

“HOW CAN I LIBERATE THE SLAVES?” THE NEGLECTED TRADITION OF DEVELOPMENTAL ABOLITIONISM

BY

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The abolition of slavery in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was a long process. In terms of the economic views of abolitionists, there has been an excessive focus on the economic ideas of liberal abolitionists and their approach to “Civilization, Christianity, and Commerce.” However, there was a “developmental abolitionism” that has received little attention. Afro-American Martin R. Delany and Liberian James S. Payne were writers who approached abolitionism through this developmentalism. They favored more interventionist measures aimed at building the material power and national autonomy of Black nations to undercut the power of slave-using African chiefs, to provide indigenous Africans with employment, and to undermine the profitability of slave-based cotton production in the Americas. They also implicitly and indirectly approached labor scarcity with solutions ranging from promoting labor-saving technology to cultivating national prosperity that would improve emigration to Africa or increase birth rates.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is now well established that, across Europe, the abolition of the slave trade did not simply occur through legislation alone. Across the world, the trade and the institution underwent a very slow death (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993, pp. 7–8), and post-emancipation difficulties were common. Abolitionist action in one region could easily divert slave supply to other regions and suppliers, and constraints put upon the external trade could simply redirect supply to internal uses. These difficulties occurred across the Americas, Africa, North Africa, and Ottoman lands; across the Atlantic, Mediterranean, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean worlds.

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ISSN 1053-8372 print; ISSN 1469-9656 online/23/04000539-558 © The Author(s), 2023. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the History of Economics Society
doi:10.1017/S1053837222000384

It was not until the twentieth century that the slave trade was formally abolished in Africa, although modern slavery continues to persist until this day in some of the poorest countries of the world, and is still not criminalized in many countries (Schwarz and Allain 2020). However, the historiography of abolitionism has been dominated by the liberal approach and measures envisioned by Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton and other European thinkers and anti-slavery activists of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This approach came to dominate after it was realized that there had to be active replacement of the trade, rather than simply having constraints put upon it. This has been to the neglect of the points of view of others who advocated a more neomercantile approach to abolitionism.

While there is a lot of confusion and debate about the definition of “neomercantilism,” partly due to confusion and misconceptions about the meaning of its predecessor “mercantilism,” this paper adopts Eric Helleiner’s (2021, p. 4) definition of “neomercantilism” as “a belief in the need for strategic trade protections and other forms of government economic activism to promote state wealth and power in the post-Smithian age.” The neomercantilists were thinkers across the world who generally sought to catch up with advanced industrial nations not through liberal economic practice but through active state support for domestic economic and industrial growth. They typically rejected arguments like those that emphasized the role of free trade and comparative advantage in raw material production as means to secular prosperity or in relatively automatic stadial theories of development. They instead highlighted the need for the state to actively promote not only agricultural development and crop diversification through technological intensification but also industrial growth, and to institute temporary or prolonged barriers to manufacturing imports to support domestic manufacturing. Neomercantilists usually believed in the instrumentality of state action for national development for purposes as diverse as national income growth, improved balance of trade, self-sufficiency, national power and dominance, national security, reciprocity against the protectionism by advanced nations, the cultivation of civilization and the arts, and the development of a strong middle class. Thinkers like Friedrich List in Germany, Henry Carey in the US, and Zheng Guanying in China are examples of nineteenth-century neomercantilists (Helleiner 2021).

Based on this definition, neomercantilist thought in West Africa did not emerge in late nineteenth-century Asante and the early twentieth century with Marcus Garvey, as Helleiner (2021) argues. The central argument made in this paper is that the triad of “Civilization, Christianity, and Commerce,” which was presented as the solution to slavery and a means to substitute slavery for “legitimate” trade, was approached not only through liberal thought, as Black thinkers like Ottobah Cugoano, Olaudah Equiano, James Horton, and Edward Blyden did, but also through neomercantilist thought as others like the Afro-American explorer Dr. Martin R. Delany and James Payne did. In a post-abolitionist setting, Delany and Payne may be referred to as “developmental abolitionists.” The focus on liberal abolitionism leads to an underestimation of the failures of the abolitionist movement—failures that a focus on the developmental abolitionists more readily reveals.

Delany and Payne are the focus of this article because there does not appear to be any comprehensive scholarly assessment of their economic ideas. Payne is not well known since he was not a prominent player in the abolitionist or pan-Africanist movements of the nineteenth century; Delany is well known as a Black nationalist, but his economic

ideas are less well known. In any case, the history of African economic ideas is a marginal field among both historians of economic ideas and Africanist historians, thereby making the exploration of new texts that may contain such ideas an infrequent endeavor.

Born in Virginia in 1812 to a free Black mother and slave father (who purchased his freedom), Martin R. Delany was educated both privately and at a school established by the Bethel African Methodist Church in Pittsburgh. His education at Harvard Medical School, beginning in 1833, came to a halt after he was dismissed following the success of a petition by White medical students to exclude Blacks from the school. He lived his life as a medical doctor, politician, author, publisher, novelist, explorer, and army officer, with his career and ideas having “an enduring impact on African-American life and history” (Beatty 2005–06, p. 79). As early as the 1830s he contemplated African American emigration to Africa—an effort that accelerated in the 1850s following several major pro-slavery and anti-Black legislations in the US. Although he grew up in the United States, he was proud of his African heritage and sought to understand African antiquity, becoming the first African American to attempt to visually present and translate Egyptian hieroglyphs in a text transcribed in his own hand (Beatty 2005–06, p. 80).

In addition to founding and contributing to weekly newspapers, Delany published four major works in his lifetime, including *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* in 1852; *Blake; or the Huts of America—A Tale of the Mississippi Valley, the Southern United States, and Cuba* from 1859 to 1862; the “Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party” in 1860; and *Principia of Ethnology: The Origins of Races and Color* in 1879. In the 1852 book, Delany had argued that African Americans had for far too long moralized the process of achieving equality with White Americans and focused on obtaining civic and political rights. He believed that there was a need to emulate the trading shops, manufactories, machinery, rail systems, the oceanic vessels carrying the “commerce, merchandise and wealth of many nations,” the “great and massive buildings,” and the “knowledge of all the various business enterprises, trades, professions, and sciences” of the White man (Delany 1852, pp. 41–44). It was in his novel *Blake* and his “Official Report” that he further explained how emulation to achieve Black elevation and become a producing race—rather than a consuming one—could be achieved.

James S. Payne was born seven years after Delany to freed slaves of African descent in Richmond, Virginia. At the age of nine, his family migrated to Africa under the auspices of the American Colonization Society. He was schooled in Liberia and was ordained a Methodist minister in 1840. He was selected as one of the commissioners charged with organizing the details of the separation of the Liberian Commonwealth from the American Colonization Society after he demonstrated interest in economics and politics (*Dictionary of African Christian Biography* 2022). Payne appears to have been fairly familiar with the Western literature on political economy. He quotes Francis Wayland, Adam Smith, and an unnamed “Essayist on ‘Domestic Agriculture’” who seems to have been well-known enough for Payne to decide not to “encroach upon his ground” in discussing how to develop a country’s agriculture sector (Payne 1860, pp. 56–57). He eventually successfully ran for president of Liberia in 1867. However, facing a labor shortage, the war in Cape Palmas, financial shortages, and flouting of Liberia’s laws by European traders, Payne’s policies could not be implemented as he had hoped (*Dictionary of African Christian Biography* 2022).

Delany's approach does not appear to be exposed to as much of the political economy literature as Payne's. While he did not directly cite anyone in his writings on political economy, he did identify Afro-Americans James Forten and Robert Douglass, who organized a national convention in Philadelphia in the 1830s when he was young, and took a political view of Afro-Americans' subservience in America (Delany 1852, pp. 15–18). It was this endeavor that caused his "young and yet uncultivated mind" to be "aroused, and his tender heart made to leap with anxiety in anticipation" (Delany 1852, p. 15). He concluded that the anti-slavery solution of sympathetic White abolitionists employing Afro-Americans in private establishments was a failure not only in scale but in quality—since such employees remained at low positions in such establishments, having neither the skill nor education to elevate themselves further. He therefore sought a more comprehensive solution to the challenge of elevating the Black race, which, in the more progressive northern United States, remained oppressed because, in Delany's prognosis, they focused too much on religion and prayer to achieve elevation.

Nonetheless, it is no surprise that ideas about national (and continental) industrial development would emerge from emigrationists. Most Afro-Americans of the nineteenth century were integrationists, partly because most were born in the United States and held out hope for gaining rights within their country of birth. Moreover, emigrationism did not entirely shake off its association with the problematic motives of many supporters of the American Colonization Society. Integrationists therefore mainly focused not on the means of attaining national development but on the means to uplift Black people in the US. Additionally, most emigrationists tended to be liberal—a situation that was in continuity with the liberal origins of the European abolitionist movement in the eighteenth century, and that included opening Africa up to Europe's manufactures as an important part of the argument for promoting non-slave commerce in Africa. Most people, as Delany and Payne observed, did not even think about political economy systematically, so that the discourse on the subject overall was limited. It is therefore with an eminent emigrationist disappointed by the limits to moralistic and liberal integrationist discourse, and a Black settler-migrant disappointed with the poor developmental stimulus associated with merchant activity and concerned about the material development, security, and territorial expansion of his fledgling nation, that developmental abolitionism began.

Despite the aspirations of the developmental abolitionists, colonial and great powers acted very anti-developmentally, failing to meet the expectations of even some of the liberal abolitionists. The efforts of multiple Black political units to pursue more developmental paths were truncated by ruling or invading colonial powers. The next section explores the hegemonic approach of liberal abolitionism and its limits. [Section III](#) presents the economic ideas of Martin R. Delany and James S. Payne. [Section IV](#) concludes the article and highlights how great powers systematically acted in opposition to the vision of developmental abolitionism.

II. ABOLITIONISM AS A LIBERAL PROJECT

Since British abolitionism began in the eighteenth century, "[t]he rhetoric of liberalism, in fact, simultaneously structured thinking about economic policy and the framework

through which the end of slavery was debated and anticipated throughout the slave-owning West” (Andrews 2013, p. 491). Free labor and free trade were the vernacular of British abolitionists who successfully argued for and implemented emancipation under these guises (Andrews 2013, p. 499).

Anthony Hopkins (2002, p. 246) argues that, in a similar fashion to how the United States developed an economic vision to sustain lasting global peace after the Second World War, “[w]ith the end of the French Wars in 1815, Britain turned her energies to the task of creating a lasting peace.” Within this new order, the material basis was to be international commerce, “financed and managed by Britain” (Hopkins 2002, p. 247). Hopkins calls this “the world’s first comprehensive development plan” (Hopkins 2002, p. 258). While the British “development plan” was similar to the US situation in that it occurred after a major war, its form and content are more akin to early twentieth-century US open door policy, which “represented the external projection of domestic liberalism, pluralism, and division between private and public domains” (Drake 1989, p. 20).

However, liberal abolitionism did not cater adequately to the post-emancipation welfare of freed slaves. When the British implemented the emancipation of slaves in its Caribbean colonies in 1834, it attached a seven-year “apprenticeship” for the newly freed, during which they would work unpaid for their former masters for a number of hours per week, and during which they were expected to be tutored in religious and educational studies to prepare them for full independence. Not only were there measures of implicit re-enslavement, and reparation requests were often rejected for freed slaves, but freed slaves often suffered economic and other forms of marginalization or subjugation.

Destitution was, therefore, generally the immediate legacy of liberal abolitionism. It was the presence of Black loyalist immigrants from the American War of Independence that “tested Britons’ self-perception as a humane and charitable people, since there was little opportunity for them to find work,” and that spurred a committee of London philanthropists to launch a colonial expedition to Sierra Leone (Hanley 2019, p. 15). It was due to the social tensions in the US and the opposition to Black economic, political, and social improvement within the country that the colonization movement emerged in the US to produce the Liberian colonization project. In nineteenth-century North Africa, there were “so many destitute liberated slaves in Tripoli that the extraordinary travelling Dutch heiress, Alexandrina Tinne, set up a refuge for them when she was there in 1868–69” (Wright 2007, p. 159). In the Americas, although all societies abolished slavery between 1804 (when Haiti did so) and 1888 (when Brazil did so), “[w]ageless and very often without access to basic education, freedmen and freedwomen could hardly improve their social and economic position” (Araujo 2017, p. 45).

On the supply side, the approach to cutting off slave supply in Africa was also liberal. While, previously, abolitionists had sought to end the slave trade mainly through a system of laws, treaties, and naval suppression, Buxton’s (1839) *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* emphasized that naval suppression was failing and there was therefore a need to additionally promote legitimate commerce and “civilization” in Africa. This would, it was argued, incentivize slave raiders and merchants to turn away from the trade in slaves. Buxton urged the British government to provide “all natural and even some artificial stimulants to agricultural industry,” with the additional benefits to Britain being cheaper raw materials and expanding markets for its own finished goods (Buxton 1839, p. 316). This approach was also present in North Africa (Collier 2014).

Several attempts have been made to chart the history of modern African economic thought. For the nineteenth century, they tend to focus on the early West African pan-Africanists, especially James Africanus Beale Horton in Sierra Leone and Edward Blyden in Liberia—a tendency observed in the earliest attempt by a professional historian of economic thought to engage with the writings of such pan-Africanists (Goodwin 1967). As recently as 2015, in Gareth Austin and Gerardo Serra's (2015) chapter on "West Africa" in the *Routledge Handbook of the History of Global Economic Thought*, despite the progress in going beyond Horton and Blyden, there is no mention of neomercantilist writers for the nineteenth century. Indeed, Ian Collier (2014, p. 531) even asserts that for the earliest modern African thought located between the Caribbean and West Africa, when emancipated slaves founded new polities such as Liberia, "[t]he liberal discourse of these black settlers, derived largely from European abolitionism, had little to offer for African societies," as they favored European imperial annexation of the African interior.

The Black liberal authors are more popular, since the narratives of Quobna Ottobah Cugoano and Olaudah Equiano "sit on the cusp of the first wave of the abolition movement that focused on dismantling the slave trade" (Gunn 2008, p. 1); Equiano was even, in his time, "the most accomplished author of African descent" who wrote in English (Carretta 2006), publishing "the single best-known work published by a black author in pre-abolition Britain" (Hanley 2019, p. 16). And the writings of Edward Blyden and James Horton "did much to establish the notion of West African nationalism that was to become extremely influential among many West African intellectuals during the twentieth century" (Adi 2000, p. 72). The result is that by focusing on the most popular Black abolitionists and writers, the historiography appears to present abolitionism as almost wholly economically liberal among Black thinkers.

It is true that Equiano, Cugoano, Horton, and Blyden argued for African capitalism, specialization in agricultural exports, and/or free trade. This is congruous with the liberal abolitionists' conventional dictum of "Civilization, Christianity, and Commerce" (CCC) as an antidote to slavery in Africa and a way of encouraging transition to "legitimate" trade. Under such an approach, free trade was sufficient to facilitate this, supported by treaties and military measures against the trade.

However, this was not the only approach to abolitionism. Whereas Charles Dickens criticized the moral hypocrisy of abolitionists who neglected humanitarian work at home, and early French romantic socialists were skeptical of free labor, free trade, market forces, and liberalism as solutions to any version of servitude (Andrews 2013, p. 491), some Atlantic thinkers advocated non-socialist and non-agrarian forms of interventionist abolitionism. Thus, the approach to abolitionism characterized by the CCC triad was not monolithic, and each of its components had some ideological variation. The strategies for promotion of legitimate commerce to substitute for the slave trade, the cultivation of "civilized" manners and arts, and the development of Christian sensibilities and maturity were contested.

There has been a less popular and more developmentally interventionist and economic nationalist approach to abolitionism, which may be called "developmental abolitionism," advocated by actors such as Delany and Payne. "Developmental abolitionism" here refers to the approach to universal slave emancipation that involved economic reforms aimed at not only making slavery economically less attractive but also building up the material power of Black nations and communities for long-run

prosperity. Put simply, there has been limited examination of nineteenth-century African or Africanist non-economically liberal thought, and more so of its relationship with abolitionism. A similar problem is detectable in European Enlightenment historiography where liberal approaches have been overemphasized (Reinert 2010, p. 1396).

This is, perhaps, a problem generally with the state of economic analysis on the West African coast in the nineteenth century. Fourah Bay College (FBC) in Freetown, Sierra Leone, was founded in 1827 as “the only institution of higher education in British West Africa” (Goodwin 1967, p. 439), and was an Anglican missionary school founded by the Church Missionary Society. It is therefore the oldest Western-styled college in Africa (Paracka 2003). Fourah Bay College produced early African development thinkers of the nineteenth century, but they “were not trained scientists, economists or agriculturists ... but products of the grammar School and literary type of missionary education” (Wyse 1983, p. 29). The college itself only occasionally taught principles of political economy, “at least nominally,” and social science in general “had only a small place in this scheme” of a British-created educational system created primarily to train natives for junior positions in administration and as schoolteachers and ministers of religion (Goodwin 1967, p. 439).

Moreover, in contrast to European abolitionists who more frequently mentioned economic rationales such as the shift in commercial attention from the West Indies to the East Indies, and the rise of legitimate commerce in Africa to discourage the odious commerce of slavery, “[o]wing to its missionary abolitionist roots, FBC faculty, students, and alumni often argued from a moral standpoint ... the College’s arguments did not always carry sufficient economic or political force to persuade those with power to support its educational mission” (Paracka 2003, p. 31).

Therefore, by the mid-nineteenth century, discussion on economics in West Africa “had not approached the quantity or quality present in other British colonies in North America and Australia” (Goodwin 1967, p. 439). This means that this debate about liberal or developmental abolitionism was likely conducted among a tiny minority of educated abolitionists.

Although there may have been “vernacular” or oral developmental abolitionists, given that economic ideas are not always embedded in written texts (Peel 1978; Stephen 2018), Payne noted how the American Francis Wayland’s *The Elements of Political Economy* was not “in the hand of every Liberian” because Liberians were “an intelligent but *uncultivated* people,” making his own *Prize Essay* an “attempt to bring the subject before the Liberian communities” (Payne 1860, p. 9). This would also help cultivate intelligence on “how to proceed” rather than the “disposition to engage in industrial pursuits” (Payne 1860, p. 10). It seems that Payne’s efforts did not yield as much fruit as he desired, given the lack of subsequent editions of his *Prize Essay* and the fact that Edward Blyden and other writers of the post-1860 period seemed not to have cited the work.

In fact, 111 years after FBC was established, the National Congress of British West Africa had to present a memo to the director of education in Sierra Leone in 1938 to ask that “economics, commerce, technical, industrial and sanitary sciences be included in the curriculum of Fourah Bay” (Wyse 1985, p. 698). It was only in 1948 that the University College of the Gold Coast established the first Department of Economics in West Africa (Austin and Serra 2015, p. 248).

Nonetheless, for late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Cugoano and Equiano, there was a belief that the “encouragement” of legitimate commerce would automatically serve as a valve for absorbing labor and surplus investment arising from the suppression of the slave trade and slavery through naval blockades and treaties. Yet all through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Africans and other non-Europeans expressed their concerns that slave emancipation without economic assistance would result in destitution, idleness, crime, and vagrancy among freed slaves.

In Europe and its American colonies, administrators’ concern for post-emancipation conditions also involved fears of a drop in productivity, a decline in production, and slave revolts. In Africa an additional concern was with political instability associated with redistribution and cutting off African chiefs’ and ruling-class dependence on slave labor (Austin 2009). African chiefs, merchant classes, landed elites, and even some Creole elites held similar fears.

Perhaps these fears were not unfounded, in the sense that their concerns reflected the *realpolitik* of the process of primitive accumulation attending the transition to capitalism. Contrary to the assertions of liberal classical and many subsequent economists, the expansion of labor supply from the non-capitalist or subsistence sector to the capitalist sector is not only driven by higher wages in the capitalist or “modern” sector to attract labor (Khan 2009). Due to the prevalence of transaction costs, it has involved compulsions placed upon peasants and household producers to sell their labor. Compulsions include state taxation on individuals and families that necessitates the latter to acquire cash through wage labor, dispossession of peasants’ lands and/or enclosing common lands and resources (such as forests for hunting), or even, in the case of labor scarcity especially in low population-dense environments, enslavement to meet market demand.

These compulsions occur because the pace of wage-incentivized proletarianization away from extra-market sectors (such as subsistence agriculture) is often slower than the requirements of capital in emerging productive sectors, while the wage rates at which more rapid wage-incentivized proletarianization may be facilitated are too high for capitalists to entirely internalize and maintain profitability simultaneously. The transition to capitalism has therefore often involved various forms of compulsion. Modern scholars who recognize this have proposed several forms of assistance to “smooth” this process, such as foreign aid to fund compensation paid to small landholders for their land (Khan 2009, p. 76) and social policy and stronger labor regulations to cushion the negative and exploitative effects of a transition to wage labor.

There were two issues to contend with. Liberal and developmental abolitionists were right in fearing that destitution among freed slaves would be an outcome in the absence of growth in legitimate commerce to absorb ex-slave labor. However, even if legitimate commerce expanded, the use of slave and coerced labor could be involved in such commerce for the reasons given above.

There are two more “progressive” ways that the latter issue could have been approached. As Gareth Austin (2009, p. 16) observes, “the reason why slavery paid in nineteenth-century pre-colonial West Africa was that, with land abundant (physically and institutionally) and labor scarce, free wage rates would have been relatively high. ... Thus, the economic alternative to slavery and slave trading would have been the absence of any market for labor at all, beyond casual employment.”

This means that, as one option, the transition to free wage labor would have had to be substantially subsidized to enable a high enough wage rate that freed slaves could accept

and that employers could offer, given the provision of a subsidy. Indeed, a petition to the governor of the Gold Coast from an Asante chief and elders in 1906 argued that “they said they depended on the labor of slaves and the descendants of slaves ‘as we have no money like white men to hire men to do necessaries for us’” (quoted in Austin 2005, p. 165). This method would have favored larger farms, enabling a narrower set of beneficiaries (which reduces the monitoring and disciplining costs for an African cadre of organized abolitionists) and a smaller number of competing employers for a limited labor pool.

Additionally, diasporic emigration into West Africa could have been subsidized, thereby amplifying the efforts of Edward Blyden, Martin Delany, and other emigrationists who promoted such emigration, while subsidies could also have been applied to the transfer of labor-saving technology to the continent. In contrast, natives in colonies were often paid paltry sums for even public works projects such as railway construction directed by the colonial state, and generally by the 1930s, “European colonial powers allowed salaries so low that natives worked in conditions that resembled those of slavery” (Ferreras 2015, p. 87). Moreover, because of the belief that “Africa holds forth inducements whereby the colored man may be elevated, without money and without price,” as Abraham Cauldwell, writing in the *New York Tribune* in 1852, believed (Stockwell 1868, p. 221), substantial economic assistance to emigrants to West Africa was not envisioned.

The other option was for a rationalization of the economic system to produce a situation whereby freed slaves could engage in subsistence production and to reorganize the economic system in a way that was compatible with this and a slower growth of cash crop production, exports, and colonial government revenues than was historically the case. Such non-capitalist, quasi-capitalist, or “post-development” forms of economic organization would have been more likely to be proposed by socialists, communalists, collectivists, and conservative advocates of agrarian and village living. Indeed, Blyden’s preference for towns over cities and for communal land ownership and egalitarianism, despite the contradictory preference for foreign trade, as well as Hillary Teage’s aversion to manufacturing and preference for agrarian life (Armistead et al. 1848, p. 32), may be Black expressions of this “communalistic abolitionism,” in defiance of both liberal abolitionism and developmental abolitionism.

The key point is that there were multiple avenues for experimentation that did not even come up in the first place due to the non-emergence of real attempts at development assistance involving the amelioration of use of slave or forced labor.

III. DEVELOPMENTAL ABOLITIONISM

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Britain entered into bilateral anti-slave trade treaties with a number of European, American, Middle Eastern, and African states (Allain 2007). Some of these rulers petitioned for material compensation or aid (a history that has not been fully unveiled) to at least partly offset revenue and export losses and enable a smoother transition to alternate economic activity. While Britain did not care substantially for the well-being of former slaves, its envisioning of subsidies for anti-slavery was so that state revenues could less disruptively transition to a dependence on

income from legitimate trade, even if such revenues were not spent developmentally. This transition to legitimate commerce would then expand commercial opportunities for British merchants—a trade that Spain and other European powers accused the British of monopolizing.

It appears that the first emergence of an offer of fiscal subsidy for trade disruption to a non-European state occurred with the 1817 Anglo-Merina treaty (renewed in 1820) with Emperor Radama I, the ruler of the Merina Empire in Madagascar. Britain offered material assistance in response to a cessation of the slave trade (Klein 2005, p. 181). This was to calm Radama's fears that, since the slave trade was a major source of his revenue, abolition would be economic suicide (Mutibwa 1989, p. 418). Several other rulers requested subsidies, including Tripoli's Yusuf Karamanli Pasha, and rulers of Dahomey and Zanzibar.

Martin Delany opposed the idea of providing subsidies to rulers to incentivize them to abolish the slave trade. Speaking on the Dahomey case, he commented:

There is some talk by Christians and philanthropists in Great Britain of subsidizing the King of Dahomi. I hope for the sake of humanity, our race, and the cause of progressive civilization, this most injurious measure of compensation for wrong, never will be resorted to nor attempted. To make such an offering just at a time when we are about to establish a policy of self-regeneration in Africa, which may, by example and precept, effectually check forever the nefarious system, and reform the character of these people, would be to offer inducements to that monster to continue, and a license to other petty chiefs to commence the traffic in human beings, to get a reward of subsidy. (Delany [1860] 1969, pp. 115–116)

Delany was therefore concerned about the morality of compensating slaving states for an immoral trade and the perverse effects this would create, especially since the subsidy was not to help the freed slaves but to compensate the ruler. Besides this concern, Delany was perhaps also worried about the state-centric approach taken with abolitionism by Britain, given his preference instead for “self-regeneration in Africa” through a different means.

Delany agreed with Buxton that “Great Britain has for half a century been employing physical force for the suppression of the slave trade, which after the expenditure of upwards of forty millions sterling, and the noble sacrifice of the lives of some of the best and bravest of her sons, still exists” (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 130). Yet he had a more ambitious vision of the “Bible and the Plough” in mind. With Liberia having received its independence from the American Colonization Society since 1847, Delany observed the difference between Liberia's President Roberts and President Benson in their attention to economic policy years later. He argued that due to the formative role played by the former in establishing the newly independent nation, President Roberts's focus was on gaining international recognition for Liberia's independence and sovereignty, thereby paving the way for President Benson to more comfortably focus on economic development. Hence, while President Roberts played his part in “pressing the claims of his country before the nations of Europe” as the times required, President Benson had “spared no authority which he possessed in developing the agricultural resources of his country” (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 60).

It was under President Benson that the 1858 national fair was organized. It was to the national essay competition organized during that fair that James S. Payne submitted his A

Prize Essay on Political Economy, as Adapted to the Republic of Liberia (for which President Benson in turn wrote the introduction). However, for Delany, not enough had been done by President Benson to move Monrovia towards being a great metropolis. It could even be argued that this was a critique of the liberal emigrationist abolitionism that produced the colony of Liberia. Hence, whereas Delany preferred Liberia to have been a self-sufficient metropolis, an article published in the October 18, 1854, paper of the Pittsburgh *Daily Morning Post* opposed Delany's previous vision to create a Black empire in the Americas, and argued, "On the African coast already exists a thriving and prosperous Republic," focusing on the "dignity of manhood, the rights of citizenship, and all the advantages of civilization and freedom" that Blacks could enjoy (quoted in Delany [1860] 1969, p. 35). By perceiving Liberia, as it was at the time, as a full-fledged prosperous republic, liberal abolitionists and liberal emigrationists implicitly saw no value in Delany's grander economic aspirations.

Delany was pessimistic about the prospects of Black people in the United States, and favored an emigrationist approach to social improvement. From 1854 to 1858, he worked through the Board of Commissioners of colored people organized at the Cleveland National Emigration Convention of Colored People in 1854 (Bell 1969, p. 15). He sought the establishment of a Black empire in the Western Hemisphere; and it was when new information about the African interior was emerging in the 1850s—particularly through the explorations of Thomas Jefferson Bowen and David Livingstone in 1857—that Delany's attention was turned towards emigration to Africa. He eventually adventured into Yorubaland in modern-day Nigeria (from Liberia, to Lagos, and then to Abeokuta), under the auspices of the Niger Valley Exploring Party, with the goal of securing land and establishing networks for Black Atlantic settlers in Africa.

His theory of development is partly embedded in the chapter "To Direct Legitimate Commerce" of the "Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party" (Delany [1860] 1969). He argued that there were three "elementary principles" that form "the basis of great nationality" (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 112). These are "first, territory; second, population; third, a great staple production either natural or artificial, or both, as a permanent source of wealth." He believed that "Africa comprises these to an almost unlimited extent" (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 112) with its population, which he believed to be about 200 million in 1860, 100 million more than modern estimates suggest. It is easy to see the conflict between Delany, whose mention of population was to show how Africa could be economically great, and Equiano and Cugoana, who characterized African demand as having the potential to absorb European manufactures while Africa benefits from agricultural exports.

Delany was motivated not only to complement the spread of Christianity by improving social relations and productive organization to foster "improvements of towns, cities, roads, and methods of travel ... implements of husbandry and industry" and "the methods of conveyance and price of produce" (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 109). He also sought to put "a permanent check to the slave trade" in Africa (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 114). He desired such an African nation to cultivate staple crops that competed with slave-produced crops such as cotton, and thereby lessen the profitability of slave production in the United States. The ambition and progressiveness of this vision should not be taken for granted, as a similar vision was held by some Spaniards for opposite reasons. In the 1820s and 1830s there were various suggestions, including by the captain-general of Cuba in 1825, Dionisio Vives, that Africans illegally landed in Cuba

and freed according to the anti-slaving treaties (*emancipados*) should be taken to Africa (to Sierra Leone, Haiti, Trinidad, or Fernando Po)—where they would engage in legitimate commerce—in order to avoid their subversion of the Cuban slave order (Sundiata 1996, p. 51). Under such conditions of emigration, the focus was on the negative benefit to the American slave plantation system rather than on the growth and national power of the *emancipados*.

Delany, however, did not directly explain the post-emancipation fate of slaves freed as a result of the fall in profitability of slave-produced goods and diplomatic pressure from the strong Black nation responsible for this. The answer, by implication, lies in his expectation that Black people in the US would emigrate to the prosperous African territories. This would therefore increase the population of the continent, further fueling its greatness. Indeed, James S. Payne, two-time president of Liberia (1868 to 1870 and 1876 to 1878), recognized the key role played by economic prosperity in attracting migrants from the Western Hemisphere. This is in contrast to Edward Blyden, who believed that the true greatness of a nation—which brings it perpetuity in legacy and memorability—is not created by wealth, material comfort, commercial prosperity, and political power (Blyden 1890, p. 11), and also believed that diasporic immigration into Africa could not be driven by an economic logic. For Blyden, “No natural impulses bring the European hither—artificial or external causes move him to emigrate. The Negro is drawn to Africa by the necessities of his nature” (Blyden 1883, p. 17), since many Liberians would not have emigrated from the US if wealth had been the attraction (Blyden 1869, p. 19).

According to Delany, in the selection of territory, it is preferable to have fertile and productive land that has navigable waterways that enable the nation to be “an export and import metropolis” (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 111). However, while Delany differentiates between “natural” and “artificial” sources of wealth, these seemed to be equally viable for him as means to greatness, which is why he argued that by being able to cultivate “great staple products” such as sugar cane, coffee, rice, and palm oil, “Africa has that without which the workshops of Great Britain would become deserted, and the general commerce of the world materially reduced; and Lagos must not only become the outlet and point at which all this commodity must center, but the great metropolis of this quarter of the world” (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 113). For him, Africa held “the balance of commercial power, the source of the wealth of nations in his hands” (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 118).

While Delany equated the capacity to achieve national wealth and commercial power through natural wealth (as Lagos had potential for) with that possible through artificial wealth (as Britain relied upon), he inadvertently converged with James Payne in supporting domestic manufacturing, not because he realized the principle of increasing returns or increased incomes from value-addition. He instead emphasized the role of self-reliance. He had “[o]ne word as a suggestion in political economy to the young politician of Liberia. Always bear in mind, that the fundamental principle of every nation is *self-reliance*, with the *ability to create their own ways and means*, without this, there is no capacity for *self-government*” (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 60). It was imperative that “[t]o succeed as a state or nation, we must become self-reliant, and thereby able to create our own ways and means; and a trade created *in Africa by civilized Africans*, would be a national rock of ‘everlasting ages’” (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 120). Delany’s neomercantilist thought comes out in his prescription for Liberians to pursue, “as a policy as

much as possible,” a patronization of home-manufactured and home-produced articles, preferring these over using foreign goods. Even if these are not equal in quality to foreign goods, this patronage, rooted in policy, “is the only way to encourage the farmers and manufacturers to improve them” (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 119). Liberians should also seek to control their own shipping trade and distribution networks, rather than rely on “the benevolence of good hearted gentlemen” in America (Delany [1860] 1969, p. 119). This was therefore a vision of agricultural development, diversification, and industrial development.

James Payne, as Delany’s contemporary who also witnessed the weak condition of Liberia, appears to be more familiar with the British and American academic literature or key ideas on political economy than Delany was. His 1858 *A Prize Essay on Political Economy, as Adapted to the Republic of Liberia* (published 1860) may be the first essay in sub-Saharan Africa to highlight the particular power of manufacturing in writing. Payne was motivated to write this essay partly for the “cultivation and mental improvement” of those Africans whose intelligence was expanded when their lot was “cast in the slave region of North America” (Payne 1860, p. 9). His encouragement to the Liberian community and state to learn the practice of political economy served, among many other ends, to enable indigenous Africans to gain better employment and prosperity, in order to ensure “mutual dependence and identity of race” (Payne 1860, p. 21). It also served to defend against the “great heathen population” surrounding Liberia and “their ill-feeling toward the intruding Americans who, by banishing the slave trade from the coast, have deprived them of an income to which they have been long accustomed” (Payne 1860, p. 22).

Like Cugoano, Equiano, Horton, and Blyden, Payne demonstrated a desire for greater agricultural cultivation. However, he believed that the industrial operations that would result in the greatest advantage to Liberia were not only agriculture—which enabled a weak community to acquire “its first elements of prosperity” (Payne 1860, p. 56)—but also “commerce, mechanical employments, including manufactures and works of enterprise, and scientific and professional labors” (Payne 1860, p. 54). Payne (1860, pp. 82–83) went further than Cugoano, and even further than Delany, who equated to commercial power of “natural” and “artificial” sources of wealth, to note the difference in gains that arise from trade between a primary goods producer and a manufacturing country:

While an only producing nation enjoys peculiar privileges, and possesses elements of wealth and strength, it is, nevertheless, subjected to great inconveniences ... the greatest amount of the benefit of their production falls, not to them, but to the nation or country to which the raw produce is exported. Great Britain with an annual importation of grain to the extent of \$120,000,000, exports \$600,000,00, of manufactures from the raw material transported from producing countries! Could England do this if she were not turning the raw material to greater advantage than the producers? Production, then, is not the only thing a nation should attempt. A nation as well as an individual, should turn its productions to the greatest advantage.... From this consideration it is clearly seen how essential manufactures are as an accompaniment of production.... The people of Liberia should remember these facts. And combining, as they have begun to do, manufacture with production, they should derive from their productions the accumulation which the demand for them in a manufactured condition would yield.

By “as they have begun to do,” Payne was referring to attempts such as the purchase of sugar cane mills and boilers to produce a turnaround in sugar manufacturing in the second half of the century (Allen 2004, p. 458). He therefore advocated the conduct of industrial and trade policy by the state. He supported giving “premiums to the most meritorious entrepreneurs,” using patent laws for inventions and intellectual property, using public procurement, and giving state assistance in the importation of capital goods (Payne 1860, p. 79). As for protective duties, he advocated them but also sued for moderation, as “so as not to exclude like products from abroad ... protection should not extend beyond an advanced duty” (Payne 1860, p. 79).

He also chided the universal application of the principle of free trade, arguing that it applied only to trade between equals, while for Liberia, which was “too young, too feeble, too unequal to the great nations of the earth,” it would be an “injurious policy (Payne 1860, pp. 80–81). This suggests that the use of neomercantilist policies was a temporary stage on the path to national prosperity. However, it was an ideal situation for free trade to prevail only when a country achieved industrial development to be organically internationally competitive. This was, he observed, because of the prevalence of hypocrisy in the advocacy of free trade among advanced nations: “The great deal said since Adam Smith’s promulgation of the doctrine of free trade, has not induced the civilized world—much as the theory is favored—to carry it into practical operation. In spite of the cry of free trade the policy of nations is protection. None adopts and practices free trade thoroughly” (Payne 1860, p. 83).

As Liberia still had a long way to go in his schema and Payne did not write much about the dynamics of advanced nations, he did not propose institutional arrangements to secure free trade among advanced equals, as Friedrich List did in his proposition for a “World Trade Congress” (List [1837] 1983, p. 126). It is therefore an open question if a developed Liberia would entirely eliminate its trade barriers as long as others maintained theirs, although it would be necessary to reduce barriers to the extent that international competitiveness makes previously high levels of protection redundant. Besides, the fact that Payne does not actually focus much on foreign trade is likely a reflection of the purpose of *A Prize Essay* being to introduce the discipline of political economy to the general public. It is also due to the small and fledgling state of Liberia, which forced him to write a lot about the principles of political economy, saving, investment, production, business ethics, the process of capital accumulation, the attraction of foreign private capital, and other basic principles, which he believed were not adequately observed in Liberia, within an eighty-six-page essay. Foreign trade and protection are discussed mainly in the final chapter, which comprises four pages. A similar situation is observed for Delany, who did not elaborate much on the neomercantilist aspects of his economic ideas.

This approach to abolitionism appears to have been marginal, having little influence among both Blacks and White Europeans at a time when there were no independent African states interacting with these authors to accept their messages and seeking to implement them, and the major concern was about a commercial transition in West Africa. Moreover, developmental abolitionist visions were antithetical to Western perceptions of Africans’ place in the global economy and of their capabilities. It is telling that the European closest to this strand of thinking was marginalized. This was British missionary Henry Venn, whose ideas have already been expounded upon (Ajayi 1959; Webster 1963; Ayandele 1971). For Venn, the increase in legitimate trade was not

enough to permanently eradicate African slavery—social change and a growing middle class were necessary (Ajayi 1959, p. 335). Indeed, he recognized the dependence of chiefs on slaves for the coastal palm oil trade in the absence of social revolution (Ajayi 1959, p. 336). British commercial activity must then be devoted to the creation of national states, not colonial territories (Webster 1963, p. 420). This “pro-Negro” policy by the Church Missionary Society was, however, reversed by Venn’s successors (Webster 1963, p. 421), and Venn lacked political backing for his ideas (Ajayi 1959, p. 340). In essence, “People like Henry Venn were lonely voices crying in the wilderness” (Ayandele 1971, p. 704).

The developmental abolitionists catered to different Black constituencies. Venn targeted African slaves employed in legitimate commerce and sought to use economics to undermine the power of slave-using chiefs. Payne targeted Black migrants to Liberia and sought to use economics to more sustainably pacify relations between Black settlers and indigenous Africans. Delany focused on slaves in the Americas and on forging a strong Black nation that would economically undercut American slavery and exert international political pressure towards abolition. They believed that civilization had to be cultivated by establishing self-sufficient sectors of arts and industry and developing a strong African middle class; if it were not, as Payne most clearly asserted, the outward symbols of “civilization” would be predominantly imported—thereby contributing to trade imbalances and low savings rates—and foreign dependency would persist for educational institutions that disseminate civilizational knowledge.

They believed that substantive development was needed to demonstrate, as Delany believed, the temporal benefits of adopting the Christian religion and, as Payne emphasized, to create independent and self-sufficient churches, missions, and schools. They also believed that promoting legitimate commerce was not enough. The extent of their neomercantilist orientation is expressed in their beliefs about the position in the global commercial system. For Payne, it was necessary for the state to use policy tools to capture greater gains from trade through the encouragement of higher value-added activities. For Delany, it was necessary to become self-sufficient and promote home manufactures to strengthen abolitionist geopolitics and grow in national power. Both were concerned not only about the availability of employment after abolition but also the quality of employment and income, which Delany (1852) observed to be low and menial for free Black people in the United States (thereby necessitating a national project), and Payne believed to be low in the international division of labor for a settlement of freed slaves and Black migrants in West Africa.

A major shortcoming of the developmental abolitionists is that they did not directly explore this issue of the use of forced labor in legitimate commerce. The lack of intensive written examination of the issue of labor scarcity among developmental abolitionists is perhaps partly due to the fact that developmental abolitionism was far from being applied and thus remained conceived at an abstract level. Where the problem was encountered in policy-making, there was a resort to forced labor and slavery, as in Zanzibar, Merina, and Asante. For the developmental abolitionists, it was perhaps also because Delany underestimated the challenge of labor scarcity in Africa and thus overestimated the continent’s population by a factor of one. For Payne, it may have been due to his belief that substantive development would attract migrant labor into the continent and increase birth rates within the continent, thereby contributing to population growth. Moreover,

Payne argued that in attracting machinery to Liberia, labor-saving machinery would be more suitable.

Although Payne was opposed to foreign aid due to its unreliability or non-perpetuity (Payne 1860, p. 22) and an aversion to aid dependency (Payne 1860, p. 21), it may reasonably be argued that, above all, it was because he had in mind “social” (for missions, schools, and churches) or “palliative” (for poverty alleviation and to prevent starvation) aid. His support for foreign capital inflows (Payne 1860, p. 48), and for government encouragement to agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing, implies that he would have been in support of foreign aid directed at these productive activities, including to import or transfer labor-saving machinery, if not for the political infeasibility of such aid at the time.

A final note is the difficulty of tracking the transmission of ideas between European political economy and Black Atlantic political economy. Why was Payne able to cite Adam Smith and Francis Wayland whereas Delany cited no European political economist, at least not directly? Why did Blyden, a fellow emigrationist, not develop developmental abolitionist ideas or cite European political economists? The relatively homogenous nature of the fields of formal education held by many of these thinkers—mainly medicine and religion—does not explain such variations (since Payne and Blyden were trained as Christian ministers, and Delany and Horton as physicians). This indicates the present insufficiency of research into the intellectual networks and educational settings in which the Black writers on political economy were immersed. Just as European scholars such as Gabriel Paquette (2009) have made progress in understanding the development of political economy in southern Europe and its Atlantic colonies, similar efforts should be directed at the Black Atlantic.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is in comparison with the grand visions held by developmental abolitionists that the full deficiency of the European response to post-abolition Black societies becomes manifest. Nowhere is the negativity of response starker than in the case of the world’s first successful mass slave uprising and the modern world’s first Black republic—Haiti—which faced an extremely hostile international environment and domestic economic and social precarity (Cheney 2017), becoming “the first ‘African’ state where creditors built a practice of economic imperialism” (Obregón 2018, p. 614).

This was not an isolated case. Various forms of constrictions were placed upon Liberia, which was the second Black republic and Black post-colonial state of the modern era, and which perennially struggled for “economic and fiscal survival” (Gardner 2014, pp. 1092–1094), and so it had “virtually no impact on ending slavery in West Africa” (Lovejoy 1983, p. 255). The Merina Empire (Campbell 1991), Asante, Abyssinia, Zanzibar (Chaves, Engerman, and Robinson 2014), the Fante Confederation (1868 to 1873), and the Egba United Improvement Association (Lovejoy 1983, p. 255) all faced a rapacious international environment led by Europe throughout the nineteenth century. Moreover, directly compensating emancipated slaves was indeed out of the question in British and European debates, although the case was made by some antislavery activists that despite “the need for reparations to former slaves and their

descendants, through land redistribution, wages, and education, demands for financial compensation for slave owners always prevailed in these public debates” (Araujo 2017, p. 45–46).

These tendencies continued into twentieth-century colonial Africa, where “[t]he conquest of Africa and the extension of European economic domination proceeded together under the banner of anti-slavery” (Lovejoy 1983, p. 286). In the 1920s, the League of Nations began to put pressure on colonial authorities in Africa to abolish slavery. This was, however, a time when the doctrine of colonial self-sufficiency prevailed among colonial powers; when the League of Nations operated in an interwar context of economic liberalism and a liquidity crisis; and when the United States’ open door policy towards Latin America followed a logic of economic liberalism.

It was in this context that one of the only two politically independent African states—Ethiopia—was being pressured to abolish slavery as a condition for entry into the League of Nations. However, given the deposition of Emperor Iyasu V, who tried to disrupt the Ethiopian social order; the institutional nature of, and nobility support for, slavery; and the weak agriculture-based economy of Ethiopia, Emperor Haile Selassie I personally believed that abolition would do more harm than good for his empire (Coleman 2008, p. 71–74). He reportedly lamented, “How can I liberate the slaves? What would they do? There would be no living for them. They would turn into thieves unless I could raise money to make roads and employ them in some way, and that I cannot do” (Noel-Buxton 1932, p. 518). On the other hand, the need to improve Ethiopia’s international image, to prevent an invasion or partition by Europeans, and to prevent falling into League of Nations Mandate status forced the emperor to attempt immediate abolition (Coleman 2008).

Nonetheless, in Ethiopian law, traceable to the *Fetha Nagast*, “it was unacceptable to simply leave a penniless and propertyless slave to his fate” (Whyte 2014, p. 659). Therefore, Emperor Haile Selassie envisaged abolition “not as a simple withdrawal of slavery’s legal status in the British Empire but as an emancipation process which would move the slaves into other forms of employment, putting them to work in a newly modernized Ethiopian military, civil service and education system” (Whyte 2014, p. 661). This, in addition to the emperor’s commitment to an imperial modernizing project (Whyte 2014), meant that the obvious solution to this quandary was therefore massive economic aid and assistance for Ethiopia, as recognized by Lord Noel Edward Noel-Buxton (1932, p. 519); but such aid was not forthcoming.

Further on, imperial powers also went ahead to ignore the proposal by Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (first established in 1916), presented at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, for the removal of all economic barriers impeding industrial development in Africa (Persaud 2001, p. 122). The Garveyite movement, which emphasized Black self-help projects, and which Delany was ideologically a precursor for—was also repressed by colonial powers (Andrews 2017, p. 2509). Thus, these formerly slaving and abolitionist powers and subsequently colonial nations simultaneously imposed colonial self-sufficiency, constrained efforts since the early twentieth century by colonial subjects to substantially improve their economic status, and pushed away efforts by the American-based Garvey aimed at Black self-help commercial projects.

For a very long time, developmental abolitionism remained cocooned in the realm of ideas in West Africa. It was not until the period of decolonization that notions of import-

substitution, self-sufficiency, and a collective Black African hegemon who could fight for Black people's rights across the world went into resurgence, this time after slavery had been abolished across colonial empires. These represented rebirths of the spirit of Delany and Payne but without direct mention to them as their texts fell into obscurity after having achieved little influence even in their own day.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares no competing interests exist.

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