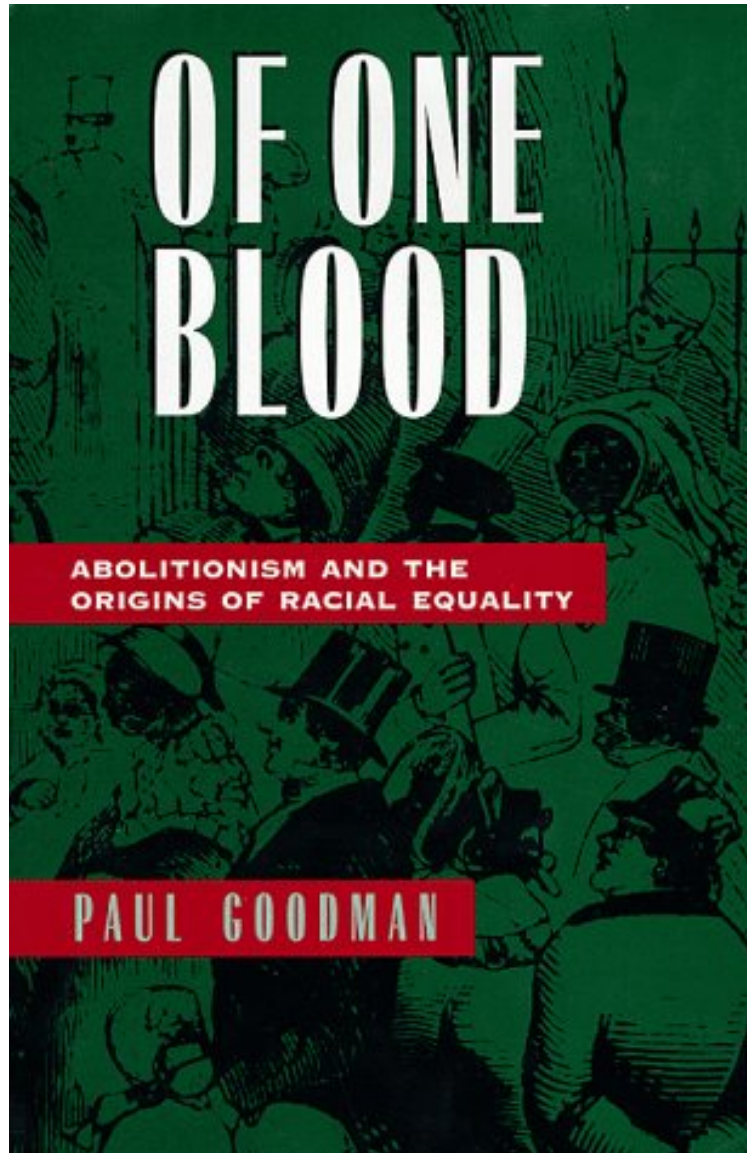


[Free] Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality

Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality

Paul Goodman

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The abolition movement is perhaps the most salient example of the struggle the United States has faced in its long and complex confrontation with the issue of race. In his final book, historian Paul Goodman, who died in 1995, presents a new and important interpretation of abolitionism. Goodman pays particular attention to the role that blacks played in the movement. In the half-century following the American Revolution, a sizable free black population emerged, the result of state-sponsored emancipation in the North and individual manumission in the slave states. At the same time, a white movement took shape, in the form of the American Colonization Society, that proposed to solve the slavery question by sending the emancipated blacks to Africa and making Liberia an American "colony." The resistance of northern free blacks was instrumental in exposing the racist ideology underlying colonization and inspiring early white abolitionists to attack slavery straight on. In a society suffused with racism, says Goodman, abolitionism stood apart by its embrace of racial equality as a Christian imperative. Goodman demonstrates that the abolitionist movement had a far broader social basis than was previously thought. Drawing on census and town records, his portraits of abolitionists reveal the many contributions of ordinary citizens, especially laborers and women long overshadowed by famous movement leaders. Paul Goodman's humane spirit informs these pages. His book is a scholarly legacy that will enrich the history of antebellum race and reform movements for years to come. "[God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Acts 17:26

.com In his final book, Paul Goodman upsets commonly held beliefs about the racial politics of antebellum America. Far from being a "white" republic at its inception, the United States only began to deny African Americans the right to vote after they'd exercised it in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Even those opposed to slavery initially believed that, because racism was so thoroughly ingrained in American society, the only reasonable solution was "colonization," the repatriation of the freed slaves to Africa. But, as Goodman shows, most black American leaders rejected this proposal and were gradually able, primarily through appeal to Christian brotherhood, to convince white abolitionists that genuine racial equality was the ultimate answer to the slavery problem. Goodman is particularly strong at discussing the secular contributions of working-class Americans and women to the abolitionist movement, which dovetailed with other progressivist agendas. It was in abolitionism, for example, that many protofeminists gained the experience in civic activism that would later benefit their own cause. Women, he writes, "had to contend with a form of discrimination that their male counterparts, however supportive they were, did not. And from the experience of contending with that discrimination ... they tended to find their way to an overarching vision of American society, a vision premised on equal rights for all, regardless of class, color, and gender." Although somewhat dry in tone, *Of One Blood* is rich in historical insight, and it articulates a vision of democratic equality that still resonates in the modern age. --Ron Hogan
From Library Journal
Using his mastery of religious history, Goodman (*Towards a Christian Republic: Anti-Masonry and the Great Transition in New England, 1826-36*, Oxford Univ., 1988) provides deeply researched and acutely analyzed insights into the origins and persuasions of abolitionism and racial equality. Goodman, who taught for 30 years at the University of California at Davis and died in 1995, also asserts that "white abolitionism was galvanized" by free blacks who pointed out the racism in proposals to solve the slavery question through black colonization of Africa. Throughout, he focuses on the premise that the abolitionists earnestly advocated that racial prejudice must be abandoned to achieve true abolition of slavery because God had created humankind "of one blood." The book has no bibliography but excellent notes for each chapter. A very useful addition to the literature on race, particularly slavery; recommended for academic libraries. ?Edward G. McCormack, Univ. of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Lib., Long Beach
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From Booklist
Goodman, a distinguished historian, died in 1995 with his manuscript for this title nearly completed. Through this work, he puts abolitionism in the social context of its time: the temperance movement, a budding feminist movement, and growing concern about the heartlessness of capitalism and the industrial revolution. He highlights the role of freed blacks in pushing for equality and resisting efforts, or movements, to send blacks back to Africa. The most famous of such movements was the American Colonization Society, made up of former presidents (including Thomas Jefferson), Supreme Court justices, congressmen, and senators. The group was so powerful and well placed that it was able to get federal funds for its plans to colonize free blacks in Liberia at the same time that many members approved expansion of slavery in U.S. territory outside the South. Goodman is critical of how American Christianity either weakly addressed or ignored racial inequalities, noting that some northern churches advocated against slavery but preserved segregated pews for their black worshippers. Vanessa Bush