I don't look as though I would be very hard on you--do I?'" The slave answered that you couldn't always

³³Emancipator, February 22, 1838. McKim Diary, February 3, 1838.

³⁴Emancipator, February 22 and March 1, 1838.

judge by looks and his companion added that "them that looks the easiest are sometimes the worst." McKim finally told the slaves that he was not a slaveholder and that he was from a free state, and this brought a good deal of relief to the two bondsmen.³⁵

McKim's account was written in the same heavy-handed sentimental style that characterized most abolitionist descriptions of slavery. At the conclusion of his first article he noted that he had no room for comment on the scenes he had described, but "none, however, is necessary, the guilt! the shame! the heartlessness! the hypocrisy of this nation! will be thoughts that will naturally crowd themselves into the minds of our readers."³⁶ What such an account lacked in subtlety and sophistication it made up in appeal to an anti-slavery readership hungry for material to confirm their worst impressions of human bondage.

It may also be noted that McKim's passing reference to several of the inmates of the slave factory as "poor things" seems to betoken an unconscious condescension and a feeling of moral superiority which were at variance with the stated belief of the abolitionists in human equality. This inconsistency which was evident in the writings of McKim's co-workers as well would appear to be a product of the religious origins of the movement which gave the abolitionists a sense that they were doing the Lord's work. Those against whom they struggled, and the slave victims themselves, became poor benighted souls in need of assistance from the small elect group that truly understood the will of God.

³⁵Ibid., March 1, 1838.

³⁶Ibid., February 22, 1838.

On February 6, the anti-slavery agent left Washington for Pittsburg which he reached three days later. His western tour was to last for almost two and a half months and during that time he would deliver 16 anti-slavery lectures and 14 sermons to audiences which were, on the whole, far less difficult than those he faced in the East. McKim appears to have restricted his activities to an area within a forty mile radius of Pittsburg, although on one occasion he did make a trip to Olive Township in Meigs County, Ohio in order to visit relatives. During this lecture tour he appeared in such places as Beaver, Miller's Run, East Bridgewater, Big Stocking and, of course, Pittsburg. On balance, the trip does not appear to have been fully successful. McKim's diary records only fifty dollars in collections, and despite the fact that he had little trouble in his speaking engagements, the subsequent weakness of the western society gives mute testimony to the fact that his efforts to strengthen the anti-slavery organization in the area bore little fruit.³⁷

When his western trip was concluded McKim decided to visit Carlisle on his way back to Philadelphia, and he arrived in his former hometown on April 28. At the invitation of the pastor of his old church he agreed to address the congregation on the following day. As he was in the midst of his sermon McKim began to feel ill and he was forced to halt his talk and sit down. This was not the first time he had suffered from a fainting spell while speaking in public. Twice when he was a student and four times since then he had fainted or come close to it

³⁷McKim Diary, February 6 - April 23, 1838.

while he was making a public address. The episode in Carlisle marked the seventh time he had been plagued by this problem and he determined that it should be the last. The anti-slavery agent resolved to give up public speaking for some time, perhaps a year, in order to allow his "nervous system to recover its former tone."³⁸

³⁸Ibid., April 29, 1838. See also, the entry for April 1, 1837.

CHAPTER VI

CHOOSING THE WORK OF A LIFETIME

The fainting spell in Carlisle brought McKim's career as an agent to a temporary halt. The factors which were responsible for these episodes are obscure, but it is clear that for over a year he had been troubled by questions of religion, love and career which often left him deeply depressed and upset. When, in October 1836, he had first entered the field as a lecturer, he had put himself in a position where he would once again be exposed to the kind of religious liberalism that had brought him to question his Presbyterian beliefs in 1834. By May 1837, McKim's contacts with the Motts and other Hicksite Quakers together with his growing acquaintance with Unitarians like William Furness had brought to the surface the same grave doubts that had plagued the young minister three years earlier. He found himself unconcerned about the dispute between the old and new schools, and he doubted the truth of two doctrines which were held with equal vigor by both factions. He wondered whether the Bible had indeed been directly inspired by God and had serious doubts about the doctrine of vicarious atonement which held that Christ died for the sins of man.¹

McKim was frightened by his doubts and questions for he seemed to be heading into uncharted waters, and in his diary he wondered aloud whither am I drifting. I certainly feel as though I had left my old moorings and were drifting into the unknown depths of radicalism. I sometimes fear I shall lose my

¹McKim Diary, January 7, May 18, 1837.

character and my opportunities of usefulness. The latter I dread and yet I want to know the truth and follow whithersoever it may lead.²

The young seeker was of course acutely aware of the fact that were he to embrace these new views fully he would have to give up his career as a Presbyterian minister and seek a new field of endeavor.

The necessity for making some sort of a decision became more acute as the result of McKim's growing involvement with Sarah Speakman, the daughter of a prosperous Hicksite farmer. He met Sarah on March 22, 1837 while in the midst of a lecture tour and within a day it was clear to him that his intentions were quite serious, for he noted in his diary that, "My visit here I expect to look back to as an epoch in my life." As this relationship developed it placed increasing pressure on McKim to find a settled occupation which would enable him to support a wife. The life of a travelling agent was suited to single men, but not to those with family responsibilities. On the other hand, if he left his post as an agent, the only work for which he was trained was the ministry unless he returned to the tannery, and he does not seem to have ever considered this last possibility seriously. If however, he made his doctrinal doubts public he would have to leave the church and find an entirely new means by which to earn a living.³

²Ibid., May 18, 1837.

³Ibid., March 22-23, 1837. By the Spring of 1837 McKim had announced to some of his associates that he intended to retire from his work as an agent for "private reasons," and it seems reasonable to infer that these reasons were related to his subsequent proposal to Sarah. F. Julius LeMoyné wrote McKim on April 4, 1838 that in view of the critical need for agents "private reasons" were not a sufficient excuse for quitting unless it was to enable him to get married. McKim Collection, Cornell.

When McKim met with the Presbytery of Wilmington in June 1837 over the question of his abolitionist activity, he did not share his religious uncertainties with them, but he was seriously considering leaving the church and becoming a Unitarian as a result of his inability to accept the doctrine of vicarious atonement. Remembering the kindness and understanding that the members of the Presbytery had shown him, he worried about the opprobrium they would be subjected to if he now "came out with an open repudiation of their most cherished doctrines," but he finally decided that whatever decision he came to "must be based upon truth alone."⁴ Nevertheless, in August, he was still in a quandary and frankly confessed to himself that he feared the consequences of being cast out of the church. He would be without a profession and unable to provide for his brothers and sisters. Moreover, he would have to "give up hopes of a union with the object of my hearts affection."⁵

By October, McKim felt it probable that he would soon feel compelled to publicly renounce his connection to the Presbyterian church, but he decided not to do it "till compelled by an imperious sense of duty." In the meantime, he became increasingly devoted to his work as an anti-slavery agent. When he had begun his northeastern tour he had planned to give up his agency at the end of the year, but by December 31, 1837 he had abandoned this plan entirely. He had become increasingly interested in his work and had grown in the conviction that it represented the path of duty. He concluded that he would continue as

⁴McKim Diary, June 18 and 20, 1837. The quotation is from the entry for June 20.

⁵Ibid., August 4, 1837.

an agent of the cause "till either slavery is abolished or indications not to be misunderstood direct me to some other sphere of labor."⁶

Gradually, the anti-slavery movement was becoming a substitute for formal religion in McKim's life. On January 22, 1838 just after the meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society concluded, he wrote that he felt himself drawing away from his earlier religious views, but coming closer to God. Five weeks later he made a firm decision to publicly repudiate the doctrine of vicarious atonement and to accept the inevitable expulsion from the Presbytery which would follow such a step. He also decided to write a pamphlet describing his views on the subject of the atonement and to send it to the Presbytery as soon as his health and schedule allowed.⁷

McKim did not begin writing his public disavowal of this basic Presbyterian doctrine for more than two months, but once he started, it took him less than two weeks to finish the document. By July 2 it was on the way to the Presbytery, and copies were en route to other interested persons such as George Duffield. In essence, McKim argued that there was no biblical sanction for the view that Christ died for the sins of man, and that such a doctrine ran contrary to reason. In his diary he had asserted that "no one being however exalted can atone vicariously or otherwise for another's sins," and his published statement

⁶Ibid., October 11, December 31, 1837.

⁷Ibid., January 22, March 2, 1838.

expressed the same view albeit in a more prolix and muted fashion. McKim argued that atonement could only be made through an individual repentance which included the permanent repudiation of sin, and in which the individual cast himself upon the mercy of God and consecrated himself to His service.⁸

Viewed through the prism of the twentieth century, McKim's insistence upon writing a public denunciation of the views to which he once adhered seems curious indeed. It certainly would have been simpler for him to merely resign from his church and to go about his search for truth without fanfare. But such a procedure would not have been in accord with the missionary zeal that had brought McKim into the church and which had led him to embrace the anti-slavery cause. Explaining his decision to his brother John who was now an Episcopal minister, McKim wrote:

I could not help believing as I do, and disbelieving as I do; and this being my state of mind I could not help honestly declaring my change of sentiment. Had I done otherwise I would have proved recreant to reason, to my conscience and to my maker and would have been unworthy of the regard of my friends.⁹

The young minister's compulsion to make his views known thus seems to have been closely related to his evangelical conception of his religious duty. Once he changed his beliefs, the logic of his position required him to seek to make others aware of the fact that they too were laboring under the incubus of a false doctrine.

⁸Ibid., March 2, July 2, 1838. James Miller McKim, A Letter to the Presbytery of Wilmington (Philadelphia: Merrihew & Gunn, 1838). The theological intricacies of this argument which seemed so important at the time are of little interest to the modern student and will not be treated here.

⁹James Miller McKim to John Linn McKim, June 30, 1838, Chubb Collection.

The repercussions from McKim's theological bombshell were not long in coming. His brother John indicated that in general he agreed with Miller's new opinions, and he went on to suggest that these views might find a comfortable home within the Episcopal church. Another brother, William, felt that Miller had to follow his conscience wherever it might lead, but he was not at all happy that it led away from the Presbyterian Church. His reaction was, perhaps, influenced by the pressure he felt from neighbors in Carlisle, for he described their responses in great detail. Some were quoted as saying that his new opinions were pure Hicksite Quaker doctrine, while others expressed the belief that he had merely taken leave of his senses. One old school supporter, Zekiel Bullock summed up his views by saying: "It's nothin but [Albert] Barnes and Duffil' developed!"¹⁰

Despite Bullock's certainty that Duffield was at the root of it all, the new school clergyman was horrified at the enormity of his former protégé's heresy. During the Summer of 1838 McKim's former mentor sent three letters urging the apostate to reconsider before it was too late, and condemning his association with abolitionists whom Duffield considered to be fanatics whose self adulatory spirit led them to the conviction that they were somehow more pious than other persons. The relationship between the two men had been increasingly cool ever since McKim had given up his Womelsdorf pastorate, and as their correspondence progressed over the summer the tone of these letters became increasingly

¹⁰William McKim to James Miller McKim, July 8, 1838; John Linn McKim to James Miller McKim, July 4, 1838, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

hostile. In April 1839 Duffield sent what appears to have been the last communication between the two men for more than twenty-five years. Having heard that McKim was critically ill he wrote the sick man: "I hope that the Lord does not intend to cut you down in the midst of your days; but His strike me as very wonderful in reference to you." He went on to say: "I tremble for you and should you pass into the eternal world without repentance and recovery from the injury you have done to the blessed saviour, to His cause and to yourself by your dreadful apostasy I shall always think of you with heaviness of heart."¹¹

¹¹George Duffield to McKim, April 8, 1839, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. George Duffield to McKim, July 9, 1838, McKim Collection, Cornell. This letter and two others from Duffield to McKim are referred to in the McKim Diary, July 18, 19, and August 1, 1838. See also, McKim to Duffield, July 23, and August 30, 1838, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

There is an interesting parallel between the deteriorating McKim-Duffield relationship, and the increasing estrangement between Theodore Weld and his former mentor, Charles G. Finney. While the two westerners do not appear to have parted acrimoniously, and a split over religious doctrine played no role in the growing division between them, Finney became quite concerned that the anti-slavery agitation might lead to civil war and that it was draining support away from revivalism. It appears that no further correspondence between the two men took place after Finney made these complaints to Weld in a letter dated, July 21, 1836.

As has been suggested in the text above, Duffield resented the influence of the abolition movement upon McKim. But his attitudes went beyond this, for he, like Finney, believed that revivalism was of primary importance and that abolitionism was channeling the interests of many away from religion. Thus, in 1840 he delivered a sermon in which he said: "The discussion of it [slavery] has frequently proved disastrous to important social interests and individual usefulness. Instances are not wanting where it has entirely destroyed the balance of mind, effectually transformed the character, and totally ruined the ministerial usefulness of some, who allowed the subject to usurp a chief or prominent place in their thoughts and pulpit ministrations: Yea, where it has led to the renunciation of the ministerial character and office, and to the utter overthrow and dispersion of a church whose members instead of following the things 'which make for peace,' have become jealous to revile each other."

It might also be noted that the response of Lyman Beecher was similar. All three revivalists (Duffield, Finney and Beecher) held anti-slavery sentiments, but their primary allegiance was to revivalism itself and they were unwilling to see it jeopardized, even by a reform

In sharp contrast to Duffield's reaction which reflected the pangs of a wounded ego more than a concern for the state of McKim's soul, was the attitude of Eliphalet Wheeler Gilbert, who was the guiding force within the Wilmington Presbytery. He had been most helpful to McKim when he was first entering the ministry, and the Delaware clergymen had taken a most tolerant attitude toward the young preacher's abolitionist activities. After receiving a copy of McKim's pamphlet Gilbert wrote a letter in which he attributed McKim's defection to anti-slavery activities, and his Quaker associations. Thinking that his motives were being impugned, McKim wrote that these factors may have had some effect upon him, but that it was "the truth" which had changed his mind. In late August Gilbert replied saying that he had not intended to question McKim's motives, nor to intimate that they were unworthy. He said that he and his brethren believed McKim to have been "honest tho' hasty in this matter," and they were resolved to take no disciplinary steps until they had conferred with the author of A Letter to the Presbytery. Gilbert asked McKim to consent to an interview with a committee of the Presbytery no matter how firmly his mind was made up, and added: "It is a debt of friendship you owe us."

that it had spawned. In addition, their sense of the practical led them to trim their sails in the face of a hostile public. It was only the younger evangelists, like Weld and McKim, who could afford to follow the doctrine of 'faith through works' wherever it led. Barnes, Antislavery Impulse, pp. 72-73. George Duffield, A Sermon on American Slavery: Its Nature and the Duties of Christians in Relation to It (Detroit: J. S. and S. A. Bagg, Printers, 1840), p. 5. Weld-Grimké Letters, I, 318-320. See also, McLoughlin, Modern Revivalism, pp. 108-113.

He promised that "we will not meet you in the spirit of controversy."¹²

McKim knew that such a meeting would be the beginning of a process leading to his "excision and deposition from the ministry," but he expressed himself as "resigned to the result or rather - 'indifferent.'" On the first of October McKim met with a two man committee of the Presbytery which included Gilbert, and he expressed his firm adherence to the doctrines contained in his pamphlet. After receiving assurances that all that he said "would not be used against him publicly, he gave frank answers to their questions. In addition to restating his views on the issue of vicarious atonement, he admitted that he did not believe in the Trinity "as popularly understood." To further questions he said that he had no doubt of the divinity of Christ, but he was sceptical of the view that "he was God equal with the Father." McKim also expressed doubt that the scriptures were inspired directly and infallibly by the Lord.¹³

The committee treated the apostate with kindness, and after the meeting was over McKim wrote in his diary that he loved and admired Gilbert. True to its word, the committee did not detail McKim's statements in its report, and said only that he expressed a firm adherence to the doctrines set forth in his pamphlet and declined giving any further explanation. It also reported that he had no desire to appear

¹²Eliphalet W. Gilbert to McKim, August 23, 1838, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. Gilbert's first letter to McKim, and the latter's reply have not been found, but their contents can be inferred from McKim's diary entry for July 11, 1838 and Gilbert's letter cited above.

¹³McKim Diary, September 13, October 1, 1838. Minutes of the Wilmington Presbytery, October 9-10, 1838, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

in his own defense before the Presbytery, and wished them to proceed to dispose of his case as quickly as possible. He left his Wilmington brethren no alternative but to depose him from the ministry for heresy, and they did so on October 10, 1838.¹⁴

In the meantime, the months that had passed since McKim decided to make his beliefs public and take the consequences had presented him with other problems as well. After the fainting spell in Carlisle caused him to abandon his career as a travelling agent, he had returned to Philadelphia where he resumed his occasional status as a member of the Mott household. During the month of May as he was attempting to regain his health, he tried to get his bearings and chart a new course for himself. He had been deeply attracted to Sarah Speakman ever since they met in March 1837, and on several occasions during the year that followed he was on the point of asking her to marry him, but his uncertain future seems to have deterred him from taking the final step until he had given up the ministry and his career as a lecturer. In May he asked the Quaker girl to be his wife and on the last day of the month he went to speak to her father. Their meeting was friendly, but Mr. Speakman seems to have been quite concerned about McKim's lack of a career. Nevertheless, the close ties which the young man had with the Motts must have weighed heavily in his favor, for the prosperous Quaker farmer decided to come to Philadelphia in a week to discuss the proposed marriage with them.¹⁵ It is worth noting that this arrangement is a clear indication

¹⁴Ibid. McKim Diary, October 1, 1838.

¹⁵Ibid., May 30, 1838.

of the fact that, even though McKim was now twenty-eight years of age, the Motts played the role of parent surrogates in his life.

The meeting between Micajah Speakman and the Motts must have been a success, for by the end of June McKim could write his brother John that he was engaged to marry the daughter of a "well off" Quaker, and that she herself was a "'Gay Quaker' who was young, handsome, amiable, pious," and accomplished. Nevertheless, the future was still shrouded in uncertainty, for the prospective bridegroom added that "my being out of a situation is a barrier. I can't tell when we will be married possibly never, probably some time."¹⁶ Thus, McKim's future happiness seemed to depend upon his ability to choose a career which would enable him to support Sarah adequately.

Through most of the Summer of 1838 McKim remained undecided about his future occupation. By late August he had narrowed the choices down to medicine and teaching, but he feared that his poor health would interfere with his success in any field he tried. Finally, on August 31, he decided to return to medicine and shortly thereafter he again enrolled in the Medical School of the University of Pennsylvania.¹⁷ As soon as he made the decision to return to school, McKim began to read medicine again, but he still found it difficult to concentrate and he had little real enthusiasm for his studies. When, in the middle of October an acquaintance of one of his friends attempted to commit suicide McKim

¹⁶John Linn McKim to James Miller McKim, June 30, 1838, Chubb Collection.

¹⁷McKim Diary, August 23 and 31, 1838.

went to the hospital to give the man religious counsel, but he nearly fainted and had to leave the sickroom. This experience left him shaken, and he wondered whether he would not have to give up medicine if this was his reaction to a hospital situation.¹⁸

McKim was consistently in a state of acute depression during these Fall months and even the cause of abolition did not interest him. On the first of December after attending an anti-slavery meeting he remarked that "I need reviving - my anti-slavery enthusiasm has subsided." The next day, he was so despondent that he entertained thoughts of suicide. "I am trying to fight the good fight of faith," he wrote, "but the struggle is a hard one. I wish it were over. The world has few charms for me; and death would be a happy release - but this is cowardly."¹⁹ Plagued by ill health that seemed to unfit him for any kind of work, and facing the imminent exhaustion of the remainder of the money from his father's estate, it is not surprising that December found him in an acute state of dejection. Previously, money meant little to him, but his engagement to a girl "who has always enjoyed the comforts of life" made it hard for him "to be content with the things I have."²⁰

By Christmas time McKim's mood of pessimism had deepened to the point where he began to feel that his engagement was a "source of more anxiety than pleasure" in view of his bleak future, and he wondered "why I should keep up an engagement which I have no prospect of fulfilling?" The day after he made this discouraging entry McKim began

¹⁸Ibid., October 14, 1838.

¹⁹Ibid., December 2, 1838.

²⁰Ibid., December 8, 1838.

to fall ill, and by early January, 1839 he was so sick that his friends were certain that he was dying, and he later claimed that he would have welcomed death as a relief from his troubles. By February 21, however, he was well enough to begin making entries in his diary again, but it took several months before he fully regained his strength.²¹

The chaotic state of McKim's life must have disturbed his friends the Motts greatly for they were like parents to him. Shortly after he had announced his engagement, Lucretia Mott had written that she would be "gaining a daughter" as a result of the marriage. Thus, in January when McKim's illness brought his medical studies to an abrupt end they set about the task of attempting to bring some order out of their young protégé's life by procuring a position for him as the publishing agent of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. It was expected that this job would soon be available because the executive committee of the society was dissatisfied with the performance of Joseph Healy who currently held the post and was planning to "promote" him to another job more suited to his talents.²² McKim's illness prevented him from responding to the offer when it was made, and the matter was not raised again until early May when he learned that he could probably get the job if he wanted it. This position promised to be permanent in nature and would give McKim the kind of stable occupation he needed in order to marry Sarah; at the same time it would enable him to work for the anti-slavery cause to which

²¹Ibid., December 25, 1838; December 26, 1838-January 1, 1839.

²²James Mott to McKim, January 14, 1839, McKim Collection, Cornell. Lucretia Mott's remark about gaining a daughter is in her letter to McKim dated July 27, 1838. Friends Historical Society Collection, Swarthmore College Library.

he was so devoted. Without further hesitation he decided to accept the job as soon as he received a formal offer.²³

Getting Joseph Healy to resign for a post of greater prestige appears to have been more difficult than had first been anticipated, and the formal offer McKim had hoped for was not made until December 30, 1839. Nevertheless, the executive committee of the Pennsylvania society did pass a resolution on July 17 declaring that should a vacancy occur in the anti-slavery office, McKim was to have the preference over other applicants provided he agrees to labor in the meantime as an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society.²⁴

This last condition grew out of the fact that the national organization, with the full backing of the Pennsylvania society, was planning to put a strong force of agents into the eastern part of the state for the purpose of revitalizing abolition sentiment in areas that had been visited by lecturers in previous years. The agents were to set up abolition libraries, obtain subscriptions to the newspapers of the cause, collect funds, and to encourage abolitionists to "vote right at the polls." McKim agreed to serve as an agent of the national society for the usual salary of eight dollars a week, and he was commissioned in early August.²⁵

²³McKim Diary, May 8, 15, 1839.

²⁴Joseph Healy to McKim, July 17, 1839, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

²⁵Joshua Leavitt to McKim, July 5, 1839, Agents Commission of the American Anti-Slavery Society made out to McKim, dated August 5, 1839, and valid for one year, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

By August 18 McKim was back on the lecture circuit. Using Carlisle as his base of operations he spent the remainder of the Summer and most of the Fall working the south central Pennsylvania area. He appears to have disagreed with the policy that sent agents back to cover ground that had already been broken, for he stated that he felt that too many lecturers had been sent to counties such as Chester and Bucks which were located near Philadelphia while not enough attention had been given to virgin territory in the state. In an attempt to remedy this situation McKim centered his activities in south central Pennsylvania where he lectured extensively in Adams County.²⁶

As far as can be determined, McKim's experiences during the course of this tour were substantially similar to those he had undergone in 1837 and 1838. As he carried his message from town to town he frequently encountered men who were so hostile to his purpose that they tried to disrupt his meetings. Such an occurrence took place at Gettysburg where he was greeted by a barrage of eggs when he began speaking. Thaddeus Stevens happened to be in the audience, however, and came to the lecturer's aid. The Pennsylvania politician took his place on the platform beside McKim and there were no further incidents. When the visitor's speech was finished, Stevens took the rostrum and offered a reward of fifty dollars for the apprehension of the egg thrower and asked the meeting to vote a resolution condemning those who had tried to

²⁶Pennsylvania Freeman, August 8, 1839.

disrupt the proceedings.²⁷

Despite the fact that his agency was proceeding as well as could be expected, McKim's tenure as a lecturer for the national society came to an abrupt end in November due to the growing impact of the nationwide depression which was drying up the sources of financial support upon which the society had placed its reliance. The grandiose plans of the national organization for putting a large force of agents into the field had been dampened from the very beginning by the refusal of many of the Seventy to serve again. McKim was one of only twenty who had responded to the call. Now, in November even those twenty were told that there were no more funds with which to pay them and that their employment was terminated effective immediately, unless they could support themselves out of collections made in the field.²⁸

Luckily for McKim his period of unemployment was to be quite brief for he received two job offers in December. On the sixteenth of that month the executive committee of the New Jersey Anti-Slavery Society invited McKim to work as an agent for them, and on the thirtieth

²⁷Ibid., September 12, 1839. C. C. Burleigh to McKim, October 26 [?], 1839, McKim Collection, Cornell.

²⁸The letter terminating McKim's employment has not been found, but James Gillespie Birney's note to Arnold Buffum, November 8, 1839 is a sample of the letters that were sent out. The fact that such letters were sent to all agents is indicated in the communication of Henry B. Stanton and James Gillespie Birney to the Executive Committee of the Massachusetts Abolition Society, November 27, 1839. See, Birney Letters, I, 502-508.

The depression was not the only reason why the agents could not be paid. At the last annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society a resolution had been adopted which prohibited the agents of the national organization from taking up collections without the permission of the state society. This prevented the agents from supporting themselves by their collections. See, ibid., I, 506.

the Pennsylvania organization invited him to take charge of their book office at an annual salary of six hundred dollars.²⁹ In view of the fact that the Pennsylvania position promised to be permanent, and in light of his personal ties in Philadelphia and the surrounding area, it is not surprising that McKim chose to go to work in the book office as the publishing agent of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

His acceptance of this position marked the beginning of a twenty-two year career as a paid functionary of the Pennsylvania society. During this period his talent for administration and his dedication to the cause would place him at the very heart of the organization's affairs, and he would come to play a crucial role in all of its activities from giving clandestine aid to fugitive slaves to publishing the Pennsylvania Freeman.

²⁹Joseph Parrish to McKim, December 12, 1839, McKim Collection, Cornell. Edward M. Davis to McKim, December 30, 1839, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

CHAPTER VII

THE PENNSYLVANIA ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY

The Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society with which McKim was now associated had been founded three years earlier (in January 1837) as a result of the growing tendency toward organization within the radical abolition movement, but it also represented a continuation of the tradition of Quaker opposition to slavery which reached back to the late seventeenth century. The objections of the Pennsylvania Friends to black servitude had grown steadily during the eighteenth century, and reached a culmination in 1776 when the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting voted to disown those members who persisted in holding slaves.¹ At about the same time, a few Quakers began to expand their efforts beyond the bounds of their own denomination, and in 1775 a group was formed to aid Negroes being unlawfully held as slaves.

The outbreak of conflict with the British forced the new society to suspend its activities, but even so, the stream of Quaker abolitionism merged with the larger current of libertarian idealism unleashed by the Revolution, and in 1780 Pennsylvania became the first state to pass a gradual emancipation bill. In 1784, with the war

¹Edward Raymond Turner, The Negro in Pennsylvania: Slavery-Servitude - Freedom, 1639-1861 (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1911), pp. 73-76. See also, Rufus M. Jones, The Quakers in the American Colonies (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1966), pp. 509-521.

concluded, the group that had been formed nine years earlier was revived under the title of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage. Although its sponsorship was broadened somewhat to include a few non-Quakers such as Franklin and Rush, it was still comprised mainly of Friends.²

With the principle of freedom already established in law, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society was able to devote its primary activities to hastening the process of emancipation that had been initiated in 1780, and toward obtaining legal protections for the freedmen. As more and more Negroes were emancipated new problems began to emerge out of the prejudice of the white community and from the poverty and ignorance of the blacks which threatened to permanently freeze them into an inferior status. To cope with this situation the abolition society set up schools and established visiting committees to minister to the spiritual and material needs of the colored community in Philadelphia. In order to protect free Negroes (and indeed, fugitives as well) from slavecatchers the society successfully lobbied for legislation severely punishing the crime of kidnapping and requiring that persons accused as runaways be brought before a judge. Thus, from its inception the primary interest of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society was in improving the condition of free Negroes in the

²Edward A. Needles, An Historical Memoir of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage and for the Improving the Condition of the African Race (Philadelphia: Merriew and Thompson, 1848), pp. 6-7, 14-16. Arthur Zilversmit, The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 93-98, 124-138.

state through legal and charitable means.³

Nevertheless, the organization was also devoted to spreading the principle of gradual abolition, and in its early years it was instrumental in encouraging the formation of groups with similar aims in other states. It took a major role in bringing about the formation of the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery which was a loose federation of gradualist groups throughout the nation. By 1805, however, the growing apathy of its membership together with mounting hostility toward even the mildest forms of abolition, led the society to become less energetic in its espousal of the cause, and after that year its efforts were almost exclusively devoted to projects for improving the condition of the free Negroes of Philadelphia.⁴

By the time that the radical anti-slavery movement made its American debut, the abolition society's functions as a philanthropic and legal aid organization were so well established that no one seems to have contemplated the possibility of adopting a more aggressive stance. Even members like James Mott and Thomas Earle, who later became militants, appear to have made no efforts to remedy the society's position.⁵

³Turner, History of the Negro in Pennsylvania, pp. 210-215. Needles, History of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, passim.

⁴Ibid., pp. 42, 54-55.

⁵Mott was admitted to the society in 1816. Earle joined in 1820 and later served the organization as a vice-president. See the membership list which appears in the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, 1825-1847, in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The Minutes of the society for the years 1825-1834 contain nothing to suggest the existence of conflict within the organization. This impression is reinforced by Needles, History of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, p. 90.

Instead, the period from 1834-1835 saw the formation in Philadelphia of several new groups which were devoted to the cause of immediate emancipation including: the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society, the Philadelphia Junior Anti-Slavery Society, and the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. Nor were these groups unique, for in other towns and cities across the state similar organizations were being formed. In Carlisle, for example, McKim had been involved in founding the Carlisle Anti-Slavery Society at some time in 1834. By 1836 there were 32 such groups in the state and their numbers were growing steadily.⁶

The membership of the new radical groups in the Philadelphia area was drawn largely from among the Hicksite Quakers, and few if any of their orthodox brethren were to be found in these organizations. As has already been indicated, the rebellion of the Hicksites grew out of their desire to return to an earlier and purer version of Quakerism in which conviction would remain unsullied by worldly considerations, and the moral absolutism of the anti-slavery forces coincided with their religious beliefs. Another factor which played an important role in bringing many Hicksites into the anti-slavery movement was the dominant

It should be noted however, that McKim was among those who assisted Needles in the preparation of this work, and earlier controversies may have been ignored.

⁶American Anti-Slavery Society, Third Annual Report . . . 1836 (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1835), p. 96. For two examples of this early anti-slavery activity see, the Minutes of the Board of Managers of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, December 30, 1833-October 11, 1841, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; and, the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society, First Annual Report of the Board of Managers July 4, 1835 (Philadelphia: printed by order of the society, 1835).

personality of Lucretia Mott. She was held in almost universal esteem by her co-religionists, and her strong bent for reform undoubtedly led many to follow her into the anti-slavery fold. There appears to have been hardly a single anti-slavery organization in the Philadelphia area during the years 1833-1860 with which she, or some member of her family, was not involved.⁷

The growing interest of the Hicksites in the cause of abolition coincided with an increasing tendency toward organization within the anti-slavery movement itself. When the American Anti-Slavery Society had first been established, its founders planned to encourage the formation of parallel structures on the state and local levels, and this work had proceeded apace during the years 1834-1836. In 1834 state societies had been created in Vermont and New Hampshire, and during the following year similar groups were set up in Ohio and New York. The year 1836 had witnessed the formation of state organizations in Rhode Island and Michigan. Massachusetts was represented by the New England Anti-

⁷In addition to Mrs. Mott and her husband James, her sons-in-law, Edward M. Davis and Thomas Cavender were most active in the anti-slavery cause. James Mott and Davis were members of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, Cavender was founding member of the Philadelphia Junior Anti-Slavery Society, and Mrs. Mott herself was the driving force behind the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. All of the above named individuals would be, at one time or another, officials of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. See the minutes of the above named organizations or of their executive committees in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. It might also be noted that Mr. and Mrs. Mott were quite active in several Free Produce organizations whose purpose was to encourage Northerners to consume only products made by free labor. See, Ruth Ketring Nuernberger, The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery ("Historical Papers of the Trinity College Historical Society," Series XXV; Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1942), pp. 25, 31 n, 99.

Slavery Society which had been founded in 1831, well before the national organization came into existence, and whose activities were in reality restricted to the Bay State. By January 1837 Pennsylvania and Illinois were the only major states in the North which had not established state societies.⁸

On January 14, 1837, just three months after McKim began his career as an agent for the national organization, Benjamin Lundy's newspaper, the National Enquirer, carried a call to the local societies asking that they send delegates to a convention which was to be held for the purpose of establishing a state anti-slavery society. The appeal was signed by almost twelve hundred individuals from fifteen of the state's sixty-seven counties, and the geographical distribution of the signatories is probably a good indication of the sources of anti-slavery strength at this time. With only minor exceptions, all of those who signed came either from the four counties within a fifty mile radius of Pittsburg, or from the southeastern portion of the state extending from Bucks County to Adams County.⁹ Thus, even before it was formally organized, it was clear that the Pennsylvania Anti-

⁸Dumond, Antislavery, pp. 188-189.

⁹National Enquirer, January 14, 1837. The exceptions were twenty-four individuals from Erie County in the extreme northeastern corner of the state, and fourteen from Mifflin County in central Pennsylvania. It might also be noted that while Lebanon and York counties were almost surrounded by counties in which there was anti-slavery sentiment, none of their citizens signed the call. Of the signers, 360 were from the Pittsburg vicinity which had recently been visited by Weld and his assistants, while 761 were from Philadelphia and the surrounding area. This included 303 names from the city itself and 172 from Chester County.

Slavery Society would be comprised of separate and distinct eastern and western branches, and that the major source of its strength would lie in the area around Philadelphia.

The convention was held in Harrisburg from January 31 to February 2, and was attended by about 240 representatives from the local societies who were joined by Lewis Tappan and eight agents of the national society including McKim. Governor Ritner who had been invited to attend declined on the grounds that he did not wish to get the subject of abolition entangled with party politics. Nevertheless, he did express his sympathy with the objectives of the gathering.¹⁰

When the convention was called into session the delegates set about the business of creating a Pennsylvania organization which was to differ little from the national society or its sister groups in other states. Slavery was viewed as a sin which could only be expiated by immediate abolition, and the Constitution of the new Pennsylvania State Anti-Slavery Society pledged it to work for immediate abolition and to work for the moral, intellectual, and religious improvement of the Negroes. Interestingly, the delegates felt it necessary to include in the constitution a statement that they would oppose the use of violence by the slaves as a means of attaining their freedom.

The actual structure of the new organization was only vaguely spelled out in its governing document. It was to have one president,

¹⁰Proceedings of the Founding Meeting of the Pennsylvania State Anti-Slavery Society, January 31-February 2, 1837, reported in ibid., February 11, 1837.

six vice-presidents, two corresponding secretaries, two recording secretaries, two treasurers, and a Board of Managers consisting of at least fifteen members. This body was to select two executive committees (one based in Philadelphia, the other at Pittsburg) which would make policy in their respective areas. The duties of the various officers were not defined. Any Pennsylvanian who agreed with the principles set forth in the constitution of the society and who did not own bondsmen was declared eligible for membership. Any anti-slavery society in the state was entitled to affiliate, and the officers of such local bodies were declared ex-officio members of the Pennsylvania society.¹¹ Thus, the new group was, at one and the same time, a direct membership organization, and a federation of local auxiliaries.

As McKim's trip to Pittsburg in 1838 would prove, the structure created at the convention was highly artificial and doomed to failure in one crucial respect. Despite the Appalachian barrier, the delegates tried to create a single society for both the eastern and western sections of the state. They attempted to deal with the problems of communications and regional differences by establishing semi-autonomous executive committees in Pittsburg and Philadelphia, but even this solution would later prove inadequate to overcome the differences between the two sections. McKim's visit to the Pittsburg area in early 1838, which has been described above, was designed to revive the flagging interest of the westerners in the formal anti-slavery movement and to strengthen their weakening ties with the national and state organizations.

¹¹Constitution of the Pennsylvania State Anti-Slavery Society, reported in ibid.

The effort would be of no avail however, for by May 1839 the western organization appears to have been in the process of disintegration, and the easterners went on to adopt a new constitution and to rename themselves the Anti-Slavery Society of Eastern Pennsylvania.¹²

For the delegates who assembled at Harrisburg in February 1837 such divisions lay in the future. They listened avidly to the usual round of anti-slavery speakers, and debated the growing issue of whether abolitionists ought to engage in political activity in order to advance their cause. They finally adopted a compromise resolution on this question which said that "we disavow all connexion whatever with any political party or men, except so far as they carry into practice the doctrines of universal liberty."¹³

¹²The rift between the two branches became apparent at the First Annual Meeting of the society in January 1838. At that time the westerners submitted a proposal that the society split in two, but the motion was tabled. When the society met again in October 1838, the issue was revived, and a committee was formed to consider the proposal. As far as can be determined this body never made a report, but by May 1839 the division was a fait accompli. See the reports of society meetings in ibid., February 8, 1838, and in its successor, the Pennsylvania Freeman, November 15, 1838. The new constitution adopted in May 1839 was essentially the same as the earlier one except for the fact that the westerners were excluded, and the boundaries of the society were defined as including Tioga, Lycoming, Centre, Huntingdon, and Bedford counties and all counties to the east of these. See, ibid., May 30, 1839.

Although the society was now formally named the Anti-Slavery Society of Eastern Pennsylvania, and in 1846 changed its name to the Anti-Slavery Society of Eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, it will be referred to throughout this work as the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. This is the name which was used most frequently by its members and the anti-slavery press. Furthermore, on McKim's motion, the society officially adopted this title in 1849. See ibid., October 25, 1849.

¹³Proceedings of the Founding Meeting of the Pennsylvania State Anti-Slavery Society, reported in the National Enquirer, February 18, 1837.

McKim, who had only recently begun his work as an agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society, was present throughout the convention; but, as had been the case at the 1833 gathering, his shyness and hesitancy led him to take little part in the proceedings. His passivity did not go unnoted by Lewis Tappan who was among the out of state speakers to address the delegates, and McKim wrote:

I can't say that I enjoyed the meeting. I took no part - from diffidence and felt quite thrown in the background. Lewis Tappan hurt my feelings by some unsympathetic . . . remarks about my inaction in the exercises of the meeting. I felt that I was very much a cypher and he spoke as if that was his opinion of me also.¹⁴

When the convention ended McKim returned to his lecturing duties for the national society, but with the passage of time this task would become increasingly interwoven with the affairs of the state organization in which he held the status of a "corresponding member." In March 1837 Benjamin Lundy's newspaper, the National Enquirer, became the official organ of the Pennsylvania society, and McKim's travels as a lecturer were described in this journal with some regularity. Usually, such reports took the form of letters from the agent himself, but on occasion communications from local abolitionists supplemented these accounts, and McKim became a familiar figure within the ranks of the Pennsylvania anti-slavery movement.¹⁵

¹⁴McKim Diary, February 4, 1837.

¹⁵See, the Emancipator, March 9 and December 14, 1837; the National Enquirer March 18, June 10 and 24, July 1 and November 2, 1837. See also the issue of March 8, 1838, and the Pennsylvania Freeman for March 15. The Freeman was the successor to the Enquirer which had previously been the official organ of the Pennsylvania society. The change in name took place when Benjamin Lundy stepped down as editor and John Greenleaf Whittier took over the post.

McKim was listed as a corresponding member in the National Enquirer, February 1, 1838.

Despite some strong and violent opposition, the eastern branch of the Pennsylvania State Anti-Slavery Society made rapid strides in the two years that followed its formation. Perhaps the best indication of its progress was its decision to join with the proponents of other reforms to erect an auditorium which would be a temple to free speech in which the most advanced ideas of the age and the most unpopular causes might be espoused. Pennsylvania Hall was designed to be one of the largest public forums in the nation, and when completed in May 1838 it had a seating capacity of over two thousand. Funds for the new structure had been raised by the sale of two thousand shares of stock which sold for twenty dollars apiece.¹⁶

Bursting with pride, the abolitionists and other Philadelphia reformers inaugurated the building with a series of meetings on various reform subjects ranging from temperance and the plight of the Indian to the merits of free discussion. The first such gathering took place on May 14, before an overflow crowd and those that followed on the next two evenings were similarly well attended. On the evening of May 16, Angelina Grimké was scheduled to address a meeting of the Woman's Anti-Slavery Convention, but among those in the audience were several rowdies who had come to disrupt the proceedings and they were especially angered by the presence of Negroes in the hall. The unwanted visitors soon began to shout, curse, and break windows, and those present had no alternative but to adjourn the meeting. On the following day (May 17), the Mayor refused to allow the building to be used for an evening gathering because

¹⁶William Lloyd Garrison to his wife, May 12, 1838, in Garrison, Life of Garrison, II, 211.

he feared further violence, but promised to protect the premises. Nevertheless, the next day McKim, who had been attending the dedicatory meetings in the new edifice, would have to write: "Our beautiful Hall is in ruins. It was fired by a mob last night and totally destroyed!!!"¹⁷

Although the burning of the hall was a blow to the morale of the abolitionists, they tried to convince themselves otherwise. McKim's remarks were typical when he said:

Our persecutions are bitter but we are not dispirited. The multitude is against us; the powers that be are against us; but God is for us. We shall yet triumph. . . . Timid friends are alarmed and false friends are deserting us. Be it so: we shall be none the weaker for such a thinning of our ranks.¹⁸

If the burning of Pennsylvania Hall provided a graphic illustration of the strength of anti-abolitionist sentiment in Philadelphia, the fact of its erection suggests that the eastern branch of the state anti-slavery society was in a vigorous and flourishing condition before the fire. After its formation, as it grew in strength, the Pennsylvania society began to assume many of the responsibilities that had formerly belonged to the national organization, and on occasion conflict even developed over whether or not the parent society was overstepping its bounds. In 1837 the Pennsylvania group pledged ten thousand dollars to the American Anti-Slavery Society on the condition that all of it be expended within the state. By 1839

¹⁷McKim Diary, May 12-May 18, 1838. See also, √Pennsylvania Hall Association, History of Pennsylvania Hall Which was Destroyed by a Mob on the 17th of May, 1838 (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838).

¹⁸McKim Diary, May 23, 1838.

when a national depression had brought contributions down to a trickle, such an arrangement did not seem binding enough, and the state groups (Pennsylvania among them) forced the mother society to agree not to send agents into a state unless they had a prior invitation from the local organization.¹⁹

Even before this resolution was passed, however, it was the usual practice of the American Anti-Slavery Society to consult the wishes of the states in selecting the agents it would send to a given area. Thus, McKim's several reappointments as a lecturer are a good indication of his strong ties with the local group, and in view of his close relationship with the Motts it seems probable that his loyalty to the state society was even stronger than his allegiance to the national organization which paid his salary.²⁰ It is not surprising, therefore, that the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania group should see him as a fit candidate for the permanent post of publishing agent.

When McKim assumed his new post in January 1840 the entire anti-slavery cause was in a state of crisis which would ultimately force him to choose between those who viewed abolition as an exclusively moral crusade and those who wished to pursue a more pragmatic course. For several years the movement had been wracked by controversy over the questions of what role women should play in the cause, whether

¹⁹Theodore Weld to Angelina Grimké, October 16, 1837, Weld-Grimké Letters, I, 461. James Gillespie Birney to Arnold Buffum, November 8, 1839, Birney Letters, I, 502.

²⁰This point is well illustrated by the arrangement which the Pennsylvania society made with McKim in July 1839 providing that he was to be given first preference for the post of publishing agent if he agreed to work as an agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society until the state post was vacant. See p. 168.

abolitionists should engage in politics to achieve their ends, and whether other reform projects ought to be included under the anti-slavery banner.

These genuine differences on issues involving both principle and tactics were further aggravated by personality clashes between Garrison and other leading figures in the movement, which stemmed in large part from the Boston reformer's self-righteous insistence that those who differed with him over these questions were somehow disloyal to the cause of the slave. It is, nevertheless, an oversimplification to attribute the schisms within the movement exclusively to Garrison and his followers, for the roots of the division are closely enmeshed with the intense individualism and moral absolutism which was characteristic of most of those who made the journey from religious evangelism to abolitionism.²¹

²¹Scholars who have treated the schism within the anti-slavery movement have been almost unanimous in giving Garrison the exclusive responsibility for creating the division. For example, Barnes, in The Anti-Slavery Impulse argues that the national society had served its purpose and was disintegrating from natural causes, but he sees Garrison as responsible for creating the side issues that led to the actual split. See, pp. 93, 155-158, 169-170. Thomas' The Liberator is in essential agreement. See, pp. 256-293.

In the pages that follow it will be argued that although Garrison was particularly self-righteous and provocative his moral absolutism was shared by those who were arrayed against him, and the intense individualism of these Christian reformers led each of the major figures in the movement down a different path. The analogy between the fragmentation of the abolition movement, and the schisms among radical socialists and communists is instructive. Here too, relatively small doctrinal differences led to fragmentation as the leading figures within the movement strove to protect its moral purity against revisionists of various types. The very unpopularity of abolitionism and socialism was enough to insure that only strong willed contentious men, imbued with a generous dose of moral certitude, would long remain within the ranks, and this was just the type of person who was most likely to refuse to compromise with his comrades on matters of principle, however small.

The seeds of dissension over the question of women's rights were planted by two South Carolina expatriates who had taken up residence in Philadelphia and become members of the Society of Friends. Already dedicated to the causes of benevolent reform, Sarah and Angelina Grimké affiliated themselves in 1835 with Lucretia Mott's Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. Despite the widespread prejudice against women taking to the lecture platform, the national organization could ill afford to pass up the opportunity of presenting first hand testimony against slavery, and in mid-1836 the sisters were offered a lecturing agency. They accepted, and received their training at the same convention that McKim attended in November 1836. Soon thereafter they were drawing large audiences for their talks which came to include not only an indictment of Negro servitude, but of the second class status of women as well.²²

In 1837, after the sisters had spoken in Boston, a group of Massachusetts clergymen issued a protest against those "who encourage females to bear an obtrusive and ostentatious part in measures of reform, and countenance any of that sex who so far forget themselves as to itinerate in the character of public lecturers and teachers."²³ This and another clerical protest which soon followed led Garrison to spring to the defense of the Grimké sisters and to make of their case something of a cause célèbre. Although Garrison does not appear to have given the

²²Sarah Grimké came to Philadelphia in 1821, and was joined eight years later by Angelina. See, Gerda Lerner, The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Rebels Against Slavery (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), pp. 58, 86, 120, 137-155.

²³Garrison, Life of Garrison, II, 135.

matter of women's rights much attention previously, he quickly concluded that the cause of human liberty was indivisible and that it would be hypocrisy to speak out for the slave without also attacking the oppression of women. From this point on he would work to rid the anti-slavery movement of all discrimination against women, and would treat those who differed with him on this issue as if they were disloyal to the cause of abolition.²⁴

In the Spring of 1837, just a few months before he was to come to the defense of the Grimké sisters, Garrison was converted to the doctrines of Christian perfectionism which were being advanced by John Humphrey Noyes, and this would have a direct bearing on the attitude of the Bostonian toward political action. Garrison quickly embraced Noyes' view that all human governments were evil, corrupt, and oppressive, and that it was wrong to participate in them in any way. Moreover, the editor of the Liberator went on to link this view with the Quaker concept of non-resistance which held that opposition to the authorities should take only passive non-violent forms. Thus, Garrison came to argue that it was wrong to support the government by voting, holding office, or bringing legal suits (inconsistently, he did not oppose the payment of taxes).²⁵ Soon the term "non-resistance" came to mean not only a

²⁴For Garrison's early opposition to women's rights see, ibid., I, 157. On the relevance of this cause to the anti-slavery movement see, ibid., II, 221-222, and the Liberator, December 29, 1837 and February 15, 1839. In reply to a letter from James Woodbury, Garrison demonstrates his tendency to view those who differ from him as apostates. See ibid., September 1, 1837.

²⁵John Humphrey Noyes to William Lloyd Garrison, March 22, 1837; William Lloyd Garrison to Henry C. Wright, April 16, 1837; cited in Garrison, Life of Garrison, II, 145-148, 148-150. Thomas, The Liberator, 228-235.

peaceful resistance to the force used by government, but the doctrine of "no government" as well. Obviously, those abolitionists who held such views could not look favorably on the growing interest of some of their fellow anti-slavery men in politics.

When McKim attended the founding meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in December 1833 there was an almost universal agreement among those present that the character of the movement should be moral rather than political, but by 1837 it was becoming apparent that it was not at all easy to draw a line between the two. Petitions to Congress asking that it end slavery in those areas where it had jurisdiction seemed non-political enough, and from 1834 to the end of the decade increasing numbers of these appeals were sent to Washington. Nevertheless, the gag-rule of 1836 soon made it appear that this tactic might be fruitless and abolitionists began to adopt the practice of questioning candidates for office as to their position on emancipation so that they could give their support to the man who promised to do most for the slave. This approach often failed however, because even anti-slavery voters were loathe to abandon their party allegiance; and besides, both candidates would often remain silent, or even worse, take an anti-abolitionist stand. The result was the emergence of a growing body of thought within the movement which favored the nomination of independent candidates and would soon come to advocate the formation of a third party.²⁶

Thus, by 1837 abolitionists were discussing the relationship

²⁶Dumond, Antislavery, p. 291. Theodore Clarke Smith, The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest (New York: Longmans, Green Company, 1897), pp. 36-39.

of a variety of new ideas to their movement, and some leading figures, particularly Theodore Weld, were arguing that regardless of the merits of reforms like women's rights or non-resistance, such extraneous projects ought not to be intermingled with the cause of the slave. This stand represented a departure from previous practice however, for almost all of the leading figures in the anti-slavery movement were universal reformers seeking to perfect mankind, and at the time when they first took up the cause of the Negro most of them were actively engaged in promoting such other causes as temperance and manual labor. Up to this time, McKim and other agents frequently spoke on behalf of such projects while carrying out their duties to the slave, and it was not at all unusual for the anti-slavery press to carry news of temperance and other reforms. As long as the abolitionists were agreed as to what reforms were calculated to advance the interests of mankind no one questioned the propriety of the society's agents advocating several causes at once. When this early unanimity was shattered by the discussions of political action, women's rights and non-resistance, however, some began to suggest that the abolitionists stick to their last.²⁷

²⁷The way in which temperance and anti-slavery were woven together in the work of agents is well illustrated by the events which took place at the very beginning of McKim's first tour of duty as a lecturer. Because he was new, he was assigned to travel with Arnold Buffum, an experienced agent. On October 22, 1837 the two men "attended" a temperance meeting in New Hope, Bucks County. The next evening both of them addressed the Buckingham Friends Meeting on temperance and anti-slavery. McKim Diary, October 21-23, 1837. See also, the anti-slavery press throughout the period for further examples. Daniel Jewetts letter to McKim of March 6, 1833 cited above on pp. 51-52. captures the flavor of the universal reformer's zeal to right all of the ills of the world at once, and explains why it appeared perfectly logical to these men to mix the most widely varied reforms with one another. For Weld's position see, Theodore Weld to Sarah and Angelina Grimké, [August 26, 1837], Weld Letters, I, 432-436.

Even so, the problem of what was the proper sphere of abolition remained. To Garrison it was clear that human liberty could not be compartmentalized, and abolition came to mean casting off all of the shackles of mankind whether they had been fastened by southern slaveholders, men, or governments. With his passion for moral purity it seemed impossible to sacrifice one for the others. If Garrison and his followers were unable to set practical boundaries for the cause of abolition, they were nevertheless absolutely certain that political action had no place in their plans. Even aside from the fact that it violated their beliefs in non-resistance, it was also alien to their concept of the movement as a purely moral crusade, aimed at eradicating sin, which would inevitably be corrupted if it entered the political arena.²⁸

Lewis Tappan was in complete agreement with the Garrisonians on this last point, for he too saw the anti-slavery cause in evangelistic terms and feared that politics would make it worldly. Nevertheless, the New York philanthropist who had lent his name to so many projects for the improvement of his fellow men had no patience with the idea of non-resistance, and could not agree that there was anything wrong with the status women enjoyed. Opposing feminism and non-resistance on principle,

²⁸On August 26, 1837, shortly after he adopted the perfectionism of John Humphrey Noyes, Garrison wrote to his brother-in-law, George W. Benson, saying: "I feel somewhat at a loss to know what to do - whether to go into all of the principles of holy reform, and make the abolition cause subordinate, or whether still to persevere in the one beaten track as hitherto." Cited in Garrison, Life of Garrison, II, 160-161. Garrison's belief that abolition was a moral crusade which would be corrupted by political ties is given in ibid., pp. 312-313. See also, Thomas, The Liberator, pp. 287-288.

Tappan abandoned his previous tolerant stand and argued that extraneous reform causes ought not to be associated with abolition.²⁹

Theodore Weld occupied the middle ground. He favored women's rights, but felt the question was divisive and ought not to be allowed to distract anti-slavery men from their primary duties to those who were in bondage. He did not accept the no-government views of those who believed in non-resistance, but neither did he feel that abolitionists ought to enter the political arena. Thus, the most prominent figures in the cause could agree only on the undesirability of substituting political action for moral suasion as a means of bringing the nation around to their views. But other key figures of scarcely less value to the movement such as James Gillespie Birney, Elizur Wright, Henry B. Stanton, and Joshua Leavitt dissented, and they committed themselves to support the new Liberty Party which was to be formed within a short time.³⁰

²⁹On Tappan's views of the political action movement see the Emancipator, December 12, 1839, and Garrison, Life of Garrison, II, 312-313. That Tappan continued to oppose the Liberty Party at least until early 1843 is indicated in Joshua Leavitt to James Gillespie Birney, February 10, 1843, Birney Letters, II, 716. When Tappan wrote John Scoble on October 19, 1843, however, he had changed his mind and was beginning to take part in Liberty Party affairs. Cited in Annie Heloise Abel and Frank J. Klingberg (eds.), A Side-Light on Anglo-American Relations, 1839-1858: Furnished by the Correspondence of Lewis Tappan and Others with the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc., 1927), pp. 148-149.

³⁰On the early participants in the Liberty Party see Thomas, Theodore Weld, p. 186. Wright's participation is documented in Garrison, Life of Garrison, II, 342. On Weld's position see, Theodore Weld to Sarah and Angelina Grimke, [August 26, 1837]; and Weld to Gerrit Smith, May 1, 1852; Weld Letters, I, 432-436, and II, 1005 n.

Lewis Tappan aptly summed up the chaotic state of anti-slavery affairs in late 1839 when he wrote:

The number of abolitionists is now so large here, and their views on many points of policy so various, that it will be impossible, I think, to have them united long. In fact they are disunited already. There will probably be an abolition political party--a religious association--a Garrison party, & G. & S. We shall, I hope and pray, get along without quarrelling, for it will be a sad sight to witness the friends of human rights contending angrily among themselves.³¹

Although Tappan's hopes for an amicable separation were doomed to disappointment, his predictions as to the fragmentation of the movement proved quite correct. In early 1839 the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society had divided as the result of Garrison's insistence upon raising the issues of women's rights and non-resistance; and the same process would be repeated in May 1840 when the Boston firebrand packed the annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society and then rammed through a women's rights motion that led his opponents to abandon the organization to him.³²

Garrison's insistence upon bringing the questions of women's rights and non-resistance to the fore was the immediate precipitant of the schism within the national organization, but the split was only possible because there were already deep fissures in the movement. These divisions were the natural result of the fact that the anti-slavery movement was composed of universal reformers who did not always share the same program, but who held in common the belief that it was wrong to compromise with error.³³

³¹Lewis Tappan to Joseph Sturge, December 10, 1839, in Abel and Klingberg, A Side-Light on Anglo-American Relations, p. 62.

³²Thomas, The Liberator, pp. 264-270, 289-293.

³³Most works which deal with the split in the anti-slavery

Early in 1839, as the Massachusetts society stood on the brink of division it looked as though the same fate might be in store for the Pennsylvania organization, and John Greenleaf Whittier who was editing the society's newspaper, the Pennsylvania Freeman, vigorously appealed to the abolitionists of the state not to allow their unity to be destroyed by side issues. He asked:

Is the present harmony of feeling among the abolitionists of Pennsylvania to give place to personalities,

movement portray Garrison as a moral absolutist unwilling to compromise his dubious principles in even the slightest degree, but his opponents are treated more gently. They usually emerge as sensible men who were only minimally infected by such vagaries as women's rights or non-resistance, and who would have willingly allowed many different points of view to co-exist within the anti-slavery society. Theodore Weld, in particular, has received such treatment, and there can be no denying the fact that Weld steadfastly refused to descend to the level of personalities, and that after the split he managed to retain the respect and friendship of all factions. Nevertheless, Weld was every bit as much a moral absolutist as Garrison. After the schism Weld repeatedly refused to join the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society which Lewis Tappan had formed as a rival to the old group which Garrison now controlled. Weld's refusal was based upon the fact that Tappan's society denied equal membership to women. In January 1843 he learned that he had been appointed by the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society as a delegate to a convention in London and he immediately wrote Tappan saying: "I write this to beg that my name may not be published as one of the representatives of the A. and F.A.S.S. And for this reason . . . I totally dissent from the foundation principle on which that society is based - a denial of the equal membership of women - and if my appointment as their representative were made public, I should feel impelled to make equally public the reasons forcing me to decline, and to do it in such a way as would inevitably bring up anew the question of women's rights." Weld differed from Garrison on this question only in his wish to keep the women's rights issue from coming to the fore and distracting the anti-slavery movement, but his views on the subject were every bit as strong, and he was no more willing than the Bostonian to compromise by acquiescing in the unequal treatment of women. Thus, it is clear that Weld was as much a moral absolutist as Garrison, and the same sort of case can be made for virtually all of the leading figures in the movement. See, Theodore Weld to Lewis Tappan, January 23, 1843, Weld-Grimké Letters, II 966-967.

invective, jealousy and evil surmisings? Will our McKims and Burleighs, our Coateses and Motts turn away from the victims of the southern prison house to discuss the relative merits of William Lloyd Garrison, Henry B. Stanton or Amos A. Phelps? We will not believe it.³⁴

The answer to these questions came in October 1839 when the executive committee of the society refused to take sides in a dispute that had arisen between Garrison's Massachusetts group and the national organization.³⁵

One reason for the ability of the Pennsylvanians to avoid the storms that were besetting the rest of the movement in 1839 and 1840, was that they did not have to contend with the vexatious issue of women's rights. When the society was first formed in January 1837 it was composed exclusively of men, and this pattern continued through their first annual meeting in January 1838. By the time the society met again in October, however, the decision had been taken to admit women, and 99 of the 247 delegates who attended were women. There is no evidence to indicate that there was any dispute at all about this new policy, and this suggests that if there were any dissenters they must have been few in number and weak in influence. The easy acceptance of this new departure was probably due in large measure to the very strong influence which Lucretia Mott had among the Hicksites and to the critical role which her organization the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society played

³⁴Pennsylvania Freeman, April 11, 1839.

³⁵Ibid., October 24, 1839.

in supporting the state group.³⁶

If the Pennsylvanians were lucky enough to avoid strife over the issue of woman's rights, they were not quite so fortunate with the subjects of political action and non-resistance. Many Hicksites must have found Garrison's doctrine of non-resistance particularly congenial because it seemed to dovetail neatly with their own Quaker beliefs about the limits of the state's right to coerce them to go to war. Furthermore, the emphasis upon peaceful resistance to the unjust demands of the state must also have seemed quite familiar.³⁷

At the same time, there was a sizable body of abolitionists, including McKim, that advocated a moderate program of political action. These individuals would not go so far as to endorse the Liberty Party, but they did approve a strategy which included the questioning of candidates, supporting those who favored emancipation, and in some

³⁶The only evidence that has been found pertaining to the role of women in the society prior to 1840 consists of the rolls of delegates to the various meetings of the organization. The roll of delegates to the founding meeting is contained in a work entitled, *The Constitution of the Pennsylvania State Anti-Slavery Society Adopted by a Convention of Delegates from Various Parts of the State, Held at Harrisburg, January 31 and February 1 and 2, 1837*, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. This item is actually a scrapbook which contains the constitution of the society, a MS listing of the delegates to the first meeting and newspaper clippings of the society's annual reports and proceedings. It will be referred to hereafter as the *Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society*. The roll of delegates to the First Annual Meeting is given in the *National Enquirer*, February 1, 1838, and the list of delegates to the October meeting is in the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, November 15, 1838.

³⁷Lewis Tappan believed that Hicksite support was crucial to the existence of Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society. Indeed, on January 30, 1844 he wrote to John Beaumont that "were it not that many members of the Society of Friends are connected with it especially that part called Hicksites it would be insignificant." Abel and Klingberg, *A Side-Light on Anglo-American Relations*, p. 174.

cases running independent candidates if there seemed to be no other alternative.³⁸

As has already been noted, the issue of political action first came up at the founding convention of the Pennsylvania society, and it was disposed of by the passage of compromise resolution disavowing all connection with any political parties "except so far as they carry into practice the doctrines of universal liberty." This meaningless compromise proved inadequate by October 1838, and McKim was one of those appointed to a three man committee whose task it was to draw up a policy statement for the society on the question. The resolutions presented by the committee took the view that since slavery had been established by law, it could only be abolished by law, and hence it was necessary for abolitionists to support those candidates, and only those candidates, who favored "universal liberty." Most significantly, the resolutions specifically attacked the belief that slavery was purely a religious question which ought to be kept out of the political arena. Even so, it did make a bow in the direction of the religiously oriented reformers like Garrison, Tappan, and Weld, by stating that while abolitionists ought to use their suffrage in behalf of liberty, they will not, under any circumstances, make bargains and agree to support particular political parties. This suggests that McKim and his fellow committee members recognized the force of the argument which held that the moral purity of the cause would be compromised by political involvement.³⁹

³⁸Pennsylvania Freeman, November 15, 1838.

³⁹Ibid.

As the storms of 1839 and 1840 swept through the movement, disagreement among Pennsylvania Abolitionists over the merits of political action also rose, but they were rarely pursued with the acrimony and rancor which characterized the dispute in other places. When Whittier retired as editor of the Freeman in February 1840 his place was temporarily filled by McKim who was already intimately involved with the paper in his capacity as Publishing Agent for the society. In March 1840, McKim wrote an article in which he spelled out what would be the basic attitude of the Pennsylvania society toward the question of political action for the next four years. He defined the four basic positions which abolitionists were taking on the matter. There were: those who refused to vote on principle (non-resistants), but who could influence others without such scruples to vote for liberty; those who voted for candidates of the two major parties, but did so only if they were favorable to the cause of the slave; those who believed in questioning the candidates put forward by the two major parties and running an independent candidate if their answers were not satisfactory; and finally, those who wished to found a third party. McKim concluded his article by stating his belief that each individual should be free to pursue the course of action he felt was best, and he argued that there should be no pressure for uniformity within the society.⁴⁰

McKim's article is especially significant because it illustrates the conviction of the Pennsylvanians that many shades of opinion could peacefully coexist under the umbrella of their society, and it shows their determination not to allow petty controversy to divide them.

⁴⁰Ibid., March 26, 1840.

Viewed in this light, a rather banal resolution at the Pennsylvania annual meeting deploring the strife and division within the movement takes on stronger meaning, for it shows that the Hicksite abolitionists were determined not to allow their own group to follow in the footsteps of the national organization.⁴¹

This is not to say that the Pennsylvanians eschewed all further discussion of political action. On the contrary, debate on the question continued into the middle of 1841, and at times it became interwoven with the question of whether allegiance to the now Garrisonian, American Anti-Slavery Society, precluded fraternal relations with the Liberty Party and other non-Garrisonian agencies. The debate was often spirited and occasionally warm, but never ugly or personal, and it reached a temporary culmination at the Pennsylvania society's annual meeting in May 1841.

At gatherings such as this the usual order of business always included a reading of the organization's annual report and an almost routine ratification of that report by the assembled delegates, but in this case the report was controversial enough to cause a full scale debate. It contained remarks about the split that had taken place within the American Anti-Slavery Society a year earlier which reflected negatively on the new organizations which had been formed by the secessionists. This provoked Thomas Earle to offer an amendment to the report which changed its meaning in such a manner as to read, in essence, that it was better to have two separate organizations than

⁴¹Ibid., May 14, 1840.

a single inharmonious one.⁴²

It is not surprising that Earle should have taken the lead in defending those who had chosen to form a third party, for in addition to being a member of the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania society he had been the vice-presidential candidate of the Liberty Party in the 1840 election. A lawyer by profession, and a Democratic free trader by predilection, Earle had long taken an interest in reform causes, and at the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1837 he had unsuccessfully pressed for the inclusion of a provision granting suffrage to Negroes. Now, at the 1841 annual meeting of the anti-slavery society, he was struggling to prevent the organization from adopting unchanged a report which he felt would imply that it was somehow superior to other groups with the same goal but different methods. In what was apparently an upset, his motion to amend the annual report was passed.⁴³

To those with a strong allegiance to Garrison this vote appeared to be a direct challenge to their position, and at a later session of the meeting they replied with a motion that added that the change in the annual report did not signify a lack of confidence in the American Anti-Slavery Society. In an attempt to prevent himself from being outflanked, Earle then attempted to amend this motion so that it would say "there is no reason to lack confidence in the American Anti-Slavery Society or any other society." His amendment was lost, and the motion

⁴²Ibid., May 12, 1841.

⁴³Ibid. On Earle's life see, Edwin B. Bronner, Thomas Earle as a Reformer (Philadelphia: privately printed, 1948).

of the Garrisonians was adopted. Earle made a few further motions which failed, and in the end he and some of his supporters filed a formal protest claiming that the later votes against them had been taken when many of delegates had returned home, and did not truly reflect the sentiment of the meeting.⁴⁴

Although McKim was not a Liberty Party man, his position was far more favorable to the idea of political action than that of the non-resistants. Nevertheless, in the votes described above he went down the line in support of the Garrisonian position. He apparently saw no contradiction between his allegiance to the Garrisonian wing and his support of a modified program of political action which did not, at this time, reflect support for the Liberty Party.⁴⁵

In any event, all of these motions, counter motions, amendments, and protests amounted to a good deal of smoke from a very small fire; for once the fumes had cleared, the members of the Pennsylvania society

⁴⁴Pennsylvania Freeman, May 12, 1841.

⁴⁵McKim's position may have been less inconsistent than it appears for, in both Massachusetts and Pennsylvania the stand of non-resistance men on political action was ambiguous. Garrison and his most devoted followers felt that their no-government views made it a sin for them to vote, but they grudgingly recognized the fact that many abolitionists did not agree. The Garrisonians held that those who were not prevented by their consciences from voting ought to exercise their suffrage only in support of candidates who were opposed to slavery. Moreover, they felt that all abolitionists (including non-resistants) ought to urge this position upon those who did go to the polls. Nevertheless, the New England group remained implacable in its opposition to the Liberty Party *per se*. Thus, although McKim did not believe in non-resistance, he probably felt that there was room for him within the Garrisonian fold. In addition, it seems likely that his personal ties with Mrs. Mott were the single most important factor in determining his position on the internal politics of the society. For McKim's stand in the votes described above see, the Pennsylvania Freeman, May 14, 1840, and May 12, 1841. On Garrison's ambiguous position see especially, Garrison, Life of Garrison, II, 273, 298-299.

went on working together as though nothing had happened, and herein lies the difference between them and their New England brethren. Indeed, over the next three years the Pennsylvania Freeman (which was now the official organ of the society) would open its pages to the Liberty Party with a generosity quite unlike the peevish exclusivity of National Anti-Slavery Standard which reflected the views of the Garrison group.

On August 4, 1841 the Freeman gave one and a half of its four pages to the announcements and statements of the Liberty Party. Two months later C. C. Burleigh, who had been serving as the editor of the paper since McKim relinquished the post on April 30, 1840, wrote:

We have willingly consented this week to be nearly crowded out of the Freeman in order to make room for our Third Party brethren, who . . . are desirous to get their document before the public. . . . While our own opinions remain unchanged and we deprecate the measure as fraught with more evil than good for our cause, we are far from wishing to deprive its friends of a fair opportunity to present its claims to our readers.⁴⁶

In contrast to this liberality on the part of the Pennsylvanians, the newspaper of the national organization contained a small squib stating that "S. D. Hastings of Philadelphia is respectfully requested to choose some other organ for his communications. We have conscientious objections to making the Standard a vehicle for Liberty Party notices."⁴⁷

The open interchange which took place among the various anti-slavery factions in Pennsylvania soon led to a situation in which the society actively cooperated with the abolition party at election time.

⁴⁶Pennsylvania Freeman, October 1, 1840.

⁴⁷National Anti-Slavery Standard, January 27, 1842.

This process appears to have begun on a limited scale during the election of 1841 when F. Julius LeMoynes was running for Governor on the Liberty ticket. Writing from Carlisle during the Summer of 1841, McKim approvingly noted that all of the abolitionists he met in that area were politically oriented, and expressed the belief that they ought to vote for LeMoynes. If one considers this election merely in terms of the ballots which the abolitionist candidate received, the results were dismal indeed, for he got only 818 votes. This was, nevertheless, a 138% increase over the vote which the James Gillespie Birney, the Liberty Party's presidential candidate, had received in 1840.⁴⁸

From 1841 to mid-1844 relations continued to improve between the Liberty Party and the society, and during the 1843 elections the voters of Philadelphia were invited to drop by McKim's anti-slavery office and pick up tickets containing the names of all candidates who had responded favorably to questions about their views on emancipation. By January 1844 the political group was making regular use of the office for its meetings, and this practice continued until September. In addition, the society permitted the political actionists to use its premises as the mailing address for their newspaper, the American Intelligencer.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Pennsylvania Freeman, October 20, November 3, 1841.

⁴⁹National Anti-Slavery Standard, October 5, 1843. Pennsylvania Freeman, September 26 ~~19~~, 1844. The date on the masthead differs from that on the inside pages of this issue. It was actually issued on the twenty-sixth.

McKim summed up the increasing rapprochement that had taken place between the two main factions of the abolition movement in Pennsylvania when he wrote:

It is true that for the past two or three years the feeling of the society toward the measure political action had been greatly modified, and with some of its members entirely changed. For a while quite a number (the writer included) believing moderate political action, . . . to be a rightful means of promoting abolition, felt at liberty to act with the third party so far as the advocacy and support of independent nominations was concerned. In consequence of these and other causes the line of demarcation between political and anti-political men became comparatively indistinct.⁵⁰

If the line between political and anti-political men was "comparatively indistinct" in Pennsylvania, it was hard and sharp in Massachusetts where the Garrisonians observed this unseemly fraternization with growing misgivings. McKim tried to quiet these fears in a letter to Maria Weston Chapman in which he gently suggested that it might be well to distinguish between the Liberty Party in Massachusetts (which was, by implication, corrupt and dangerous), and that group in other states. Mrs. Chapman was one of Garrison's most fervent and dogmatic supporters, and she would have none of this. Petulantly stamping her pen, she replied: "the Western men will soon find that they can't be friends with us and our Liberty Party opponents. Let every man have his choice." Elsewhere, Mrs. Chapman had spoken of the necessity to "fight it out" and get the issue settled, and in another letter dated November 6, 1843, McKim wondered why it was necessary to "fight it out." He went on to ask "is there no way of correcting an evil in this society the American Anti-Slavery Society or adopting

⁵⁰Ibid.

an important measure . . . without 'fighting!'"⁵¹

It appears that the Pennsylvanians and the New Englanders were in fact unable to settle their differences without fighting, for relations between the two groups continued to deteriorate. In February 1844 McKim, writing for the executive committee of his society, informed Mrs. Chapman that no further efforts would be made to raise money for the national organization. This decision had been taken because the American Anti-Slavery Society had done nothing to decrease its debts, but instead had allowed them to increase. McKim went on to say that "our members have given to the full extent . . . of their confidence . . . and any further effort would most likely be not only fruitless but prejudicial to the cause."⁵²

At the root of the increasing tension between the two societies was Garrison's introduction of another new and divisive doctrine which came to be symbolized by the slogan: "No Union With Slaveholders." In 1841 he had begun to argue that the Constitution of the United States was a pro-slavery document and that the Union had been founded by a compromise between North and South which gave legal sanction to the slave system. Believing that moral laws took precedence over man's laws, Garrison was soon calling the national compact a "covenant with death

⁵¹McKim to Maria Weston Chapman, October 19, November 6, 1843; Maria Weston Chapman to McKim October 22, 1843; Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

⁵²McKim to Maria Weston Chapman, February 3, 1844, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library. The debt of the national society had increased from twenty-five hundred to four thousand dollars in seven months. National Anti-Slavery Standard, December 14, 1843.

and an agreement with hell" which ought to be immediately annulled.⁵³

Earlier, Garrison had been forced to acknowledge that abolitionists need not be non-resistants, and that those who believed in voting might still classify themselves as anti-slavery men, but now he had found new grounds for arguing against participation in the affairs of government. To vote or to hold office was to recognize the validity of the charter which brought the nation into being, and since that document implicitly recognized the right of one man to own another, such an action amounted to an endorsement of slaveholding. Garrison's Christian perfectionism and moral absolutism would not permit him to focus his attack on the offending provisions alone, for to him they tainted the entire structure.⁵⁴

Given the validity of the Boston reformer's belief that the Constitution sanctioned slavery, his assault upon it was merely a logical development of the evangelistic belief that the immediate and total renunciation of sin was necessary for salvation. Moreover, such an attitude led quite naturally to the "higher law" doctrine which held that when man's edicts came into conflict with God's laws, obedience was due the latter. Although Garrison's notions about the Constitution would gain little favor outside of his own small circle, the beliefs that gave rise to them were substantially the same as those of all abolitionists. During the decade of the 1850's anti-slavery men of all

⁵³Garrison, Life of Garrison, III, 32-33, 88, et passim.

⁵⁴Thomas, The Liberator, pp. 328-330.

stripes would justify their resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law on the grounds of the same "higher law" as that invoked by the Boston agitator in defense of his denial of the authority of the national charter.⁵⁵

The moral absolutism which led Garrison to reject the Constitution was also similar to that which had earlier turned some anti-slavery men against organized religion. At first, they had seen the churches as the vehicle through which reform would be achieved, but when this hope began to fade Garrison decided that they must be totally corrupt, and in 1835 he wrote that "American (not Bible) Christianity is the main pillar of American slavery." James Gillespie Birney who, as a political actionist and a conservative on the woman question, was Garrison's opposite, took a similar view and in 1840 he wrote a tract entitled, The American Churches the Bulwarks of American Slavery.⁵⁶

Just as he had responded to the frustration and disappointment of learning that the churches would not lead an abolition crusade by urging others to "come-out" of these corrupt institutions, so too, Garrison would react to the intractability of the government by urging Americans to abandon it. In the early 1840's the Texas question, which was hanging fire on the national horizon, threatened a drastic increase in the power of the slave states, while at the same time the gag-rule of

⁵⁵James Gillespie Birney who disagreed violently with Garrison on both the nature of the Constitution and disunion could nevertheless write of the Fugitive Slave Law, "there is too much activity of conscience among us to allow of its enforcement." Birney to the Christian Anti-Slavery Convention, April 2, 1850, Birney Letters, II, 1134.

⁵⁶Garrison, Life of Garrison, I, 479. James Gillespie Birney, The American Churches the Bulwarks of American Slavery (London: Ward and Co., 1840).

1836, which had been designed to shut off national debate on the slavery issue, was still in force. Garrison had been trumpeting his message to the nation for eleven years, but despite a demonstrable increase in the size of the anti-slavery forces, it must have seemed that a solution to the problem was further away than ever before.

There was nothing new about the idea of disunion as a solution to the slavery problem. Whenever the issue came up for national debate in Congress southern spokesmen countered threats to their institution by raising the specter of disunion, and northerners occasionally responded in kind. At the time of the Missouri Compromise, both Jefferson and John Quincy Adams sadly predicted that once slavery became an irreconcilable moral issue neither side would be able to compromise and disunion or civil war could be the only outcome.⁵⁷

By the 1840's the nation had taken several giant steps in this direction. At the South, slavery was now viewed by some, not as a necessary evil, but as a positive good; while at the North, the moral agitation of the abolitionists had made significant inroads into public sentiment. As the Texas question arose again, there were those in both sections who saw the issue primarily in terms of its relation to slavery, and some southern spokesmen argued that any halt to the nation's expansion in this area would bring an end to the union, while thirteen northern congressmen warned that the annexation of Texas would be

⁵⁷ Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820, in Ford (ed.), Works of Jefferson, XII, 158-160. Adams (ed.), Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, V, 12.

tantamount to dissolving the union.⁵⁸

Thus, while disunionism would always represent the views of only a small minority in the North, it had become a thought that was by no means unthinkable, and Garrison's advocacy of this idea represents a logical development of his view that slavery was essentially a moral question. If he is to be faulted for bringing the idea forward it must be on the grounds that while peaceful disunion might save the souls of northerners by ending their pact with evil, it would make slavery in the South more secure than ever.

Garrison first attempted to raise the disunion issue within the national organization at its annual meeting in 1842, but that group refused to consider it and he had to content himself with printing a new slogan on the masthead of the Liberator: "A REPEAL OF THE UNION BETWEEN NORTHERN LIBERTY AND SOUTHERN SLAVERY IS ESSENTIAL TO THE ABOLITION OF THE ONE AND THE PRESERVATION OF THE OTHER." By January 1843 when the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society met, Garrison had gained enough support within that body to secure the passage of a resolution demanding the dissolution of the union. Then, in early 1844 he launched an all out effort to bring the American Anti-Slavery Society and its remaining auxiliaries into line.⁵⁹

In Pennsylvania this resulted in the reopening of old wounds between non-resistants and political actionists. As McKim put it, the introduction of the question by the American Society . . . "can an abolitionist consistently with his principles vote for any man to hold office under the

⁵⁸Thomas, The Liberator, p. 334.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 330-332.

Constitution of the United States?" and the discussion which has ensued has redrawn the old lines with increased vividness.⁶⁰

In the struggle that followed, McKim at first found himself allied with the political actionists, while Lucretia Mott who had played such an important role in bringing him into the movement steadfastly supported Garrison. Initially, the Pennsylvanians had rejected the disunion doctrine out of hand. At an anti-slavery meeting, held in Philadelphia in 1842, those present voiced their unanimous objection to Garrison's new proposals and resolved that while they did not feel bound to obey those portions of the Constitution (if any) which favored slavery, they did not believe that the existence of such provisions was a sufficient ground for disunion. The resolutions went on to point out that all of the proper avenues for remedying the situation had not been exhausted.⁶¹

The opposition from Pennsylvania seems to have been almost as strong in May 1844 when Garrison succeeded in getting the annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society to adopt his views. At least five representatives from that state including McKim, Thomas Earle, and C. C. Burleigh journeyed to New York to present their dissent, but it was to no avail, for the vote was 59-21 in favor of the disunion position. Mrs. Mott and one companion were the only Pennsylvanians who can be positively identified among those supporting Garrison.⁶²

At some time during the month that followed the annual meeting

⁶⁰Pennsylvania Freeman, September 26 [19], 1844.

⁶¹National Anti-Slavery Standard, May 12, 1842.

⁶²Ibid., May 23, 1844.

of the American Anti-Slavery Society a curious event occurred. McKim, who had consistently opposed Garrison's views on the constitution for the past two years suddenly made a complete about-face and publicly recanted his previous opposition to disunion. In an article which had an odd quality of contrition to it the Pennsylvania abolitionist wrote:

The introduction of this question at the American meeting I exceedingly regretted, and though I could not prevent its discussion there, I did what I could to prevent its further introduction and agitation; particularly among the friends of the American Society in this region of the country. The truth is, I had an instinctive fear that the views which I held, in common, with others around me, would not bear a very rigid examination. I was conscious that they were formed without much reflection on my part, and I believed the same to be the case in regard to others, and there was a secret misgiving, that if forced to a reconsideration of their soundness, I should be obliged to abandon them, and, with them, some plans of Anti-Slavery operation based on their correctness, in which, as is well known, I had embarked a good deal of interest. But I had neither the power to prevent the general introduction of the question, nor have I been able to withhold my own mind from its investigation. I listened to the debates in the American Society, and have read the discussions which have since been published in the papers. The result is the deep conviction already intimated, that no abolitionist can, with consistency, vote for any man to take office under the Constitution of the United States; that so to vote, however it may be intended, is, according to the fair rules of judgment among men, to give sanction to a compact confessedly among the most iniquitous and cruel that ever disgraced a civilized people.⁶³

This account of the reasons for McKim's change of heart is less than convincing. His shift seems too sudden; his reasons for it too pat, too tidy. Indeed, there is a striking similarity between the

⁶³Ibid., July 4, 1844. Although McKim said that it was well known that he had embarked a good deal of interest in certain plans of anti-slavery operation, the exact nature of these plans is not known with certainty. He was probably referring to his attempt to resurrect the Pennsylvania Freeman as a paper largely favorable to political action. See below p. 63.

account he gave of his conversion to abolition (he listened to Peck and read Garrison's tract), and his description of his conversion to disunion (he "listened to the debates," and "read the discussions "). McKim had heard the arguments that were put forward in these debates many times before, and there could have been little that was new in the discussions he read.

It seems more likely that events at the annual meeting of the national society led him to read and listen with new eyes and ears. Although he may not have admitted it, even to himself, McKim's livelihood depended upon his making the right decision. The New York meeting must have shown him that the battle between the disunionists and those who leaned toward political action would be bitter and brutal, and that the Pennsylvanians would be forced to make a final choice between Garrison and those who believed in political action. As subsequent events would suggest, the losing faction could expect little mercy from the winners. Thus, although it may never have been openly mentioned, McKim stood to lose his job as publishing agent if he made the wrong choice.

The loss of this position would have shaken the comfortable life McKim had built for himself in the past four years to its very foundations. His agency had provided him with the security he needed to go through with his plans to marry Sarah Speakman, and despite threats that she would be disowned for merging her life with one who was not a Friend, they were wed on October 12, 1840. A little more than three years later McKim's responsibilities increased still further when, on October 30, 1843, his first child, Lucy, was born. During this time the couple became an integral part of Lucretia Mott's social circle. They were neighbors, friends, and co-workers in the cause of reform, all at the

same time, and McKim's life was structured around the Hicksite anti-slavery community.⁶⁴ To give up his job would mean abandoning all of this and placing himself in much the same occupational and spiritual dilemma he had faced in 1839. Thus, whether McKim was conscious of it or not, there were compelling personal reasons for directing his ideological footsteps in the direction of the winning side.

It is also worth noting that McKim was no stranger to the process of conversion. His acceptance of evangelistic religion, his adoption of abolitionism, and his break with the Presbyterian Church have all been described in detail, and his shift to disunion fits in well with this pattern. In particular, McKim's conversion to active Presbyterianism and his subsequent decision to leave the ministry came about as the result of the prolonged persuasions of individuals he held in high esteem. It would seem, therefore, that personal considerations converged neatly with McKim's pattern of allowing the strong dominant

⁶⁴McElroy's Philadelphia Directory (Philadelphia: Edward C. Biddle and John Biddle, 1843) shows that the McKims and the Motts lived within a block of one another. The McKim home was at 97 North Tenth Street, the Motts resided at 136 North Ninth Street. Otelia Cromwell's Lucretia Mott, although overly enthusiastic and shallow gives an excellent picture of the way in which reform activity and social life overlapped in the Mott household. The picture drawn by Cromwell shows the McKims to have been frequent visitors. See pp. 93, 94, 98, 100, et passim. A letter from Lucretia Mott to Elizabeth Neall Gay, December 24, 1847, clearly illustrates the social aspect of anti-slavery activity. Mrs. Mott wrote: "I often think of Sydney /Sidney Howard Gay, the New York based editor of the National Anti-Slavery Standard/ unaided as he is by such a nice Executive Committee as we have here meeting at Sarah Pugh's every week and enjoying the evening so much." Sidney Howard Gay Collection, Special Collections, Columbia University Library.

figures in his life to draw him into their theological or ideological orbits.

Regardless of his motives for making the shift to disunion, it is certain that by July McKim had not only adopted this position as his own, but was taking steps to bring his organization into line with the position of Garrison's group on the question. During this month he had been planning to take a week's vacation at Cape May, but at the last minute he was induced to change his plans and take the holiday in Boston instead. There, he invited C. L. Remond and Frederick Douglass, two of the national society's most popular and powerful speakers, to attend the upcoming meeting of the Pennsylvania abolitionists.⁶⁵ It was apparently no accident that the two speakers were both disunionists and that this would be a central subject at the gathering.

The New Englanders were less than certain that the Pennsylvanians could be convinced to embrace the new doctrine, and a week before the meeting, they decided that Garrison himself should attend it. Edmund Quincy wrote McKim that:

We think his presence is very important for the purpose of showing precisely where we stand on the Disunion Question. We wish to show that we are not bigoted or intolerant on the

⁶⁵Robert Purvis to McKim, October 31, 1844, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. In the wake of the subsequent division within the society the adherents of the Liberty Party apparently charged that McKim's trip to Boston, while ostensibly for pleasure, was actually for the purpose of bringing reinforcements for the cause of disunion. In the letter cited above, Purvis gave his support to McKim and said that he knew that McKim did not decide to go to Boston until the last minute and that his primary reason for going there was "the enjoyment of sea bathing and air." Nevertheless, McKim's invitation to Remond and Douglass together with his behavior at the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania society suggests that he was active in trying to insure victory for the disunionists.

subject, and not in the least desirous of dragooning or browbeating abolitionists into the measure until they are ready for it. . . . Garrison will be the very man for your meeting, if you wish to have the question fairly and clearly stated, and argued in a temperate and dispassionate manner, with the single desire of promoting the truth, and not of obtaining victory. You will find . . . his influence out of the meetings will be very beneficial in disarming prejudice and comforting friends.⁶⁶

The meeting began on August 12, 1844, and although it rapidly became clear that Garrison was "the very man" for the meeting, his success was due less to his temperate and dispassionate manner than to his ability to strike just the right chords of sober earnestness with his Hicksite audience. "Garrison just suited them," wrote one observer who went on to say: "His soberness, his solemnity, his earnestness - his evident deep religious feeling - his simplicity - all these were just what the Quakers love, and they gathered about him as their fathers did about Fox, and said yea! verily! he is a prophet."⁶⁷

With Garrison, Remond, and Douglass working for disunion, both on the platform and behind the scenes, it was clear that the American Anti-Slavery Society was making an all-out effort to bring the Pennsylvanians into line. They were aided by their local supporters including McKim and the Motts, and one of the first items of business taken up by the meeting was a motion which would allow the visitors from the national organization to join in the discussions that were to follow. This was passed, but an amendment which would have permitted them to vote failed of adoption.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Edmund Quincy to McKim, August 4, 1844, cited in Garrison, Life of Garrison, III, 113n.

⁶⁷Sidney Howard Gay to Edmund Quincy, August 21, 1844, cited in Thomas, The Liberator, p. 310.

⁶⁸Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1844), Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

Despite the fact that the leading figures in the Pennsylvania society were ready to have it out on the disunion question, there was strong sentiment for avoiding the issue, and this was reflected in the agenda submitted by the Business Committee which made no mention of the problem. Nevertheless, as the National Anti-Slavery Standard observed, "this comfortable state of affairs was destroyed by J. M. McKim who introduced a Resolution declaring the pro-slavery character of the Constitution and the duty of not voting under it." Claiming that he was not introducing the motion from partisan motives, McKim said that he was bringing it up because he knew that the subject was uppermost in the minds of all those present, and he wanted to get it out into the open.⁶⁹

After dropping this not unexpected bombshell, McKim receded into the background and left Garrison to defend the disunion policy, while Thomas Earle and C. D. Cleveland fired salvo after salvo in spirited opposition. Cleveland who was an official of the Liberty Party argued that the Constitution was not a pro-slavery document and held that if changes were needed they should be made in the proper manner. Earle insisted that disunion was merely non-resistance in another guise, and he went on to say that the introduction of the new doctrines would change the basic goals of the society from seeking an end to slavery to the destruction of the Union. Moreover, he argued that the adoption of Garrison's views would amount to a proscriptive test for membership. The Boston agitator answered these charges by

⁶⁹National Anti-Slavery Standard, August 22, 1844.

saying that the issue was not the support of "no-government," but rather, the support of this government. He also contended that the adoption of disunion would preclude no one from membership in the society so long as they were opposed to slavery.⁷⁰

Professor Cleveland introduced a resolution stating that it was the duty of abolitionists to vote, and reaffirming their loyalty to the Constitution. This was defeated by what the National Anti-Slavery Standard termed "an overwhelming majority," and all attempts to amend the resolutions McKim had introduced were also defeated. Nevertheless, his motions were never actually adopted and McKim later stated that the disunionists "had no wish to vote on it [disunion] till the society was fully prepared."⁷¹

Even without a formal vote on the issue, it is clear that the Garrisonians emerged as the victors at this meeting. Not only were the political actionist views of Professor Cleveland defeated, but the disunionists also succeeded in electing an executive committee which was predominantly in their favor. This was not accidental, for when the Nominating Committee brought in a slate of officers for the coming year which consisted of seven political actionists and seven Garrisonians, the committee was dismissed and a new one selected. This second body was comprised of three disunionists and two Liberty Party men, and it succeeded in getting the adoption of a slate of nominations which included

⁷⁰Ibid. Pennsylvania Freeman, October 10, 1844.

⁷¹Ibid., September 26 [19], 1844. National Anti-Slavery Standard, August 22, 1844.

the names of only three political actionists (out of fifteen nominees). While the society had taken no formal action on disunion or the Constitution, this meeting was undoubtedly a victory for Garrison and his supporters. It may or may not have been coincidental that McKim emerged from these proceedings with a new and more prestigious title. He was now the General Agent of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.⁷²

In the year that followed the last vestiges of harmony that had previously existed within the society between Garrisonians and political actionists vanished. The Executive Committee behaved as though the organization had already given its official sanction to the disunion doctrine, and issued petitions urging Congress to amend the Constitution or dissolve the Union. It hired between six and eight lecturing agents during this year, and all of them were non-resistants. Thomas Earle and Samuel Aaron (a political actionist) were refused the right to lecture for the society on a voluntary basis despite the fact that they had been doing this for years and were both currently members of the Executive Committee. The Pennsylvania Freeman adopted a more violent tone towards the Liberty Party.⁷³

The National Anti-Slavery Standard which mirrored the official views of Garrison's organization had been delighted with the unexpected fidelity which the Pennsylvanians had shown at the August convention. By the Fall, however, it was pressing for a more formal acknowledgement

⁷²Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1844), Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

⁷³Pennsylvania Freeman, October 24, November 21, 1844; July 17, 1845.

of their disunionist beliefs, and in late December a meeting was held in Philadelphia on the matter. The end result appears to have been total chaos. The tellers who counted the votes could not even agree on which side won. At this meeting a suggestion was made that the society divide its funds between the Liberty Party and those who wished to remain in the old organization, but no action was taken on this point. The strong showing which the Liberty forces made is illustrative of the fact that political action was strongest in Philadelphia, and among the non-Hicksite members of the Pennsylvania society. In the rural areas where the Hicksites were the dominant group within the society, there was little support for the political actionists.⁷⁴

It is for this reason that Thomas Earle and his supporters protested loudly and vigorously when McKim and the Executive Committee decided to hold the 1845 Annual Meeting of the society in Kennet Square, Chester County, which was a Hicksite stronghold. Originally the gathering had been scheduled for Norristown which was easily accessible to those who lived in Philadelphia; but the committee claimed that facilities were not available in Norristown and moved the meeting site to Kennet Square which was on the outer fringe of the society's main balliwick. In fairness, it must be observed that the committee did arrange for transportation from Philadelphia to Kennet Square for all who wished to take advantage of it.⁷⁵

⁷⁴National Anti-Slavery Standard, August 22, December 19, 1844; January 16, 1845.

⁷⁵Pennsylvania Freeman, July 17, 1845.

The Eighth Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society was held on August 11, 1845, and McKim was again the man who injected the issue of disunion into the proceedings by presenting a series of resolutions which termed the Constitution "an unholy league with oppression," and held that to vote or obey it was to make oneself a party to the "compact" and hence, to evil. After a lengthy and heated debate those present voted to adopt this position by a margin of 442-188.⁷⁶ The society was now solidly in the Garrisonian camp, and although it would occasionally show some independence, it would never again deviate markedly from the orthodoxy of the Bostonians. As for McKim, he had become very much the "organization man" and in the years that followed it would often be difficult to tell where his personal opinions ended and those of the organization began.

⁷⁶Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1845), Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TASKS OF ANTI-SLAVERY

Although it has been necessary to chronicle at some length the circumstances which led McKim and his organization to land in the Garrisonian camp, the real relevance of the agent and his society lies elsewhere. Day after day, in a dozen different ways over a period of more than two decades the Pennsylvanians struggled to keep the evil of slavery before the public eye, and it is this rather than the internicine battles of the abolitionists which makes their story significant.

It is doubtless true that by the 1840's the radical anti-slavery movement had lost some of its early momentum and that it had been weakened by the decline of revivalism and seriously damaged by internal divisions. Nevertheless, by raising the issue of black freedom, it had been responsible for making northerners aware of how sharply the slavery question divided them from their southern countrymen. During the two decades which preceded the Civil War the radicals continued their agitation, and even though they gained few new members, their refusal to let the issue of immediate emancipation drop from public view served as a moral polestar for the North. If few men were willing to give up the Constitution and the Union for the slave, the abolitionists brought many to see slavery as a cancer which must

not be allowed to grow until it devoured the entire nation.¹

At the heart of the abolition effort in eastern Pennsylvania was Lucretia Mott and a small coterie of close friends, relatives and followers, devoted to anti-slavery in particular and universal reform in general. Primarily composed of Hicksites, this group would, in the years after 1845, come to form the nucleus of the twelve to fifteen member Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania society, but it would also be represented in almost every other humanitarian reform project in the Philadelphia area.²

McKim had first become a member (albeit, a peripheral one) of this social circle when he was an agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society, and his subsequent residence in Philadelphia together with his engagement to Sarah Speakman made these ties even stronger. As has already been noted, Mrs. Mott's opinion of McKim carried a great deal of weight with the father of his intended; but even so, the Hicksites looked askance at intermarriage, and when Mr. Speakman gave his approval to the engagement there were threats that Sarah would be disowned if

¹For the interpretation that the Civil War was the result of fundamental moral antagonism between the North and South which had its roots in slavery see, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "The Causes of the Civil War: A Note on Historical Sentimentalism," Partisan Review XVI (October 1949), 969-981. Dwight L. Dumond's Antislavery Origins of the Civil War (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1939), describes the manner in which the moral challenge of the abolitionists led to secession. It is weak, however, in that it ignores the Garrisonians almost entirely.

²See below pp. 227, 228 and 230.

she married out of the meeting.³

The disownment proceedings, however, were never instituted and Sarah McKim remained a Hicksite in good standing until the end of her life. It seems apparent that Mrs. Mott's strong support for the match, together with the fact that McKim's new-found beliefs blended so well into the liberal Quaker milieu, was enough to appease those who had been threatening to make trouble. After McKim broke with the Presbyterian Church in 1838, he never again affiliated with any formal religious organization, not even the Hicksites, and he later wrote that his daughter Lucy "had been tenderly and conscientiously reared outside of sectarian pales, on the outskirts of a liberal Quakerism." On McKim's wedding day Mrs. Mott wrote that he "has lately married one of the finest Quaker girls of Chester Co. and is well nigh a Quaker himself - of the right sort I mean."⁴

The wedding took place on October 12, 1840, and less than two weeks later Sarah was forced to return to Chester County on family business for several weeks; and McKim, lonely and perhaps a bit miffed at this sudden separation, sent her a long letter which sheds considerable light on his relationship to the Mott household and on his aims in life. He wrote that soon after Sarah left he "fell into my old habits and found

³Sarah A. McKim. to the Monthly Meeting [of Hicksite Friends], October 1840, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. See also, [Wendell Phillips Garrison] In Memoriam: Sarah A. McKim (New York: no publisher given, 1891), p. 16.

⁴Lucretia Mott to Richard D. Webb, October 12, 1840, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library. McKim briefly alluded to the rearing of his daughter in describing a visit the two of them made to the Sea Islands during the Civil War. See, James Miller McKim, The Freedmen of South Carolina: An Address Delivered by James Miller McKim in Sansom Hall, July 9, 1862 . . . (Philadelphia: Willis P. Hazard, 1862), p. 8.

myself seated in the parlor at 136 [North Ninth Street, the home of Mrs. Mott].⁷ The next day he went to hear his hostess of the night before deliver a Sunday sermon, and then after doing some reading he once more made his way to her house where he spent the evening. Sundown of the next day again found him visiting with the Motts. After telling Sarah of his activities in her absence McKim went on to promise that he would devote all his energies to her happiness, and added that doing this "will not interfere with my primary consecration of my entire life to our Heavenly Father. We will both devote ourselves to each other and unitedly to God." He went on to say that this joint dedication would bind them more firmly to God and to each other.⁵

Thus, McKim's marriage marked an important transition point in his life. Together with his recently acquired position as publishing agent, it gave him a sense of purpose and direction, and put an end to the frantic spiritual wanderings which had characterized his state in the 1830's. Through his work, his marriage, and his close ties to Mrs. Mott and the Hicksite community, he had come to know who he was and where he was going. It is not surprising that in the years that followed the depressions and physical ailments that had previously plagued him were markedly diminished.⁶

When McKim first took on the job of publishing agent Lucretia Mott was universally respected in anti-slavery and reform circles, but

⁵James Miller McKim to Sarah McKim, October 29, 1840, Chubb Collection.

⁶This conclusion is based on the fact that the entire body of McKim's correspondence after 1840 appears to show a marked diminution in his preoccupation with his health as compared to the 1830's.

she and her group had not yet assumed control of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. In the years between 1841 and 1846, however, they came to hold most of the positions on the organization's Executive Committee. Among those who played key roles on this body were Mrs. Mott's husband, James; her son-in-law, Edward M. Davis; and three friends of long duration: Sarah Pugh, Mary Grew, and Abby Kimber. Also a part of this circle were Robert Purvis, an independently wealthy Negro farmer and his wife Hattie, and they too were frequent visitors at the home of Mrs. Mott. Needless to say, McKim, as the society's agent was an ex officio member of the committee, but in addition to this he served as the organization's corresponding secretary from 1841-1843, and again from 1850-1863.⁷

⁷Mrs. Mott's son-in-law, Edward M. Davis, a Philadelphia commission merchant, first joined the committee in 1838 and would hold a wide variety of posts ranging from president to corresponding secretary, to "additional member" during his many years in the organization. In 1841 his mother-in-law, who was already the president of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, became an additional member of the state society's committee. In that same year McKim, Sarah Pugh, and Robert Purvis were also elected to this body. Miss Pugh was a Quaker school-teacher who would, after serving two years as an additional member, become the perennial treasurer of the society. Robert Purvis would serve at various times as president, vice-president, and additional member of the committee. Mary Grew joined the ranks in 1844 and held the positions variously of corresponding secretary and additional member. James Mott was elected vice-president in 1846 and held this post until 1851 when he became the organization's president. Abby Kimber was a latecomer and did not join the committee until 1850 when she became an additional member. With the single exception of Edward M. Davis, who missed two years, all of the individuals named above served continuously on the committee until at least 1865. All of those mentioned except Purvis and McKim were Hicksites. The majority of those members who have not been listed were also Hicksites. Information on the offices held by each individual has been compiled from the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society which are collected in the Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, and from the Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, 1846-1870, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Volumes I and II of the minutes covering the years 1837-1846 have not been located. Volumes III and IV are kept in separate collections. Volume III, 1846-1856, is in the Gilpin Collection; while Volume IV, 1856-1870 is in the Pennsylvania Abolition Society Collection. Hereafter, these minutes

The small group which ran the affairs of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society was also at the heart of much of the other activity in behalf of the Negro that was taking place in the Philadelphia area. McKim, James Mott, Edward M. Davis, Robert Purvis, Haworth Wetherald and Benjamin C. Bacon were also members of the by now venerable Pennsylvania Abolition Society. This society, although lethargic and decrepit with age, still played a role in giving legal aid to Negroes accused of being fugitives, and in addition, it worked to maintain schools for the free Negroes of Philadelphia. McKim joined in 1843, and along with James Mott, Thomas Earle, and two others he assisted Edward Needles in compiling and publishing a history of the older society.⁸

will be referred to as Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, and no attempt will be made to distinguish volume III from volume IV since this will be apparent from the date for each entry. Biographical data on the individuals mentioned and descriptions of their relationship to Mrs. Mott are to be found in, Cromwell, Lucretia Mott, pp. 23, 50, 97-99, et passim. In general, the other members of the Executive Committee after 1846 were also part of Mrs. Mott's circle, but they were not as important to the organization as those already described, and it has not been considered necessary to mention them specifically.

⁸Minutes of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, 1825-1847, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. See especially the entries for June 27, 1843; December 26, 1844, and June 25, 1846. William J. Buck, Manuscript History of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, which was written in 1879 and is to be found in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. It contains (on pp. 358-365) a complete list of the society's members, and the dates when they were admitted. A careful perusal of this list shows that virtually all of the male members of the executive committee of the anti-slavery society joined the abolition society at one time or another. See also, p. 274.

McKim and his co-workers on the Executive Committee also formed a significant portion of the leadership of the Free Produce Association. Long a favorite of Quaker abolitionists, this movement to discourage the use of the products of slave labor by providing substitutes made by free men found little favor outside of Hicksite strongholds, and even Garrison and his Boston supporters felt it was unrealistic. Nevertheless, the Executive Committee of the Free Produce Association in 1844 numbered among its members McKim, and James and Lucretia Mott. Sarah Pugh was the group's recording secretary, and Mary Grew served as corresponding secretary.⁹

One organization to which McKim did not belong was the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, but even here he was not totally uninvolved. Presided over by Mrs. Mott, and officered by the other female members of her circle including Sarah McKim, this organization played a vital role in supplying funds for various branches of the cause including the state society, the free produce group, and the vigilance committee. Each year in December it held an "Anti-Slavery Fair" or bazaar at which the ladies sold various items they had made or received as contributions, and the proceeds were donated to the movement. McKim frequently attended the female society's weekly meetings

⁹The Pennsylvania Freeman for February 17, 1841; November 18, 1841, October 24, 1844; January 1, and October 29, 1846; and October 29 [sic], 1847 contains the names of officers of the Free Produce Association. Although the offices held by the individuals listed above tended to vary, their membership on its executive did not change. The example cited above is from the issue of October 24, 1844 which was chosen because McKim's name appeared for the first time on that date. A full treatment of the free produce movement is given in Nuernberger, The Free Produce Movement.

to appeal for money to be used for some special purpose, and he often served as a guest speaker.¹⁰

The same individuals who were so active in behalf of the slave were also involved with numerous other reform causes. Perhaps the best indication of the breadth of the reform interests of McKim and his co-workers can be gleaned from the pages of the anti-slavery society's official organ, the Pennsylvania Freeman. It contained numerous articles on the subjects of temperance, women's rights, justice for the indians, the abolition of capital punishment, phonography, mesmerism, phrenology, and prison reform. Furthermore, it even described the activities of the "'Rosine Association' for the reformation, employment and instruction of females whose habits and situation have precluded them from the sympathies and respect of the virtuous part of the community."¹¹

¹⁰Minutes of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1841-1862, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. On McKim as a visitor and speaker see for example, the entries for January 14, 1841; June 9 and 15, November and December, 1842. The pattern was still holding true a decade later, and he is known to have spoken before the women on January 14, and May 13, 1849; March 13, 1851; June 10, and September 9, 1852; and November 10, 1853. On the contributions made by the women's organization to the various departments of the cause, see its minutes for January of each year when an accounting was given of the proceeds from the fair, and decisions were made as to how to allocate this money. After 1846 it rarely donated less than a thousand dollars to the Pennsylvania society. In view of the fact that the total receipts of that group usually ranged between five and seven thousand dollars; this donation was of great importance. For a listing of the annual income of the Pennsylvania society, and of the amounts donated by the female organization see, William Cohen, "The Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society" (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of History, Columbia University, 1960), pp. 106-107.

¹¹Pennsylvania Freeman, 1846-1854. The description of the purpose of the Rosine Association is from the issue of May 6, 1847.

Because of the pressure of his anti-slavery duties, McKim was less involved in other reform causes than many of his co-workers, and he did not join Lucretia Mott in speaking for prison reform or in organizing the Association for the Relief and Employment of Poor Women; but even so, he remained a universal reformer. As will be shown below, one of the first things he did when he took over the management of the society's anti-slavery bookstore was to stock its shelves with reform works that went far beyond abolition. In early 1848 he signed a call for an Anti-Sabbath Convention to be held in Boston, and in 1852 he was a speaker at the Pennsylvania Women's Rights Convention held in West Chester. Nevertheless, despite these sporadic forays into other areas, McKim devoted most of his energies to the cause of the slave.¹²

McKim's headquarters was the anti-slavery office at 31 North Fifth Street, located only a few blocks from his residence on Tenth Street, and close to the homes of the most active members of the Executive Committee. It served as the publishing office for the Pennsylvania Freeman, and for the numerous tracts issued by the society. It was also used as both a library and bookstore for the movement, and as a collection point for funds and petitions. The Free Produce Association often sold its wares here, and the several rooms at the office

¹²For Mrs. Mott's activities see, for example, ibid., January 8, 1846 and April 4, 1850. On McKim and the women's rights convention (at which Mr. and Mrs. Mott also spoke), see the issue of June 12, 1852. The signers of the call for the Anti-Sabbath Convention are listed in Garrison, Life of Garrison, III, 220.

were used as meeting places for various branches of the cause ranging from the female society to the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, which aided fugitive slaves.¹³

One of the first problems that faced McKim when he took up his duties as publishing agent in February 1840, was the condition of the "Anti-Slavery Depository" (as the society's bookstore was called). Its shelves were stocked exclusively with abolition tracts, many of which had proven unsaleable, and it was steadily losing money. Something had to be done to draw customers into the store, and McKim decided to begin clearing out the dead weight by giving away those works which could not be sold. He then restocked it with more current anti-slavery tracts and with works on other reforms (especially temperance) which might also appeal to his patrons. He also ordered books of a more general nature and began to carry the major Philadelphia newspapers as well. All of the profits from this operation would, of course, be used for the support of the society. By May 1841, fourteen months after McKim took over, it could be reported that the depository was in a more prosperous condition than ever before.¹⁴ In view of the increasing severity of the national depression this was no mean achievement.

Over the years the depository carried, in addition to anti-slavery works, tracts advocating a wide variety of reforms from women's rights

¹³See, the Pennsylvania Freeman, 1840-1854, and the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, 1846-1861.

¹⁴Pennsylvania Freeman, December 31, 1840; May 12, 1841.

to the abolition of the death penalty, from non-resistance to Irish freedom. The speeches of Daniel O'Connell were there along with Adin Ballou's, Christian Non-Resistance, C. C. Burleigh's Thoughts on the Death Penalty, and Catherine E. Beecher's The Evils Suffered by American Women and American Children.¹⁵

Nor were books the only items available in the depository, for in 1842, probably at McKim's instigation, the anti-slavery society made an agreement with the Free Produce Association whereby the bookstore would carry products supplied by the association. One advertisement in the Pennsylvania Freeman listed a wide variety of dry goods as available ranging from Manchester gingham to unbleached Canton flannel and muslin (both bleached and unbleached). Orders and inquiries were to be directed to McKim or to James Mott. Also on sale in the depository were such miscellaneous items as "elegant men's dressing cases," ladies work boxes, and "exquisitely beautiful enamelled paper weights."¹⁶

Despite the potpourri of reform literature and sundries, anti-slavery tracts remained the primary commodity sold in McKim's store. The works available included Lydia Maria Child's Anti-Slavery Catechism, William Ellery Channing's, Emancipation, and Theodore Weld's Slavery As It Is, among a host of others. Over the years the most popular works in the store appear to have been Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle

¹⁵Ibid., June 11, 1846; May 27, 1847. A list of publications sent to McKim on November 2, 1860 is given in, Samuel May Jr. to McKim, November 4, 1860; McKim to Richard D. Webb, October 23, 1843, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

¹⁶Pennsylvania Freeman, September 14, 1848; February 15, 1849. Fifth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1842), Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

Tom's Cabin, and Hinton Rowan Helper's, The Impending Crisis of the South. Over one thousand copies of Helper's book were sold in the last three weeks of 1859 alone. McKim was the subscription agent for the out-of-town anti-slavery press, and at the depository he also sold single copies of such papers as the Liberator, the National Anti-Slavery Standard, and the North Star.¹⁷

Many of the books and pamphlets available in the depository were published by McKim, who actively sought out works which he thought would be useful to the cause and then prepared the manuscript for the printer. Often, he would merely ask an author for permission to reprint a work that had already been published elsewhere. In 1843, for example, he asked for and received the permission of William Jay to republish, A View of the Action of the Federal Government in Behalf of Slavery. In 1845 McKim wrote to Charles Sumner introducing himself as one who had published the last public addresses of Channing with the latter's "consent and approbation." He then asked the Massachusetts lawyer for permission to publish his Fourth of July oration entitled, The True Grandeur of Nations. Sumner consented and this marked the beginning of a cordial association between the two men which would continue into the Civil War.¹⁸

¹⁷On McKim as the subscription agent for out of town papers see, the Liberator, March 1, 1840, and the Pennsylvania Freeman, October 7, 1847. On Uncle Tom's Cabin see, ibid., April 15, 1852. The response to Helper's book is mentioned in the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, January 1, 1860. A list of publications sent from Boston to Philadelphia on November 2, 1860, sheds light on the books available in the depository. It is given in, Samuel May Jr. to McKim, November 4, 1860, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library. The title page of Channing's, Emancipation (Philadelphia: Eastern Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, 1841), included the statement: "For sale at the Anti-Slavery Office, 31 N. Fifth St."

¹⁸William Jay to McKim, January 4, 1843; September 17, 1846, McKim Collection, Cornell. McKim to Charles Sumner, November 11 and 19, 1845, Sumner to McKim, November 17, 1845,

It is difficult to estimate the extent of McKim's publishing activities because few useful figures have survived. It is known, however, that in 1848 the Pennsylvania society printed 40,000 octavo pages of anti-slavery literature, and that in 1853 the Executive Committee ordered the publication of five thousand tracts on the Nebraska question alone.¹⁹ It should also be noted that just as the works sold at the bookstore were not restricted to those pertaining solely to abolition, so too, the works which McKim guided into print were not limited to the anti-slavery topic either.

In addition to running the bookstore and putting out tracts for the society, McKim's duties as publishing agent included the management of the Pennsylvania Freeman. Although his responsibilities in this regard

Charles Sumner Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

The relationship between McKim and Sumner is difficult to assess. In the years before the Civil War the Pennsylvanian had a number of contacts with the Bostonian. McKim visited the Senator when he was recuperating from the assault of Preston Brooks, and in 1858 Sumner sent him some celery seeds. In that same year McKim felt on close enough terms to invite the Senator to visit with him in his home. Other than the usual requests for endorsements and speeches, however, the records do not show that the two engaged in any significant joint anti-slavery endeavors prior to 1862. In that year McKim suggested to Sumner that a commission (later to be called the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission) be established to investigate conditions in the South and recommend a plan for reconstruction. Sumner acted on this suggestion, but McKim was not named to the body that was finally set up. He felt angered and humiliated by this rejection, and said that he had counted on Sumner's "cooperation both as an anti-slavery Senator and as a personal friend." McKim to Sumner, March 23, 1863; see also, McKim to Sumner, June 7, 1858, Charles Sumner Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. McKim to R. D. Webb, April 19, 1857, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

¹⁹Pennsylvania Freeman, August 17, 1848. Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, February 21, 1853.

were supposedly of a non-editorial nature, the resignation of John Greenleaf Whittier as editor led the society's Executive Committee to draft McKim temporarily for the job. He served in this capacity from February 27 to April 30, 1840, when C. C. Burleigh was hired to take on the position "for a season." Throughout the remainder of the Freeman's checkered history McKim would occasionally be called upon to serve as a stand-in editor for those brief periods when the regular incumbent of that post was absent, or when the job was vacant. Even so, he never held the position for a length of time sufficient to stamp the paper with his own imprint, and during his various tenures it usually mirrored the style which it had had when it came into his hands.²⁰

McKim's major duties in regard to the paper were to handle the business details of publication and circulation. When he took over the Freeman, it had approximately fourteen hundred paying subscribers, but by December 1840 this figure was down to thirteen hundred. The drop was probably due to the internal division of the abolitionists rather than to any mismanagement on McKim's part, but in any event, the Freeman had been, and would continue to be, a losing venture. The cost of publication came to almost four thousand dollars a year in 1840, and subscriptions and advertising accounted for little more than a fourth of this figure. In the years after 1840 the paper never appears to have had a printing of more than two thousand copies, and of these only

²⁰ Pennsylvania Freeman, February 20, 27, April 30, 1840; September 21, 1847; April 27, 1848; February 28 - June 29, 1854. Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, November 3, 1846.

thirteen hundred, at most, went to paying subscribers.²¹

The Freeman must have been the bane of McKim's existence for he and the Executive Committee were constantly engaged in a fruitless search for means of making the paper self-sustaining. At the close of 1841 they decided that the drain on the society's resources caused by the deficit of the Freeman was too great, and that the money could better be expended in hiring agents to canvass the countryside for the cause. They reasoned that the National Anti-Slavery Standard could serve the need of the Pennsylvanians for an abolition newspaper, and this substitution would eliminate the costly subsidy to the Freeman. When local events demanded, they could always put out a special edition of their own paper.²²

At a special meeting held on December 22, 1841, the society ratified this plan, and for the next two years the Freeman existed in a state of limbo, making sporadic appearances as need arose. Altogether, there were eight special editions of about eight thousand copies each and these were given away gratis. During these years the Pennsylvanians depended on the National Anti-Slavery Standard for their news of the cause, and the leading abolitionists in the state kept up a lively correspondence in it so that news of local affairs would not be totally

²¹Ibid., November 4, 1851. The remaining 700 copies were allocated as follows: 350 to "nominal [i.e., non-paying or delinquent] subscribers, 100 to the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society which paid for them, 100 to other papers for exchange, and 150 to the depository for sale or giveaway. The minutes for January 4, 1854 lists 1619 subscribers, but does not distinguish those who paid from nominal subscribers. See also, the Pennsylvania Freeman, December 31, 1840.

²²Ibid., December 29, 1841. Edward M. Davis to Elizabeth Pease, April 6, 1847, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

ignored. From May through July of 1843, McKim wrote a series of articles for the Standard entitled, "Letters from Philadelphia" which reported on the progress of the cause in the state. In one of these he described The Yearly Meeting of [Hicksite] Friends and indicated that the anti-slavery forces were in total control of the meeting and that an expected attack from some Quakers who opposed the vigor of their organization's stand failed to materialize.²³

In two other letters, McKim described the proceedings of the Philadelphia Repeal Association as they related to the abolitionists. This organization of Irish-Americans devoted to repealing the Act of Union between England and Ireland was disturbed by the anti-slavery leanings of Daniel O'Connell, which they feared would prejudice southerners against their cause. They had written to O'Connell, who was the leading figure in the fight for Irish freedom, seeking to prejudice him against the abolitionists. When O'Connell reiterated his previous anti-slavery stand, the Pennsylvania society published his letter in three leading newspapers and in a special edition of the Freeman. All of this provoked the repeal association to debate the issue again at three successive meetings. Surprisingly, the second of these gatherings voted not to hear the anti-abolitionist report of the first meeting, but this action was soon reversed.²⁴ The upshot of it all was that the anti-slavery men had again succeeded in focussing

²³ National Anti-Slavery Standard, May 25, 1843. Fifth and Sixth Annual Reports of the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1842 and 1843), Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

²⁴ National Anti-Slavery Standard, July 6 and 13, 1843.

public attention on the emancipation issue through the use of a petty controversy.

As has just been indicated, the Standard did carry news of events in Philadelphia and the surrounding counties; nevertheless, it was not the same as having a local newspaper, and by mid-1843 McKim was proposing that either a new anti-slavery organ be established in the Philadelphia area, or that the Freeman be revived. His plan was probably a reflection of his strong interest in political action and of his discontent with the excessively whiggish position of the Standard. Moreover, it contained a safeguard against interference by the national or state societies, for the paper was to be put in the hands of three prominent abolitionists who would run it as an independent venture.²⁵

As the plan finally worked out McKim, Thomas Earle, and C. C. Burleigh (all of whom favored political action), were given charge of the new paper, and they received from the state society a two hundred and fifty dollar guarantee against financial loss. The resurrected Pennsylvania Freeman which put out its first issue on January 18, 1844, was obviously a low budget affair designed for a limited audience. Only 1,250 copies were printed for each of its semi-monthly issues, and the paper consisted of four, four column pages, printed on cheap paper. Its prospectus stated that "the subjects which will mainly occupy our

²⁵Ibid., August 3, 1843. C. C. Burleigh to McKim, June 24, 1843, McKim Collection, Cornell. This letter contains Burleigh's reply to McKim's suggestion that the two of them undertake to bring out a new paper or revive the Freeman. McKim's opposition to the Whig bias of the Standard is contained in his letter to D. L. Child, October 25, 1843, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

attention will be the church, the clergy, political parties and political partisans; their present condition in respect to the anti-slavery cause, and the duties of abolitionists in regard to them."²⁶

Perhaps because of the serious divisions among Pennsylvania abolitionists in 1844, McKim's venture as an independent publisher was short-lived, and by February 1845 the paper was back in the hands of the society. Even the services of James Russell Lowell, who wrote a series of guest editorials during the first half of the year, failed to make it into a paying venture, and his articles had to be discontinued for want of funds. By the end of 1845 the Executive Committee decided once again to issue the Freeman on a weekly basis and to raise the price of a subscription from seventy-five cents to a dollar a year.²⁷ This decision signified that the committee had chosen to devote a substantial portion of the society's income to subsidizing the paper, for it was clear that even with the best of luck it would be some time before the Freeman could possibly become self-supporting.

In the years that followed, McKim, acting on behalf of the Executive Committee, tried one expedient after another to increase circulation. In the hope that more interesting subject matter would

²⁶ Pennsylvania Freeman, January 18, 1844. National Anti-Slavery Standard, February 8, 1844. Seventh Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1844), Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

²⁷ Pennsylvania Freeman, February 13, 1845; January 1, 1846. National Anti-Slavery Standard, January 23, 1845. James Russell Lowell to McKim, 1845, Chubb Collection. McKim to James Russell Lowell, August 23, 1845, James Russell Lowell Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. Lowell, who was in dire financial straits, wrote McKim that it was "five articles since I received anything from you. Five times five makes twenty-five [dollars]." McKim remitted the money in August and asked Lowell to understand that his employment had only been terminated because the society had debts to pay. He assured the man who would shortly write The Bigelow Papers that he would probably be rehired when the society's financial position improved.

raise the number of subscriptions he wrote to prominent abolitionists asking that each contribute (gratis) a regular column. In January 1847 the size of the paper was enlarged by one column, and it was increased again in early 1853. At regular intervals McKim implored each reader to go out and get one or two more subscribers, and in 1853 a free copy of Uncle Tom's Cabin was offered to each reader who brought in a new subscriber, while those who secured three were to get Richard Hildreth's, The White Slave. At one point, the Executive Committee even decided to send an agent to canvass all the hotels and boarding houses in Philadelphia for subscriptions to their paper and to the Standard as well. Nevertheless, income was not the main aim, for the resolution went on to say that if no takers could be found the papers were to be delivered to these places free of charge.²⁸

All these measures did have some effect, for in 1846-1847 the annual paid circulation of the Freeman was about eight hundred fifty, and during 1850-1851 it reached thirteen hundred. Nevertheless, even though the price of the paper went up to two dollars a year in 1852, it never became a paying proposition. Beset by the prolonged illness of the editor and faced with an again shrinking subscription list, the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society decided to abandon its official organ

²⁸Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, August 18, 25, November 17, 29, 1846; April 6, 1847; January 11, 1853. Pennsylvania Freeman, January 20, 1853. McKim to James Russell Lowell, August 26, 1846, James Russell Lowell Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University, McKim to Maria Weston Chapman, August 26, 1846, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library. Oliver Johnson to McKim, November 15, 1846, McKim Collection, Cornell.

once and for all.²⁹

McKim served as editor during the Freeman's last four months, and he and his associates tried to put the best face possible on their decision. They termed the demise of the paper a "merger" with the New York based National Anti-Slavery Standard. They argued that with this sister journal only four hours away from Philadelphia, it was a waste to have two newspapers with substantially similar content when one could serve the same function, and the financial saving could be used to hire agents and arrange public meetings. With the Philadelphia press more receptive to anti-slavery sentiments than ever before, there seemed to be less need of a local abolition paper.³⁰

²⁹Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, November 25, 1851; January 4, 1852; February 28, 1854. Pennsylvania Freeman, December 4, 1851; June 22, 1854. Oliver Johnson to William Lloyd Garrison, July 16, 1853, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library. Circulation figures for the Freeman have been arrived at by adding together the bi-weekly figures on subscriptions which McKim gave the Executive Committee. These are in the Minutes. The periods covered were: August 18, 1846-July 27, 1847 and November 19, 1850-November 4, 1851. These periods coincide with the society's fiscal year which usually ran from annual meeting to annual meeting. The Minutes give no indication of subscription trends after January 4, 1854, but the continued downward trend has been inferred from the report on that date that during the past year 145 subscriptions had not been renewed, while only 27 additional subscriptions were gained. In view of the illness of the editor and in the absence of a major subscription campaign, it seems warranted to assume that the decision to terminate the paper was dictated in part by a still dropping subscription level. Surprisingly, no direct evidence has been found to indicate that the decision to give up the paper was suggested by the Bostonians. It is, nevertheless, true that in May 1854 the Standard was in a declining condition, and in that month McKim was offered the chance (which he turned down) to take over its management. Thus, there may have been a connection between the crisis of the Standard and the decision to abandon the Freeman. See, McKim to Sidney Howard Gay, May 20, 1854, Sidney Howard Gay Collection, Special Collections, Columbia University Library.

³⁰Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, February 28, 1854. Pennsylvania Freeman, May 25, June 22, 1854.

In point of fact, the claim that a merger had taken place was merely sugar coating designed to make the death of the Freeman more acceptable to the members of the society. It is true that McKim now became the "Corresponding Editor of the Standard for Pennsylvania," but this merely meant that local contributions to that paper would first be sent to him, and that he would select the most newsworthy of these and forward them to New York. In the years that followed, the Pennsylvanians rarely had more than one article in a given issue of the Standard, and these columns were usually written by McKim.³¹

The demise of the Freeman undoubtedly represented a defeat for McKim and his organization. Nevertheless, it was only one aspect of a broader program to spread the gospel of abolition, and even without the newspaper, the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society would continue to make its views felt through its other publishing activities, and through public meetings which were now being fairly reported in the Philadelphia press. Moreover, by this time McKim had developed a position and influence in the Philadelphia area which transcended the narrow bounds of the Garrisonian group he represented, and his bookstore-office was visited by many who would not dream of formally calling themselves abolitionists.

³¹Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, June 21, 1854. National Anti-Slavery Standard, 1854-1860. McKim to Richard D. Webb, April 9, /1856/, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

CHAPTER IX

THE TASKS OF ANTI-SLAVERY (Continued)

When McKim first became the publishing agent of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, his primary duty was to carry out the policies of the Executive Committee and to take the responsibility for operating the bookstore, publishing tracts, and managing the Freeman. Almost from the start, however, his activities transcended these functions and touched upon virtually every aspect of anti-slavery work. It appears to have been for this reason that, once he had proven his orthodoxy in 1844, he came to be referred to first as the "general agent," and later as the "resident agent," of the society. In this capacity it was McKim's duty to carry out the programs devised by the Executive Committee; but he was also a member of that body, and thus he came to guide the formation of the very policies which he was called upon to carry into action.¹

In point of fact, these policies varied but little from year to year. Despite the Mexican War, the Wilmot Proviso, the growing free-soil agitation, the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska controversy, and even the birth of the Republican Party, the basic program of the Pennsylvania society continued to mirror the battle plan of the American

¹Pennsylvania Freeman, October 24, 1844. McKim is first referred to as the "Resident Agent" in the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, August 18, 1846. Thereafter, this is the title used whenever he is referred to by his title.

Anti-Slavery Society in the 1830's. It is true that the Pennsylvanians took a stance on each of these new questions, and that they were now committed to disunion, but their central strategy remained unaltered by onrushing events.

As has already been shown, the fundamental aim of the radical anti-slavery men in the 1830's had been to convert the nation to immediate emancipation through the use of such means as agents, public meetings, newspapers and tracts, and petition campaigns. The early abolitionists refused to allow themselves to be drawn into discussions of the specific means by which abolition was to be brought about because they believed that the main focus should be upon using moral suasion to convince their fellow citizens of the sinfulness of slavery. Once this was accomplished, practical plans would "easily present themselves." If, on the other hand, abolitionists allowed themselves to be drawn into discussions of specific plans, this would give those who disagreed on particular points an excuse for failing to confront the central issue: the sinfulness of slavery. Moreover, because their focus was upon moral suasion rather than practical planning, the early anti-slavery men eschewed political action.²

Despite the major changes that were taking place on the American political scene, McKim and his organization continued to hew to these older principles and techniques that had been carved out by the abolitionists in the 1830's. Thus, in 1846 the Executive Committee

²The basic aims and tactics of the early anti-slavery movement may be determined from the Particular Instructions /Of the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1834/7, Weld-Grimké Letters, I, 125-128; and from the Declaration of Sentiments of the American Anti-Slavery Society in, Garrison, Life of Garrison, I, 408-412.

proposed a program which included a drive for fifty thousand signatures on petitions protesting against state laws which favored slavery; subscription campaigns for the Freeman and Standard; the publication and circulation of at least two hundred thousand tracts; and the use of lecturing agents. Two years later, McKim, speaking for the Executive Committee wrote: "The measures of the Society during the past year have been the same in character and about the same in extent as in former years." He went on to say that their object was to use agents, tracts and conventions to "scatter light among the people."³

Even the birth in 1848 of the Free-Soil Party, dedicated to preventing the further extension of slavery brought no change in the society's position. An editorial in the Freeman welcomed the new development as a "great breach in the pro-slavery parties," and as proof of the advance of the principle of freedom. Nevertheless, it warned:

But, if seduced from their adherence to principle by the allurements of popular favor and the hope of speedy victory, these pioneer reformers [abolitionists] leave their high moral position to enter the government and become members of a political party; their faithlessness must be disastrous to the cause they love.

The editorial went on to note that "opposition, reproach, and persecution have rifted our ranks, but they have tended to keep us pure;" however, now that anti-slavery views were gaining increasing public acceptance, it would be necessary to guard this purity more zealously than ever

³Pennsylvania Freeman, June 18, August 27, 1846; August 17, 1846. See also, a circular in the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, June 15, 1847.

against "the temptation of public favor."⁴ Thus, despite the fact that the revivalist upsurge and the religious reform impulse which accompanied it had subsided by the beginning of the 1840's, the Pennsylvania Garrisonians continued to tread along well-marked paths, secure in the knowledge of their own rectitude.

From the beginning, one of the strongest traditions in the abolition movement was the convocation of the annual meeting. Borrowed from the benevolent system, this event rapidly became a ritual without which no anti-slavery society could exist. As early as 1836, Theodore Weld had remarked on the essential uselessness of such gatherings at which the faithful exhorted the faithful out of the earshot of potential converts.⁵ His comment was made in private, but it is doubtful that he could have found many to agree with him, for these meetings, unproductive though they were, did serve one useful purpose. At a time when most northerners viewed the abolitionists with contempt or hostility, the annual conferences helped to sustain morale and to demonstrate to each member that he was not alone.

Year after year, in an unbroken chain through the Civil War, the Pennsylvanians held such gatherings, and from start to finish it was McKim who organized and led these affairs. It was he who invited anti-slavery notables such as Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Frederick Douglass to appear as guest speakers; and it was he who, as a member of

⁴Pennsylvania Freeman, September 7, 1848.

⁵Theodore Weld to Lewis Tappan, [April 5, 1836], Weld-Grimké Letters, I, 286-287.

the business committee, was largely responsible for drawing up the agenda of the meeting. Together with Mrs. Mott and other members of the inner circle, McKim dominated the discussions, and he also wrote the Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society and read it to the assembled delegates.⁶

This document generally spent little time in discussing the activities of the society, and dispensed with them in a few paragraphs. Instead, the focus was upon the general political situation and the news about slavery and fugitives. McKim was perennially optimistic, and his reports always focussed on those events which, he felt, showed the movement marching steadily forward. In 1848 he observed that abolitionists were no longer the target of mob violence, and that they were now treated with respect in the public press. He also noted that free Negroes in Philadelphia were now accorded somewhat better treatment and praised the erection of a "House of Refuge" for colored juvenile offenders. He also pointed proudly to a recent law prohibiting the use of public jails to hold those accused of being fugitive slaves. He went on to welcome the "decomposition of old parties and the formation of new ones" as another instance of the progress of the cause, and a

⁶See, the Annual Reports of the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, and the reports of the proceedings of the annual meetings which are given in the Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. This only covers the period ending in 1849. Thereafter, see, the Pennsylvania Freeman (through 1853), and the National Anti-Slavery Standard (for 1854 and the years following). The annual meetings from 1849 on usually occurred in October, and the reports are to be found in the newspaper issues for late October or early November. On McKim as the author of the Annual Report of the Executive Committee see, for example, the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, August 8, 1848; June 12, 1849; October 8, 1850; and October 5, 1851.

precursor of disunion.⁷

Even in 1851, when Lucretia Mott was in a state of despair over the condition of the cause, McKim radiated confidence, and in his address to the annual meeting claimed that he didn't think there was any real despondency among abolitionists. Though he admitted that "there might be some depression of feeling," he went on to say that the abolitionists "expected and predicted" the events of the past year and that slavery could not be destroyed without a struggle.⁸

In addition to delivering the report of the executive committee at these gatherings, McKim's membership on the business committee gave him partial responsibility for drawing up a series of resolutions for the consideration of those present, and often it was he who read them to the meeting. These statements of policy usually included at least some of the following: an endorsement of the free produce movement, a condemnation of the Constitution as a proslavery document, a plea that the Union be dissolved, a warning against the snare of involvement with political parties, and an attack against the hypocritical policies of the churches because of their failure to take a firm enough stand against slavery.⁹

The seriousness with which McKim and his associates took these gatherings of the faithful is indicated by the detailed two page coverage

⁷Pennsylvania Freeman, August 17, 1848.

⁸Ibid., October 16, 1851.

⁹See the reports of the proceedings of the meetings filed with the Annual Reports in the sources described in footnote 6 above.

the annual meetings usually received in the Pennsylvania Freeman. In contrast, such activities as the tours of voluntary and paid agents through the countryside, local anti-slavery conventions, and even large public meetings addressed by name speakers, received less space.¹⁰ Even so, if the anti-slavery men had any genuine effect upon public opinion, it was through these types of activity rather than through their annual meetings.

McKim's first sustained experience as a part of the anti-slavery movement had been as a lecturer, and it is not surprising that throughout his career as the resident agent of the society he would place a special emphasis on this form of activity. When the publication of the Freeman was suspended in December 1841, and again when the paper was abandoned in 1854, one most compelling argument advanced in favor of giving up the journal was that such a step would provide badly needed funds for the hire of lecturing agents, and on both occasions McKim favored this line of reasoning.¹¹

In theory, the paid lecturers used by the society were chosen by the Executive Committee, and the minutes of that body seem to bear this out, for they dutifully record the decision in regard to each agent the society used. Nevertheless, it would appear that the choice was really McKim's and that the committee acted as a rubber stamp in such matters, for in 1855 McKim wrote his Boston counterpart saying that Giles Stebbins, who had previously lectured for the Pennsylvania society, was

¹⁰Pennsylvania Freeman, January 1, 1846-June 29, 1854.

¹¹Ibid., December 29, 1841; June 22, 29, 1854. The editorials in June, 1854, were written by McKim who was acting editor at that time.

a good man, but that he was married and insisted on taking his wife on tour with him. This impeded Stebbins' mobility, and McKim expressed his intention not to rehire him if another agent then under consideration was willing to travel alone. Whatever the official formalities, it appears that in point of fact, McKim made the decisions as to whom the society employed.¹²

As a rule, in the period 1841-1861, it appears that while the society often had two (and occasionally three) "full time" lecturers in the field during a given year, they actually travelled for only a few months, and their combined salaries rarely exceeded the amount that it would have cost to keep one man in the field the year round. To compensate for this lack, the society inaugurated a system whereby voluntary lecturers would canvass the surrounding countryside. While Mrs. Mott, May Grew and several other prominent figures within the society took on this burden frequently, McKim appears to have spoken more often than anyone in the organization.¹³

¹²McKim to Samuel May Jr., July 5, [1855], Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library. It might also be noted that McKim appears to have been fairly sophisticated (and perhaps a little less than straightforward) in his personnel policies. On March 21, 1860, Samuel May Jr., the agent of the Massachusetts society, wrote McKim asking for a character reference for Mahlon Linton who had previously served the Pennsylvania organization. McKim replied that while Linton was principled, honest, intelligent and forthright, he could say nothing in his favor when it came to efficiency. McKim suggested that out of consideration for Linton's feelings it might be well to hire him, and then release him on the ground of a lack of funds. McKim's letter was dated April 1, 1860. Both are to be found in the Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

On the other hand, McKim also appears to have been concerned with the training of agents who he believed had potential, and he sent Annie Dickinson to Massachusetts in the hope that May would allow her to travel with Susan B. Anthony and Sarah Holley. McKim to Samuel May Jr., November 22, 1860, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

¹³Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, 1846-1860. Pennsylvania Freeman, 1841-1854. It is difficult to determine how much

With its limited resources, one problem the society could not ignore was the fact that the individual lecturer (whether paid or voluntary) who travelled from town to town, often spoke before very small audiences. To increase the number of those exposed to the message, the device of "county conventions" was instituted in 1843. Under this plan the agent no longer had to move from hamlet to hamlet in search of a hearing. Instead, McKim would work together with local abolitionists to set up large meetings at a few central points within a given county. The strength of this plan was also its weakness, for while this might insure larger audiences, it seems unlikely that the unconvinced would travel very far to hear the truth. Moreover, it should also be noted that the vast majority of these meetings were held in Philadelphia and in neighboring Lancaster, Chester, Montgomery and Bucks Counties.¹⁴

was actually spent for lecturers as the treasurer's accounts varied in form from year to year. At times a separate figure was given for lecturers, but more often than not they were lumped under the general heading "agents." This latter figure would, of course, include McKim's salary, which had reached the figure of one thousand dollars a year by the end of 1853. The best that can be said is that \$719.70 was expended for lecturers in 1844-1845, \$916.06 in 1846-1847, and perhaps as much as one thousand dollars in 1853-1854. But usually the figure appears to have been less than five hundred dollars, and in some years it was close to nothing. Moreover, one cannot discount the possibility that the larger figures above included payments to the Editor of the Freeman, or payments of arrears to lecturers from previous years. Those who wish to try and make some sense of the society's chaotic accounting system are advised to consult the Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society for the years 1840-1849. For the period 1849-1860, see the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. (Financial reports usually appear in October or November). See also, the National Anti-Slavery Standard, November 4, 1854; December 22, 1855; October 25, 1856; October 16, 1858; and November 3, 1860. The system of voluntary lecturers is first alluded to in the Fifth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1842), in the Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

¹⁴Sixth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1843), in the Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

These conventions generally lasted for two consecutive days, and in October and November, 1847 McKim set up a series of at least four such double meetings, and personally spoke before at least two of them. In the fall of 1848 he organized seven of these conventions, and he also accompanied the noted Negro orator, William Wells Brown, on a lecture tour through Chester and Lancaster Counties that began in late October 1848 and extended until early January 1849. That winter McKim arranged for a series of eight meetings in Philadelphia, and in the spring he brought Lucy Stone to Pennsylvania and arranged for her to speak in Philadelphia, Norristown, Kennet Square (Chester County), Newtown (Bucks County), and Germantown.¹⁵

The pattern began to change in the early 1850's and, though local meetings were not abandoned, greater emphasis was placed on holding large gatherings in Philadelphia designed to attract a wider cross-section of the public. Thus, in December 1851, McKim wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson asking if he would consent to participate in the society's 1852 lecture series. He told the Concord sage that among others who had been invited to speak were: Garrison, Phillips, Henry Ward Beecher, Horace Mann, Theodore Parker, J. R. Giddings and John G. Palfrey. Emerson "conditionally and reluctantly" accepted. In March 1858, McKim wrote his New York co-worker, Sidney Howard Gay, that he was planning a series of thirteen lectures for the following winter even if it should

¹⁵Pennsylvania Freeman, October 14, November 11 and 18, December 23, 1847; September 21-December 21, 1848; April 19, 26, and May 5, 1849. Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, September 19, 1848; February 20, 27, and April 3, 1849.

cost a thousand dollars.¹⁶

In the meantime, the work of the society's hired lecturing agents continued. Just as McKim had been obligated to make regular reports of his progress when he was an agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society, so too, the agents of the Pennsylvania organization were required to report their progress to the resident agent. In December 1857 McKim received a letter from Frances Watkins which told of her work in the Harrisburg area. On Monday [November 28, 1857], she met with a nineteen member anti-slavery society that had just been formed in the city. On Tuesday she lectured at a colored church, and while the attendance was good, she could report only one new subscription to the National Anti-Slavery Standard. She reported that on Wednesday she had held her best meeting yet in a schoolhouse near Harrisburg. On the following evening, however, she lectured in town to an audience which she described as "not large."¹⁷

McKim must have received so many letters like this that it is doubtful whether he gave it a second thought, but if he did pause to reflect, he might have been struck by the fact that twenty-one years after he began his own career on the lecture circuit, the work was still going on. It went more slowly than before, because the fires of

¹⁶McKim to Ralph Waldo Emerson, December 31, 1851, Ralph Waldo Emerson Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. McKim to Sidney Howard Gay, March 13, [1858], Special Collections, Columbia University Library.

¹⁷Frances Watkins to McKim, December 1, 1857, in the Scrapbook of Edward and Anna Thorpe Wetherill, containing letters and clippings of the anti-slavery movement from 1852 to the Civil War. It is located in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Hereafter, this work will be referred to as the Wetherill Scrapbook.

revivalism had long since been damped, and many of those most interested in the anti-slavery cause were by now engaged in the political battle against the extension of the system of bondage. But still, it progressed.

As has been shown above, McKim was at the very heart of anti-slavery activity in Pennsylvania, but his reputation went beyond the confines of his own state and throughout Garrisonian circles he was known as one of the most steady and reliable workers in the cause. True, he was an indifferent speaker, and he wrote with a leaden pen, but his talent for organization and administration more than compensated for these deficiencies. Furthermore, he had the rare capacity of being able to make even his most radical views unobtrusive, and he worked well with those whose opinions were far more moderate than his own. Thus, he was well suited to undertake the delicate diplomatic mission of attempting to make Garrisonianism respectable in England.

From the very beginning, the radical anti-slavery cause in America had been profoundly influenced by the English abolition movement, which had successfully employed the slogan of immediate emancipation as a means of ending West Indian bondage. Perhaps for sociological as well as intellectual reasons, the American branch of the movement tended to be strongly Anglophile in tone, and came to attach an immense importance to its connection with the British. It was, therefore, of no small significance that in the wake of the acrimonious division of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1840, the bulk of British support had gone to Lewis Tappan's American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, rather than to

Garrison's group.¹⁸

Even so, Garrison continued to have some support among radical English reformers, and when, in 1846, he visited England, he succeeded in bringing about the formation of the Anti-Slavery League. Nevertheless, it was the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and the Evangelical Alliance that dominated the abolition picture in England, and these groups opposed Garrison because of his tendency to associate other reforms with abolition and his position on the woman question. By the early 1850's, Garrison's reputation among English abolitionists had reached a new low partly as the result of charges of religious infidelity that were being hurled against him.¹⁹ It was at this point that McKim stepped into the picture.

At some time in mid-February 1853 McKim received a letter from Louis A. Chamerovzow, the newly appointed secretary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, proposing an exchange of anti-slavery newspapers and extending the hand of fellowship provided that this would not be taken to imply that they must agree on all points. At the same time, McKim was also in receipt of letters from some of Garrison's English supporters, and from Sarah Pugh, who was then abroad, urging that this would be a most opportune time for the cause to send a representative to England. McKim was aware of the deplorable state of

¹⁸Abel and Klingberg, A Side-Light on Anglo-American Relations, pp. 50-51.

¹⁹Lewis Tappan was one of those who made such charges. See his letter to The Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, February 14, 1853 in ibid., p. 314.

relations between the Garrisonians and many of their British brethren, and Chamerovzow's communication, together with the information he had gained from others more favorable to the American Anti-Slavery Society, led him to believe that an American mission at this time might produce much good.²⁰

After carefully weighing the alternatives, McKim decided that he was the best available man for the job. Someone was needed who was talented both with the pen and on the platform, and who combined a judicious temperament with a thorough knowledge of the cause. Realistically assessing his own strengths and weaknesses, McKim concluded that while his speaking and writing abilities left something to be desired, his knowledge of the cause was sufficient to make up for this deficiency because he had "great faith in the power of the truth when plainly stated by one who himself fully understands and deeply feels it." Moreover, there was no one else available to go. Garrison would have been ideal but "he is himself the subject of controversy." Wendell Phillips would also be well suited for the task, but because of his ailing wife, he could not leave home. Referring to such radical extremists as Parker Pillsbury and H. C. Wright, McKim noted that they "are strong men but they would not do."²¹

On the other hand, there were many factors which argued against

²⁰Louis Alexis Chamerovzow to McKim, January 11, 1853, Wetherill Scrapbook. Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, March 22, 1853.

²¹Two sheets headed, respectively, "Reasons Why I Should Go to England," and "Reasons Why I Should Not Go to England," unsigned, but clearly written by McKim. They are located in the McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

such a trip. McKim felt that he was needed at home. The society's funds were in a low state, and special efforts would be needed to remedy this. Who would collect subscriptions for the paper and write the annual report? Who would "exercise the general supervision over the affairs of the Society which is so necessary to preserve its unity and efficiency?" McKim answered these self-raised objections by noting that there was not much "office business" in the summer, and what there was might be allocated among his co-workers, and he rationalized that "a little variety is needed in the administration of our society's affairs."²²

By late February 1853, after McKim had become fairly well convinced in his own mind that he was the right man to undertake the mission to England, he began to seek the advice of his colleagues both in Boston and Philadelphia. Garrison and Phillips were in hearty agreement on the desirability of the trip. The Boston editor wrote that he believed McKim "admirably fit" for the task, and he counselled that the work to be done was "more in the social circle than in public meeting[s]." On March 22, or shortly before this date, the Pennsylvania agent made a definite decision to go, and he left aboard the Arctic on April 30, with a pocket full of introductions to prominent abolitionists and liberals including John Bright.²³

²²Ibid.

²³William Lloyd Garrison to McKim, March 19, 1853, Charles Follen McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. McKim to Sidney Howard Gay, February 23, March 11, 1853, Sidney Howard Gay Collection, Special Collections, Columbia University Library. Jacob Bright to John Bright, April 18, 1853; and a Resolution of the Vigilance Committee of the City of Philadelphia commending McKim to the abolitionists of Great Britain as an "uncompromising advocate of universal freedom."

The Pennsylvania Freeman announced that McKim would be gone for five or six months and said that "though the chief object of his trip is his own recreation and gratification, he expects to find much gratification in efforts to promote the Anti-Slavery cause." In private, however, McKim appears to have seen the trip primarily as a question of duty. In weighing the pros and cons of leaving, he had written that it would be hard for Sarah and the children (a son, Charles Follen, had been added to the family in 1847) to let him go and that nothing would justify such a step in his wife's eyes except a sense of duty. Indeed, he appears to have been almost single-minded during his trip, for aside from a brief trip to the continent, about which little is known, he appears to have done little else but work for the cause. One of his hosts later remarked concerning McKim's lack of interest in the usual tourist scenes that he would have preferred visiting and conversing with people to seeing the Killarney Lakes.²⁴

Arriving in London in mid-May, McKim immediately put himself in

It was dated April 27, 1853 and signed by Robert Purvis (Chairman) and William Still (Secretary). This item and the Bright letter are both to be found in the McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. See also, the Pennsylvania Freeman, May 5, 1853.

²⁴Ibid. Two sheets headed, respectively, "Reasons Why I Should Go to England," and "Reasons Why I Should Not Go to England," unsigned, but written by McKim, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. McKim did not believe it would be proper to set the precedent of having the cause pay for the trip, and he planned to use his own money for it. Nevertheless, he did arrange to have others take up his duties so that he would continue to receive his salary. See, ibid. The remark about the Killarney Lakes was quoted in a letter from Mary Estlin to McKim, November 24, 1853, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

touch with John B. Estlin and his daughter Mary. The elder man had recently begun to publish the Anti-Slavery Advocate, a journal of strong Garrisonian leanings designed to counteract the "misrepresentations" and omissions in the Anti-Slavery Reporter, the official paper of the British society. Mary Estlin (who was a niece of Walter Bagehot) had been one of those who had written McKim about the urgency of an American mission, and during his stay in England her home was his London headquarters, and she became his closest adviser. As congenial as this company might be, the fact remained that most English abolitionists were affiliated, not with the small band of Garrison supporters, but with the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.²⁵ If McKim was to counteract the unfavorable publicity the Garrisonians had received, it was this group he would have to convince.

It was for this reason that McKim attended the sessions of the annual meeting of the British society which began just a few days after his arrival. The experience was discouraging, for despite the large number in attendance and the enthusiasm of those present, it quickly became clear to him that the organization was controlled by men who, although upright, sincere, and religiously conscientious, "lacked

²⁵On Miss Estlin as McKim's adviser and hostess see, for example, Mary Estlin to McKim, August 11, 12, and 13, 1853, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library. See also, Mary Estlin to McKim, August 25, September 4 and 9, 1853, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. On the attitude of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society see Abel and Klingberg, A Side-Light on Anglo-American Relations, pp. 50-51. The stance of the Anti-Slavery Advocate was described by McKim in a speech he made to the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1852). See, the Pennsylvania Freeman, December 23, 1852.

sufficient liberality and comprehensiveness of spirit" to qualify them for its leadership.²⁶

Louis Chamerovzow, the new secretary, seems to have been somewhat more liberal than the committee he served, and on May 23 he invited McKim to a soiree in honor of Harriet Beecher Stowe. On June 11 the Englishman informed his Pennsylvania counterpart that he would probably be able to arrange a meeting of the "full committee" at which McKim could discuss the prospects of the anti-slavery cause in America. McKim continued to cultivate Chamerovzow, and even told him that he had decided not to attend any public meetings sponsored by the British Garrisonians. Impressed by this decision, Chamerovzow indicated that this was the course which he himself would have advised, and promised to call McKim's tact and delicacy to the attention of the committee. Although the results of McKim's interview with the committee are unknown, his subsequent charge that it was unnecessarily narrow and sectarian would seem to suggest that he did not make too much progress with it. This dissatisfaction did not extend to Chamerovzow whom McKim termed "an able liberal and generous-hearted man."²⁷

In late June or early July, McKim left for a brief visit to Paris and Geneva, but by August 1 he was back in London to attend a West Indian emancipation meeting. From there he visited Bristol, Leeds,

²⁶These remarks were made by McKim when reporting on his trip after his return to Pennsylvania. See, Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1853), in the Pennsylvania Freeman, November 4, 1853.

²⁷Louis Alexis Chamerovzow to McKim, May 23, 1853, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library. Chamerovzow to McKim, June 11 and 16, 1853, McKim Collection, Cornell.

Newcastle, Edinburgh, Perth, Glasgow, Belfast, Dublin, Cork, Bath, and Bridgewater. Wherever he went he met with anti-slavery men, in small groups and large, and tried to dispel their fears about Garrisonian abolitionism.²⁸

On the platform he usually began his talks with the subject of slavery and its evils, and then he moved from there to discuss in optimistic terms the progress of the cause in America. He identified the Garrisonians as virtually the only true abolitionists in the nation, but was candid enough to admit that there were other forms of anti-slavery action taking place in the political sector. He ardently defended his American colleagues against the charges that had been levelled at them, and took particularly great pains to refute the charge that Garrison himself was an infidel. He did not deny that the Bostonian held several beliefs that were considered by many to be heretical, but argued that in his works Garrison was the very model of a Christian. Furthermore, McKim asserted that the policy of the American Anti-Slavery Society was to admit to membership all who agreed on the issue of immediate emancipation regardless of their other views.²⁹ Nevertheless, his remarks in one particular speech demonstrated that the Garrisonians

²⁸ Pennsylvania Freeman, October 20, 1853. While little is known of McKim's activity on the continent, his allusions to it suggest that here too, his primary interest was in the anti-slavery cause. See, for example, his speech at the twentieth anniversary meeting of the national organization. Proceedings of the American Anti-Slavery Society at Its Second Decade . . . December 3-5, 1853 (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1854), pp. 149-150.

²⁹ Reports of McKim's speeches were published in the English press and are given in the Pennsylvania Freeman, August 25, October 13, 20, and 27, 1853.

were in fact a far less heterogeneous group than his earlier statement implied. He is reported to have said:

Wherever you meet a working abolitionist, you are sure to find a virtuous member of society, a promoter of peace, temperance, and every good word and work; in a word a man is known by his fruits rather than his professions.³⁰

McKim concluded his speaking tour on September 30, and the next day set sail for the United States. Although he had not revolutionized the relationship between the British anti-slavery forces and the Garrisonians, he had succeeded in easing tensions and in creating an atmosphere in which a greater degree of cooperation would be possible. Moreover, he had come to have a more realistic appreciation of the nature of the British anti-slavery movement and its limitations. Upon his return home he would say that despite the fact that most Englishmen were opposed to slavery the number of active abolitionists was not large.³¹ He had come to England thinking of it as the spiritual center of the anti-slavery movement, but his conversations and correspondence with Miss Estlin, and his own observations must have done much to shake this notion. She warned him that the Americans could no longer look to English abolition for leadership, and at one point she had written:

I see a providence . . . in your being here now to testify to the poverty of the land, /and to/rectify the exaggerated notions of the number and influence of their British coadjutors entertained by some of your transatlantic friends.³²

³⁰Ibid., October 20, 1853.

³¹Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1853) in, ibid., November 4, 1853.

³²Mary Estlin to McKim, August 25, 1853, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. See also, Mary Estlin to McKim, August 11, 1853, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

McKim arrived in the United States on October 14, in time to attend the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, scheduled for the following week. There he made a full report on his trip and summed up his contribution by saying that his efforts to bring about greater cooperation and understanding had been "not altogether unsuccessful."³³ Six weeks later he gave a more thorough presentation to the twentieth anniversary meeting of the national organization which demonstrated how sharp and strong American nationalism could be, even in an abolitionist who had been attacking the policies of his nation and advocating disunion for almost a decade. McKim said that

abolitionists are not aware of how much love of country they cherish, until they leave their own shores. Such at least was the case with myself. Sensible as I was of the sin of my country, I was, at the same time, not unconscious of a heartfelt attachment to her, and a deep solicitude for her welfare.³⁴

Speaking of the virtues of the nation, McKim sounded not unlike a Fourth of July orator as he mentioned the fact that the United States served as an example to the world of the possibility of national self-government, of the practicability of keeping church and state separate, "and of the enjoyment by the people of all social, educational and material advantages, under laws made and administered by themselves." Nevertheless, he did add that this example is "greatly counteracted" by

³³Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1853) in, the Pennsylvania Freeman, November 4, 1853.

³⁴Proceedings of the American Anti-Slavery Society at Its Second Decade . . . December 3-5, 1853, pp. 150-151.

the nation's inconsistency on the slavery issue.³⁵

When McKim returned from Europe, the nation whose virtues he saw so clearly was already on a collision course with civil war. Even before he left, northern opposition to the fugitive slave law had been growing rapidly and was becoming ever more vocal. Just ahead lay the violent controversies that would accompany Stephen Douglas' Kansas-Nebraska Act and which would ultimately lead to the realignment of both political parties along sectional lines. In the face of this growing crisis the abolitionists gave increasing attention to the plight of the fugitive, for each escaped bondsman was a visible symbol of the oppressiveness of slavery, and each Negro returned to servitude a living illustration of the cruelty of that institution.

By the time the crises of the 1850's began to be headline news, McKim was an old hand at aiding fleeing southern bondsmen. When he first took the job of publishing agent, the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee was already an efficient functioning organization whose members included such leading figures of the Pennsylvania society as Robert Purvis and Josph Healy (McKim's predecessor). The committee handled a steady stream of runaways, and from June 1839 to March 1840 it aided sixty-two such cases. Another thirty-five were given assistance in the period from June to September 1841, and 117 more were helped during these same months in 1842. The exact date at which McKim became involved in this operation is not known, but on December 28, 1843, when the committee held a public meeting at a colored Presbyterian Church, McKim served as

³⁵Ibid., p. 149.

secretary.³⁶

By March 1844, McKim had acquired the reputation of being the man to see if one wished to arrange for the delivery of a fugitive, and he even had contacts with anti-slavery white southerners who were willing to undertake such ventures. At some time prior to March 13, 1844 he had conversations with Arthur Price of Norfolk dealing with the possibility of arranging escapes from that city, and they corresponded about the problem during March and April. At first Price was cautious and asked McKim to recount details of their conversation to prove that he was indeed the same abolitionist to whom he had spoken. With these preliminaries out of the way, Price asked for assistance in arranging the escape of a Negro he was currently teaching to read, and on April 22, with an apology for not giving advance notice of the slave's departure, reported that he had been sent North by boat.³⁷

In 1849, Samuel A. Smith (also known as Samuel Richardson) of Richmond, Virginia approached McKim with a scheme which entailed sending a fugitive in a crate by railroad. The underground stationmaster dismissed the plan out of hand as impossible, but finally agreed to accept such a box if it were sent. Because he was well known in Philadelphia, McKim arranged to pick it up under a fictitious name, and when it arrived he cautiously tapped on the container and asked "all right?" Back came the reply, "all right sir," and Henry "Box" Brown was a free

³⁶Minutes of the Vigilance Committee of Philadelphia, June 1839-May 31, 1840; December 28, 1843, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Minutes of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, September 9, 1841; September 8, 1842.

³⁷Arthur Price to McKim, March 1844; March 13, 1844; April 22, 1844, McKim Collection, Cornell.

man. The entire escape had been the slave's own doing. It was he who had devised the plan, and it was he who had paid the professional rescuer, Smith, forty dollars to make the arrangements. Brown had entered his crate at 5:00 A.M. on a Friday and did not arrive until Saturday morning. After taking him home for a bath and breakfast, McKim sent the fugitive further North to safety.³⁸

In the wake of this success Smith appears to have offered to send more such goods North via the rails, but McKim was hesitant, and, in a series of letters addressed to Smith, he at first refused outright to accept anymore such crates. Within a month McKim relented somewhat and contented himself with spelling out the risks involved. In the meantime, he was spreading the story of Brown's escape in letters to trusted abolitionists. Each time he related the episode he cautioned that it must be kept out of the press so as to protect those involved and to allow the method to be used again. Within a month, however, the story appeared in the Burlington Courier in Vermont, and was then reprinted in the Pennsylvania Freeman. Although the article itself named no names, and identified places only as northern or southern, the "Box" Brown affair was no longer a secret.³⁹

The aftermath was tragic. In May the Richmond Republican reported that an unsuccessful attempt had been made to ship two Negroes to

³⁸McKim to Sidney Howard Gay, March 20, 1849, Sidney Howard Gay Collection, Special Collections, Columbia University Library. Lucretia Mott to Joseph Dugdale and family, March 28, 1849, Mott Papers, Friends' Historical Society Collection, Swarthmore College Library. McKim to Samuel Rhoads, March 29, 1849, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

³⁹Pennsylvania Freeman, April 19, 1849 (reprinted from the Burlington Courier, April 12, 1849). S. A. Smith to McKim, April 8, 12, and 16, 1849, McKim Collection, Cornell.

freedom in boxes, and that they and Samuel Smith, who had been paid \$240 to aid them, had been apprehended. While it cannot be said with certainty that the publicity surrounding the escape of Brown led to this denouement, this seems a likely possibility. In spreading the story, however, McKim had been fulfilling one of his many functions as the resident agent of the Pennsylvania society. Such tales did wonders for the morale of tired abolitionists and they served as good propaganda for the cause as well. McKim had recognized the dangers of wide publicity, but he had seen no need to check his tongue within the movement and this had worked to the detriment of his duties as a member of the vigilance committee. Once the Richmond arrests had been made, there was no further point in maintaining the last shreds of secrecy, and McKim and his colleagues exploited the propaganda potential of the case to the fullest. They even went so far as to put the box in which Brown had been transported to Philadelphia on public exhibition.⁴⁰

In the future McKim was more discreet, but even so, he could not forbear to drop tantalizing hints about his underground work. Thus, in 1851 he wrote to a friend describing a case then underway, saying:

It is a sequel to the story of Wm. Still, my assistant in the office which was published in the Freeman and which you may have seen: and a fitting sequel it is to that most interesting and romantic tale. I fairly itch to tell you all about it; But the only way to keep such things from the public is not to tell them even confidentially to our friends. This I will say however - but

⁴⁰Pennsylvania Freeman, October 4, 1849. Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1849); Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. See also, Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, September 11, 1849.

even this must be inter nos - Peter, the hero of the story
 [Peter Still, the brother of William], from tidings
 brought us yesterday is one of the happiest of men. So
 don't take the trouble to grieve about him; nor about his
 family; Victoria the 1st [i.e., Canada] will see that no
 harm shall come to them. . . . But of their deliverer I may
 not speak: though if I were to I should tell you of a
 heroism - a boldness - a skill - a disinterested
 benevolence - a patient endurance of suffering - a lofty
 intrepidity - which has rarely known a parallel.⁴¹

Despite McKim's itch to tell more about his labors, the Brown case appears
 to be the only instance in which his loose talk may have resulted in
 the apprehension of the fugitives he was seeking to aid.

For reasons that are not altogether clear, the vigilance
 committee became disorganized after 1849, and in December 1852 a meeting
 was held at the Anti-Slavery Office to reorganize the group. Again,
 McKim appears to have been at the heart of events, for although he held
 no formal office in the meeting, it was he who called it together and
 defined its purpose. Noting that "the duties of this department had
 been performed by individuals on their own responsibility and sometimes
 in a very irregular manner," McKim went on to say that a new organization

⁴¹ McKim to [George Thompson], April 1851, McKim-Garrison Papers,
 Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. The recipient has been
 identified on the basis of the fact that the first half of this letter
 is given in William Still's, The Underground Rail Road . . . (Philadelphia:
 Porter and Coates, 1872), pp. 581-583, and is attributed to Thompson.

The man who brought Peter Still's family out of Alabama was
 Seth Conklin. He got them as far as the area around Vincennes, Indiana
 where the Negroes were apprehended. Conklin then attempted to bail
 out his charges only to be taken into custody himself. He was turned over
 to the southern slavecatchers and was later found drowned in the river
 with his hands and feet bound. See ibid., pp. 1-37, for the entire story.
 Peter Still's family was later purchased from their master for an
 exorbitant price. Garrison to Samuel May, May 31, 1853, Garrison Collection,
 Boston Public Library.

was needed. Those present agreed, and the reconstituted group elected Robert Purvis as President and William Still as Secretary. The nineteen member committee to which McKim belonged then went on to select an "Acting Committee" which would handle the day to day work of aiding Negroes on the run. William Still, Passmore Williamson, and two others were selected for this duty.⁴²

It is highly significant that Purvis and Still, the leading figures in the group, together with a large portion of the committee, were Negroes, for the role of colored men in helping escaped slaves has often been neglected in favor of those better known episodes in which whites were involved. Still had been McKim's office assistant since 1849, and from the very first he had been involved in giving aid to black men heading North. As a Negro he had the sort of access to the colored community that even abolitionists like McKim could never command, and it was here, rather than in the cellars of white anti-slavery men, that fugitives were usually sheltered. In the years that stretched from the reorganization meeting to the Civil War it was Still who played the dominant role in handling runaways.⁴³

⁴²Pennsylvania Freeman, December 9, 1852. Still, The Underground Rail Road, p. 611, et passim.

⁴³While Larry Gara's, The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1961), is perhaps too strong in its denigration of the role of white abolitionists in the underground railroad, he nevertheless makes a point of great value by emphasizing the role of Negroes in this work. The interpretation above was first suggested to me by Gara's book. See especially, pp. 52-55, 109-113, 175-178. William Still's role emerges fairly clearly from a perusal of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee's, Underground Railroad Journal C, 1852-1857, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. This journal which was kept by Still, contains narratives drawn from the escapees and a listing of financial expenditures made in connection with assistance given to fugitives. Roughly five hundred fugitives were

Even so, McKim continued to take a hand in this work, and it is often difficult to discern where his responsibility ended and that of his office assistant began. In 1855, while Still was touring fugitive communities in Canada, an harassed McKim found it difficult to cope with his usual office duties while at the same providing for the needs of the eighteen bondsmen who had arrived within the past two days. Two years later fugitive operations were still thriving and McKim wrote that fifty ex-slaves had been handled within a single fortnight. As Still's superior in the anti-slavery office, McKim was apparently expected to act in a supervisory capacity when required, and one of the lighter moments in a deadly serious business occurred when Sidney Howard Gay, who handled fugitive matters in New York, urgently wrote: "I hate to complain - but I must state a fact. Still is in the habit of sending men here by a train that arrives about 3 A.M. Unless it is absolutely imperative which it can't often be, it should not be done." Gay went on to plead that the old man who met the train received little compensation and should not be imposed upon.⁴⁴ Although the outcome of this minor controversy is not known, it may safely be assumed

listed in this journal for the years 1852-1857, but it should be remembered that many cases were probably handled without the need for financial expenditure, and these, of course, were not listed.

⁴⁴Sidney Howard Gay to McKim, September 10, 1858, McKim Collection, Cornell. McKim to Mary Estlin, September 21, 1855; McKim to Richard D. Webb, November 2, 1857; McKim to Maria Weston Chapman, November 19, 1857; Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

that some reasonable compromise was worked out and that the stream of southern refugees continued to flow North unabated.

In addition to giving aid to bondsmen in flight, McKim and his associates also worked to make the lives of fugitives and free Negroes alike more secure under the law. In April 1847 he forwarded to the Pennsylvania Legislature two petitions asking for the passage of an "anti-kidnapping" bill designed to guarantee full legal protection to those accused as fugitives. The memorial addressed to the Senate contained 3,283 signatures, while the one sent to the House contained 2,936 names. In addition, plans were underfoot to send the Motts to Harrisburg to lobby for the bill, but these were cancelled when it became apparent that the measure would become law with little trouble.⁴⁵

At the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, in August 1847, McKim claimed that the credit for the passage of this bill was due to the activities of the society, but he was vigorously disputed by Samuel Aaron who argued that its adoption was due to the general political situation rather than to the activities of the organization. The truth would seem to lie somewhere in between, for there can be little doubt that such a measure could not have been passed several years earlier. On the other hand, it should also be noted that in this, as in so many other instances, the abolitionists represented the advance guard of a public opinion which they were helping to mold. McKim's group hoped to follow up the passage of the anti-kidnapping bill with a law which would have enfranchised the Negro population of

⁴⁵Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, April 27, 1847.

the state, and in 1848 they memorialized the state legislature to that end. On this issue, however, they were too far ahead of public opinion, and in 1849 the proposal was voted down by a large majority of the Pennsylvania Senate.⁴⁶

Up to this point the abolitionists had been on the offensive, but the passage of the federal Fugitive Slave Law in September 1850 reversed the situation. The anti-kidnapping bill of 1847, which had made it virtually impossible to recapture a slave in Pennsylvania, was rendered almost nugatory by the new statute and cases involving Negro runaways were now placed within the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. United States commissioners were authorized to return accused Negroes merely on the basis of a signed affidavit executed by the claimant, and penalties were established for officials who failed to cooperate, as well as for citizens who impeded the process of recapture.⁴⁷

The immediate result of the new federal statute was a sharp increase in illegal kidnappings as well as in legal slave recoveries. In a letter describing the drastically altered situation with regard to kidnappings and fugitives, McKim (with pardonable exaggeration), said that as the result of the law "South Eastern Pennsylvania has become a Guinea Coast and many of its inhabitants are as insecure from kidnappers as are the unhappy inhabitants of the shores of Africa." He

⁴⁶Ibid., September 28, 1847; February 8, 1848. Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (1847), Scrapbook of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. Pennsylvania Freeman, October 7, 1847; February 8, 1849.

⁴⁷United States Statutes at Large, IX, 462-465.

went on to describe several instances of kidnapping which had transpired in recent weeks, including two in Chester County, and then he told of two cases in which he had been personally involved, but helpless to render assistance. He said:

You must hear the tale of a broken hearted mother whose son has been stolen from her [.] You must listen to the impassioned appeals of the wife whose husbands retreat has been discovered and whose footsteps are dogged by the bloodhounds of Slavery. You must hear the husband, as I did a few weeks ago - himself bound and helpless, beg you for God's sake to save his wife. You must see Hanna Dellam with her noble boy at her side pleading in vain before a pro-slavery judge that she of right free - that her son is entitled to freedom and above all that her babe about to be born should be permitted to open its eyes upon the light of liberty. You must hear the judge's decision remorselessly giving this woman and her children . . . over into the hands of her tormentor. ⁴⁸

Despite the wide latitude which the federal law gave those who wished to recover their human property, certain portions of the anti-kidnapping bill remained a thorn in the side of slavecatchers. In particular, Section Six, which made it illegal to use local jails for the detention of possible fugitives, was particularly troublesome; and it was not long before efforts were being made to repeal the state law, or at least to eliminate Section Six. As these efforts threatened to become successful the Pennsylvania society moved into action, and the Executive Committee voted that McKim should make a trip to Harrisburg where he was to "make himself acquainted with the members of the legislature to do what he can to prevent the repeal of the anti-

⁴⁸ McKim to [George Thompson], April 1851, McKim-Garrison Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

kidnapping law . . . and generally to spread correct principles."⁴⁹

Three weeks later, McKim reported that he had met with the most prominent members of the legislature and with the Governor, and that he had received assurances that a bill designed to prohibit all Negro immigration into the state was bound to fail. Nevertheless, he had to report that the men with whom he spoke believed that the bill to repeal Section six might pass. Even so, he was hopeful that it would not, and expressed the feeling that his visit had been opportune and that it had done some good. The repeal bill did not pass in 1852, and this may have been partially due to McKim's efforts; but it was adopted in 1854 in spite of abolitionist opposition.⁵⁰

Prior to the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, McKim and the Pennsylvania Society had had almost no experience with the area of legal defense. The workings of the anti-kidnapping law of 1847 (and, to a lesser degree, of the act which had preceded it as well), had made it so difficult to recover slave property that such cases were rare.⁵¹ Furthermore, instances in which whites were brought to trial on criminal charges for abetting escapes were virtually unknown within the state. All of this changed after 1850, and the defense of accused runaways and those who aided them became a central concern for the agent of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

⁴⁹Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, January 27, 1852.

⁵⁰Ibid., February 16, 1852. National Anti-Slavery Standard, September 9 and 30, 1854.

⁵¹Turner, History of the Negro in Pennsylvania, pp. 117-118, 237-239.

Although McKim did not deliberately attempt to cloak his activities in a shroud of obscurity, as did Theodore Weld, he was basically a man who worked behind the scenes without seeking publicity. This fact makes it difficult to determine with precision his exact role in each of the fugitive cases that came up for adjudication, for much of the work that was done required only local communication and was not reduced to writing. The cases themselves were, of course, given wide publicity, but the emphasis in such reports was upon the plight of the accused, and the cruelty of his oppressors, rather than upon the role of the abolitionists.⁵²

Nevertheless, the bits and pieces of information that are known about McKim's activities in these cases are sufficient to suggest a broader pattern in which he played a key role. It appears that news of arrests would be directed to McKim at the anti-slavery office by interested abolitionists, and the agent would then arrange for legal counsel. Three of the lawyers who he engaged most frequently were David Paul Brown, William Pierce, and George Earle. McKim would then be present throughout the course of the hearing both as a representative of the accused and as a reporter for the anti-slavery press. Perhaps

⁵²The first fugitive slave case to be tried in Pennsylvania was that of Henry Garnett who had been seized on October 17, 1850 and was accused of being a runaway. The Pennsylvania Freeman of October 24, reported the case and said: "At the earnest solicitation of the persons who had interested themselves in the accused the case was postponed till the next morning." Those "who had interested themselves in the accused" were not identified further, and there is no direct evidence to indicate that McKim was one of them, but the writing itself sounds as though it fits his pen, and the pattern of activity is similar to that of other cases in which he was known to have been involved and which will be described below.

the most important aspect of his work was the way in which he sought to develop each case as propaganda against the slave system. In those instances where the accused was released, but a danger of rearrest or kidnapping existed, McKim arranged for the speedy and secret departure of the person involved.⁵³

All of the elements described above were present in the case of Daniel Webster (also known as George Dangerfield), a fugitive from Virginia, who had been working on a farm near Harrisburg when he was seized. Learning of this, the local vigilance committee and a member of the House of Representatives sent separate telegrams to McKim alerting him to the fact that Webster and his captors were now en route to the office of the U.S. Commissioner in Philadelphia. McKim immediately wired the legislator asking him to "furnish us with a reason for delay." Back came the reply, "we are looking for witnesses."⁵⁴

⁵³On March 26, 1860 McKim received a telegram from M. McKinney in Harrisburg, which said: "A colored man was taken near town today they left at three oclock for Phila by the Reading and Phila Railroad [.]" McKim must have asked for more information for the next day he received another telegram from the same source which said: "He lived with J. M. Gray near town six months all the information we have [.]" Letters from David Paul Brown to McKim, March 4, 1851 and [1857], and from William Pierce to the same, March 29 and April 16, 1860 confirm the pattern in which McKim hired them to defend fugitives. Their role is repeatedly referred to in newspaper accounts of fugitives cases along with the name of George Earle. All of the items listed above are to be found in the McKim Collection, Cornell. McKim's presence at the hearings is indicated in Martha Coffin Wright [Lucretia Mott's sister] to David Wright, April 2, 1859, Martha Wright Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Library. See also Lucretia Mott's description of the Passmore Williamson case (1855) in a letter to Martha Coffin Wright cited in Cromwell, Lucretia Mott, p. 167. In this same source may be found a dramatic description of the way in which McKim spirited those in danger out of town.

⁵⁴National Anti-Slavery Standard, April 16, 1859.

When the fugitive arrived late in the morning of Saturday, April 2, 1859, McKim had already arranged for counsel, and he promptly went to the place where the Negro was being detained. One of the first things he noticed after he arrived was that the prisoner was manacled, and he quickly told the deputy marshall that this precaution was unusual and asked that the handcuffs be removed. After some discussion his request was granted. When the hearing convened that afternoon, only one of the four lawyers could be present, and he had not had sufficient time to acquaint himself with the case. For this reason he asked the commissioner to allow McKim to speak since the anti-slavery agent was "a friend of the prisoner to whom the case had in some measure been entrusted."⁵⁵

The commissioner agreed to allow McKim to have his say, and the agent then pleaded that he had just barely had time enough to engage counsel, and that he believed that he could secure testimony pertinent to the case within twenty-four hours. The commissioner agreed to grant a continuance until Monday at 10:00 A.M. Over the weekend the abolitionists worked desperately to agitate public opinion (and McKim, almost certainly, was at the center of this activity). By Monday they had succeeded in arousing public opinion to quite a state of excitement. The small hearing room was packed with interested spectators, and many individuals who could not get in filled the corridors of the building. A sizeable number of those present were Negroes. The hearing lasted

⁵⁵Ibid. Martha Coffin Wright to David Wright, April 2, 1859, Martha Wright Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Library.

until 6:00 A.M. the following morning, and resulted in a dismissal of the case on a technicality. The testimony presented included the claim of several Philadelphia Negroes that they had known Webster for some years. It seems likely that they perjured themselves to save the fugitive, and that McKim arranged this. Immediately after the hearing McKim saw to it that Webster got to Canada, and he wrote a long article on the case for the National Anti-Slavery Standard which was published in pamphlet form shortly thereafter.⁵⁶

While the evidence of McKim's participation in earlier such episodes (the Webster case took place in 1859) is of a more fragmentary nature, it suggests the same general pattern. In early 1851, Euphemia Williams was accused of being a slave who had escaped from Maryland twenty-two years earlier. She was brought before a federal judge on a writ of habeas corpus obtained by McKim and Passmore Williamson, and her release was subsequently won by David Paul Brown who acted as her

⁵⁶The account of the Webster case in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, April 16, 1859 appeared in a column entitled, "Our Philadelphia Correspondent," which was signed "M" and was written by McKim. The attribution of authorship has been made on the basis of the internal evidence of the article, and on the basis of the fact that when the Freeman folded McKim became the "Corresponding Editor of the Standard for Pennsylvania," and the Philadelphia column became his responsibility.

The pamphlet which contained McKim's column bore no attribution of authorship, and was entitled, The Arrest, Trial, and Release of Daniel Webster a Fugitive Slave: Correspondence with the National Anti-Slavery Standard (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, 1859). The pamphlet was rushed into print, and McKim's part in publishing it is unclear, though it is certain that he did not proofread it. In the National Anti-slavery Standard, April 23, 1859, he wrote: "I hear last week's Philadelphia Letter has been made into a pamphlet. I am sorry I hadn't seen it first, as it contained some typographical errors and rhetorical infelicities." Whether this meant that the pamphlet had been published in Philadelphia by his co-workers, or whether he was referring to another edition published elsewhere is unknown.

The Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society show that on April 13, 1859 the Executive Committee decided to pay all the expenses of the case. See also, Daniel Webster (writing from Canada) to McKim, May 1, 1859, and William Rutherford to McKim, May 14, 1859, both in the McKim Collection, Cornell.

attorney.⁵⁷

That McKim was the man who engaged Brown to deal with these cases is clear from the correspondence between them. In December 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law was still quite young, and Brown had defended only a few cases; nevertheless, some of McKim's friends asked him to transmit thirty dollars to Brown for his role in freeing Adam Gibson. The attorney wrote McKim that "I require no bribe in the cause of humanity, and if I did you would be the last man by whom it would be offered." Three months later, after Brown had been involved in several more cases, the lawyer told McKim that he had heard that his colored friends were planning to present him with a gift. He acknowledged the fact that he had been of great service to them, but maintained that

⁵⁷Pennsylvania Freeman, February 13, 1851. See also, Still, The Underground Rail Road, pp. 566-570. Passmore Williamson, who worked with McKim on this case, was a white Orthodox Friend who served on the vigilance committee and subsequently became a cause célèbre himself in 1855 when he was accused of contempt of court for refusing to answer questions about the whereabouts of a Negro woman accused as a fugitive. While the case was still in progress the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society for September 4, 1855, recorded the following: "A general feeling of rejoicing was felt at the result of the late trials and of hope for the success of the application for a writ of habeas corpus for Williamson. The importance and indispensableness of our organization were shown by these cases." It seems clear that McKim was at the heart of the organization's efforts. See, Cromwell, Lurcretia Mott, pp. 167-168. See also the printed record of the trial, Case of Passmore Williamson: Report of the Proceedings on the Writ of Habeas Corpus Issued by Hon. John K. Kane . . . in the Case of The United States of America Ex Rel. John H. Wheeler vs. Passmore Williamson . . . (Philadelphia: Uriah Hunt and Son, 1856).

he wanted nothing for himself, and asked the agent to arrange that if a gift were given it be for his wife.⁵⁸

By 1857, however, it has become clear that the defense of fugitives and those who aided them was not a thing of the moment, and Brown's duties to the cause must have cut deeply into his practice. In response to an inquiry from McKim about the fees for certain cases that were pending, he replied that he would charge five hundred dollars for Williams and the same for Scarlet and Moore. For ten accused colored men, however, his fee would be only twenty-five dollars each.⁵⁹

The task of aiding fugitives was an expensive one. Not only was money needed to pay for the defense of those who got caught, but it was needed to pay for railroad fares and food and clothing as well. In the fund raising area, too, McKim was deeply involved. Here, his trip to England stood him in good stead, and a steady trickle of contributions for the purpose of aiding fugitives flowed in from persons whom he had met on his visit abroad. This money, together with local funds donated for the same purpose was often handled separately from the receipts of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, and the records that have been found are so fragmentary as to render impossible any attempt

⁵⁸David Paul Brown to McKim, December 28, 1850, in the Pennsylvania Freeman, January 2, 1851. David Paul Brown to McKim, March 4, 1851, McKim Collection, Cornell.

⁵⁹David Paul Brown to McKim, [1857], McKim Collection, Cornell.

to estimate how much money was donated for aid to fugitives.⁶⁰

Over the years that stretched from 1840 to 1860 James Miller McKim had carved out a career for himself of which he could be justly proud. He had built the relatively minor job of publishing agent into an institution which embraced virtually every aspect of non-political anti-slavery activity. He had taken on tasks which ranged from the publication of tracts and a newspaper to assisting fugitives. He had involved himself in lobbying activities with the Pennsylvania Legislature, and he had undertaken to smooth relations between British and American abolitionists.

In fairness, it should be observed that the effectiveness of McKim and his associates was sometimes limited by their tendency to expend too much energy among those who were already committed to

⁶⁰On March 30, 1854 the Pennsylvania Freeman reported that the following contributions had been received by the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee: £ 10 from the Ladies Anti-Slavery Society of Dundee, Scotland, £ 2 from Linhouse Martindale, Esq., England, and £ 5 from the Birmingham Young Ladies School. A contribution of unknown size was received from an English Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society which specified that the money was not to be used to buy slaves out of bondage. Mary Ireland to McKim, October 30, 1858, McKim Collection, Cornell. See also, Miss E. Wigham to McKim, February 5, 1858 in which the sender encloses £ 10 for the vigilance committee, and an equal amount for Thomas Garrett of Delaware who was involved in underground railroad work. This letter is to be found in the Wetherill Scrapbook.

The Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society made a special appeal for funds in the June 12, 1851 issue of the Pennsylvania Freeman saying, "we have had slave cases to defend in court, fugitives from injustice to rescue, and numerous individual cases of oppression and suffering to relieve, all of which have made appeals to our sympathies which could not be resisted." The plea was signed by McKim and James Mott. The Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, June 14, 1860 record the fact that nine years later the same generosity held true, for on that date the Executive Committee voted seventy dollars for the defense of several Negroes who tried to free Moses Horner.

emancipation. Agents could be most effective when confronting sceptical audiences, petitions most educational when placed before the unconvinced, and newspapers most enlightening when given to the uninitiated; and very often these varied appeals went out to those who needed no persuasion as to the evils of slavery. But even so, the message of these abolitionists slowly but steadily came to permeate the community around them.

In 1854 McKim had been offered the opportunity to move to New York and take over the management of the floundering National Anti-Slavery Standard. He refused because "here in Penna. I have a position and influence, the growth of many years that help me much in the duties that I am called upon to perform," and these would be of little use in New York.⁶¹ Moreover, life had been good to McKim and moving would have meant giving up a mode of existence he had come to cherish. Although still a dedicated perfectionist, he had come far from the days in which he passionately debated with himself the issue of where the true path of duty lay. The following passage from his letter refusing the New York position suggests that he had managed to find that path and to create quite a comfortable existence for himself as well:

I live two lives - an outward and an inward one. Or rather [,] I live in two worlds, a moral and a physical one. And I enjoy both to a high degree. I live the anti-slavery cause and am never happier than when laboring successfully to fulfill my role in its duties [.] And yet I enjoy with a keen zest the outward good things that have fallen to my lot. I have wife and children, house and grounds, friends and acquaintances around me: in short I have all I crave in the way of human comforts:

⁶¹ McKim to Sidney Howard Gay, May 20, 1854, Sidney Howard Gay Collection, Special Collections, Columbia University Library.

but I can truly say that if I were sure I should be in the way of duty I could leave all these except the first named . . . tomorrow.⁶²

McKim's life in Philadelphia as the agent of the anti-slavery society was a rewarding one, but it could not go on along the old path indefinitely, for events were moving swiftly now and slavery's Armageddon lay just ahead. By November 1859 James Miller McKim had spent almost half of his life fighting for emancipation, and now he had the opportunity of seeing his dreams come to fruition by a means far removed indeed from the moral suasion in which he had originally placed his faith.

⁶²Ibid.

CHAPTER X

DISUNION BECOMES A REALITY

When the radical anti-slavery men first began their work in the 1830's, they had hoped to use moral suasion as a way of bringing the entire nation, the South included, to repent of its sins and renounce slavery. Almost as soon as they started, however, it became apparent that they would get no hearing south of the Mason and Dixon line, and their efforts came to be concentrated almost exclusively upon the North. As the abolition message did its work, the gulf between the sections over slavery grew ever larger, and during the 1850's conflict between the two areas began to assume increasingly violent forms. At the same time, old political alliances began to dissolve, and were replaced with new ones focussed upon the slavery issue. The mounting violence and the growth of sectional political alignments were harbingers of a civil war that would bring Miller McKim's work for emancipation to completion.

Even though McKim was a peaceful man, his work tended to place him close to the vortex of the growing violence, and it became an almost commonplace aspect of his life. He saw it regularly in the fugitive cases to which he attended, and he saw it also in the response of Philadelphia's Negroes when they resolved to use revolvers against those who would put them in bondage.¹ He read of it in Kansas where

¹On November 27, 1850, Lucretia Mott wrote Elizabeth Neall Gay that "our colored friends are holding meetings frequently and

the normal volatility of frontier life combined with the slavery issue to create an explosive mix, but the reverberations from this western situation came closer to home when they led to the caning of Senator Sumner with whom he was on friendly terms.

Although he abhorred violence, McKim was not a true pacifist or a non-resistant, and when some of his fellow abolitionists began to argue about whether or not runaways ought to forcibly resist attempts to capture them he is said to have sensibly remarked that "as a Convention we were not called upon to give any advice to fugitives on that subject." Clearly, he felt that the matter ought to rest with those involved and that gratuitous advice was uncalled for. When he learned of the assault upon Senator Sumner in May 1856, McKim lost his customary calm demeanor and wrote to an English friend, "I have been walking up and down today with teeth set, clenched fists and dry blood, raging." The meaning of the growing pattern of violence was not lost upon the anti-slavery agent, and he also observed that

we are on the eve of great events. I don't mean to say that a revolution is at hand; but one is approaching. Let it come I say, and the sooner the better. . . . let the union be blown into ten thousand fragments rather than this

resolving to resist the 'inequity framed by law' by a resort to the revolver." Sidney Howard Gay Collection, Special Collections, Columbia University Library. Similar feelings were expressed at a fugitive slave convention held at Cazenovia, New York. See, the Pennsylvania Freeman, August 29, September 12, 1850.

The Christiana "Riots" of September 12, 1851 which began when Negroes forcibly resisted a group of slavecatchers provide perhaps the best example of this violence. McKim's role in the case is not clear, but it seems likely that he was deeply involved in the attempts to defend those involved who were charged with treason. They were later acquitted. A full account of the case appears in ibid., December 4, 1851.

enslavement of the black race at the South and all the races at the North should longer continue.²

Unlike many of his fellow abolitionists, who viewed the newborn Republican Party as worse than useless, McKim saw it as a positive development and insisted that while abolitionists should denounce all who upheld the Constitution "in its present form," a distinction should be made between "those who are professedly anti-slavery and those who are not." Nevertheless, his organization continued to eschew political action, and it was not until the Civil War began that he abandoned his non-political stance.³

Tensions continued to mount in 1857 and 1858. The Dred Scott Decision denying the power of government to limit the spread of slavery became the law of the land, and was followed by the publication of Hinton R. Helper's, The Impending Crisis of the South, and by Stephen Douglas' rejection of the LeCompton Constitution for Kansas. From August to October 1858, with tensions rising the Lincoln-Douglas debates brought the divisions among northerners into the open. Ten days after the last of the debates took place, William H. Seward remarked in a Rochester speech that the antagonism between the free and slave states represented an "irrepressible conflict" that must end in total victory

²McKim to Richard D. Webb, May 23, 1856, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library. The attitude of the Pennsylvania agent toward resistance by fugitives is given in the Pennsylvania Freeman, October 24, 1850.

³McKim made these remarks in an address to the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. See, the Minutes of that organization for October 11, 1855. McKim even went so far as to grant that "the election of a man who could, and would use the power of his office against slavery would perhaps supercede the necessity of disunion and perhaps would bring about disunion by driving the South off." McKim to Richard D. Webb, April 4, 1856, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

for one side or the other. It was against this background that McKim first heard (from a "military gentleman" [Hugh Forbes?]) that John Brown was planning to make an armed attack upon the slave system.⁴

Although McKim knew of Brown's Kansas exploits, he had never met the bearded patriarch and put little credence in the rumor, despite the fact that it came to him again from two new sources in 1859. In point of fact, McKim knew very little, for he had no information as to when or where the raid would take place, or what its target would be. Moreover, even had he been privy to these details, he doubtless would have dismissed the plan as impractical, since the little he did know led him to describe it as "utterly chimerical," and when the raid occurred, on October 16, 1859, he confessed that he was taken by surprise.⁵

However surprised McKim may have been by the events of Harper's Ferry, he welcomed them as providing a clear proof of the truth of what the abolitionists had been preaching for over twenty-five years. In an article for the National Anti-Slavery Standard he wrote that the attack would demonstrate to the slaveholders "the horror which is cherished by a virtuous community for the crimes of slavery," and foreshadowed the overthrow of that system. He went on to say that the abolitionists had actually been the true friends of the masters, for their advice was designed to prevent servile war and insurrection. He said that now, however,

⁴National Anti-Slavery Standard, November 6, 1859. In this and succeeding footnotes the references to the Standard are to columns written by McKim.

⁵Ibid.

the aggressions of the Slave Oligarchy are reacting upon a people who are not amenable to the principles or under the influence of the recognized Abolitionists; men who hate as well as love; men who have wrongs to revenge; men who abhor slavery of all kinds, and know no means but that of the sword for its overthrow; such men and others entirely unknown to the Abolitionists now threaten to take the question in hand and press it to an issue.⁶

There was a deep ambivalence in McKim's attitude, for while he mouthed the words that bespoke his adherence to the traditional abolitionist aversion to violence, he thrilled to the valor and nobility of Brown's deed. His remarks sound as though the Kansan were the resurrected hero of one of the novels of Sir Walter Scot which he had read so long ago. At one point he wrote: "Mr. Brown (let his name forever hereafter be pronounced with respect) has struck a blow which is making tyrants tremble, and causing their system to vibrate to its foundation"; and he added:

Then the heroism of these men, and especially that of their leader; his magnanimity; his care for the safety of the prisoners; his consideration for their wives and children; his entire superiority to all fear; his noble bearing in the hands of his enemies; . . . surely, if this be not a hero, we look in vain for one worthy of that title.⁷

In the wake of Brown's trial and sentence, the activities of the abolitionists began to take two directions simultaneously. Some of those who had been involved in the plot desperately sought to find some means of rescuing the condemned man, while others, recognizing the propaganda value of Brown's martyrdom and the futility of any attempts at freeing him, concentrated their efforts upon making as much capital

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

as possible out of the case. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who had been deeply involved, was one of those who entertained quixotic plans for delivering the prisoner. Brown, himself however, was among those who saw that he could serve the cause far better in death than he could alive, and on October 28 he positively prohibited his friends from making any attempt to free him.⁸

At first, Higginson would not take no for an answer, and prevailed upon the captive's wife to make a trip to Harper's Ferry for the purpose of changing Brown's mind. She agreed to try, and Higginson arranged for McKim to accompany her to Virginia and render all necessary assistance. They set out from Philadelphia on November 8, but only got as far as Baltimore when they received a telegram stating that it was Brown's urgent wish that she should not visit him at this time. The unsuccessful leader was clearly intent upon converting a defeat into victory through his martyrdom, and on November 10, he wrote to his wife: "I have been whiped [sic] as the saying is; but am sure I can recover all the lost capital occasioned by that disaster; by only hanging a few moments by the neck; and I feel determined to make the utmost possible out of defeat."⁹

⁸Oswald Garrison Villard, John Brown, 1800-1859: A Biography Fifty Years After (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910), pp. 511-512.

⁹The quotation is from John Brown to Mary Brown, November 10, 1859, cited in ibid., p. 540. On Mrs. Brown's abortive trip south see, McKim to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, November 8, 1859, Thomas Wentworth Higginson Collection, Boston Public Library; and Higginson to McKim, November 9 and 10, 1859, McKim Collection, Cornell. See also, Villard, John Brown, pp. 512-513.

McKim brought Mrs. Brown back to Philadelphia immediately upon receipt of the telegram, and for the next month she would remain under his care and tutelage. His aims appear to have been two-fold: he had a genuine desire to do as much as possible to ease the pain and suffering of the family, and he also wished to extract the maximum possible benefit for the cause out of the case. During the three weeks she spent in Philadelphia Mrs. Brown was a guest in his home as well as that of the Motts, and he sent accounts of her thoughts and character to the Standard and the New York Daily Tribune. Describing his guest he wrote that "she is just the woman to be the wife of the hero of Harper's Ferry. Stalwart of frame and strong in native intellect, she is imbued with the same religious faith, and her heart overflows with the same sympathies." He went on to speak of the patriarchal manner in which Brown ran his family, of the books in their library, and of the religious precepts which Mrs. Brown and her husband shared.¹⁰

While he was working to heighten northern sympathy for Brown and his family, McKim also made arrangements to retrieve the body after the execution had taken place. He assisted Mrs. Brown in the composition of a letter to Governor Wise of Virginia asking that "when all shall be over, the mortal remains of my husband and his sons may be delivered to me for decent and tender interment among their kindred."¹¹ At the same

¹⁰Compare McKim's account in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, December 3, 1859 with the shorter version in the New York Daily Tribune, December 2, 1859. McKim's role as the special correspondent of the Tribune is confirmed in William Lloyd Garrison to McKim, December 17, 1859, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

¹¹Mary Brown to Governor Henry A. Wise [copy], November 21, 1859, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library. McKim to

time he persuaded Hector Tyndale, a Philadelphia businessman who, although not an abolitionist, had free soil sympathies, to accompany him, his wife, and Mrs. Brown on her final visit to her husband, and they arrived at Harper's Ferry at 6:00 A.M. on December 1, 1859.

The officials who met them told Mrs. Brown that only she would be permitted to visit her husband; and the McKims and Tyndale were forced to remain in the town where the fateful raid had occurred while she went on to Charlestown, the place of his imprisonment. While awaiting Mrs. Brown's return, they went out for a stroll, but a bullet whistling by their heads convinced them that they had better remain indoors. Aside from this incident, however, Governor Wise's guarantee of protection was carried out to the letter, and in his published account McKim emphasized the courtesy and kindness with which Mrs. Brown had been received, and the respect which even her husband's enemies had for John Brown.¹²

Mrs. Brown was only allowed to see her husband for two hours on the afternoon of December 1, and then, despite the request of her husband that she be allowed to stay the night, the visit was brought to a close. She returned to Harper's Ferry and waited there with her friends for the delivery of her husband's remains. The execution took place on the morning of Friday, December 2, and by the middle of the following day they were back in Philadelphia, where McKim planned to secure the services of an undertaker and to allow Mrs. Brown a day's rest before proceeding on to North Elba, Vermont where the burial was

Thomas Wentworth Higginson, November 23, 1859, Thomas Wentworth Higginson Collection, Boston Public Library.

¹²National Anti-slavery Standard, December 17, 1859. New York Daily Tribune, December 12, 1859. Villard, John Brown, p. 550.

to take place.¹³

The Mayor of Philadelphia met them at the railroad station, however, and insisted that Brown's remains be sent out of the city aboard the next train as he feared that otherwise he would be unable to maintain order. Faced with the mayor's determination to use the police and even the military if necessary, McKim could do little but proceed on to New York. There, Brown's remains were given to an undertaker, and Mrs. Brown and McKim (Sarah McKim and Tyndale had remained in Philadelphia) were joined by Wendell Phillips: On Monday, the fifth, this party of three set out for North Elba and arrived there four days later after an arduous trip by rail, boat, sleigh, and wagon. That same day Brown was buried after speeches by McKim and Phillips which were duly transmitted to the press.¹⁴

McKim's talk was free of the ambivalence which had marked his first utterances about Brown. He said that though he had not known the hero of Harper's Ferry personally, he had come to "love and admire him," and he added that "to stand under his roof and aid in his burial, was the greatest honor that had ever been vouchsafed him." In concluding his address McKim asked the family to be comforted by the fact that "by their sacrifices they had made large contributions to the cause of Freedom and Humanity; that in this respect their position was an honorable, and by many would be regarded as an enviable one." This tactless remark was echoed in other letters the family received that month, and one of

¹³National Anti-Slavery Standard, December 10 and 17, 1859.

¹⁴Ibid., December 10 and 17, 1859.

Brown's daughters wrote him at the end of December that if those who had written had lost a father, two brothers, and their dearest friends, "they would not make such an idle wish."¹⁵ Eulogistic and sanctimonious though it was, McKim's graveside speech accurately suggested that his admiration had come to extend beyond Brown the man, to his act as well.

Step by morbid step McKim had detailed the progress of the funeral party, and as the special correspondent of the Tribune (his friend Sidney Howard Gay was now the managing editor of that paper) his reports had attained a readership far beyond the range usually covered by the anti-slavery press. McKim's efforts to use the Brown affair to advance the cause also led him to join with Wendell Phillips, George Stearns, and others in unsuccessfully urging Mrs. Brown to choose Lydia Maria Child, rather than James Redpath, as her husband's authorized biographer. There was a double purpose in the arrangements which McKim made, or attempted to make, with regard to the publication of works by or about Brown, for the income from this material was to form part of a fund that had been established to support the widow and her children.¹⁶

¹⁵Annie Brown to McKim, December 27, 1859, McKim Collection, Cornell. National Anti-Slavery Standard, December 17, 1859. Governor Henry A. Wise to Mary Brown /copy/, November 26, 1859, and Governor Henry A. Wise to William Taliaferro /copy/, November 26, 1859, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

¹⁶Mary Brown to McKim, March 6, 1860; Marcus Spring to McKim, November 29, 1859; McKim Collection, Cornell. Shortly after she returned from Baltimore on November 8, 1859 Mrs. Brown indicated a desire to return to North Elba. This did not fit in with the plans of the abolitionists to aid her and to use her as a symbol of her about-to-be martyred husband. When informed by McKim of Mrs. Brown's intention, Higginson replied that "in consigning Mrs. Brown to your care I of course hoped that she would be guided by your judgment: although of course neither you nor I can claim any authority over her." He also said: "We

To an extent that is still largely unknown, McKim helped to aid fugitive members of Brown's band who had not yet been caught, and he was privy to plans for breaking two members of the raiding party out of prison before they were executed. Those followers of Brown who had managed to escape had done so by travelling North through the Shenandoah Mountains until they emerged in the area of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. From there they had received assistance from McKim and Dr. William Rutherford of the Harrisburg Vigilance Committee. On November 22, 1859 the doctor had informed McKim that a party of Virginians had been in the area and that they had a "requisition" for the fugitive, Coppoc. He told McKim that if the rest of the party had not left their hiding place yet, they had better be hurried away quickly.¹⁷ The agent's response to this information is not known, but it seems clear that he had knowledge of the movements and plans of the fugitives.

On February 14, 1860 Aaron Stevens and Albert Hazlett, the last two members of Brown's band still alive in Virginia, were sentenced to death. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who had entrusted Mrs. Brown to McKim's care and had worked so hard to arrange a rescue for her husband, again tried to devise a plan for freeing the prisoners. This time he

know that it will be for her pecuniary advantage to stay away from home, because of the presents and the permanent friends she . . . will gain." Thomas Wentworth Higginson to McKim, November 12, 1859, McKim Collection, Cornell. See also, McKim to William Lloyd Garrison, November 25, 1859, McKim Papers, Maloney Collection, New York Public Library.

¹⁷Ellen Rutherford (writing in behalf of her father, William Rutherford) to McKim, November 22, 1859, McKim Collection, Cornell. McKim to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, November 23, 1859, Thomas Wentworth Higginson Collection, Boston Public Library.

hoped to do it by an overland dash through the Shenandoah Mountains. He set up his headquarters at the home of Dr. William Rutherford, and it was apparently McKim who had introduced the two men, for Higginson wrote: "Your friend the doctor is a tower of strength." On February 20, 1860 Higginson sent a messenger to McKim asking the agent to advise or help the bearer to raise funds "for our business undertaking." He said that it was well organized and would not be carried out unless there was a strong probability of success. He went on to tell McKim that "we have for a master machinist a man who has never failed." This was a reference to James Montgomery, a born fighter and veteran of the Kansas border wars, who had agreed to lead the venture. The rescue attempt was never made because Montgomery, desiring to scout the territory first, went to Charlestown, penetrated the jail by feigning drunkenness, and spoke with the two prisoners who advised him that rescue was impossible. Accepting this judgment as valid, Montgomery and his comrades called off their plans.¹⁸

In the wake of the Brown affair, McKim returned to his routine duties at the anti-slavery office. There were still fugitives in need of aid, books to be published and sold, and funds to be raised for the society. These were the actions of habit, however, for the nation was heading toward a grave crisis which would make this work unnecessary. Brown's raid had become the focal point for southern fears that the entire North stood ready to attack the peculiar institution. This was of course, a gross exaggeration. Nevertheless, the upsurge of sympathy

¹⁸Thomas Wentworth Higginson to [McKim], February 20, 1860, Wetherill Scrapbook. Villard, John Brown, pp. 572-579.

for Brown indicates that even if most northerners deplored the means he had used, a majority had come to believe that slavery was a growing threat which must not be allowed to expand further.¹⁹

It was this attitude which was at the root of the rising success of the Republican Party, and which did indeed pose an ultimate threat to the institution of slavery. As will be remembered, McKim had once been an ardent supporter of certain forms of political action, but had given up this position in 1844 when he accepted the view that the Constitution was a proslavery document which should not be obeyed. In the 1850's, especially after the birth of the Republican Party, he had begun to move back toward his old views. It is true that he continued to hold that the highest anti-slavery ground was the non-political terrain occupied by his organization, but he had learned that a difference did exist between political men who were anti-slavery and those who were not. Now, in 1860, with the triumph of the Republican Party imminent, McKim and some of his fellow abolitionists began to develop an even greater appreciation of that party.²⁰

Writing to his English correspondent, Richard D. Webb, on June 22, 1860 McKim predicted that the Republicans would be the victors in November, and that this would be a gain for the cause. He was more cautious however in his personal evaluation of Lincoln, and contented

¹⁹Allan Nevins, The Emergence of Lincoln (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), II, 98-112.

²⁰On McKim's attitude toward the Republican Party in the 1850's see above, p. 284. McKim to Richard D. Webb, June 22, 1860, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library. Oliver Johnson to McKim, October 11, 1860, McKim Collection, Cornell. Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, October 3, 1860.

himself with saying, "we shall see what we shall see." During the year that preceded the Civil War, McKim appears to have strengthened his contacts with Republican politicians and to have followed their doings with an ever increasing interest.²¹

In predicting the election of Lincoln, McKim had, of course, been saying what many already knew, that the impending division within the Democratic Party would make the victory of the Republican candidate almost certain. When these events actually took place South Carolina, true to her word, made ready to take the first steps toward secession. In a letter to his daughter, who was then eighteen years old, McKim welcomed the news saying:

Well, South Carolina seems to be in earnest, and determined on secession [.] I hope she will be allowed to make the experiment. It would hasten the day of emancipation. Ned Hallowell has just been in expressing his pleasure at the prospect of a muss. He wants to "have a crack at them": he "wants to fight". Ned's a terrible fellow - all the time sniffing blood, and "spilin for a fight."²²

²¹McKim to Richard D. Webb, June 22, 1860, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library. J. M. Ashley to McKim, January 13, 1860; Alfred H. Love to McKim, July 11, 1860; John Harley to McKim, August 27, 1860; McKim Collection, Cornell. Two letters written early in 1861 suggest that McKim was in close contact with Republican members of the Pennsylvania Legislature and that these members conveyed inside information to him about the affairs of that body. It may be inferred that these contacts existed in 1860 as well. E. W. Capron to McKim, January 29, 1861, and, E. H. Fish to McKim, January 30, 1861, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

²²James Miller McKim to Lucy McKim, November 9, [1860], Chubb Collection. McKim expressed much the same sentiments about the possibility of disunion in his column in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, December 29, 1860.

The almost light-hearted tone of the last few lines suggests that, like so many of his fellow Americans, McKim could hardly imagine that a bitter fratricidal war was truly in the offing. He had been predicting disunion at least since 1857 when he said that the North and South were already like two different nations and that "there is no real union between them at this moment."²³ Now that it was here, McKim seemed secure in the faith that if the South were allowed to go in peace, emancipation would be the ultimate result.

By January 25, 1861, when five lower South states had already left the Union and two more were about to do so, McKim was beginning to take a different attitude toward the possibility of a war. He was beginning to see that such a conflict would bring emancipation with it, but he could hardly believe that the North would have the moral strength to stand up to their brethren below the Mason and Dixon line. He wrote that he had "more hope in the folly of South than in the wisdom of the North - in the recklessness of Carolina than in the courage of Pennsylvania."²⁴

On April 15, 1861, three days after the guns began to fire, McKim unambiguously welcomed their sound saying: "A virtuous war is

²³McKim to Richard D. Webb, November 2, 1857, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

²⁴McKim to Elijah F. Pennypacker, January 25, 1861, Friends' Historical Society Collection, Swarthmore College Library. On February 11, 1861 McKim expressed the belief that there would be two confederacies, one free and one slave, but he did not profess to know whether there would be war or not. He wrote: "We may have war to the knife, or for the present at least, no war at all. But that we are on the verge of a great revolution is unquestionable." McKim to Richard D. Webb, Garrison Collection, Boston Public Library.

better than a corrupt peace." He claimed that the peace which had preceded the conflict had been "hollow and partial," and that while both sections had lived together in comparative amity they had been united in conducting an unceasing war against a subjugated race. He said that recently the North had had virtue enough to repent

of our meanness in maintaining this armed intervention against the blacks; and for this our fellow conspirators now make war upon us. They demand that we shall aid them in their purpose [,] not only to perpetuate [,] but to extend, their system of bondage, and our refusal to comply is made a justification of war.²⁵

McKim went on to say that "this is to be an abolition war," because the South itself had chosen to give it that character by its charges that the Lincoln government was an abolition government, and he concluded that the conflict could only result in "the triumph or extinction of slavery." He criticized those of his co-workers who failed to come out for the war for disbelieving their own prophecies that the slavery controversy would lead to disunion, civil war, and emancipation, and said that: "Now, when two thirds of their prediction has come to pass, they not only hesitate as to the remainder, but doubt whether that which has taken place is really an assured fact." For seventeen years McKim had been agitating for disunion, but like most other Garrisonians, he abandoned the doctrine with hardly a backward glance once he became convinced that war would bring emancipation.²⁶

²⁵McKim's column dated, April 15, 1861 in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, April 20, 1861.

²⁶Ibid.

From this point on, McKim devoted himself to supporting the war, secure in the belief that a northern victory could have no other outcome but emancipation. As the year progressed McKim moved toward the conclusion that the anti-slavery movement had served its purpose and that the cause of the Negro now required new goals and new forms. On January 22, 1862 he tendered his resignation to the society he had served for twenty-two years saying: "I retire because I believe that my peculiar work, in the position I have occupied is now done." He expressed the belief that while slavery still existed, and northern opinion was not yet all that it should be, the demise of Negro servitude was near, and the regeneration of public sentiment was almost accomplished. He went on to note that the society was now free to "discontinue the use of some of the instrumentalities heretofore deemed indispensable." He no longer saw any real need for the use of travelling lecturers or the office agent.²⁷

Expanding upon the reasons for this decision in a private letter which was later published, McKim argued that public opinion and the government itself had now come to adopt a position which was close enough to that of the abolitionists to make vituperative attacks inappropriate and destructive to the cause. Now the task was to work from within "the establishment" to undo the harm wrought by slavery. McKim said:

²⁷ McKim's letter of resignation and the correspondence pertaining to it was printed in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, May 3, 1862. See also, Minutes of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, January 22, 1862.

In my judgement, the old anti-slavery routine is not what the cause now demands. Iconoclasm has had its day. For the battering-ram we must substitute the hod and trowel; taking care, however, not to 'daub with untempered mortar.' We have passed through the pulling-down stage of our movement; the building-up - the constructive part - remains to be accomplished. If our machinery can be adapted to the new exigencies - as it undoubtedly can - I am willing to stay and help work it. But my interest in the old appliances and old watchwords is pretty much all gone. Scarp and counter-scarp, big guns, and 'Delenda est Cathargo,' do very well when the citadel stands defiant and apparently impregnable; but when the enemy hoists a flag of truce and proposes negotiation, it is time to change our tactics.²⁸

For all practical purposes, this resignation marked the end of McKim's career as an anti-slavery agent, and the beginning of his work to build a new America based upon the principles of equality and justice. In this quest he would be able to move more freely than heretofore because of his abandonment of the Garrisonian clichés which had circumscribed his actions in the past. During the years to come he would work intimately with government officials and politicians to achieve the goals he had previously sought by moral suasion.

Two years after his resignation, while addressing a meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, McKim remarked that "the history of one abolitionist, howsoever humble, even though it be for a day, is the history, to that extent, of every other abolitionist - and of the

²⁸National Anti-Slavery Standard, May 3, 1862.

cause."²⁹ This had been uniquely true in his own case, for he was genuinely representative of the first generation of radical anti-slavery men which began its work in the early 1830's. He shared with all of the major figures in the movement an identification with evangelistic religion, a romantic intensity of spirit, and a perfectionist outlook as to the possibilities for human improvement.

It was this constellation of beliefs which led McKim to become a universal reformer embracing not only abolition, but a wide variety of causes including temperance, women's rights, and peace. It was a similar outlook which led his co-workers ranging from Mrs. Mott, Garrison, and Phillips to Weld, the Tappans, and Elizur Wright, to take the same broad view of reform. Although these individuals would come to a parting of the ways over the question of which causes deserved support, it is most important to note that they were united in the catholicity of their views and that in regard to abolition they were all fully agreed on the necessity for immediate and total emancipation.

McKim's early career has such strong parallels with that of Theodore Weld and other western evangelists who became absorbed in the anti-slavery crusade, that it raises the question as to whether the link between revivalism and abolition held true only in the West, for McKim was an easterner. Closer examination reveals that evangelistic religion was as important a factor in the creation of the radical anti-

²⁹ Proceedings of the American Anti-Slavery Society at its Third Decade . . . Dec. 3d and 4th, 1863 (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1864), p. 31.

slavery movement in the East as it was in the West, and the attitudes of abolitionists in both areas were fundamentally similar.

McKim's work as a lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society and his labors for twenty-two years as the agent of the Pennsylvania organization rarely brought dramatic immediate results. His hearers did not become converts by the hundreds, and the papers and books he published did not go into hundreds of thousands of homes. The true importance of his work, however, lies in his steady incessant hammering away at the same theme, day after day, week after week, and year after year. While the precise number of persons he affected is, of course, incalculable, it seems clear that in varying degrees, and in varying measure, large numbers of individuals were touched by his message. When it is remembered that he was not alone, and that other abolitionists throughout the North were carrying the same task forward, the cumulative impact of their work upon the nation becomes obvious.

The effect of McKim and his associates upon public opinion is suggested by the growing acceptance of the abolitionists as a legitimate part of Philadelphia life. From being despised outcasts in 1838 when Pennsylvania Hall was burned, they had advanced by 1849 to a point where they were just barely tolerated. During the 1850's, as tensions over the slavery issue mounted, McKim repeatedly remarked upon the growing fairness with which they were treated in the public press. In 1860 he could write that "Horace Furnace [a lawyer] called a day or two ago to know if we were intending to have a meeting soon. He was desirous to take a position among the abolitionists before they ceased to be odious."³⁰

³⁰James Miller McKim to Lucy McKim, November 9, [1860], Chubb Collection.

There can be little doubt that the divisions among radical anti-slavery men over the issues of women's rights and political action were quite destructive to the cause, for in the years that followed the 1840 split a good deal of energy was expended upon fruitless and bitter wrangling. McKim and his fellow Pennsylvanians had first attempted to hold aloof from these destructive and useless battles, and he worked for the adoption of a position which would have allowed all shades of opinion on political action to coexist within his organization. He earlier favored a program of moderate political action, but when Garrison raised the issue of disunion, it became impossible for McKim to remain a loyal supporter of the *Bostonian* while holding to his previous stand. With a suddenness reminiscent of his conversion to abolitionism, he made an about-face, and embraced the view that the Union ought to be dissolved and that the Constitution was an iniquitous compact with sin.

Despite the radicalism of his stand, McKim was essentially a moderate and prudent man. Although he continued to advocate and believe in disunion from 1844, when he first adopted the position, through the crisis year of 1860, neither he nor his Pennsylvania organization gave it great emphasis. Unlike some of his more radical colleagues, McKim worked to maintain contacts with anti-slavery men of all types, and, without abandoning his own beliefs, he sought out the non-political areas where cooperation was possible.

Once the Republican Party emerged as a significant national force he insisted on recognizing its possibilities for good even though it did not "occupy the highest anti-slavery ground." Indeed, although

McKim gave no outward indication of it, one wonders whether the birth of this party did not cause him to question the wisdom of his earlier decision to abandon political action. Certainly, when the war came he was able to cast off the old shibboleths with hardly a backward glance. Nevertheless his work as a Garrisonian was not wasted, for, using the techniques that had been developed in the 1830's, this group had continued to attack slavery from an uncompromising moral standpoint. If such a position was often impractical and visionary, it did serve as a moral polestar for the North.

Twenty-one years before the outbreak of the Civil War, when McKim had first been offered the post of publishing agent, he was given an opportunity which comes to a relatively few men: the chance to unite the consuming passion of his life and his occupation. In the years that followed he had made the most of it, and he had placed himself in almost constant opposition to the policies of his government. But, he did not have the personality of the professional nay-sayer. He had no deep personal need to be in perpetual opposition to "the establishment." If anything, he would rather have preferred to work with the powers that be, as long as he believed they stood for justice. It must have been with great relief and pleasure that he could finally write: "Iconoclasm has had its day."³¹

³¹ See p. 300 above.

CHAPTER XI

EPILOGUE

Although McKim's career as an anti-slavery agent came to an end during the first year of the Civil War, his work on behalf of Negro freedom and equality had merely entered a new phase. With the capture of the Sea Islands of South Carolina, the North was confronted with the problem of dealing with a large population of ex-slaves. Recognizing the importance which the first steps toward reconstruction would have in shaping future policies, McKim immediately threw himself into the work of relieving the suffering of the freedmen and devising plans for aiding them in their transition from a state of dependence to genuine freedom. To achieve these ends he arranged for the formation of the Philadelphia Port Royal Relief Committee in March 1862. In his capacity as the group's executive secretary he made a tour of inspection of the islands in June 1862.¹

¹The picture of McKim's activities during the Civil War and Reconstruction given in this epilogue has been drawn from an extensive, although still incomplete, study of his later life. A full-scale biography will be forthcoming when this research is finished. Of particular use in the study of McKim's later life is the voluminous McKim Collection in the Cornell University Library which contains his correspondence as an official of the various freedmen's relief groups with which he was associated. Also of great importance are the records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in the War Records Office of the National Archives. McKim's work during the Civil War and Reconstruction is frequently alluded to in James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University

As a result of this trip McKim concluded that a government commission was needed to study the problems of the freedmen and to make recommendations as to future policy. In December he went to Washington where he proposed the idea to Charles Sumner, Thaddeus Stevens, Edwin Stanton, and others. The plan was adopted, and in March 1863 the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission was established under the auspices of the War Department. Much to McKim's disappointment, he was not given the post of secretary of the commission to which he had aspired.

Despite this personal setback, he continued his work for the blacks, and the Port Royal committee soon evolved into the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association which was again under his direction. Like similar groups organized in other cities and states, this association was established to supply material relief (through voluntary contributions) for the freedmen, and to provide teachers for the ex-slaves so that they would quickly be able to take their proper place in a democratic society.

In addition to his work on behalf of the freedmen, McKim actively participated in efforts to integrate the horse-drawn street cars of Philadelphia. He became an active member of the Union League, and he played an important role in the recruitment of Negro troops in the Pennsylvania area. In the Winter of 1864 he lobbied in Washington for the passage of the Freedmen's Bureau Bill. In May, he was invited to the White House to discuss the problem of reconstruction with

Press, 1964), and in Willie Lee Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment (Indianapolis: The Bobbs Merrill Company, 1964).

Lincoln. Although not an uncritical supporter of the President, McKim worked for his re-election in 1864.

Even before the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau, a system of cooperation had developed between the Army, which was handling most freedmen's matters, and the voluntary agencies. The relief associations contributed material goods like blankets and food, and sent teachers South to educate the former bondsmen. The government arranged for the distribution of the supplies, and assisted in providing buildings and protection for schools. With the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau in early 1865 it became apparent that coordination between this unit and dozens of independent local groups would be difficult indeed. Seeing the need for a national federation of local groups which would work directly with the bureau, McKim worked to create this central agency. In the Fall of 1865 he succeeded in bringing into being the American Freedmen's Aid Commission (later, it became the American Freedmen's Union Commission). Again, he was the paid functionary who actually carried out the day to day business of the organization. He did not, however, fully succeed in centralizing the work, for the American Missionary Association, which was also engaged in sending teachers South, remained a separate and distinct agency.

Searching for a way to establish an organ to represent the interests of the freedmen, McKim joined with George Stearns of Boston and others, to launch the Nation in July 1865. With E. L. Godkin as editor, and McKim's son-in-law, Wendell Phillips Garrison, as literary editor, the magazine would soon become a political and literary success. Disagreements among its backers and Godkin's lack of genuine interest

in the cause of the freedmen soon made it useless as a propaganda organ for the freedmen's cause, however, and it was reorganized in 1866 as a purely business and literary venture. McKim did not withdraw his investment, and he was associated with the magazine for the rest of his life.

From 1866-1869 McKim continued to work for the freedmen as the secretary of the American Freedmen's Union Commission, and the organization came to concentrate its efforts almost exclusively upon the problem of supplying teachers for the southern Negroes. By 1868, however, contributions had dropped off markedly, and rivalry with the American Missionary Association had weakened the Commission still further. In early 1869, although it had not come close to accomplishing its mission, McKim moved that it be disbanded.

McKim was now fifty-nine years old and in declining health. His career as an active reformer had come to an end, and he retired to the beautiful home in Llewellyn Park, West Orange, New Jersey which he had purchased when he took up his duties with the national freedmen's organization. His retirement was not complete, however, and he continued to work occasionally in the office of the Nation, and maintained his interest in reform. On June 13, 1874, as the failure of reconstruction was becoming increasingly evident, James Miller McKim died. He had worked vigorously to translate the promise of emancipation into the reality of freedom, but an America bored with the complexities and frustrations of the race problem, and more concerned with reunion than social justice, had ceased to listen. The gilded promises of industrialization beckoned and those who were not swift enough to join the race would have to fall by the wayside.

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