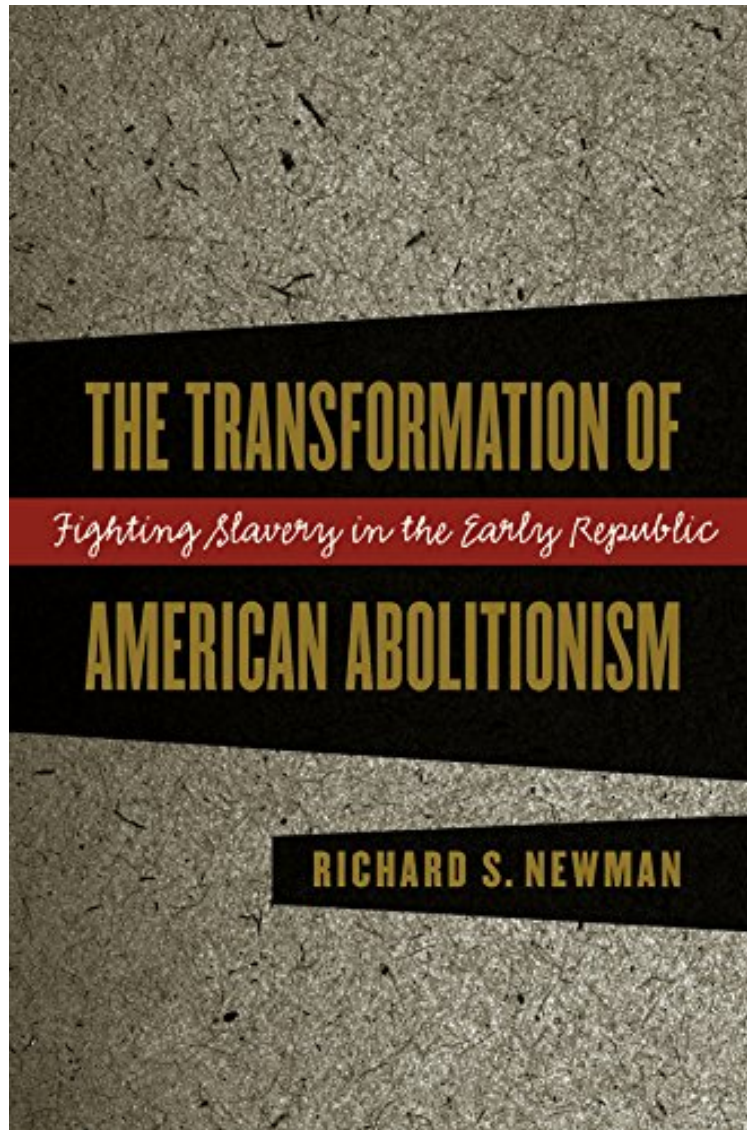


[Download] The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic

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Richard S. Newman

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#1469696 in Books Richard S Newman 2002-04-22Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.25 x .68 x 6.00l, .85 #File Name: 0807849987272 pagesThe Transformation of American Abolitionism Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic | File size: 56.Mb

Richard S. Newman : The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic:

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. The Evolution of AbolitionismBy Roger D. LauniusThe master

narrative of the American antislavery reform movement starts in 1831 when William Lloyd Garrison began publishing "The Liberator" in Boston. But it is changing and Richard S. Newman, an assistant professor of history at Rochester Institute of Technology, well known as an elite school for the training of engineers but not for historians, is helping to alter the historiographical landscape. Newman argues that there were two essential phases of American abolitionism, but we have been emphasizing only the latter, direct action immediate abolitionism that emerged in the 1830s. Going back to the Revolutionary era, he traces a belief among Christians opposed slavery on moral grounds. Add to that the vague antislavery sentiment of such Revolutionary leaders as Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and the like, and the stage is set for change. Newman comments: "The era between the Revolution and the 1830s was the first great period of transformation. What began as an elite abolitionist movement in Pennsylvania during the post-Revolutionary period yielded to an egalitarian movement based in Massachusetts during the early 1830s. With this shift in location, abolitionist strategy, tactics, and, perhaps most significantly, personnel shifted too" (p. 2). He comments that whereas the earlier antislavery effort revolved around courtroom battles and legal briefs, the later period involved legislative lobbying, rabble rousing, and direct action. This is the same shift from moderate to more confrontational approaches that many reform movements have followed since that time. An example of this is the move from the legal emphasis of the NAACP in the first half of the twentieth century to the non-violent direct action of Martin Luther King to the more radical sometimes violent confrontation of the Black Panthers. Newman concentrates his study on two antislavery organizations, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society and the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. And while his emphasis on these two states and their organizations might skew his perspectives, this book is a welcome addition to the literature. After all, there were such Old Northwest anti-slavery advocates as Theodore Dwight Weld largely unrepresented in this study, something that Gilbert H. Barnes rectified in 1933 with his benchmark study, "The Anti-Slavery Impulse," unfortunately now out of print but still an important work that should be familiar to all students as a corrective to an over-emphasis on William Lloyd Garrison and "The Liberator." Newman's critical contribution is his reconnection of post-Revolutionary abolitionism with the direct action of Garrison and others beginning in the 1830s. Throughout, he concentrates on the strategies and tactics of the abolitionists in these two states and how they changed over time. He traces the transformation of approaches among abolitionists in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts from an emphasis on restricted participation by elites and no one else to the enlistment of a mass movement of supporters drawn from all classes and walks of life. He constructs the move from legal challenges to slavery to attacks on slavery in the media and on the lecture circuit. Most important, he sees leadership move from white elites in Philadelphia to Boston where both white and black leadership and action took place. What may be most interesting about this book is its place in the larger historiography of American abolitionism. Most professional historians of the consensus school of the 1940s and 1950s saw the abolitionists as dogmatic and inflexible in dealing with a significant problem in American history. Their "intransigence" hardened the positions that led to the Civil War. The "repressible conflict," consensus historians believed, could have been averted had Americans on both sides done what they do best, reach a compromise solution. But the abolitionists, like the pro-slavery advocates in the South, were unwilling to compromise. Historians of the 1960s and 1970s such as Kenneth M. Stampp and Lewis Perry viewed the abolitionists through the lens of the Civil Rights Crusade and looked back on the abolitionists as predecessors of the current struggle. For them, it looked more and more like a righteous cause fought for egalitarian goals. By the 1970s, with the failure of the Civil Rights movement to end racism and with such graphic examples as the Boston busing controversy in 1974 signaling how far the nation had not come, some historians began to see in the antebellum abolitionists a group who had not gone far enough when they had the chance to alter the United States in a truly fundamental way. Since the 1990s a new generation of scholars, including Newman, have emerged to explore abolitionism in American history. Like those that came before, they aim to correct the scholarly record, and are arguing that abolitionists were both egalitarian and right minded after all. Newman and his fellow scholars of abolitionism are moving out to reinterpret the abolitionist crusade as realistic and reasonable, one that changed over time to accomplish its purposes, and that extended in an unbroken past back to the ideals of the American Revolution. The linkage to the Revolution is especially interesting because of the present-day neoconservative attack on the results of the Civil Rights Crusade. At some level, Newman and others working in this field may be offering a defense of the Civil Rights Crusade and its search for racial justice, however imperfectly realized it may have been. This is a fine book with an important thesis and lesson to offer its readers. I look forward to seeing the author extend his thesis into a broader discussion of abolitionism in states beyond Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

13 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Reexamining Abolitionism By Alan Scott Henderson America's first, and perhaps most important, reform movement was the fight to end slavery, commonly called abolitionism. Dozens, if not hundreds, of scholarly and popular books have been written on this subject. Rich Newman's excellent new study synthesizes much of that scholarship by giving us a rare glimpse into abolitionism's earliest phases. This book should be required reading for anyone interested in early American history, slavery, or social reform. Newman makes two important contributions to the subject he has examined so thoroughly. First, he identifies the ways in which the abolitionist movement changed over time. These changes were a function of broader social and political currents affecting the early American republic. Second, Newman continually pulls back to emphasize how abolitionism was similar to, or differed from,

other mass movements in U.S. history (indeed, the "transformation" Newman identifies is abolitionism's evolution into a mass, not elite, political movement). In this respect, the book transcends its immediate chronological limits to address wider questions about the strategy and tactics of American reform and reformers. Professor Newman's book, while based on meticulous research, is NOT a dry monograph intended for a narrow, academic audience. Newman writes beautifully, eschews jargon, and avoids tedious discussions of historiographic debates. Undergraduates, graduate students, and well-read members of the public will all benefit enormously from Newman's book. It is a VERY significant addition to the literature on reform, and will quickly become the definitive work on early abolitionism. It will certainly provoke many stimulating discussions about a fascinating, if also troubling, chapter in our nation's past.

Most accounts date the birth of American abolitionism to 1831, when William Lloyd Garrison began publishing his radical antislavery newspaper, *The Liberator*. In fact, however, the abolition movement had been born with the American Republic. In the decades following the Revolution, abolitionists worked steadily to eliminate slavery and racial injustice, and their tactics and strategies constantly evolved. Tracing the development of the abolitionist movement from the 1770s to the 1830s, Richard Newman focuses particularly on its transformation from a conservative lobbying effort into a fiery grassroots reform cause. What began in late-eighteenth-century Pennsylvania as an elite movement espousing gradual legal reform began to change in the 1820s as black activists, female reformers, and nonelite whites pushed their way into the antislavery movement. Located primarily in Massachusetts, these new reformers demanded immediate emancipation, and they revolutionized abolitionist strategies and tactics--lecturing extensively, publishing gripping accounts of life in bondage, and organizing on a grassroots level. Their attitudes and actions made the abolition movement the radical cause we view it as today.

In thoughtful and often original ways, [this book] redirects our attention to the fascinating 'first wave' of the movement and, in turn, resuscitates its historical significance. (Waldo E. Martin Jr., University of California, Berkeley) In thoughtful and often original ways, [this book] redirects our attention to the fascinating 'first wave' of the movement and, in turn, resuscitates its historical significance. (Waldo E. Martin Jr., University of California, Berkeley) Because of its persuasive reformulation of accepted historical narratives and because of its revealing analyses of actions as well as ideologies, [this book] is a major historiographical turning point. (James Brewer Stewart, Macalester College) Richard Newman's study significantly furthers our understanding of the key roles African Americans played in undermining the slave system.--*Law and History* Newman's excellent study of abolitionism has reframed a familiar topic and uncovered a new one. . . . Newman can take a place beside James Brewer Stewart as a master of the history of abolitionism. . . . [This book offers] convincing revision and original insights and research and an engaging and fluid narrative.--*Georgia Historical Quarterly* Deserves careful reading. Its fresh and lively writing and Newman's insistence on linking and contrasting old and new antislavery tactics should encourage researchers and lecturers on antislavery movements to broaden the context of their work.--*Journal of Southern History* Because of its persuasive reformulation of accepted historical narratives and because of its revealing analyses of actions as well as ideologies, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism* is a major historiographical turning point. Thanks to Richard Newman's pathbreaking work, we now have a much fuller understanding of the origins of the abolitionist movement, its deeply African American character, its racial dynamics, and the nature of its development in the years before 1840.--James Brewer Stewart, Macalester College This is a most important and persuasive discussion of the early years of American abolitionism. In thoughtful and often original ways, it redirects our attention to the fascinating 'first wave' of the movement and, in turn, resuscitates its historical significance.--Waldo E. Martin Jr., University of California, Berkeley Newman's well-crafted and articulate work earns a place among the many worthy studies of abolitionism.--*Journal of American History* A fine historical interpretation of first- and second-wave abolitionism and black protest.--*Journal of Interdisciplinary History* A major contribution to our understanding of the first fifty-six years of American abolitionism.--*American Historical* About the Author Richard S. Newman is assistant professor of history at Rochester Institute of Technology. He is coeditor of *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860* and an educational consultant to Strong Museum in Rochester, New York.