

THE COBBS OF MARGATE:
EVANGELICALISM AND ANTI-SLAVERY
IN THE ISLE OF THANET, 1787-1834

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In July 1806, when the anti-slavery movement was making significant progress in the House of Commons, Francis Cobb II (1759-1831) laid the foundation-stone of his family's new brewery in Margate and 'offered up a petition to [his] God and Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that His blessing might be vouchsafed on this undertaking ... knowing that "except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it"'.¹ One year later, Cobb determined that '[a]s the foundation-[stone] was laid in prayer, the top-stone should be brought forth with praise' and called upon all those present to join with '[him] in singing... the 127th Psalm'. Although these episodes might appear unusual to the modern eye, they offer fascinating insight into the mental world of a man whose faith impacted every aspect of his life and informed his family's attitudes to slavery. Through an in-depth study of one evangelical family in Thanet, this article explores the regional dimension of the anti-slavery movement and illustrates in microcosm what was happening around the country. It investigates the mechanisms of grass-roots anti-slavery, explores its social profile, examines the networks that were central to its success and re-emphasises the importance of 'vital religion' in convincing people to mobilise, especially when they stood to lose in the process.

The Historiography of Anti-Slavery

When William Lecky argued, in 1869, that '[t]he unweary, unostentatious and inglorious crusade of England against slavery may probably be regarded as among the three or four perfectly virtuous pages ... in the history of nations', he articulated a historiographical tradition – birthed within the anti-slavery movement itself – that interpreted abolition and emancipation as events unfolding within a providential framework.² Indeed, Thomas Clarkson's *History* (1808) provided the interpretative paradigm within which anti-slavery would be understood into the

twentieth century, a 'Whiggish' framework that celebrated moral progress in history and presented abolition as the inevitable consequence of an 'upsurge' in religious consciousness and public morality.³

In 1944, Eric Williams challenged this entire frame of reference with the publication of *Capitalism and Slavery*. He argued that the 'importance' of the abolitionists had 'been seriously misunderstood and grossly exaggerated by men who [had] sacrificed scholarship to sentimentality' and proposed an alternative explanation where the 'decisive forces [were] the developing economic forces'.⁴ Somewhat controversially, Williams contended that abolition and emancipation were brought about by the decline of the West Indian sugar colonies and the emergence of a new political economy (free trade and *laissez-faire*) rooted in industrial capitalism.

Attempting to move beyond this false dichotomy of moral and material explanation, late twentieth-century historians of anti-slavery focused on the relationship between abolition, emancipation and socio-economic change *within* the metropolis. David Brion Davis and Roger Anstey traced the intellectual origins of anti-slavery thought, exploring the composition of socially-constructed 'climates of opinion' and the central role of Evangelical and Enlightenment ideology – the 'shifting patterns of thought and value which focussed attention on new problems ... [and] camouflaged others'.⁵ A more recent generation of researchers has sought to understand how abolition and emancipation reflected class interest, exploring the developing middle-class, capitalist ideology that stressed free trade over mercantilism. The latest trend in historical scholarship has recognised the importance of extra-parliamentary agitation and focused on the broader culture of anti-slavery as opposed to the 'small circle of propagandists and elite politicians' that dominated earlier historiography.⁶

What have still not been adequately explored, as Davis first argued in 1975, are the social profiles, networks and day-to-day activities of those involved with grass-roots anti-slavery.⁷ Who were the people who founded and co-ordinated auxiliary associations? What was their socio-economic and political background? With whom did they associate? Why did they support emancipation? And how did they draw others to the anti-slavery cause? John Oldfield and Judith Jennings have published pioneering work answering some of these questions regarding the age of abolition.⁸ However, grass-roots activity in the age of emancipation has still not received the attention it deserves. Seymour Drescher, in a recent review essay, has called for more 'precise markers from social history' and this study attempts to answer his call.⁹

Kent: A Slavery Heritage?

Kent, and particularly Thanet, may not appear the most obvious setting

for an article on grass-roots anti-slavery. Throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the bulk of support came from the metropolis and from the northern manufacturing towns. As David Killingray writes, '[t]here was relatively little publicly organised anti-slave trade sentiment in the south-east counties, including Kent'.¹⁰ Indeed, Clarkson's tour of the south coast in 1788 was particularly fruitless as he failed to 'excit[e] a sufficient degree of public attention to form Committees' and returned home within a month.¹¹ However, when the focus turned to emancipation in the 1820s, some areas in Kent – particularly the more politically radical towns of Maidstone, Rochester and Chatham – actively supported anti-slavery.

Perhaps one of the reasons anti-slavery took so long to mobilise in Kent is that the county did have important links with the slave-economy, largely due to its geography. As Killingray writes, 'Kent was a maritime county with a long seaboard cut by the river Medway ... and proximity to London which was the major overseas trading city dependent on the Thames'.¹² Located on its north-eastern/eastern coastline, Kent's ports were ideally placed to service, provision and salvage slave-ships; and vessels from Thanet, Deal and Dover regularly engaged in these maritime activities (known collectively as *foying*). In the eighteenth century, London was closely connected with the triangular trade and the benefits that Kentish ports derived from their proximity to the metropolis did not end with the abolition of the slave trade. In the early nineteenth century, ships returned from the plantations with slave-produced rum, sugar and molasses and unloaded their cargo at the West India Docks. As Temperley writes, 'it would be no exaggeration to describe London as the hub around which the whole Atlantic slaving system revolved'.¹³

However, this was certainly not the county's only link with the burgeoning Atlantic Economy. Kentish bankers benefited through their extension of credit, and others connected with extra-European commerce and shipping (e.g. insurers and shipwrights) owed much of their wealth to slavery. In 1821, **William Cobbett** argued that there was 'infinite corruption in Kent... [due] to the swarms of West Indians ... that have selected it as their place of residence' and this powerful pro-slavery presence largely stifled organised anti-slavery in the age of abolition.¹⁴ However, in the 1820s, an auxiliary was founded in Margate and remained active until emancipation was achieved in 1833. This *locale* presents a unique research opportunity, as archival sources for the Cobbs of Margate – highly active in the Margate Anti-Slavery Association and intimately connected with a business empire that profited greatly from slavery – are extensive. Together with the published reports, periodicals and surviving minutes of the London Committee, they allow the reconstruction of a highly detailed picture of grass-roots anti-slavery in Thanet.

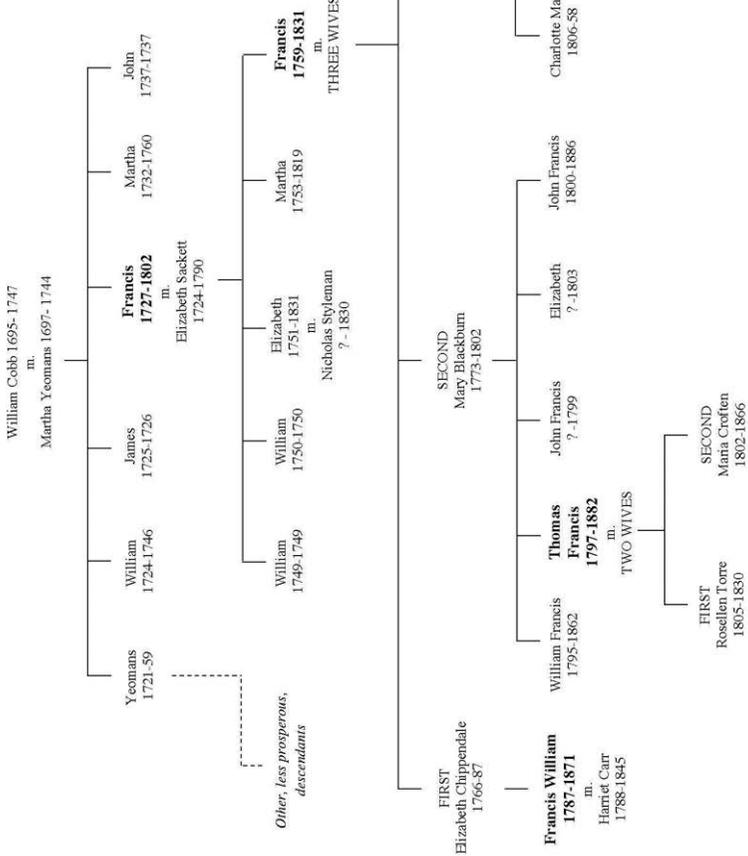
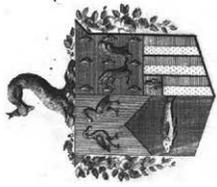


Fig. 1 Family Tree of the Cobbs of Margate showing the adopted coat of arms.

The Cobbs of Margate: A Problematic Inheritance?

Between 1787 and 1834, the Cobbs exercised considerable influence over the affairs of Margate, ‘one of the most fashionable and best frequented watering places in the kingdom’.¹⁵ So much was their dominance that one contemporary claimed the family had ‘so [closely] identified itself with the history of the town, that one [could not] be separated from the other’ and dubbed the *paterfamilias*, ‘King’ Cobb.¹⁶ Certainly, it was the town’s development as a seaside resort in the late eighteenth century that allowed Francis Cobb I (1727-1802) – the quintessential self-made man – to establish his business empire.

Able to attract contemporaries with surplus wealth in the ‘summer season’, eighteenth-century Margate experienced what Peter Borsay has termed ‘urban renaissance’.¹⁷ As the seaside resort became increasingly prosperous, its principal inhabitants gained access to a world of social competition, where notions of ‘respectability’ and ‘reputation’ ruled. In this environment, the Cobbs found their past increasingly problematic. (Francis I had originally traded as a ‘baker and gingerbread baker’ before the brewery, the keystone of the family fortune, was founded in 1761.¹⁸) Cobb’s grandchildren – particularly Francis William (1787-1871) and Thomas Francis (1797-1882) – found their humble origins especially difficult to reconcile with their prominent positions in civic life and sought to ‘doctor’ their genealogy by adopting the heraldry of an extinct Cobb family, also of Kentish descent.

If they found their grandfather’s past embarrassing, both grandchildren were anxious to celebrate their evangelical father and the *Memoir of Francis Cobb* – published shortly after his death – served this purpose. Whereas Francis I had attended church irregularly, his son Francis II became ‘awakened to a sense of the supreme importance of religion’ after the tragic death of his first wife and his four grandsons were similarly evangelical.¹⁹ As William Francis, the second grandson, explained:

Hitherto the influence of religion on his character had only appeared in that regular attendance on its ordinances in which he had been early trained, and in his correct and amiable discharge of relative and social duties; now, he realized its transforming and elevating power, in raising the affections from earth and fixing them on God and Heaven.²⁰

Francis II’s spiritual transformation is clearly evinced by his personal writings: one letter to his sister, shortly after his conversion, reads:

We are all sinners by nature and practice; and when the Lord is pleased to bring us to a sense of this by the power of the blessed Spirit, we are then led by the same power, to JESUS CHRIST, the Friend and Saviour of Sinners. Examine then yourself, my dear ... Give credit to a brother who



Francis Cobb (1727-1802)



Francis Cobb II (1759-1831)



Francis William Cobb (1787-1871)

Fig. 2 The Cobbs of Margate: Miniatures (Cobb Papers U1453/F28).

has no other view than the welfare of your precious mortal soul ... there is no true enjoyment in anything short of true religion.²¹

Although the family prized the status their wealth afforded them, their evangelicalism cast attention on the morality of its source. Conscious that ‘the iniquity of the fathers’ could be visited ‘upon the children unto the third and fourth generation’, the grandchildren became increasingly concerned about the business empire they had inherited.²² Although the archive reveals little about the early years of the family business, Francis I started out in the brewery trade, having worked as a baker for a maximum of fourteen years. As Matthias has demonstrated, a county brewer needed

£200 to purchase the necessary equipment and considerably more to rent premises and purchase malt and hops. How did Francis I accrue this kind of money?²³ Moreover, after only two years, he was able to purchase the freehold of his rented property and expand his business rapidly. The brewery certainly became a lucrative enterprise, providing ale for summer holidaymakers, but where did the initial capital come from? Although lost to the vagueries of time, evidence suggests that Francis I was involved in some ‘shady’ enterprises: he was certainly not averse to operating outside the law, being fined £26 of ‘Lawful English Money’ for avoiding custom duties in 1799 and preventing an officer searching his premises.²⁴ Living on a coastline renowned for smuggling, it is not unlikely that substantial capital was accrued through this activity. Perhaps his grandchildren came to the same conclusion? The other branches of the business empire – the shipping agency (which operated from 1770) and the bank (which opened in 1785) – also occupied the family’s attention in the 1820s. Not only did they make use of ‘tainted’ capital released by the brewery but their profits were also ‘dirtied’ in other ways; through them, the family had been complicit in slavery.

Profiting from Slavery?

Cobb’s shipping agency – which co-ordinated maritime activities like provisioning ships, assisting those in distress, and repairing and salvaging wrecks – profited greatly from the contemporary slave-economy. In September 1782, the *Emperor*, travelling from Jamaica to London, ran into difficulty on Mouve Sands and its valuable cargo of slave-produced sugar, rum, pimento and cotton was salvaged and stored in the family’s warehouses.²⁵ Similarly, in 1784, the Cobbs acted as ‘agents of the Owners of the Cargo of the *Matilda* from Jamaica laden with Sugar & Rum’ when it was wrecked off Margate.²⁶ The family were uniquely suited to this role as they had the spare capital to cover local expenses and because the role:

require[d] dealings with shipowners and characters operating from places remote from Margate. They would generally prefer to deal with a substantial, safe and respectable trader ... as the agent was expected to incur all the necessary expenses on the shipowner’s behalf.²⁷

The archives reveal countless instances of the shipping agency servicing vessels connected with the slave-economy. The *Oakes*, for example, was wrecked on Margate Sand on 8 November 1820, en route to St Vincent. On this occasion, empty puncheons and hogsheds, as well as various sundry goods, were salvaged from the wreck.²⁸ The agency also provided West Indiamen – like the *Lady Ann* and *Jamaica Planter* – with anchor and cable in the aftermath of severe gales.²⁹ Significantly, the

family once came into direct contact with slavery through their agency, arranging for the board and lodgings of twelve wrecked Negro slave-sailors whilst their ship was being repaired and arrangements made for their transportation.³⁰

Records relating to the salvage of rum, coffee and cotton from the *Matthew* in 1806 afford particular insight into the Cobbs's indirect gains from slavery. After the salvaged cargo had been carted to Cobb's warehouses for storage and restitution, Cobb paid each salvor one-third of the customs and excise officers' valuation of the item salvaged, including £5 16s. to William Singleton for a puncheon of rum.³¹ After the customary auction had taken place, Cobb billed the ship-owner (compiling the various expenses accumulated by his agency) and charged a 'commission for [his] care and trouble' of 5% – £120, out of £2,285. However, the family received substantially more from the salvage process than their standard commission. The cargo of the *Matthew* was valued at £4,022 13s. and a third of this (£1,340 17s. 8d.) would have been awarded to local salvors. If this salvage had been carried out entirely by men sub-contracted to Cobb's agency, then Cobb and Hooper (his maritime business partner) would have taken 50% of the salvage award as their initial cut – on this occasion, £670 8s. 10d. Moreover, Cobb was able to provide many other agency services (like storage, board and lodgings) in-house, accumulating further profits.

Not only did Cobb's shipping agency provision West Indian produce, but the family brewery also supplied the merchant firm James Brown & Co. with beer and porter destined for the Danish slave-colony of St Croix in 1790.³² As the brewery chose not to export outside their local area until the late nineteenth century, they clearly made exception for this highly lucrative relationship. The family also purchased large amounts of slave-produced rum for sale in their tied houses. In the early 1820s, J. & G. Cowell, of Camberwell, acted as their agents at the docks, keeping the family informed of market developments and replenishing their stocks when shipments of 'finest quality Jam^{an} rum' arrived or became available 'on-the-cheap'.³³

Although difficult to discern, it is highly likely that the Cobbs also profited from slavery through their bank's extension of credit to those engaged in extra-European commerce and shipping, and to those with direct interests in the plantations. Slave-produced goods constituted such a significant portion of Britain's overseas trade in this period, that it was almost impossible for a county bank of standing to avoid such associations.³⁴ The Cobbs 'lent to most trade[r]s in Thanet', many of whom would have been implicated in slavery, even if they did not have direct interests.³⁵ One notable example is the Broadstairs-based shipwright, Thomas White, who constructed 'some of the best ... West India Vessels'.³⁶

Francis II, Francis William and Thomas Francis Cobb were all intimately connected with a business empire that had profited greatly from slavery. Their subsequent involvement with anti-slavery was, in many ways, an attempt to atone for past transgressions, even if profit continued to rule their business activity into the 1830s. Their example reveals the deeply conflicting impulses of those involved with anti-slavery; a family reluctant on one level – yet deeply committed on another – to campaign for the abolition of an institution that had helped make them wealthier than most country gentlemen of the time.

The Anti-Slavery Movement in Margate

Widely considered a pro-slavery stronghold, Kent produced eight petitions in opposition to the slave trade in the first mass-petitioning campaign of 1788-1792; for a county of its size, it was under-represented.³⁷ However, one 1792 petition came from the ‘ministers, church-wardens, deputies, & principal inhabitants’ of ‘Margate, Ramsgate and the Isle of Thanet’ and this locality – along with its most prominent family – would have a prolonged association with anti-slavery.³⁸ In November 1806, when abolition became an electoral issue nationwide, Francis Cobb II (then Deputy³⁹ of Margate) supported the aspiring ‘Knights of the Shire’ with the best abolitionist credentials. He served on the election committee of the Whig politician, William Honywood (d.1818), who labelled the slave trade as a crime ‘disgusting to human nature’; and also subscribed £52 10s. to the Tory, Sir Edward Knatchbull (1758-1819), who demonstrated his anti-slavery stance with a speech in the Commons in 1792.⁴⁰ A staunch Tory, Cobb split-voted because of his anti-slavery commitment and was exceptional in advocating an issue that, as the *Kentish Chronicle* reported, was ‘scarcely ... capable of swaying large numbers of voters’.⁴¹ Francis II also supported William Wilberforce (1759-1833) – the parliamentary leader of abolition – in his hotly contested re-election as Yorkshire MP in 1807, receiving a letter of thanks when the victor sought ‘to make ... acknowledgements to [his] kind friends’.⁴²

When in 1823, the ‘Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions’ sought to re-establish the network of local auxiliaries that had lain dormant under the patrician ‘African Institution’ (1807-1822), Kent again failed to mobilise.⁴³ Only ‘Dover’ and ‘Rochester & Chatham’ petitioned Parliament in 1823 and the Margate Anti-Slavery Association was the sole male auxiliary formed in east Kent before the tour of the Agency Committee’s itinerant speaker, George Thompson, in 1830-1.⁴⁴ The circumstances surrounding the foundation of the Margate Association are unknown, undocumented in surviving minutes or published sources. However, it was disseminating material by 1825 (a year after the town submitted its first petition for

Margate Anti-Slavery Association
NEGRO SLAVERY.

No. XIII.

**IS NEGRO SLAVERY SANCTIONED BY
 SCRIPTURE?**

THERE has recently appeared from the pen of a Clergyman of the Church of England, the Rev. B. Bailey, A. M., Curate of Burton-upon-Trent, and domestic Chaplain to the Right Hon. Lord Torphichen, a pamphlet, entitled "The House of Bondage, or a Dissertation upon the Nature of Service or Slavery under the Levitical Law," being in fact a defence of West-India slavery. Our notice of this pamphlet will be more particular than it deserves, for the sake of the answers which we shall append to it, chiefly from another pamphlet published in 1789, entitled, "Considerations on the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade, upon Grounds of natural, religious, and political Duty," which appeared anonymously at first, but has been recently acknowledged by the venerable Bishop of St. David's, in a list which his lordship has lately published of his works, amounting to nearly one hundred in number. After some research, we have obtained the sight of a copy of this treatise, which, though published five-and-thirty years ago, is so powerfully applicable to the existing circumstances of the slavery question, that the cause of truth and humanity will be served by giving an outline of its valuable contents. The arguments of Mr. Bailey are answered in it by the most triumphant anticipation,

and often with so remarkable a coincidence of language, in quoting the objections of the advocates of slavery, that we should suspect that Mr. Bailey had borrowed his arguments from the forgotten and obsolete work, by a Mr. Harris, to which the Bishop's treatise is an answer. We will present our readers, in passing, with a single illustration of this coincidence. "The relative duties," says Mr. Bailey, "of master and servant (meaning slave) are founded upon this religious principle,"—namely, the principle of being "servants of Christ." Mr. Harris also had, it seems, talked very gravely, like Mr. Bailey, of "the relative duties of master and slave." But what says the Bishop of St. David's of these reciprocal duties? "Reciprocal duties!" he exclaims, with indignation; "Reciprocal duties!—To have an adequate sense of the propriety of these terms, we must forget the humane provisions of the Hebrew law, as well as the liberal indulgence of Roman slavery, and think only of WEST-INDIA SLAVERY! of unlimited, uncompensated, brutal slavery, and then judge what reciprocity there can be between absolute authority and absolute subjection; and how the Divine rule of Christian charity can be said to enforce the reciprocal duties of the West-India slave and his master. Recipro-

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For Circulation

Fig. 3 Negro Slavery pamphlet marked 'Margate Anti-Slavery Association' and 'For Circulation' (Cobb Papers U1453/Z28/3).

‘gradual abolition’ to Parliament) and remained active thereafter, petitioning both the Commons and the Lords in 1828, 1830-1 and 1833, despite considerable local opposition.⁴⁵ As one contemporary commented:

Almost every person of consideration [locally]... is connected with the West India interest. I need not say how difficult, nay, how almost impossible it is to bring such persons to regard with any thing like complacence the operations of our Society.⁴⁶

George Thompson himself described ‘Thanet’ as a ‘very unlikely spot for the spread of those principles which I advocate’, despite finding ‘persons in Margate ... favourable to the A.S. cause’.⁴⁷ The involvement of a highly respected local family in various grass-roots activities perhaps explains the existence of anti-slavery sentiment in an unsympathetic region, in a county closely linked with slavery.

Although the *Rules for Anti-Slavery Associations* (1825) clearly specified how local auxiliaries should be organised, the Margate Association adopted a looser structure. Like many smaller, less prestigious auxiliaries, it had neither President nor Vice President but developed instead around one family. Not only did the Cobbs act as Treasurers, but either Francis William or Thomas Francis Cobb served as ‘Secretary’ as one circular letter – addressed to their firm – requests

a Report – as full as circumstances permit, of the proceedings of your Association, and of the exertions made in your neighbourhood... during the last twelve months.⁴⁸

Through their participation in the family business empire, both men had extensive experience of handling correspondence, organising local activity and deploying funds strategically, which made them particularly suited to this important and time-consuming position. In all likelihood, the Cobbs *funded* the grass-roots activity of their local auxiliary. Surviving archival sources, however, do not reveal the Margate Association’s subscribers and the family are not listed in the published ‘*Accounts...*’ of the Anti-Slavery Society (1823-31), which only recorded the most prestigious individual donors.⁴⁹ Although undocumented, the Cobbs’s financial support of anti-slavery is almost certain; at the very least, they gave their time if not their money.

Through the ‘diffus[ion of] sound information on the System of Slavery’, the Margate Association sought to establish an anti-slavery constituency amongst its highly literate urban audience.⁵⁰ Thus, the dissemination of inexpensive, promotional literature – like the *Negro Slavery* tracts (1823-1826) and the popular pamphlet *A brief view of the nature and effects of Negro slavery* (1824) – was prioritised.⁵¹ Other pamphlets, like the *Address on the consumption of free labour sugar* (1825), furthered specific

objectives.⁵² The archives strongly suggest that the Cobbs operated a lending library, allowing interested parties to read more widely on the subject of slavery. Copies of pamphlets marked ‘For Circulation’ are retained in this collection, alongside published reports and periodicals marked ‘Thomas F. Cobb’.⁵³ Over forty issues of the influential journal, the *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, also feature and, though damaged, appear well read.⁵⁴ The auxiliary seems to have been primarily concerned, however, with the sale of higher-quality publications, regularly ordered from London between 1827 and 1831 at a cost of £25 10s. 10d.⁵⁵ For a minor ‘small-town’ auxiliary, this expenditure was substantial; it indicates consistent demand and suggests a largely middle-class target audience. This focus undoubtedly reflected the leadership of the Cobbs who sought to promote the cause amongst their friends, often (but not exclusively) from the upper echelons of local society.

The Margate Association also produced its own propaganda, including a four-page pamphlet entitled *Black Widow; A True, Interesting and Affecting Story* (1827). Extracted from an article published in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (to which the Cobbs subscribed), this pamphlet was produced by William Denne – the local printer and anti-slavery activist – and sold for 1d.⁵⁶ It clearly attempted to make the anti-slavery cause relevant, as the pamphlet’s subject – an elderly ‘mulatto’ named Betto Douglas – was enslaved on the plantation of the Kentish landowner, Earl Romney, in St Kitts.⁵⁷ The Margate Association also used the local press to inform the public and shape local opinion, inserting pieces in both the *Kentish Chronicle* and *Kentish Gazette* when they petitioned Parliament. Francis William’s carefully drafted account of a July 1833 meeting summarised resolutions submitted to the ‘Representatives of East Kent’ and was obviously written for inclusion in the local newspaper.⁵⁸

With the establishment of the Agency Committee in 1831, anti-slavery propaganda reached the illiterate lower classes through the spoken word. During George Thompson’s tour of Thanet, public meetings of three hours were unexceptional and venues were regularly packed. As one contemporary reported:

I have had the pleasure of hearing [Mr Thompson] at Margate, and was much gratified by the good attendance and the interest that appeared to be excited.⁵⁹

After he first spoke at Margate, Thompson recorded that ‘the room was crowded to suffocation’ and his second lecture also attracted an ‘excessive’ crowd.⁶⁰ Francis William – as Deputy and the most prestigious local anti-slavery supporter – is likely to have chaired these lectures, sharing the stage with Thompson. The fact that both lectures were held at the Cobb-owned *London Hotel* is highly suggestive of further ‘background’ involvement.

If opinion building was the *raison d'être* of the Margate Association, the petition was the desired result. Little is known about the first petition the auxiliary produced 'upon the subject of the Slave Trade [sic]' except that Edward Knatchbull 'presented it to the [Commons]' in 1828.⁶¹ More is known, however, about petitions submitted to Parliament in 1830-1 and 1833 and a signed letter presented to the Representatives of East Kent in 1833. Together, these activities offer considerable insight into the mechanics of grass-roots anti-slavery.

On 28 October 1830, the Deputy, Francis II, received an official request to schedule a public meeting to petition Parliament for the 'Abolition of Colonial Slavery at the earliest possible period'.⁶² Three years later, his son and successor – Francis William – received a similar appeal, this time for 'immediate and entire Abolition'.⁶³ Having responsibility for determining the time and location of town meetings, it was natural that both men would prioritise these anti-slavery gatherings, scheduling them in the prestigious Town Hall at 6pm. Although their responsibilities as Deputy prohibited them from *signing* requests for public meetings, their 'behind-the-scenes' influence is evinced when, in July 1833, Francis William scheduled a meeting to consider 'Objectionable Provisions in the Bill for the ABOLITION of SLAVERY'. Although his fellow committee-members signed the request, the document was actually written in his own hand! Not only were the Cobbs able to facilitate anti-slavery in an official capacity, but Francis William also drafted anti-slavery petitions for the local auxiliary. Anxious to ensure that the 1830 petition was appropriately worded, he sent a copy to his friend – William Baylay, the Anglican Minister at St John the Baptist – which was duly returned with comments.⁶⁴ In 1833, Francis William also made arrangements (through his anti-slavery contact Denne) to publicise the upcoming anti-slavery meeting through a printed poster.⁶⁵ However, the Cobbs's extensive role in orchestrating local mobilisation is best evinced by an 1833 memorandum in Francis William's hand. Not only did he have to ensure the 'lower part of hall' had sufficient 'benches' for the meeting, but he had 'Petitions' to 'g[e]t ready', 'Resolutions to prepare', 'M[overs] and S[econd]ers to arrange', multiple petitions to collate and decisions to make regarding their presentation in Parliament.⁶⁶ In 1830, the Margate Petition – left in the Town Hall – collected 150 signatures, a substantial proportion considering the size of the town's eligible male population. Francis II then forwarded it to the Archbishop of Canterbury for presentation in the Lords and to his schoolfellow, Thomas Law Hodges, for presentation in the Commons.⁶⁷ In 1833, multiple petitions were collated by the Margate Association and submitted to Parliament. The Margate Petition, which Francis William forwarded to his friend, John Pemberton Plumtre, to present in the Commons amassed 496 signatures.⁶⁸ As well as relying on local contacts, Francis William thought carefully about how anti-slavery

could be advantaged through the presentation of petitions. As Plumptre commented:

You judge quite rightly in placing some petitions in Sir E[dward] K[natchbull]’s hands- it will draw & bind him I hope to the cause.⁶⁹

During the election campaign of 1832, Francis William and other members of the Margate Association only supported candidates pledged to emancipation, pressurising others to do likewise. As one circular stated, the Association was:

to make strict enquiries of every Candidate [in the hustings], not only whether he is decidedly favourable to the extinction of Slavery, but whether or not he will attend the Debates in Parliament.⁷⁰

An Address to the People of Great Britain – also received by the Cobbs – encouraged the Association to ‘most powerfully’ render assistance to known anti-slavery supporters

not merely by votes, but by open and public adoption of the Candidate on these avowed grounds, by the exertion of lawful influence, by saving him time in his canvass, and by relieving him from expence [*sic*] in going to the poll.

Francis William, in particular, took these instructions to heart, serving as Chairman on the Margate District Committee of Plumptre, a ‘liberal reformer’ and vital religionist who favoured immediate emancipation.⁷¹ On behalf of the Margate Association, Francis William also maintained pressure on both successful candidates after the election. In separate letters, he asked Knatchbull and Plumptre to clarify their positions on anti-slavery and begged ‘the favour of [their] attendance ... at the general meeting of the friends of the abolition of slavery at Exeter Hall’.⁷² Not content with pressurising parliamentary candidates, the Association also ‘form[ed] a list’ of ‘*Electors* who [could] be properly influenced in the approaching contest, each individual answering for himself and as many more as he can bring to aid’.⁷³ In both these activities, the eminently respectable Cobbs were pivotal, moving in the same social circles as those the Association sought to influence.

Active between 1825 and 1833, the Margate Association illuminates the different mechanisms of grass-roots anti-slavery. A small auxiliary, it punched well above its weight, establishing a broad anti-slavery constituency through the written and spoken word. While loosely organised, its activity extended beyond managing petitions, although it did this successfully in 1828, 1830-1 and 1833. Moreover, its reliance on public meetings shows ‘how seriously [it] tried to mobilise public opinion’.⁷⁴ Although fundraising was never a priority, available resources

were used effectively locally and the auxiliary ably assisted the election of candidates sympathetic to emancipation. The Cobbs – particularly Francis William – were intimately involved with all aspects of grass-roots activity, particularly the petitioning process, in both an official and unofficial capacity. The success of anti-slavery auxiliaries hinged on the efforts of dedicated members, especially where opposition was strongest, and the Margate Association was no exception. Influential in different spheres of community life, the Cobbs connected the diverse – yet equally crucial – ‘vertebrae’ of grass-roots anti-slavery.⁷⁵

The Culture of Margate Anti-Slavery

Although petition lists do not survive in their entirety, consultation of other archival sources has enabled the partial reconstruction of Margate’s anti-slavery constituency. The personal correspondence of George Thompson has proved highly valuable as he was instructed by the Agency Committee to ascertain the ‘feeling[s] that prevail[ed] in the neighbourhood in favour of [anti-slavery]’, especially among the ‘*influential* classes’.⁷⁶ Letters written whilst in Thanet reveal the region’s most prominent anti-slavery sympathisers: Evangelicals like Francis William Cobb and Lieutenant Henry Dove – and Quakers like Benjamin Maw and Abraham Newby – all entertained Thompson between his first and second lectures in Margate.⁷⁷ Handwritten minutes, printed requests for anti-slavery meetings and draft petitions reveal other local activists.

In recent scholarship, grass-roots anti-slavery in the age of emancipation has been associated with a non-conformist lower class.⁷⁸ As Turley concludes, ‘at a more local level, tradesmen, artisans and dissenting ministers were the ... people who were active’.⁷⁹ However, research undertaken for this article suggests that the local composition of anti-slavery was more heterogeneous: although this non-conformist artisan ‘group’ was important, it was not universally dominant. Margate did produce artisan-supported denominational petitions in the 1830s, but the Association itself was dominated by an evangelical, conservative, interdenominational middle-class. Thirty-one of the fifty-eight anti-slavery campaigners identified in **Table 1** can be placed in this ‘middling’ category and members of the *haute* middle-class were particularly active, co-ordinating local activities, requesting public meetings and proposing and seconding motions. These included emerging professionals like George Yeates Hunter (a surgeon), Thomas Jones (an apothecary) and Henry Dove (a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy); prosperous merchants like the Newbys (coal and linen) and Robert Rybot (linen); and clergymen like John Cramp. The lower middle-classes – particularly Charles S. Lewis (a schoolmaster), Samuel Lewis (a clerk) and William Robinson (a shopkeeper) – were also active locally and various artisans – Adams,

TABLE 1. SOCIAL PROFILE OF MARGATE ANTI-SLAVERY CAMPAIGNERS

Known Anti-Slavery Campaign Supporters
grouped into Gentry, Middle and Artisan classes.

| KNOWN ANTI-SLAVERY CAMPAIGNERS | | OCCUPATION | DENOMINATION |
|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------|-----------------|
| Francis Cobb | * | Lesser gentry | Baptist |
| Francis W. Cobb | ** | Lesser gentry | HC HT |
| Thomas F. Cobb | ** | Lesser gentry | Anglican HT |
| Charles Cadby | | Lesser gentry | Baptist |
| Samuel Coode | ** | Lesser gentry | |
| George Gaskell | ** | Lesser gentry | Wesl. Meth. HT |
| William Gaskell | | Lesser gentry | Wesl. Meth. HT |
| William Giles | * | Lesser gentry | Baptist |
| John Peirce | * | Lesser gentry | |
| Henry Thompson | | Lesser gentry | Baptist |
| MIDDLE CLASS | | | |
| William Aver | | Wesl. preacher | Wesl. Methodist |
| Francis Barrow | | Angl. minister | Anglican HT |
| Rev. W.F. Baylay | | Angl. minister | Anglican HT |
| Rev. M. Berkeley | | Curate | Anglican |
| Charles Boncey | | Hotel owner | HT |
| John Carthew | | Tavern owner | HT |
| Thomas Costigan | | Catholic priest | Roman Catholic |
| Rev. John Cramp | * | Bapt. minister | Baptist HT |
| James Denne | | Bookseller | Anglican HT |
| Henry Dove | ** | RN Lieut | HC |
| Daniel Elgar | | Grocer | |
| John Hays | | Grocer | HT |
| George Y. Hunter | * | Surgeon | Anglican HT |
| Richard Jenkins | | Auctioneer | Baptist HT |
| Thomas Jones | ** | Apothecary | |
| E[manuel] Levey | | Jeweller | |
| Charles S. Lewis | * | Schoolmaster | Baptist |
| Mr S. Lewis | | Clerk | Anglican HT |
| Benjamin J. Maw | * | Grocer | Quaker |
| Thomas Newby | ** | Coal merchant | Quaker |
| Robert C. Osborne | | Bookseller | Anglican |
| James Pickering | | Chemist | HT |
| William Robinson | * | Glass dealer | |

THE COBBS OF MARGATE: EVANGELICALISM AND ANTI-SLAVERY 1787-1834

| KNOWN ANTI-SLAVERY CAMPAIGNERS | | OCCUPATION | DENOMINATION |
|-----------------------------------|----|----------------------|-----------------|
| MIDDLE CLASS | | | |
| Robert Rybot | ** | Linen draper | HC HT |
| John Swinford | | Corn factor | Anglican |
| Edward White | | Surveyor | HT |
| John White | * | Wine merchant | HT |
| Henry Willis | | Linen draper | |
| James E. Wright | | Attorney | HT |
| Rev. Tho. Young | | Minister HC | HC |
| ARTISAN CLASS | | | |
| William Adams | | Painter | HC HT |
| Thomas Carthew | | Boot maker | Baptist |
| William Castell | ** | Boot maker | HC |
| John Crofts | | Corn Chandler | |
| Garton Crow | | Ironmonger | HT |
| John Fagg | | Clock-maker | |
| Thomas R. Flint | ** | Ironmonger | Baptist |
| John B. Flint | * | Ironmonger | Baptist |
| Daniel Gouger | ** | Miller | Wesl. Methodist |
| Moses Harrison | ** | Boot maker | Wesl. Meth. HT |
| Steph. Hermitage | * | Painter | Quaker |
| J[ohn] Jenkins | | Maltster | Anglican HT |
| George Marshall | * | <i>Not in Pigots</i> | |
| Abm. R. Newby | ** | Tailor | Quaker |
| William Paine | ** | Blacksmith | Baptist HT |
| John Robason | | Chandler | Anglican HT |
| Thomas S. Rowe | ** | Painter | Wesl. Meth. HT |
| Hills Rowe | | Boot maker | Baptist HT |
| Charles Woodruff | * | Wheelwright | HC |

Key: ** = Very active * = Active; HC = Countess of Huntingdon Connexion; HT = Subscriber to Evangelical New Church, Holy Trinity, Margate.

Castell, Gouger, Harrison, Rowe and the Flints – signed petitions, although they generally allowed their better-educated peers to set the agenda. Particular impetus came from the Cobbs, the auxiliary's most prestigious and well-respected family, and other lesser gentry (George Gaskell, Samuel Coode and William Giles). Despite this slight social bias, anti-slavery in Margate is most aptly characterised as a *cross-class* alliance of the 'respectable' rather than a 'class cause'.⁸⁰

Grass-roots anti-slavery in Margate was also *cross-denominational* and not solely an extension of evangelical non-conformist religious mobilization (a common historiographical characterisation).⁸¹ In 1830, only 3% of petitions were sponsored by Establishment clergymen as the church nationwide had ‘strained relations’ with nonconformity and ‘ke[pt] a distance from the antislavery cause because [it]... resented the prominence of Dissenters in it’.⁸² However, Margate exemplified an unusual community-centred ecumenical alliance as its three Anglican ministers – Baylay, Barrow and Berkeley – sponsored the auxiliary’s 1830 petition. The Association even managed to draw support from non-conformists when Thanet Methodists co-ordinated their own petitions in the 1830s, refuting Hurwitz’s thesis that petitioning by this point was ‘by denomination in a given local community’.⁸³

At least six Wesleyan Methodists, twelve Baptists, seven Anglicans, three Quakers, one Roman Catholic and six members of the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion actively supported anti-slavery in Margate (Table 1), and ministers of different denominations sponsored draft petitions or contributed in public meetings. Many activists were also evangelical, giving substantially to the missionary work of other denominations: evidence of subscriptions to the Church Missionary Society, in particular, suggests a large evangelical contingent in the Established Church.⁸⁴ Such a dispersed anti-slavery constituency ultimately required ‘bonding and enabling structures’ *beyond* class or denomination. The Cobbs, who figured prominently in the various networks that comprised the ‘vertebrae’ of local activism, supplied the connective ‘ligaments’.

Margate’s religious networks were one such ‘vertebrae of public activity and co-operation’ and provided ready-made foundations for grass-roots anti-slavery.⁸⁵ Evangelicalism, in particular, was capable of binding people together ‘across lines of social difference’ and the pre-existence of an evangelical network in Margate helped determine the cross-class and cross-denominational nature of its anti-slavery constituency.⁸⁶ As Turley writes, ‘[Evangelical Anglicanism]... provided enough common ground theologically and in perspective on the world, to allow co-operative activity with evangelical dissenters.’⁸⁷ Over half (31) of Margate’s known anti-slavery activists subscribed to either the Thanet auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society or the Margate Ladies’ Bible Association, and others supported the Thanet auxiliary of the London Missionary Society.⁸⁸ Interestingly, many of those most active in grass-roots anti-slavery – the Cobbs, the Gaskells, Dove, Rybot, Cramp, Gouger and T. S. Rowe – served on the Managing Committee of the Thanet BFBS.⁸⁹ Both Francis II and Francis William acted as Vice President in the 1820s and 30s and exercised considerable influence over the local evangelical community.

Not only were the Cobbs plugged into local non-conformity through the BFBS but they also attended Margate’s Dissenting chapels. Francis

He often frequented Ebenezer Chapel (Baptist) to hear more challenging preaching and Francis William considered Zion Chapel (Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion) his spiritual home. The Cobbs were also connected with local ministers: Thomas Francis regularly corresponded with the Anglican Reverend William Baylay and the family knew Thomas Young (Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, Margate, Zion Chapel), George Atkinson (Baptist, Margate, Hawley Square) and Thomas Cramp (Baptist, St. Peters) through the Thanet BFBS. Naturally receptive to anti-slavery ideology, whole denominational networks could be drawn to anti-slavery if their minister – or another prominent member (like a Cobb) – declared in its favour. Occupying a central position in Anglican, non-conformist and interdenominational religious networks, the Cobbs were ideally placed to 'connect' these distinct groups and enlarge the anti-slavery constituency.

A pious moral activism infused nineteenth-century Margate and local anti-slavery campaigners were unsurprisingly involved with grass-roots campaigns for penal reform and the 'Better Observance of the Lord's Day'. Over two-thirds (40) of known anti-slavery campaigners supported the grass-roots activity of the Lord's Day Observance Society and over a third (21) sought to protect the 'Lord's Day' and abolish capital punishment. Moreover, as complete petition lists do not survive, this reform 'culture' is likely to have been even more entangled. Once again, the Managing Committee of the Thanet BFBS was central to local activity as several of its members – including Francis William and Thomas Francis – served on the committee of the LDOS auxiliary, co-ordinating its petitioning campaign in February 1833 and its April 1834 mobilisation.⁹⁰ Francis William single-handedly organised the grass-roots movement against capital punishment (drawing together local sympathisers, forming a committee, collecting subscriptions and disseminating propaganda), raising one petition in May 1830 and another in April 1836.⁹¹

Although Turley argues that anti-slavery activists embraced 'limited political reform', only seven of the fifty-eight identified campaigners were involved with the Margate Parliamentary Reform Association and the most active of these (George Yeates Hunter and William Paine) were religiously inclined.⁹² Political affiliations, though an important 'bonding and enabling structure', were not decisive: pious networks were instead crucial. With the exception of the Quaker Newbys, these centred on a dynamic, evangelical BFBS core clustered around the Cobbs.

The Cobbs's dominance in the commercial and political life of Margate also contributed to the success of local anti-slavery. It is surely no coincidence that Samuel Lewis (a Clerk at Cobb's Bank) contributed in anti-slavery public meetings. Nor is it unlikely that those who staffed the brewery's tied houses (John Carthew) or regularly dealt with Cobb's shipping agency (many of the artisans) became involved with grass-

roots anti-slavery *through* their business connections. Furthermore, as bankers, the Cobbs dealt on a daily basis with local people. At least thirty-eight known anti-slavery campaigners held personal, business or charitable savings accounts with Cobb's Bank. Still more would have been extended credit by the family firm. Relationships forged within quasi-political bodies also encouraged anti-slavery involvement. Twelve known anti-slavery campaigners held positions as Commissioners for Paving and Lighting, and both William Paine and Edward White served on the Margate Pier and Harbour Committee, alongside Thomas Francis and Francis William (Chairman).⁹³ Three Overseers of the Poor – Hays, Carthew, Harrison – also supported anti-slavery, as did the Inspector of Weights and Measures (Richard Jenkins) and the Sub-Deputy (John Jenkins).⁹⁴ All of these positions required prolonged, regular interaction with Francis William, the Deputy. Friendship and kinship connexions, more generally, drew others to the anti-slavery cause. Just as Francis William and Thomas Francis 'inherited' their father's commitment, both Gaskell and Lewis brothers became activists, as did various Newbys, Carthews, Flints, Jenkinsons and Whites. The friendship that existed between Francis William and J.P. Plumptre, the Evangelical MP for East Kent, provides further evidence of the crucial 'enabling' role that personal ties played in advancing grass-roots anti-slavery.⁹⁵

Anti-slavery in Margate was founded on multi-layered networks. However, the *nature* of its anti-slavery constituency suggests that 'bonding and enabling structures' of religion were of primary importance in drawing people together as activists. They alone explain its unified – yet cross-class and cross-denominational – composition. These pious networks centred on a dynamic, evangelical, BFBS reform-group, dominated by the Cobbs. Influential, prestigious and deeply committed to anti-slavery, this family was uniquely suited to unite potentially fractious elements in the local movement. Their centrality in secular networks (particularly business and banking, local politics and philanthropy) further enabled the extension and maintenance of anti-slavery commitment. However, although these networks facilitated grass-roots activity, they did not cause it. Similar structures existed elsewhere and did not invariably lead to popular mobilization; something else was needed.

The Influence of 'Vital Religion'

Although many historians regard 'motivation' as an elusive quarry, 'a shadowy subject even for the most insightful biographers', the Cobbs did not become anti-slavery activists without reason.⁹⁶ As Brown recognises, '[s]omething in their experience of the world led them into active opposition to slavery' and motivated them to campaign for the abolition of an institution that had contributed greatly to their social position.⁹⁷

The word ‘evangelical’, although frequently used, has long escaped adequate definition. Francis II’s spiritual journal, however, evinces what David Bebbington has described as the ‘essentials’ of evangelicalism (aptly characterised by Henry Venn as the ‘vital operation of Christian Doctrines upon the heart and conduct’).⁹⁸ Francis II’s evangelical conversion certainly entailed a complete ‘change of life’ (*conversionism*), leading him to renounce ‘theatrical amusements ... the race-course, the ball-room and the card-table’ as ‘contrary to Christian principles’.⁹⁹ His personal reflections evince a developing understanding and application of evangelical theology, with its emphasis on the atonement of Christ (*crucicentrism*) and the need to express the gospel through practical efforts (*activism*). In one letter, Francis II passionately urged his son to ‘follow Christ Jesus, the Lord, the Alone Friend, and Saviour of such lost, ruin’d, undone, self destroy’d, ill and hell deserving sinners as ever was, your unworthy but redeemed father’.¹⁰⁰ Another passage reveals him grappling with his own slothfulness in view of God’s mercy, lamenting his tendency to do ‘so little for Him who hath done and suffered all things for me’.¹⁰¹ Francis II’s *biblicism* is apparent in his prose itself; like many evangelicals, it is dominated by biblical idiom, with scriptural passages inserted into the text ‘in a kind of cut-and-paste fashion... as part of his own first-person vocabulary’.¹⁰²

Desperate to see signs of the Lord ‘touching their hearts’, Francis II sought to raise his children as ‘vital religionists’ and presided over their daily devotions, prayers and bible-reading.¹⁰³ As one close friend commented, ‘[t]he situation in which I recollect him... is with his household convened around him for morning and evening worship’.¹⁰⁴ The Cobbs regularly attended church together: on Sacrament Sundays, for example, they frequented the parish church twice (for morning-prayer and forenoon-service) before attending the afternoon/evening Baptist lecture.¹⁰⁵ Both Francis William and Thomas Francis inherited their father’s evangelical faith and subscribed substantial amounts to the building of a staunchly evangelical parish church in Margate.¹⁰⁶ After emancipation, the family went on to found an evangelical lectureship at this church (Holy Trinity), spending over £5,000.¹⁰⁷ As Walton writes, ‘[t]he Cobbs were anxious to do all they could for the spiritual welfare of the town’ and this lectureship allowed them to maintain ‘the strict evangelical character of the Parish’.¹⁰⁸

Evangelical belief, with its emphasis on activism, prescribed engagement with society. Although evangelicals recognised that faith alone saved, works were seen as the only reliable evidence of salvation and every earthly action became imbued with ‘infinite consequence in the next’.¹⁰⁹ The dominant early nineteenth-century eschatological paradigm was optimistic postmillenarianism, which – when married with enlightenment ideas about human progress – assumed that society was

salvable. Not only was Francis II concerned about the spiritual welfare of his employees, encouraging the brewery-men to attend ‘some place of worship on the Lord’s Day’, but his family was also at the heart of evangelicalism’s nineteenth-century ‘empire of philanthropy’.¹¹⁰ Anti-slavery provided an outlet for the Cobbs’s restless activism and just as Wilberforce privately wrote, ‘God Almighty has placed before me two great Objects: the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners’, Francis II had a similar epiphany.¹¹¹ In 1824, he resolved that ‘God still has somewhat to do in and by me, whereby he may be glorified’.¹¹² Shortly afterwards – when the emancipation drive began – his family became involved with the Margate Anti-Slavery Association: this was no mere coincidence.

Evangelicalism and Anti-Slavery

Evangelicals like the Cobbs undoubtedly recognised that they had not only been saved *from* something, but *for* something. However, encouraging activism was only one way in which ‘vital religion’ contributed to anti-slavery; evangelical theology also predisposed anti-slavery thought. As Roger Anstey writes:

For the saved, slavery stood particularly condemned precisely because the conception of Redemption was central for him. He could not but help relate the work of Redemption in its existential saving role, as it so wonderfully applied to him, to the historical framework of the redemption of the Chosen People from their bondage in Egypt... spiritual and physical slavery were linked in an overarching typology.¹¹³

In Exodus, God had physically brought his people Israel ‘out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage’.¹¹⁴ Not only was this foundational, biblical narrative implicitly critical of contemporary slavery, but it could also be supported by New Testament passages like Luke 4:18 (when Jesus claimed he had come to bring ‘deliverance to the captives’). Acutely aware that they had once ‘serve[d] sin’, evangelicals uniquely appreciated their own spiritual redemption from its bondage through Christ, who had died to ‘destroy’ that ‘body of sin’.¹¹⁵ Francis II himself adopted this language in one letter to his sister, commenting that his fellow man was ‘in this world imprisoned, as it were, with sins’.¹¹⁶ This biblical ‘link’ between physical and spiritual slavery was also central to the anti-slavery thought of Francis William. The choice phrase ‘liberty to the captives’ features on a memorandum written in his hand and summarises an argument (based on Luke 4:18) that he delivered at an 1833 anti-slavery public meeting.¹¹⁷ Slavery also violated the Christian ‘law of love’, enshrined in the ‘Golden Rule’ (‘All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them’); and the inclusion of the phrase ‘first principles, do as be

done by' in the aforementioned memorandum reveals the influence of this biblical passage on Francis William.¹¹⁸ At the same 1833 public meeting, the Deputy described anti-slavery as 'the cause of suffering *humanity*', a portrayal rooted in Scripture. Acts 17:26 stated that God 'hath made of one blood *all* the nations of men' and other passages emphasised the natural and moral equality of man. Genesis 1:27, for example, maintained that *all* men were made in God's 'own image' and 2 Corinthians 5:15 stressed that Christ had 'died for *all*'. As Thomas Scott summarised, the slave was '[o]ur brother, our fellow man, if not [yet] our fellow Christian'.¹¹⁹ The Cobbs were exposed to these contemporary arguments, as Francis II subscribed to Scott's Bible Commentary and – according to William Francis – 'was in the habit of extracting very largely from the Practical Observations', which 'next to the Bible itself ... [was] his chief study and delight'.¹²⁰ The family's evangelicalism – and exposure to literature that condemned slavery on biblical grounds – effectively predisposed them to define slavery as a religious (not political) issue. If defined as such, slavery could not be 'render[ed] to Caesar': it became an evil that *had* to be conquered, an outlet for both uneasy consciences and thankful hearts.¹²¹

Anti-slavery was not, however, 'intrinsic' to evangelicalism, just as many contemporaries supported emancipation for reasons other than 'vital religion'.¹²² The evangelical Cobbs were *predisposed* to define slavery as a religious issue, but this did not mean they would do so: it certainly did not mean they would become activists. As Matthews summarises, 'anti-slavery ... was a potentiality of Evangelicalism ... it was not a necessary, compelling conclusion of Evangelicalism itself'.¹²³ It was often defeated by material interest, convenience, or simply because the institution was out of sight, out of mind.¹²⁴

One of the most pervasive evangelical arguments for abolition in the nineteenth century was that slavery was a *national* sin and caused *national* judgements. As Thompson mused whilst in Margate; 'I wait for judgement on this deep stain'd land/ I wait to feel the Sin-avenging hand'.¹²⁵ Acutely conscious of the workings of providence in his own life, this argument resonated with Francis II who interpreted economic distress, bankruptcy, international conflict and the king's madness as 'national judgements': 'The Lord is never at a loss how to visit a disobedient people, and such we assuredly are'.¹²⁶ He applied this same logic to Margate, when it suffered from a lack of visitors: 'As a place we are sadly dissipated and corrupt ... may we not expect that God will deal with towns as with nations?'.¹²⁷ Such a mentality certainly helps explain the intensity of his family's involvement with grass-roots anti-slavery.

Sadly, the Cobbs's thoughts on slavery rarely appear in their own words as the archive predominantly contains 'incoming' correspondence, not the letters the family actually wrote. Two anti-slavery petitions, however,

provide further insights into Francis William's mental world. Although intended to be representative of the Margate voice, Cobb drafted these petitions and the rhetorical framework he chose to employ is particularly revealing. Both drafts emphasise the emotional, motivating power of religion, with the 1830 petition denouncing slavery as a '*stain upon our Christian Character*' and the 1833 petition labelling it '*anti-Christian*'.¹²⁸ They also suggest, however, that Francis William was influenced by natural rights philosophy. The atmosphere of the Enlightenment was formative; it imbued contemporaries with libertarian values and intersected in interesting ways with evangelicalism, which did not operate within an ideological vacuum. In both drafts, the fashionable moral philosophy of the century is 'transposed ... into a religious key' with slavery described as a 'violation of the great principles of *justice*' (note: not *liberty*).¹²⁹ A *fusion* of religious and libertarian sentiment seems to have characterised Francis William's anti-slavery thought, as Enlightenment ideals reinforced 'newly awakened Christian conviction' of a similar temper.¹³⁰ Evangelicalism appears to have acted as the 'golden thread' that linked everything together: not only did the Cobbs's faith provide the lens through which they interpreted their world, but it also provided the rhetoric through which their thoughts could be expressed.

Despite being acutely profit-conscious, the Cobbs's anti-slavery commitment was not economically motivated. Although their business empire was diverse, emancipation was highly damaging and reduced their profit-margins significantly: not only did it affect a decline in shipping and ensure fewer wreckages of West Indiamen (the agency's most lucrative salvages), but it also increased the price of rum (imported regularly for the brewery's tied houses). Although it has been argued that contemporaries anticipated a different post-emancipation landscape, Drescher has conclusively demonstrated that economic arguments (based on Adam Smith's dictum 'the work done by freemen comes cheaper in the end') *only* became decisive with the 1833 Emancipation Bill.¹³¹ In the 1820s – when the Cobbs became involved with grass-roots anti-slavery – economic arguments were peripheral; it is no surprise that they do not feature in either the draft petitions or the 1833 memoranda.

If evangelicalism governed the family's conscious thought, capitalism arguably dominated the realm of the subconscious.¹³² Thomas Haskell has persuasively argued that the intensified market activity and extended networks of credit and communication (intrinsic in banking, brewing and shipping) birthed a new 'cognitive style', which stressed that actions, and inactions, had wider consequences.¹³³ For the scrupulous, capitalist activity 'developed' a sense of moral responsibility for geographically 'remote' evils like slavery. This thesis, however, fails to explain why the Cobbs focussed their humanitarianism on slavery *specifically* nor why they became highly active. The evangelical idea of 'national sin' better

explains their sense of complicity in slavery, and acknowledgement of ‘Retributive Providence’ was arguably a greater ‘spur to incessant activity’.¹³⁴

As Davies argues, the ‘needs and interests of particular classes [did have] much to do with a given society’s receptivity to new ideas’ and anti-slavery certainly ‘reflected the [subconscious] needs... of the emerging *capitalist* order’.¹³⁵ Not only did it legitimise capitalism by establishing slavery as its antithesis, but it also ‘opened new sources of *moral* prestige’ and defined ‘a participating role for middle class activism’.¹³⁶ Local anti-slavery allowed individuals to distinguish themselves socially and politically, to acquire status and respectability in a society where ‘men especially strove to fashion, promote and advertise themselves’.¹³⁷ Although the Cobbs dominated civic affairs before they became involved with the Margate Association, their participation undoubtedly enhanced their social position and local reputation. More importantly, however, it allowed them to *redeem* their family name and draw a line under their past business practice. Evangelicalism was pre-eminently the lens through which they understood their activism and – although susceptible to subconscious influences – the Cobbs sought to behave in accordance with their beliefs and principles.

Historians have rightly been sceptical of idealistic interpretations of emancipation. However, as John Stuart Mill once mused, ‘[i]t is what men think, that determines how they act’ and the evangelical beliefs held by the Cobbs exerted considerable influence over their lives.¹³⁸ Evangelicalism does not, in itself, explain why anti-slavery became the issue of a generation: the only ‘necessary, compelling conclusion’ of a theology which stressed the preaching of the gospel to all men was missionary activity.¹³⁹ Understanding *how* contemporaries came to define slavery – and specifically emancipation – as a religious issue will undoubtedly be the subject of important future scholarship. Evangelicalism did, however, prescribe an engagement with society and, once slavery was defined as a religious issue, the *intensity* with which evangelicals held their beliefs explains why many became *activists*. As Charles Simeon wrote to Francis William, ‘Wellington was not content with Waterloo, nor with any thing short of Paris itself: nor will any attainment satisfy me [whilst there is still much left to do]’.¹⁴⁰ The Cobbs of Margate were certainly not plaster saints; they too were motivated by profit, reputation and a wider self-interest. As Hilton reminds, ‘[t]here can be little doubt that ... evangelicals were sincere. This does not mean ... that they were motivated by humanitarian feeling’ alone.¹⁴¹ Anti-slavery was particularly attractive as it averted national judgement, arrested the decay of public morals and facilitated the conversion of the slaves. However, feelings of guilt, as well as the overflow of gratitude – for doing ‘so little for Him who hath done and suffered all things for me’ – were incredibly potent forces, and

the Cobbs directed these towards anti-slavery.¹⁴² They applied the logic of evangelicalism vigorously to all aspects of their lives and cannot be understood without reference to it.

CONCLUSION

In 1845, Francis William subscribed £2 2s. to '[erect] a Monument to the memory of SIR THOMAS FOWELL BUXTON ... in Westminster Abbey', immortalising his family's commitment to anti-slavery.¹⁴³ Although the Cobbs had acquired wealth and social position through slavery, their conversion to evangelicalism made them anxious to draw a line under this 'problematic' episode and redeem their family name. Their own contribution to anti-slavery deserved particular commemoration; if nothing else, it celebrated a God who was able to 'make all things new'.¹⁴⁴ Besides, there was further cause for celebration as the family's grass-roots activity had enhanced their reputation locally. As one *Punch* extract, entitled 'A Great Man', wryly reported

... the health of MR. COBB, the brewer, was proposed, as that of a gentleman who 'was born great, had achieved greatness, and had had greatness thrust upon him'. It is evident that the brewer is not thought small beer of in his own neighbourhood. We wonder that Margate is capable of holding so great a man with his triple amount of magnitude.¹⁴⁵

Through an engagement with one anti-slavery family, this article has explored the social profiles, networks and day-to-day activities of those involved with anti-slavery; and answered important questions about the culture of grass-roots anti-slavery and the mechanisms employed by local auxiliaries. Not only does this study add to our understanding of the national movement, but it also illustrates in microcosm what was happening around the country. Most importantly, it challenges some of the conclusions made by influential scholars like Turley and Drescher. The lesser gentry, evangelical, Dissenter-Anglican Cobbs do not fit either scholar's profile of the 'typical anti-slavery campaigner' in the 1820-30s. Moreover, the existence of a *cross-class* and *cross-denominational* anti-slavery constituency in Margate adds further layers of complexity to the received picture.

Through focussing on the experience of one evangelical family, this study has necessarily been a meditation on the relationship between evangelicalism and anti-slavery. It has illustrated how grass-roots movements (in the age of emancipation) relied heavily upon religious networks to draw and bind people to the cause; how anti-slavery rhetoric drew heavily on religious idiom; and how religious conviction remained an important motivating factor. This study has not attempted to answer *why* emancipation occurred in 1833; it provides only a small insight into

public opinion. However, since the publication of *Capitalism and Slavery*, it has been unfashionable to emphasise the evangelical contribution to anti-slavery and there has been a tendency to downplay the local movement's religious character (to avoid being charged with writing naïve or 'idealistic' scholarship). The teleology inherent in early anti-slavery historiography fails to stand up to historical scrutiny; however, historians have been so anxious to avoid the mistakes of past generations that they have pushed evangelicalism too far out of the picture. The Cobbs *chose* to define slavery as a religious issue, as did many of their contemporaries – a consequence of their highly religious milieu. Living in an increasingly secular society, we no longer understand the emotive power of evangelical theology. As Davis acknowledges:

we have uncritically tended to assume that ... Christianity was somehow diluted and secularised as religious men and women became preoccupied with social problems [like slavery] ... Such assumptions lead easily to a crude reductionism in which 'sin', for example, means something other than sin...¹⁴⁶

In this framework, concepts like 'sin' lose their emotive power, and the evangelical rhetoric of national sin and national judgement – once so potent – loses its intensity. This study must not be seen as a return to the old historiography (which saw anti-slavery as the *sole* work of men of evangelical belief); but it is a reminder that such men existed and that the emotive energy generated within evangelicalism, *if* directed into anti-slavery, was strong enough to motivate action.

(Editor's note: this article is a shortened version of a dissertation submitted as part of the Tripos Examination in the Faculty of History, Cambridge University, in which the Thanet anti-slavery campaigners' participation in other local reform movements is explored in greater detail.)

ENDNOTES

¹ Francis Cobb, W. F. Cobb, *Memoir of Francis Cobb* (Maidstone, 1835), pp. 51-52.

² W.E.H. Lecky, *A History of European Morals* (6th edn: London, 1884), I, p. 153.

³ See the 'Abolition Map' in Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, 2 vols (London, 1808).

⁴ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1944; reissued New York, 1961), pp. 178, 210.

⁵ Qu. in Thomas Bender (ed.), *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley, CA, 1992), p. 71.

⁶ Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), p. 21.

⁷ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, NY, 1975), pp. 238-9.

⁸ J.R. Oldfield, *Popular politics and British anti-slavery* (Manchester, 1995); Judith Jennings, *The business of abolishing the slave trade, 1783-1807* (London, 1997).

⁹ Seymour Drescher, Review Essay of 'The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation', *History and Theory*, XXXII (1993), p. 329.

¹⁰ David Killingray, 'Kent and the Abolition of the Slave Trade: a County Study, 1760s-1807', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, CXXVII (2007), 109.

¹¹ London, British Library, Add. MSS 21255, Abolition Committee Minutes, dd. 26 August 1788.

¹² Killingray, 'Kent and Abolition', 109.

¹³ Howard Temperley, Review of 'London, Metropolis of the Slave Trade', *Journal of Southern History*, LXXI (2005), p. 137.

¹⁴ William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (1830; revised edn, London, 1957), I, p. 45.

¹⁵ Edward Wedlake Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales: or Delineations Topographical, Historical and Descriptive* (Kent, 1808), VIII, p. 956.

¹⁶ *The Licensed Victuallers' Gazette*, 4 December 1875, p. 398.

¹⁷ Peter Borsary, 'The English Urban Renaissance: The Development of Provincial Urban Culture c. 1680-c. 1760', *Social History*, V (1977), p. 591, p. 592.

¹⁸ Francis Cobb I initially completed a seven-year apprenticeship, see Cobb Papers U1453/F/15/2-3 (formerly at East Kent Archives Centre, Whitfield, but now at Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone). For the brewery's foundation, see K.E. Lampard, 'Cobb & Son, Bankers of Margate, c.1785-1840' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Kent, 1986), p. 415; Cobb Papers U1453/T2, Bundle C (title deed).

¹⁹ Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 14.

²⁰ Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 13.

²¹ Cobb, *Memoir*, pp. 16-17 – letter dd. 29 July 1788.

²² Exodus 20:5-6.

²³ Peter Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England, 1700-1830* (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 252-254.

²⁴ Cobb Papers U1453/037/46-47 – notice of hearing 'for offences against excise duties', dd. September 1799.

²⁵ Cobb Papers U1453/B5/3/13.

²⁶ Cobb Papers U1453/B5/3/29. See also U1453/B5/3/15; and U1453/Z55/15.

²⁷ Lampard, 'Cobb and Son', p.15.

²⁸ *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 January 1821.

²⁹ Cobb Papers U1453 B5/4/111- letters from John Blackett, London agent, to Cobb and Son (1803-1824), esp. letters dd. 31 December 1803 and 17 February 1804.

³⁰ Cobb Papers U1453 B5/3/13 – draft bill costing up food and accommodation for the crew of the *Emperor*, wrecked on Mouve Sands in 1782, charges for 'Twelve Black Men' per day (12s).

³¹ Cobb Papers U1453 B5/3/37, bill receipt dd. 8 October 1806.

³² Cobb Papers U1453/B5/4/167.

³³ Cobb Papers U1453/B2/40/156.

³⁴ Killingray, 'Kent and Abolition', 111-114.

³⁵ Alan Armstrong, *The Economy of Kent, 1640-1914*, (Rochester, 1995), p. 217. See also K. J. Lampard, 'County Banks and Economic Development in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: the Case of the Margate Bank', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, CXII (1993), 79-80.

³⁶ Qu. in John Whyman, 'Aspects of holidaymaking and resort development within the Isle of Thanet, with particular reference to Margate, circa 1736 to circa 1840' (unpublished

doctoral thesis, University of Kent, 1980), p. 29; Cobb Papers U1453/B3/15/2000, letter dd. 9 June 1787, letter dd. 22 April 1793 and other undated items; U1453/B3/15/2002, letter dd. 10 June 1802.

³⁷ *Eighth Report of the Directors of the African Institution*, (London, 1814), pp. 51-67.

³⁸ *Eighth Report of African Institution*, p. 66.

³⁹ Margate was an unincorporated limb of the Cinque Port of Dover until 1857. For three successive generations, a Cobb served as 'Deputy to the Mayor and Jurats of the said Town and Port of Dov[e]r' and effectively held the office of Mayor in Margate. Cobb Papers U1453/O35/7; U1453/O35/1-8, 10, 16.

⁴⁰ Cobb Papers U1453 Z103 – *Kentish Chronicle*, 14 November 1806 (newspaper copy retained by Francis Cobb amongst his anti-slavery documents); U1453 087/1-33 – papers relating to 1806 election, especially 087/9B (subscription list) and 087/11 (letter from Ja[me]s Royle, chairman of Honywood's committee, dd. 6 November 1806, thanking Francis Cobb for his support and 'kind exertions'.)

⁴¹ Cobb Papers U1453 Z103, *Kentish Chronicle*, 14 November 1806.

⁴² Cobb Papers U1453/C278 – letter from William Wilberforce to Francis Cobb dd. 27 August 1807.

⁴³ Although no archival material survives relating to this period, Margate and Ramsgate are known to have petitioned the Commons in 1814 (a response to concessions made at the Congress of Paris that allowed the French to re-open their slave trade). See *Eighth Report of African Institution*, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁴ *Substance of the Debate in the House of Commons on the 15th May, 1823...* (London, 1823), p. xxxviii, p. xxxix.

⁴⁵ The *Times*, 22 March 1824, iib, notes that petitions for 'gradual abolition' were raised in 'Strood, Sevenoaks [and] Margate'.

⁴⁶ *Report of the Agency Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society* (London, 1832), p. 17.

⁴⁷ University of Manchester, John Rylands Library (JRL), Raymond English Anti-Slavery Collection (REAS) 2/1/4 – letter from George Thompson to his wife, dd. 4-7 October 1831.

⁴⁸ Cobb Papers U1453/Q201 – 'Circular', dd. 24 December 1831

⁴⁹ Designed as propaganda documents to encourage social emulation, national subscription lists only recorded the most generous and prestigious donors. Your average annual subscribers (as the Cobbs were likely to have been) did not feature. See, for example, *Account of the Receipts and Disbursements of the Anti-Slavery Society for the Years 1823, 1824, 1825 and 1826: With a list of the subscribers* (London, 1827).

⁵⁰ Cobb Papers U1453/Q201.

⁵¹ Cobb Papers U1453/Z28/3; U1453/Z28/8.

⁵² Cobb Papers U1453/Z28/7.

⁵³ Cobb Papers U1453/Z28.

⁵⁴ Cobb Papers U1453/Z27.

⁵⁵ *Accounts of the Receipts and Disbursements of the Anti-Slavery Society* (various years) – entries for 'Margate Association' under the heading 'Payments for Publications'.

⁵⁶ *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, XXV, (June 1827). Significantly, this pamphlet appears in the lending-library collection.

⁵⁷ *Black Widow; A True, Interesting and Affecting Story* (Margate, 1827), [http://www.recoveredhistories.org/pamphlet1.php?catid=615, Anti-Slavery International, accessed 20 October 2010]. Further pamphlets are likely to have been printed; however, these local publications are less likely to survive due to their smaller print-runs.

⁵⁸ Cobb Papers U1453/O43/22.

⁵⁹ Account dd. 6 October – from St Peter's, Isle of Thanet (possibly the Baptist minister, Rev. Cramp), taken from *Report of Agency Committee*, p. 16.

- ⁶⁰ JRL REAS/2/1/4 – letter from George Thompson to his wife, dd. 4-7 October 1831.
- ⁶¹ Cobb Papers U1453/094/3 – letter from Sir. E. Knatchbull, M.P to F. W. Cobb, dd. 15 May 1828, acknowledging receipt of this petition. Significantly, this shows Francis William acting solely in the interests of the Margate Association as it was before he was appointed to the office of Deputy.
- ⁶² Cobb Papers U1453/043/13/1.
- ⁶³ Cobb Papers U1453/043/21.
- ⁶⁴ Cobb Papers U1453/C571 – letter from W. Frederick Baylay, Vicar of St John the Baptist, to F. W. Cobb, dd. 30 Oct 1830.
- ⁶⁵ Cobb Papers U1453/043/21/4.
- ⁶⁶ Cobb Papers U1453/043/21/4 – memorandum written on back of anti-slavery notice dd. 3 April 1833.
- ⁶⁷ U1453/043/13/4 – letter dd. 15 Nov. 1830.
- ⁶⁸ Cobb Papers U1453/043/21/3 – printed April 1833 petition, with Francis William’s amendments and annotations.
- ⁶⁹ Cobb Papers U1453/O95/119 – letter from Plumptre to F. W. Cobb, dd. April 29 1833. Francis William’s effort did help ‘draw’ Knatchbull ‘to the cause’ as he became an active anti-slavery supporter.
- ⁷⁰ Cobb Papers U1453/Z28 – *Address to the People of Great Britain*, document dd. 25 April 1831.
- ⁷¹ Cobb Papers U1453/O95.
- ⁷² Cobb Papers U1453/043/22/17.
- ⁷³ Cobb Papers U1453/Z28.
- ⁷⁴ David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780-1860*, (London, 1991), p. 60. He sees ‘attitude to public meetings’ as an important indicator of the efforts of anti-slavery auxiliaries to mobilise public opinion.
- ⁷⁵ Turley, *Culture of Anti-Slavery*, p. 87.
- ⁷⁶ Report of Agency Committee, p. 4, p. 5.
- ⁷⁷ JRL REAS 2/1/3; REAS 2/1/4; REAS 2/1/5. During the tour, he delivered two public lectures in Margate, in late September and early October, as well as one in Ramsgate.
- ⁷⁸ See, in particular, Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective*, (London, 1987), esp. p. 133.
- ⁷⁹ Turley, *Culture of Antislavery*, p. 94.
- ⁸⁰ Turley, *Culture of Antislavery*, p. 108, p. 182.
- ⁸¹ See James Walvin, ‘Introduction’ to Walvin (ed.), *Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846*, (London, 1982), pp. 1-21; Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*; Edith Hurwitz, *Politics and the Public Conscience: Slave Emancipation and the Abolitionist Movement in Britain* (London, 1973), p. 82.
- ⁸² David Turley, ‘Kent and the Campaigns against the Slave Trade and Slavery’, 2007, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/kent/content/articles/2007/03/08/abolition_turley_feature.shtml, accessed 6 August 2010] (para. 11 of 15); Table 6.1, ‘Percentage of English denominational antislavery petitions 1788-1831’, in Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, p. 127.
- ⁸³ Hurwitz, *Politics and Public Conscience*, p. 44.
- ⁸⁴ In 1824, for example, the CMS contribution in Margate was £18 14s (not including substantial individual benefactors) - *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, Twenty-Fourth Year*, XXIV (London, 1824).
- ⁸⁵ Turley, *Culture of Antislavery*, p. 5.
- ⁸⁶ Turley, *Culture of Antislavery*, p. 8.
- ⁸⁷ Turley, *Culture of Antislavery*, p. 8.

⁸⁸ Francis William headed-up the Margate auxiliary of the LMS and is listed as ‘Director’ in The Report of the Directors to the Forty-Sixth General Meeting of the Missionary Society usually called the London Missionary Society, XLVI (1840), p. xiii.

⁸⁹ Cobb Papers U1453/Z/1/5.

⁹⁰ Cobb Papers U1453/Z52/6; U1453/Z52/8; U1453/044/11/1-11; U1453/Z52/7.

⁹¹ See Cobb Papers U1453/O92/31; U1453/O44/13; U1453/O92/1-32.

⁹² Turley, *Culture of Antislavery*, p. 6.

⁹³ Mockett, *Journal*, p. 195.

⁹⁴ Mockett, *Journal*, p. 194.

⁹⁵ U1453/095/119 – letter from Plumpton to F.W. Cobb dd. 29 April 1833; U1453/O95/120 – letter dd. May 20 1833; U1453/O95/120 – letter dd. 20 May 1833; U1453/O95/121 – letter dd. 4 June 1833; U1453/O95/157 – letter dd. 19 June 1835.

⁹⁶ David Brion Davis, ‘The Perils of Doing History by Ahistorical Abstraction: A Reply to Thomas L. Haskell’s AHR Forum Reply’, in Thomas Bender (ed.), *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley, CA, 1992), p. 306.

⁹⁷ Brown, *Moral Capital*, p. 25.

⁹⁸ David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989; 2000 edn); Henry Venn (ed.), *The life and a selection from the letters of the late Rev. Henry Venn, M. A.*, (London, 1835), p. vii.

⁹⁹ Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Cobb Papers U1453/F14/2-3 – letter from Francis II to Francis William, dd. 6 August 1824.

¹⁰¹ Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 18.

¹⁰² D.B. Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* (Oxford, 1996; 2001 edn), p. 23.

¹⁰³ Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁴ Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁵ Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁶ Cobb Papers U1453/Z53/11; Canterbury, Canterbury Cathedral Archives (CCA), Holy Trinity Parish Records, U3-268/6/B/16 – Committee Minute Book, with list of subscriptions. Cobb & Co. (Francis William and Francis II) gave £300, Thomas Francis £50.

¹⁰⁷ CCA, Holy Trinity Parish Records, U3-268/25/A1/1 – the lectureship was founded in 1841 and funded one Sunday evening and one Wednesday evening service. Francis William had five-tenths of the share, Thomas Francis one-tenth, Rev. William Francis one-tenth, Rev. John Francis one-tenth and Rev. Richard Reade (brother-in-law), one-tenth.

¹⁰⁸ Hugh Merscy Walton, *A Short History of Holy Trinity Church, Margate, 1825-1932* (Margate, 1932), ch. 7;

¹⁰⁹ G.M. Young, *Portrait of an Age: Victorian England* (London, 1936; 1977 edn), pp. 21-2.

¹¹⁰ Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 45; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 71.

¹¹¹ William Wilberforce, diary entry of 28 October, 1787, qu. in Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, *The life of William Wilberforce*, 5 vols., (London, 1838), I, p. 149.

¹¹² Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 82.

¹¹³ Roger Anstey, ‘Slavery and the Protestant Ethic’, in Michael Craton (ed.), ‘Roots and Branches: Current Directions in Slave Studies’, in *Historical Reflections*, VI (1979), pp. 157-181, at p. 159.

¹¹⁴ Exodus 20:2.

¹¹⁵ Romans 6:6.

¹¹⁶ Letter from Francis II to sister Elizabeth (Mrs Styleman), dd.12 May 1838, reprinted in Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 84.

- ¹¹⁷ Cobb Papers U1453/O43/21/4 (memorandum on reverse).
- ¹¹⁸ Matthew 7:12. Significantly, the Parable of the Good Samaritan taught that benevolence should operate *across* ethnic boundaries (Luke 10:25-37, at 29)
- ¹¹⁹ Taken from Thomas Scott's exegesis of 2 Chronicles 28: 9-11.
- ¹²⁰ Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 28. For the 'encouragement [Cobb] gave to [the] publication of [Scott's] commentary', see Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 28; Cobb Papers U1453 A5/9 - fragmented 1825 account book detailing this £2 18s subscription.
- ¹²¹ Mark 12:17. From this, it was inferred that it was right to submit to the 'powers that be' (Romans 13:1), *unless* they contravened God's law.
- ¹²² Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 71. Many Whigs, for example, felt for the cause of suffering humanity without really seeing God as having a role.
- ¹²³ Matthews, *Religion in the Old South*, p. 79.
- ¹²⁴ See Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, pp. 18-19, esp. at 18. This was famously the case in the slave-holding American South.
- ¹²⁵ JRL REAS 2/1/ 5 – letter from George Thompson to his wife, dd. 8-10 October 1831.
- ¹²⁶ Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 56, p. 83.
- ¹²⁷ Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 74.
- ¹²⁸ Cobb Papers U1453/O43/13; U1453 U1453/O43/21.
- ¹²⁹ Roger Anstey, 'The pattern of British Abolitionism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in Bolt and Drescher (eds.), *Antislavery, Religion and Reform* (Folkestone, 1980), p. 21.
- ¹³⁰ Roger Anstey, 'Capitalism and Slavery: A Critique', *Economic History Review*, XXI (1968), p. 319.
- ¹³¹ Seymour Drescher, *The mighty experiment: free labour versus slavery in British emancipation* (New York, 2002).
- ¹³² Davis, *Problem of Slavery*; Thomas L. Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility: Part 1', *The American Historical Review*, XC (1985) pp. 339-361; Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility: Part 2', *The American Historical Review*, XC (1985), pp. 547-566.
- ¹³³ Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility: Part 1', p. 342.
- ¹³⁴ Roger Anstey, 'A re-interpretation of the abolition of the British slave trade, 1806-1807', *English Historical Review*, LXXXVII (1962), p. 313.
- ¹³⁵ Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, p. 467, p. 49.
- ¹³⁶ Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, p. 384-5.
- ¹³⁷ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People? England, 1783-1846* (Oxford, 2006), p. 37.
- ¹³⁸ J. Stuart Mill, 'Considerations on Representative Government', in John Gray (ed.) *Liberty and Other Essays* (Oxford, 1991), p. 215.
- ¹³⁹ Matthews, *Religion in the Old South*, p. 79.
- ¹⁴⁰ Cobb Papers U1453/C495 – letter from Charles Simeon to F. W. Cobb dd. 30 July 1836. This intensity marked evangelicals out from other religionists.
- ¹⁴¹ Hilton, *Mad, bad and dangerous?*, p. 187.
- ¹⁴² Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 18.
- ¹⁴³ Cobb Papers U1453/Q213 - this was the maximum subscription.
- ¹⁴⁴ Revelation 21:5.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Punch* (July to December 1846), vol. XI, (London, 1846), p. 242.
- ¹⁴⁶ David Brion Davis, 'An Appreciation of Roger Anstey', in Bolt and Drescher (eds), *Antislavery, Religion and Reform* (Folkestone, 1980), pp. 12-13.