Chapter 12: Crusade Against Slavery
• Mat_25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.
Objectives:

- We will study the impact of William Lloyd Garrison on the rapid rise of abolitionism, and his role in the later division between radical and moderate abolitionists.
- We will study successes, struggles, and hardships faced by the abolitionist movement through 1852.
- We will study American abolitionism in the context of the global movement against slavery that arose in the nineteenth century.
THE CRUSADE AGAINST SLAVERY

- Antislavery movement was not new to the mid-nineteenth century.
- There had been efforts even before the Revolution to limit, and even eliminate, the institution.
- Those efforts had helped remove slavery from most of the North by the end of the eighteenth century and had led to the legal prohibition of the international slave trade in 1808.
THE CRUSADE AGAINST SLAVERY

- American antislavery sentiment remained relatively muted in the first decades after independence.
- Not until 1830 did it begin to gather the force that would ultimately enable it to overshadow virtually all other efforts at social reform.
Early Opposition To Slavery:

- In the early years of the nineteenth century, those who opposed slavery expressed their moral disapproval but did not engage in few overt activities.
Early Opposition To Slavery:

- Organized antislavery movements at this time promoted colonization.
- The effort to encourage the resettlement of African Americans in Africa or the Caribbean.
- In 1817, a group of prominent white Virginians organized the American Colonization Society (ACS) which worked carefully to challenge slavery without challenging property rights or southern sensibilities.
Early Opposition To Slavery:

- The ACS proposed a gradual manumission or freeing of slaves, with masters receiving compensation through funds raised by private charity or appropriated by state legislatures.
- The society would then transport liberated slaves out of the country and help them to establish a new society of their own elsewhere.
Early Opposition To Slavery:

- The ACS was not without impact.
- It received some funding from private donors, some from Congress, some from the legislatures of Virginia and Maryland.
- And it arranged the shipment of several groups of African Americans out of the country, some of them to the west coast of Africa, where in 1830, they established the nation of Liberia.
- Liberia became an independent republic in 1846 and Monrovia was named after the American president who had presided over the initial settlement.
Early Opposition To Slavery:

- But the ACS was in the end a negligible force.
- Neither private nor public funding was nearly enough to carry out the vast projects its supporters envisioned.
- Few went back to Africa.
- There were too many African American slaves to realistically transport everyone back.
- African Americans themselves were resistant because they were already three to four generations removed from Africa.
- The Cotton boom itself was causing a demand for slaves and thus caused colonization to lose its strength.
Garrison and Abolitionism:

- As the antislavery movement was in verge of collapse, a new figure emerged to transform it into a dramatically different phenomenon.
- William Lloyd Garrison was an assistant in the 1820s to the New Jersey Quaker Benjamin Lundy who published the leading antislavery newspaper of the time the *Genius of Universal Emancipation* in Baltimore.
- Garrison shared Lundy’s abhorrence of slavery, but he soon grew impatient with his employers moderate tone and mild proposals for reform.
Garrison and Abolitionism:

- In 1831 Garrison returned to Boston to found his own weekly newspaper the *Liberator*.
- Garrison’s simple philosophy was genuinely revolutionary.
- Opponents of slavery should view the institution from the point of view of the black man, not the white slave owner.
- They should talk about the damage it has done to Africans and not focus on White society.
- He rejected gradualism and demand the immediate, unconditional, universal abolition of slavery.
Garrison and Abolitionism:

- The true aim for the opponents of slavery must be to extend to African Americans all the rights of American citizenship.
- As startling as the dramatic nature of his proposals was the relentless uncompromising tone.
- Garrison soon attracted a large group of followers throughout the North enough to enable him to found the New England Antislavery Society.
Black Abolitionists:

- Abolitionism had a particular appeal to the free blacks of the North, who in 1850 numbered about 250,000 mostly concentrated in the cities.
- They lived in conditions of poverty and oppression often worse than those of their slave counterparts in the South.
Black Abolitionists:

- Northern Blacks were often victimized by mob violence; they had virtually no access to education; they could vote in only a few states; and they can work only lowly occupations.

- Most worked as domestic servants or as sailors in the American merchant marines, and their wages were beyond poor.

- Some were kidnapped by whites and forced back into slavery.
Black Abolitionists:

- Even with their problems, Northern Blacks were fiercely proud of their freedom.
- And they remained acutely sensitive to the plight of those members of their race who remained in bondage, aware that their own position in society would remain precarious as long as slavery existed.
- Many came to support Garrison and subscribe to his newspaper.
- The majority of the *Liberator*’s early subscribers were free African Americans.
Black Abolitionists:

- David Walker, a free black from Boston, who in 1829 published a harsh pamphlet, *Walker’s Appeal ... to the Colored Citizens* called for the violent opposition and overthrow of slave masters, “kill, or be killed.”
Black Abolitionists:

- Most African American critics of slavery were less violent in their rhetoric.
- Sojourner Truth, a freed black woman, spent several years involved in a strange religious cult in upstate New York.
- She emerged as a powerful and eloquent spokeswoman for the abolition of slavery.
Black Abolitionists:

- The greatest African American abolitionist of all, and one of the most electrifying orators of his time, black or white, was Frederick Douglass.
- He was a escaped slave who spent two years lecturing in England where members of the country’s antislavery movements revered him.
- On his return to the US, Douglass purchased his freedom from his Maryland owner and founded an antislavery newspaper, the *North Star*. 
Black Abolitionists:

- He achieved wide renown as well for his autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas*, in which he presented a condemning picture of slavery.

- Douglass demanded for African Americans not only freedom but full social and economic equality as well.

- Black Abolitionists had been active for years before Douglas emerged as a leader of their cause; they became a more influential force; and they began too, to forge alliances with white antislavery leaders such as Garrison.
Anti-Abolitionism:

- Abolitionism was a powerful force, but it provoked a powerful opposition as well.
- Almost all white southerners of course looked on the movement with fear and contempt.
- But so did many Northern whites.
- Indeed even in the Northern abolitionists were never more than a small dissenting minority.
Anti-Abolitionism:

- To its critics, the abolitionist crusade was a dangerous and frightening threat to the existing social system.
- Some whites correctly warned that it would produce a terrible war between the sections.
- Others feared also that it might lead to a great influx of free blacks into the North.
- Some feared the social instability that it would bring to the status quo.
- For Northern businessmen abolition was a threat to lucrative trade with the South.
Anti-Abolitionism:

- Abolitionists also suffered violence from White mobs.
- William Lloyd Garrison almost was killed in Boston in 1835 if not for authorities saving him by locking him in jail.
- Elijah Lovejoy, editor of an abolitionist newspaper in Alton, Illinois was a repeated victim of mob violence.
  - Three times, angry whites invaded his offices and smashed his presses.
  - Three times, Lovejoy installed new machines and began publishing again.
- When a mob attacked his office a fourth time late in 1837 he tried to defend his press the attackers set fire to the building and Lovejoy was fleeing was shot and killed.
Anti-Abolitionism:

- Abolitionists were strong-willed passionate crusaders, displaying enormous courage and moral strength and displaying a level of fervor that many found disturbing.
- They were seen as wild eye fanatics bent on social revolution.
Abolitionists Divided:

- By the 1830s, Abolitionist movement had divisions.
- One reason was the violence of the anti-abolitionists, which persuaded some members of the movement that a more moderate approach was necessary.
- Another reason was the growing radicalism of William Lloyd Garrison, who shocked even many of his own allies (including Frederick Douglass) by attacking not only slavery but the government itself.
Abolitionists Divided:

- In 1840, Garrison precipitated a formal division within the American Antislavery Society by insisting that women, who had always been central to the organization's work, be permitted to participate in the movement on terms of full equality.
Abolitionists Divided:

- By 1840 Garrison even moved to a more radical stand and an extreme pacifism that rejected even defensive wars.

- Opposition to all forms of coercion, not just slavery but prisons and asylums and finally in 1843 a call for northern disunion from the South.
Abolitionists Divided:

- The nation could purge itself of the sin of slavery by expelling the slave states from the Union.
Abolitionists Divided:

- Some abolitionists thought to appeal to the moral senses and the conscience of slaveholders and convince them that their institution was sinful.
- When that produced no results, they turned to political action, seeking to induce the northern states and the federal government to aid the cause whenever possible.
- They joined the Garrisonians in helping runaway slaves find refuge in the North or in Canada through the so-called underground railroad.
- They helped fund the legal battle over the Spanish slave vessel *Amistad*. 
Abolitionists Divided:

- From 1840 on, abolitionism moved in many channels and spoke with many different voices.
- The Garrison faction remained influential with their uncompromising moral stance.
- Others operated on more moderate ways, arguing that abolition could be accomplished only as the result of a long patient, peaceful struggle.
Abolitionists Divided:

- Later after the Supreme Court in *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* ruled that states need not aid in enforcing the 1793 law requiring the return of fugitive slaves to their owners, abolitionists secured the passage of personal liberty laws in several northern states.

- These laws forbade state officials to assist in the capture and return of runaways.
Abolitionists Divided:

- Above all antislavery societies petitioned Congress to abolish slavery in places where the federal government had jurisdiction in the territories and in the District of Columbia and to prohibit the interstate slave trade.

- But political abolitionism had severe limits.

- Few members of the movement believed that Congress could constitutionally interfere with a domestic institution such as slavery within the individual states themselves.
Abolitionists Divided:

- The abolitionists never formed a political party.
- Antislavery underlay the formation in 1840 of the Liberty Party, which chose the Kentucky antislavery leader James G. Birney as its presidential candidate.
- But they never campaigned for outright abolition but stood instead for “free soil”, for keeping slavery out of the territories.
Abolitionists Divided:

- The free-soil position would ultimately do what abolitionism never could accomplish, attract the support of large number, even a majority of the white population of the north.

- The frustration of political abolitionism drove some critics of slavery to embrace more drastic measures.
Abolitionists Divided:

- A few began to advocate violence, a group of prominent abolitionists in New England funneled money and arms to John Brown to enable bloody uprisings in Kansas and Virginia.
Abolitionists Divided:

- Others attempted to arouse widespread public anger through propaganda.
- The most powerful document of abolitionist propaganda was a work of fiction Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.
- It first appeared as a serial in an antislavery weekly.
Abolitionists Divided:

- Then in 1852, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was published as a book.
- It rocked the nation selling more than 300,000 copies within a year of publication and was later issued again and again to become one of the most remarkable best sellers in American history.
Abolitionists Divided:

- Stowe’s novel emerged not just out of abolitionist politics but also out of popular tradition of sentimental novels written by and largely for women.
- Her novel, by embedding the antislavery message within a familiar and popular literary form, succeeded in bringing the message of abolitionism to an enormous new audience.
- The book was also adapted to a theater drama that expanded the audience.
Abolitionists Divided:

- Reviled throughout the South, Stowe became a hero to many in the North.
- And in both regions, her novel helped to inflame sectional tensions to a new level of passion.
- Few books in American history have had so great an impact on the course of public events.
Abolitionists Divided:

- Ever divided, abolitionists remained a powerful influence on the life of the nation.
- Only a relatively small number of people before the Civil War ever accepted the abolitionist position that slavery must be entirely eliminated in a single stroke.
- But the crusade that Garrison had launched, and the men and women committed to this cause revealed how deeply the institution of slavery divided the nation.