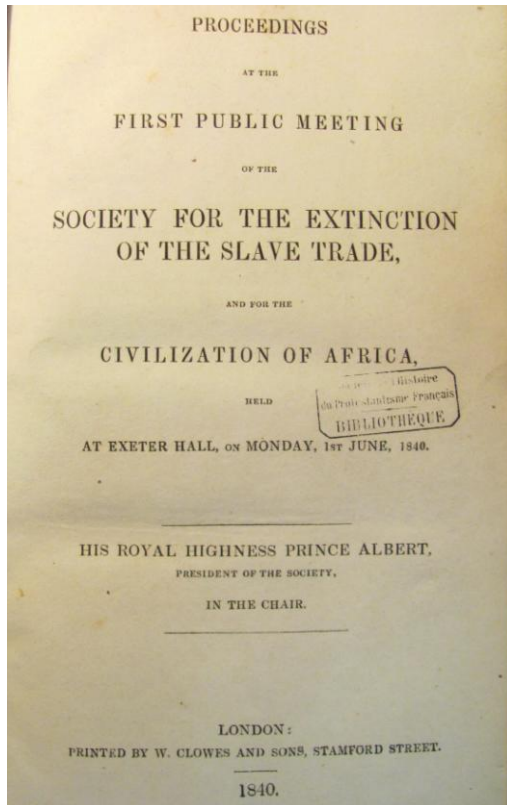


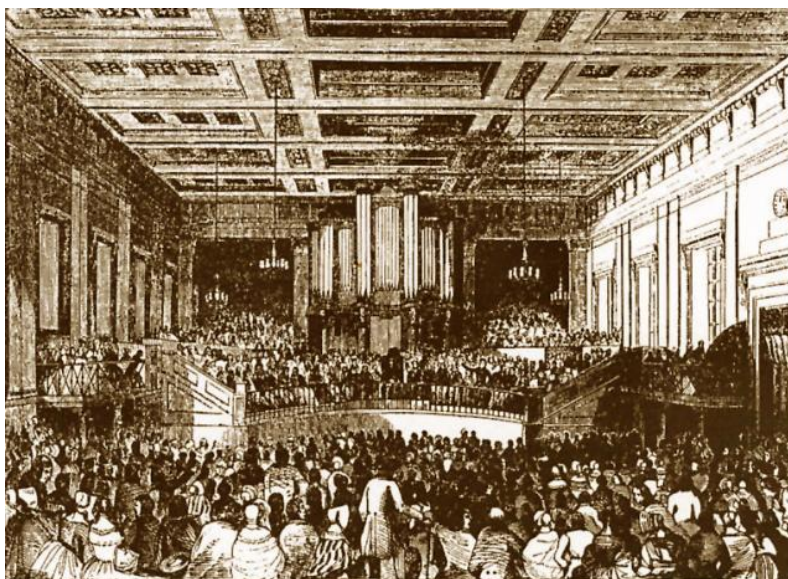
Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade, and for the Civilization of Africa (African Civilization Society)



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British abolitionist campaigns continued after colonial slavery finally came to an end in 1838. Within a year, two new societies had been founded aiming to combat the slave trade and slavery: the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, in February 1839, and the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilization of Africa (African Civilization Society), in June 1839. Both new anti-slavery societies held a series of prominent meetings at Exeter Hall in London to publicise their aims and raise funds.

By 1839, opposition to slavery had taken on a mainstream humanitarian role in British politics. Abolitionist societies benefitted from support from all sectors of society: Prince Albert was President of the African Civilization Society, and membership included British Earls, Lords and MPs, as well as distinguished foreign members. The Chairman was Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, author of *The African slave trade and its remedy* (1840). The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, led by the Quaker abolitionist Joseph Sturge, also commanded broad public support.



African Civilization Meeting at Exeter Hall.

Illustrated London News, 26 June 1842.

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The two societies differed sharply in their aims and the means by which they believed widespread emancipation could be achieved. Sturge's Anti-Slavery Society was initially founded on pacifist principles, and focused on providing charitable relief and education to the former slaves in the British colonies, and campaigning against plantation slavery in the rest of the Americas. The Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilization of Africa, as the name suggests, thought that direct intervention in Africa should be the next main focus of Britain's anti-slavery efforts. Following the recommendations of the Chairman's influential book, *The African slave trade and its remedy*, the African Civilization Society questioned the continued effectiveness of the naval patrols which had been operating off the coast of West Africa since Britain's abolition of the slave trade in 1807. A flyer publicising the Society argued that Africa was "anxious for European manufactures and instruction", but that the continent was losing more and more of its natural riches through the continuing illegal slave trade. An alternative approach had been suggested by Thomas Fowell Buxton: instead of concentrating efforts on the coast and negotiating with other European powers, Britain should approach African leaders directly and draw up treaties with them to end the slave trade. Buxton's long term plan was to end slave trading by establishing a widespread British colonial presence in Africa, based on agriculture, trade and 'civilization'.

The African Civilization Society held general public meetings in London in June 1840 and June 1842 (see image above, from the *Illustrated London News*). Speeches were made by public figures and well-known abolitionists such as Thomas Fowell Buxton, William Cowper and Stephen Lushington. In 1840, Fowell Buxton asked the meeting: "shall a new effort and a mighty one be made for the deliverance of Africa?" (*Proceedings at the first public meeting*, p.10). He suggested a degree of cooperation with the United States, France and the Vatican in order to encourage the spread of Christianity in Africa.

The impetus of the African Civilization Society faded quite quickly after the failure of the British government's 1841 expedition to the Niger, but Thomas Fowell Buxton's book and the Society had turned the focus of anti-slavery activism back to Africa, where it would feed into ideas of civilization and colonial development in the second half of the nineteenth century.

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