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IN this study the term “abolitionist” will be applied to those Americans who before the Civil War had agitated for immediate, unconditional, and universal abolition of slavery in the United States. Contemporaries of the antislavery movement and later historians have sometimes mistakenly used the word “abolitionist” to describe adherents of the whole spectrum of antislavery sentiment. Members of the Free Soil and Republican parties have often been called abolitionists, even though these parties were pledged officially before 1861 only to the limitation of slavery, not to its extirpation. It is a moot question whether such radical antislavery leaders as Charles Sumner, John Andrew, George Julian, Thaddeus Stevens, or Owen Lovejoy were genuine “abolitionists.” In their hearts they probably desired an immediate end to slavery as fervently as did William Lloyd Garrison. But they were committed publicly by political affiliation and party responsibility to a set of principles that fell short of genuine abolitionism. The names of Sumner, Julian, and other radical Republicans will crop up frequently in this book, for they were closely connected with the activities of abolitionists during the Civil War and Reconstruction. No attempt will be made, however, to settle the question whether Sumner, for example, was an authentic abolitionist. The focus of this study will be upon those men and women who made no apologies for their radicalism and who crusaded militantly for immediate, unconditional, and universal emancipation.

In 1860 there were three loosely defined and somewhat inter-related abolitionist groups in the North. First and most prominent in the eyes of the public were the Garrisonians—the members of the American Anti-Slavery Society and its auxiliaries. The Garrisonians had a more cohesive and active organization than any of the other genuine abolitionist groups, and many of the ablest writers and speakers in the movement were affiliated with them. William Lloyd Garrison was widely regarded as the pioneer and leader of the militant abolitionist crusade. Wendell Phillips was universally acknowledged to be one of the finest platform speakers in the nation. In addition the American Anti-Slavery Society

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contained a host of lesser luminaries who were fairly well known to the antislavery public: Lydia Maria Child, Theodore Tilton, Edmund Quincy, Parker Pillsbury, Oliver Johnson, Abby and Stephen S. Foster, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Sydney Howard Gay, James and Lucretia Mott, Samuel J. May, Robert Purvis, James Miller McKim, and many others.

The Garrisonians were small in number, but their influence and their impact on public opinion cannot be measured by size alone. The radicalism of their doctrines, the vehemence of their language, and the prominence of their leaders gave them an audience and a notoriety far out of proportion to their numbers. This small army of talented and articulate reformers was active primarily in the eastern states. New England, of course, was the center of Garrisonian abolitionism. The *Liberator* was published in Boston. Eleven of the twelve members of the American Anti-Slavery Society's executive committee were from New England (the twelfth was from New York). The Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society was the most vigorous auxiliary of the national organization. But there were pockets of Garrisonian strength elsewhere. Oliver Johnson, Theodore Tilton, and Sydney Howard Gay formed the core of a small group of Garrisonians in New York City. Johnson edited there the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, organ of the American Anti-Slavery Society. In Philadelphia there were two Garrisonian organizations: the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, led by J. Miller McKim, James and Lucretia Mott, and Robert Purvis; and the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, dominated by Mary Grew and Sarah Pugh. Scattered through parts of upstate New York were several active Garrisonians who constituted the leadership of the New York Anti-Slavery Society: Samuel J. May, Aaron M. Powell, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony. Finally, in the Western Reserve of Ohio there existed another outpost of Garrisonianism: Marius Robinson edited there the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, organ of the near-moribund Western Anti-Slavery Society, and Giles B. Stebbins and Josephine S. Griffing headed the lecture corps of these western Garrisonians.

The second group of abolitionists active in 1860 is more difficult to delineate. Roughly it consisted of those who, for one reason or another, had broken with Garrison in 1840, but who had

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nevertheless refused to submerge their abolitionist identity in the Free Soil or Republican parties. Of the men who had founded the Liberty party in 1840, some had died and many had been absorbed by the Republican party, but an indomitable remnant of political abolitionists had refused to adulterate their beliefs with the pale antislavery doctrines of the Republican party, and had kept the Liberty party alive through the 1850's. In 1860 they called their organization the Radical Abolitionist party. They proclaimed the constitutional right and duty of the federal government to abolish slavery in the states. Leaders of this party were Gerrit Smith, William Goodell, and Frederick Douglass. The center of their strength was in upstate New York, and the party organ, the *Principia*, was edited in New York City by Goodell.

Closely allied with the Radical Abolitionists was the Church Anti-Slavery Society, successor of Lewis Tappan's American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society which had died a quiet death in the 1850's. The Church Anti-Slavery Society was founded in 1859 by a Connecticut Congregationalist minister, Henry Cheever, and his more famous brother, George Cheever, pastor of the Church of the Puritans in New York City. The Cheever brothers hoped to convert the northern Protestant clergy to the doctrine of immediate and unconditional emancipation, but the radicalism of the Society, and its insistence that slaveholding as well as slavery was a sin, alienated most of the northern clergy. No more than a few hundred members, mostly Congregational and Presbyterian ministers in New England, New York, and the upper tier of western states, ever belonged to the Society, and its influence was limited. Many members of the Society were also adherents of the Radical Abolitionist party, and Goodell's *Principia* doubled as an unofficial organ of the Church Anti-Slavery Society.

Another abolitionist-controlled organization, informally associated with the Radical Abolitionist party and the Church Anti-Slavery Society, was the American Missionary Association. Organized by Lewis Tappan, George Whipple, and Simeon S. Jocelyn in 1846, the A.M.A. was ostensibly nonsectarian, but in reality it was dominated by Congregationalists. It organized anti-slavery churches in the West and in Kentucky, carried on mission work in Africa, and in 1855 founded Berea College in Kentucky.

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In 1860 the A.M.A. was small, with its major work of freedmen's education still in the future.

The third major grouping of abolitionists is almost impossible to define precisely. Speaking broadly, one might say that it consisted of all those who advocated the immediate, unconditional, and universal abolition of slavery, but who did not belong to any of the formal abolitionist organizations described in the preceding paragraphs. This included a majority of the old Liberty party stalwarts who had followed Henry B. Stanton, Joshua Leavitt, and Elizur Wright into the Free Soil party in 1848 and ultimately into the Republican party. Most of the western political abolitionists had pursued this course and had almost completely submerged their abolitionist identity in the weaker antislavery principles of the Republican party. Yet they remained militant and uncompromising in their basic abolitionist beliefs.

A subgrouping of abolitionists who do not fall readily within any organizational framework were the supporters of John Brown. The most famous members of this group were the "Secret Six" who had subsidized Brown's campaigns in Kansas and his abortive invasion of Virginia. Of these six, Theodore Parker had died and Gerrit Smith has been classified with another group, but the other four remained very much alive and were destined to play important roles in the drama of the Civil War: George L. Stearns, wealthy Boston lead-pipe manufacturer; Samuel Gridley Howe, world-famous for his work with the blind; and the young, romantic intellectuals, Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Frank Sanborn. All four were from Massachusetts. James Redpath and Richard J. Hinton, British-born radicals who had known John Brown in Kansas and who later published biographies of Old Ossawatimie, also lived in the Bay State.

In fact, Massachusetts was by far the most radical antislavery state in the Union. In addition to being the center of Garrisonian activity, Massachusetts was the home of many of the prominent non-Garrisonian abolitionists, and the state boasted two of the strongest antislavery senators in Congress, Charles Sumner and Henry Wilson. The center of this antislavery political power was a small, informal organization known as the Bird Club. The Bird Club originated about 1850 when a group of radical leaders of the Massachusetts Free Soil party began meeting together in

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Boston on Saturday afternoons for dinner and long, confidential political discussions. Host on these occasions was Frank Bird, an East Walpole paper manufacturer and radical Free Soiler. Sumner, Wilson, and John Andrew, the famous war governor of Massachusetts, were members of this club, and as the decade progressed it became more and more powerful until by 1860 it virtually controlled the state's Republican party. For the next twelve years the Bird Club ruled Massachusetts politics. A majority of the men in the Club were probably not abolitionists according to the definition of that term used in this study, but a number of genuine abolitionists *did* belong to the Club. Stearns, Howe, Sanborn, Charles W. Slack, and other abolitionists were members, and exerted a strong influence on the Club's policies. Frank Bird himself presided over a disunion convention in 1857 organized by Garrisonians. Elizur Wright, who had served as secretary of the American Anti-Slavery Society in the 1830's and had helped found the Liberty party in 1840, was a member of the Bird Club. The line between abolitionist and Free Soiler was often blurred and indistinct in Massachusetts. If the Bird Club was not a formal abolitionist organization, it was the next thing to it.

There were also many abolitionists who did not belong to any definite antislavery organization, but who were nevertheless well known and influential in their communities and states: Dr. Henry I. Bowditch, Boston physician; James Freeman Clarke, Boston Unitarian minister; Levi Coffin, the Quaker "President" of the Underground Railroad in Cincinnati; Octavius B. Frothingham, liberal Unitarian minister and Transcendentalist intellectual of New York City; Gilbert Haven, a Massachusetts Methodist preacher and militant abolitionist; John Jay, wealthy grandson of the first chief justice; Samuel Sewall, Boston lawyer; John G. Whittier, beloved Quaker poet of Amesbury, Massachusetts; and Samuel Johnson of Lynn, Massachusetts, Unitarian minister and expert on Oriental religions. These were only a few of the scores of prominent men throughout the North who refused to identify themselves formally with any antislavery society, but who frequently appeared on abolitionist platforms and bore powerful testimony for freedom in their daily callings.

These various groups of abolitionists often differed on points of procedure or emphasis, but on the main objectives of the aboli-

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tionist crusade they were united. The crisis of the Civil War obscured most of their old academic disputes and caused them to close ranks, at least for a time, in the struggle for the freedom and equality of the Negro. The chapters that follow are the story of that struggle.