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Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism (Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture)

Christopher Leslie Brown

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...vests of Europeans can be diverted into another channel." This advice the elderly Quaker doctor John Fothergill shared with his colleague John Cookley Lettison shortly before his death in 1780, after a long and fruitful career in the West Indies. But the

MORAL CAPITAL



FOUNDATIONS of BRITISH ABOLITIONISM

...transient did by 1778, that the moment for benevolent intervention in the American colonies had passed, that the successful rebellion in North America would compel British opponents of slavery to abandon their homes for a comprehensive emancipation. "It is not a time," he wrote to Sharp in 1779.

Christopher Leslie Brown *"to hope for freedom to liberty." Most of all, Fothergill recognized the decisive influence of pecuniary interests. "He knew that a profitable trade would be*

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Christopher Leslie Brown : Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism (Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism (Published for the Omohundro

Institute of Early American History and Culture):

Revisiting the origins of the British antislavery movement of the late eighteenth century, Christopher Leslie Brown challenges prevailing scholarly arguments that locate the roots of abolitionism in economic determinism or bourgeois humanitarianism. Brown instead connects the shift from sentiment to action to changing views of empire and nation in Britain at the time, particularly the anxieties and dislocations spurred by the American Revolution. The debate over the political rights of the North American colonies pushed slavery to the fore, Brown argues, giving antislavery organizing the moral legitimacy in Britain it had never had before. The first emancipation schemes were dependent on efforts to strengthen the role of the imperial state in an era of weakening overseas authority. By looking at the initial public contest over slavery, Brown connects disparate strands of the British Atlantic world and brings into focus shifting developments in British identity, attitudes toward Africa, definitions of imperial mission, the rise of Anglican evangelicalism, and Quaker activism. Demonstrating how challenges to the slave system could serve as a mark of virtue rather than evidence of eccentricity, Brown shows that the abolitionist movement derived its power from a profound yearning for moral worth in the aftermath of defeat and American independence. Thus abolitionism proved to be a cause for the abolitionists themselves as much as for enslaved Africans.