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ABOLITIONISM AND THE CHURCHES, 1830-1865:
A STUDY OF ATTITUDES AND TACTICS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

John Raymond McKivigan, B. A., M. A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1977

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The conversion of the churches to the cause of immediate emancipation was one of the most sought after goals of the abolition movement in the United States. Regarding slavery from a radically different ethical perspective than their gradualist antislavery predecessors, the immediate abolitionists desired the sanction of established religious institutions for their views. Heavily influenced by contemporary evangelical trends, the new school of abolitionism considered slaveholding a sin from which true repentance required instant voluntary renunciation. But as long as almost every American religious denomination accepted slaveholders as Christians in good standing, the moral case for abolitionism was seriously undermined. Presbyterian minister Albert Barnes later expressed the stand taken by early abolitionists:

Let the time come, when, in all the mighty denominations of Christians, it can be announced that the evil is ceased with them forever; and let the voice of each denomination be lifted up in kind, but firm and solemn testimony against the system—with no mealy words, with no attempt at apology, with no wish to blink at it, with no effort to throw the social shield of religion over so great an evil—and the work is done. There is no
public sentiment in this land—there could be none created—that would resist the power of such testimony. There is no power out of the church that could sustain slavery an hour, if it were not sustained in it.

When the abolition movement was still in its infancy, its advocates approached influential clergymen and church associations to obtain their cooperation. The early abolitionists were quite confident when they first appealed to the pulpit, for as one of them recalled, they "had attributed the silence of the clergy respecting slavery to the same source with their own former quiescence, partly thoughtlessness, partly ignorance of the essential character and actual workings of the system, and partly preoccupation with subjects nearer home...." In addition, the clergy was thought to be sympathetic to reform, for many of them had shown interest in the slavery problem by involvement in the colonization movement. This optimism, however, was to be quickly dispelled. For example, William Lloyd Garrison while still an obscure editor, asked his own minister, the renowned Lyman Beecher, for an endorsement of immediate emancipation only to be told that his zeal "was commendable, but misguided." In the early 1830s, this experience was repeated again and again as most clergymen and denominations shied away from involvement in the controversial abolitionist cause.

As a result of the clerical indifference and at times outright hostility toward the immediate emancipation
program, the abolitionists' attitude toward the churches underwent extensive change. Still convinced of the righteousness of their cause, the abolitionists accused the religious institutions of risking divine retribution by thwarting rather than promoting God's will. The American Anti-Slavery Society as early as 1834 warned the denominations: "that the American Church is stained with the blood of 'the souls of the poor innocents,' and holds the keys of the great prison of oppression; that while she enslaves, she is herself enslaved; and that she can never go forth to millenial triumph until she shall wash her hands from blood --open the prison door--and let the oppressed go free."\(^5\)

Adopting a posture modeled after the prophets of Biblical times, the abolitionists began a campaign to save the church by arousing it from its wrongful toleration of the "sum of all villainies."\(^6\)

Many aspects of the history of the relations of the abolition movement to the American churches are well known. Since the pioneering research of Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, it is acknowledged that individual clergymen and church members played leading roles in the anti-slavery societies. The use of the Bible to justify slavery is a significant, though embarrassing, part of the intellectual history of many northern as well as southern churchmen. The few denominations, such as the Quakers, that held out from the general toleration of slavery are deservedly
recognized. Most importantly, in studies of abolitionism and church history, antislavery agitation is granted the major role in provoking the sectional schism of several large denominations. Despite this sizeable body of literature, several misconceptions still impair historical knowledge about the churches' role in the abolition crusade.

One of these false impressions deals with the actual standing of slavery in the northern wing of the churches during the 1840s and 1850s. Historians frequently cite the sectional schisms of several of the nation's largest denominations in these years as evidence of the growing antislavery sentiment of the North. Historical accounts frequently rely upon contemporary observers, as diverse as Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, and John Quincy Adams, who attributed the break-up of the Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, and other churches to a widening divergence between North and South on the moral questions of slavery. Since the best-known divisions had occurred by the mid-1840s, these accounts leave the impression that the antislavery sentiment of the religious sects was well in advance of that of other national institutions and that the churches had important influence on the political developments leading to war.

While these sectional religious schisms did occur largely on account of tensions arising from the issue of slavery, there is reason to question whether the divisions transformed the northern branch of the churches into
powerful exponents of the antislavery cause. Certainly this interpretation ignores the opinion of those in the vanguard of the antislavery movement, the abolitionists. However much they quarreled about other matters, most abolitionists agreed that as far as antislavery in the churches was concerned, there was much less going on than seemed to meet the eye. Parker Pillsbury, a follower of Garrison and a harsh critic of the churches, examined the antislavery claims of the post-schism Methodist Episcopal Church and declared "Grosser fraud and falsehood was never told!" As evidence Pillsbury noted the thousands of Methodist slaveholders from the Border States who remained unmolested in the northern branch of the denomination. Even abolitionists more disposed than Pillsbury toward cooperation with the churches, complained that the motive of the Baptist separation "was one, not of principle, but of policy," and that northern and southern Baptists still carried on a "cordial fraternization." These two examples of many such statements reveal that the abolitionists, by their own standards, still believed that the northern churches shared in the guilt of maintaining slavery.

Another unfortunate misconception concerning church-oriented abolitionism deals with the scope and effectiveness of abolitionist activities following the division of that movement in 1840. Historians are well acquainted with the course of major antislavery efforts prior to the schism of
the original national abolitionist organization, the Ameri­
can Anti-Slavery Society. With the fragmentation of the
movement, however, subsequent antislavery endeavors became
less coordinated and therefore harder to evaluate. In ac­
counts of the abolitionists after 1840, the faction that
followed the lead of Garrison is regarded as the chief heir
to the traditional moral-suasion approach toward secular and
religious institutions. Due to this group's reputation for
heterodox religious views and intemperate denunciations of
the churches, historians usually minimize the effectiveness
of Garrisonian agitation of the major religious bodies.

Not much more success is attributed to the efforts of
the abolitionist opponents of the Garrisonians. Historians
commonly note that most of the energy of these men was de­
voted to antislavery politics. The anti-Garrisonians' or­
ganization, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society,
attempted to keep up the traditional, broad range of aboli­
tionist activity including lobbying the churches. After a
decade and a half of financial neglect and embarrassing im­
potence, however, this society ignominiously disbanded. As
a result of these trends, historical accounts portray aboli­
tionist labors with the churches after the 1830s as diffuse,
decentralized, and insignificant. Far greater credit is ac­
corded to more moderate spokesmen who first gained influence
in the northern churches and then helped lead public opinion
to antislavery ground.13
While the schism in the American Anti-Slavery Society certainly was a setback for the abolitionists, it is inaccurate to conclude that they played little part in the subsequent development of antislavery sentiment in the churches. Close examination of the records left by the Garrisonians reveals that, despite their frequent resolutions denouncing all connections with the slavery-tolerating sects, they still participated in church-based antislavery reform. A large proportion of the membership of Garrisonian societies after 1840 continued to be clergymen and church members who still worked for abolitionist goals inside their denominations. In addition, Garrisonian presses and speaking platforms often were made available to antislavery churchmen who hesitated to affiliate with their society.

Similarly, careful study of the group that broke with the Garrisonians in 1840 reveals their uninterrupted labors to abolitionize the northern denominations. While many anti-Garrisonian abolitionists concentrated their efforts on political action, they retained both their affiliation with religious denominations and their interest in making those bodies cease all sanction for slavery. After the sectional schisms in many of these denominations these abolitionists remained active both inside their churches in pressing for a clear-cut repudiation of slavery and outside them in the new antislavery religious organizations which developed in the 1840s and 1850s. As the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery
Society faded away, these new societies provided central direction to later church oriented abolitionist activities. Garrisonian and anti-Garrisonian abolitionists were unable to overlook past grudges and did not cooperate in this work. Nevertheless both factions significantly contributed to moving the northern denominations much closer toward fulfilling the original goals and expectations of the abolition movement by the time of the Civil War.

This dissertation hopes to clear up these misconceptions and bring new light to the story of abolitionism's relation with the churches. The religious principles which helped to produce modern abolitionism need to be carefully examined to explain exactly what abolitionists demanded the churches do to relieve themselves of the charge of giving sanction to slavery. Since the major antislavery events of the 1830s are well known, this study will concentrate upon the role that the abolitionists' frustrating failures during those years played in dividing the old American Anti-Slavery Society and in changing the attitudes and tactics of the antislavery forces toward the church. The schisms in the Presbyterian, Methodist Episcopal, and Baptist denominations will be examined in perspective of abolitionism's moral principles in order to determine what actions antislavery reformers expected the churches to take to purify themselves of toleration for oppression.
With the above information serving as background, the effectiveness of a variety of new church-oriented tactics developed by abolitionists in the 1840s and 1850s can be assessed. In those years, the abolition movement produced a number of now nearly forgotten religious denominations. Individuals and whole congregations favoring abolition could join these new sects as a means of influencing their old church to adopt stronger antislavery ground. In a similar fashion abolitionists set up their own missionary and religious publication societies to draw funds away from the established "benevolent" organizations in order to pressure them to abandon policies indirectly sanctioning slavery. Abolitionists in the 1840s and 1850s sponsored a long series of "Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions." These meetings' purpose was to obtain greater circulation for abolition principles among church members and to provide some coordination and mutual encouragement for church-oriented antislavery reformers. By the late 1850s this interdenominational antislavery cooperation even developed a permanent organization in the Church Anti-Slavery Society, which remained influential in spreading abolitionist ideas through the Civil War. Finally, the antislavery political parties, along with the troubled political events of these decades, had an often unacknowledged influence upon abolitionist advances inside the nation's denominations. The examination of these varied activities will prove that church-oriented
antislavery activity did not decline after the rupture of the old abolitionist societies.

After analyzing the principles and goals of the abolitionists in relation to the church and the tactics they developed to try to get the denominations to accept them, an assessment can be made of the success of the antislavery movement in this area of its endeavor. From an examination of the evolving positions of the various religious bodies toward slavery, it will be seen that most northern sects took strong antislavery stands only much later than usually thought. In the troubled 1840s and 1850s some denominations took large steps to rid themselves of slavery. In others, however, for reasons of theological conservatism or church government, no strong antislavery position was ever adopted. Only when moral suasion against slavery had been replaced by military coercion did most of the churches finally fulfill abolitionist hopes by becoming active agents in demanding immediate emancipation. From the basis of this evidence, this study must conclude that the antislavery campaign within the churches was a success, but a success of a very qualified nature, and a success nearly as much shaped by contemporary circumstance as by abolitionist labor.
ENDNOTES


6 John Wesley's description of American Slavery which Abolitionists frequently quoted.


11 Parker Pillsbury, *The Church as It Is: or, the Forlorn Hope of Slavery* (Boston: Published by Bela Marsh, 1847), p. 46.

For many years, most students of the antislavery movement accepted the interpretation of the previously cited landmark works of Barnes and Dumond which contended that American abolitionism shifted from religious to political channels in the mid-1840s. More recently, Aileen S. Kraditor, Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969); Gerald Sorin, Abolitionism: A New Perspective (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972); James B. Stewart, Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), and others have reasserted the importance of the apolitical and secular tactics of moral suasion practiced by Garrisonian abolitionists in the 1840s and 1850s. While these studies are useful correctives to the anti-Garrisonian biases of earlier works, they ignore the unabated efforts of many abolitionists to convert the churches to antislavery activism which continued down to the Civil War. A few of the recent historical accounts of abolitionism, however, give at least a degree of note to the later phase of church-oriented antislavery endeavors. Louis Filler, The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860 (New York, Harper & Row, 1960), observes the continuing abolitionist agitation in benevolent societies in the 1850s as an indication of a growing antislavery sentiment in the North in more than political affairs. Carleton Mabee, Black Freedom: The Nonviolent Abolitionists from 1830 through the Civil War (London: The Macmillan Company, 1970) accurately describes the dissatisfaction of the abolitionists with the northern churches even after southern members had seceded from several denominations. Merton Dillon, The Abolitionists: The Growth of a Dissenting Minority (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), notes an abolitionist revival of interest in non-political methods of agitation but does not trace its impact on the religious denominations of the Free States. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery (Cleveland: The Press of the Case Western Reserve University, 1969) perhaps undervalues its subject's contribution to awakening much of the northern religious community to the moral case against slavery. Two examples of historical works which credit the more moderate mainstream church leaders, rather than the abolitionists, with supplying the North with the ethical arguments to resist the encroachments of the "Slave Power" are Clifford S. Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1960), and Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1965).
CHAPTER ONE

THE CHURCHES' ROLE IN THE ABOLITION MOVEMENT

Massachusetts abolitionist Charles K. Whipple observed in the 1850s that "the Anti-Slavery movement...was at its commencement, and has ever since been, thoroughly and emphatically a religious enterprise." Although historians in the years since have studied many wide ranging aspects of the campaign against slavery, they usually find moral repugnance for the southern institution among its strongest unifying elements. When analyzing those antislavery activities more narrowly defined as abolitionist, with which Whipple was most familiar, the religious dimension of that cause is quite visible. In accounting for the abolitionist exertions among the nation's churches, the paramount role of morally defined convictions and goals can not be denied. In order to explain the history of the church-oriented phase of the abolition campaign, it is therefore necessary to understand the religious principles and objectives of the militant antislavery reformers in the various denominations. In light of the hostile reception most churches gave abolitionist overtures, it is also valuable to comprehend
the obstacles confronting antislavery forces. When all this can be explained, it will throw light upon why the most renowned ethical movement in the nation's history had such troubled relations with the very institutions supposedly entrusted to be the moral guides for the people.  

I

The key role of religious principle in the inspiration for the modern abolition movement which began in the 1830s has been noted by historians from Gilbert H. Barnes to David B. Davis. Prior to the emergence of the new current of abolitionist thought, slavery had been judged in terms of its social, political, and economic consequences as well as its ethical implications. Even among non-slaveholders and church leaders who voiced alarm at the moral evils accompanying the "peculiar institution," great solicitude usually was expressed for the socially disrupting potentials of any drastic antislavery action. As a result programs of amelioration, gradual emancipation, and colonization found public favor, although as yet poorly perceived forces of economics and racism already were working to frustrate their final success. But even before the failures of the gradualist approach became widely apparent, new theological trends created a vastly different climate of moral judgment which would radically reset the course of the antislavery campaign.
The source for the forces revolutionizing the American religious scene in the first third of the nineteenth century was the resurgence of revivalistic preaching known as the Second Great Awakening. Like its predecessor, this evangelistic wave revitalized many United States denominations, especially those like the Methodists and Baptists that were most free from inhibiting Calvinistic influences. Orthodox Calvinism, already undergoing considerable modification among its Congregationalist and Presbyterian defenders, stressed predestination, the depravity of human nature, and man's inability to effect his own salvation. The new evangelicalism replaced Calvinist determinism with Arminian assumptions that every human being possessed the free will and moral capability to work out his conversion and redemption. Revivalism retained the traditional Calvinist emphasis upon personal sin but used it as a means to heighten the emotional pressure upon the individual to repent his sins and accept saving grace from God. Revivalistic notions of personal guilt for sins and of individual responsibility for salvation led many evangelical churchmen to conclude that immediate and complete repentance for wrong doing was the only acceptable proof of genuine Christian character. Just how these new standards of acceptable moral behavior affected the attitudes of the churches and abolitionists toward slaveholders will be discussed shortly.
An important corollary to these new evangelical assumptions was the concept of benevolence. Each new convert to evangelicalism faced a problem of seeking reassurance about the genuineness of his conversion after the emotional uplift from the revival had passed. Many of the new Christians found relief from their doubts in the preachings of Charles G. Finney, a Presbyterian minister of unorthodox views who was probably the most effective revivalist of his era. Finney taught that salvation was just the beginning of religious experience and that the proper test of love of God lay in overcoming one's self-interest and acting in a benevolent manner toward mankind. The converts, preached Finney, began a new life in which "they have no separate interests ....They should set out with a determination to aim at being useful in the highest degree possible." Disciples of Finney and of revivalists with similar benevolent creeds played major parts in the rise between 1815 and 1830 of a large number of voluntary societies, in mission, tract, temperance, and other fields. These "benevolent" societies labored for nothing less than the moral reformation of the American character. While historians advance additional explanations for the creation of such reform societies, Finneyite benevolent impulses are never denied a significant role. In addition to helping create a climate of concern for the well being of others, benevolence implied that conduct producing human misery was morally reprehensible.
Since even slaveholders conceded that regrettable evils occasionally attended their system, defenders of slavery could expect much contention with benevolent adherents.

Another outgrowth of evangelical trends with ramifications for the antislavery movement was the doctrine of perfectionism. Always implicit in revivalism's high estimation of man's free will and moral ability, forms of perfectionism appeared in several denominations and spread into secular thought. Finney's "disinterested benevolence" sent out the converted to work for the moral perfection of society. The doctrine of "entire sanctification" led many Methodists to believe that the strictest personal morality could be maintained by true Christians in the face of a corrupt world. Other perfectionists, like John Humphrey Noyes, created entire communities built upon perfectionistic tenets. While disagreeing on some points, all perfectionists shared an abhorrence for individuals and institutions tolerating any form of evil. Historians no longer believe as strongly as they once did in the influence of individual perfectionists such as Noyes and Finney upon antislavery leaders, but elements of perfectionism show up in the principles and goals of even the most orthodox church-oriented abolitionists. The influence of perfectionism helped abolitionists maintain uncompromising personal moral standards which set both example and direction for the broader antislavery movement.
The key difference between the abolitionist campaign emerging in the 1830s and the preceding antislavery movements lay in the abolitionists' demand for immediate and unconditional emancipation. This immediatism was a direct product of the application of contemporary evangelical concepts to the problem of slavery and particularly of the judgment that slaveholding was "a sin—always, everywhere, and only a sin." Who first advocated this belief is in dispute, but the influence of the new theological trends is evident. Evangelicalism taught that God has given every individual free will and moral ability, but slavery deprived its victims of the unhindered use of these powers and stood as an obstacle to salvation. Those inspired by benevolent principles regarded it as sinful to allow such a misery-producing system as slavery to persist when it could be abolished. Abolitionists refused to consider pleas of mitigating circumstances in the cases of particular slaveholders because they denied there could be any acceptable excuse for continuing to sin.

Once slavery was declared a sin, there were moral requirements incumbent upon both slaveholders and non-slaveholders. As already noted, modern abolitionists demanded immediate emancipation because the Bible obligated sinners to repent and cease their wrong-doing at once. Gradualist programs for abolishing slavery had to be discarded because they compromised with evil by sanctioning its temporary
continuance. Post-1830 abolitionists believed nonslaveholders and especially ministers had a duty to make clear that they regarded slavery as a sin. Abolitionists charged that the tendency to blame the evils found in slavery upon the system in the abstract and not the individual slaveholder "has done more to soothe the consciences of slaveholders and lull the north to sleep, than all other things combined." As this last statement suggests, the abolitionists recognized that an uncompromising moral condemnation of slavery added noticeably to the compelling power of their demands.

In addition to insisting that slaveholding was a "sin per se," the abolitionists pointed out the disastrous consequences slavery had upon the moral atmosphere of the South and the nation. Abolitionists charged that slavery conflicted with "those social relations and duties which not only spring from our social nature, but which God has also enjoined by positive enactment," such as those between husband and wife and parent and child. In a like manner, abolitionist writings accused slavery of barbarizing the morals of the masters, for as one antislavery tract explained, "the 'peculiar institution' has become their God, and whatever protects it is right...." Instead of trying to resist the corrupting influence of slavery, many members of the southern clergy openly defended human bondage as compatible with the Bible, the abolitionists complained.
Immediate emancipation seemed the only solution to save the nation from irreligiousness and ruin.

Another crucial contention in the abolitionist moral argument was that slavery was a "national sin" for which northerners shared in the guilt as well as the consequences. Benevolence doctrines blended with Puritan and Quaker traditions to give credence to the concept of community responsibility for sin. Abolitionists recognized that slavery's greatest support came not from the self-justification of slaveholders but from the countenance shown by good men and women not connected with the system. In reply to the assertion that slavery was the South's problem, abolitionists used the "national sin" notion to charge that "the people of the non-slaveholding states are not guilty in respect to this sin, any further than they adopt principles and pursue measures which tend to perpetuate it. When the people of the North come to regard slavery as a sin, and earnestly and faithfully protest against it as such, and endeavor by argument and persuasion to induce the South to repent of it and abolish it immediately,—their duty will be done." Once supposedly uninvolved individuals and institutions were made aware of their moral culpability for slavery, advocates of immediate emancipation hoped to see them enlist in the abolitionist cause.

Clearly products of contemporary evangelical trends, these moral perceptions about slavery shaped the objectives
of abolitionist activity among the nation's churches. The antislavery reformers recognized the primary importance of persuading the denominations to testify to the sinfulness of slaveowning. Abolitionists contended that Christians had a duty to bear the same witness against slaveholding as against any other sin. If only the religious bodies would "call it [slavery] by its right name, Robbery," one abolitionist declared, the consciences of professedly Christian masters would be put under great duress to repent. Abolitionist Alvan Stewart told the Presbyterian General Assembly that failure to declare slavery sinful represented "moral cowardice." Stewart warned that continued equivocation would throw the influence of the church to the side of pro-slavery forces, for "silence soon becomes acquiescence, which soon is apology, which is soon defence, which is soon vindication," leading to the destruction of the reputation and authority of the church.

Acknowledging the sinfulness of slaveholding was only the first step the abolitionists demanded of the churches. Abolitionists reminded the denominations that nearly all of them professed to follow an interpretation of early Christian practice which reserved full church membership exclusively to the "visible saints." Accordingly, most sects had established strictly defined disciplinary procedures first to interrogate, then admonish, and finally expel unrepentant sinners. Already a few small churches, such as the Quakers
and Free Will Baptists, had testified to slavery's inherent
sinfulness by barring all slaveholders from their communion
and fellowship. Abolitionists insisted that the major de-
nominations also treat slavery as a sin requiring church
discipline. Opponents of slavery hoped that the slavehold-
ers' consciences might be reached if threatened with the
moral odium of ejection from the Christian body.

The exact tactics used by abolitionists to advance
church discipline against slaveholders will be discussed
throughout this study. Some of the arguments abolitionists
used to advocate antislavery action, however, can be cited
here as examples of applications of the new evangelically
influenced moral standards to the problem of slavery. In
one of the most comprehensive defenses of the practice of
nonfellowship with slaveholders, Kentucky abolitionist min-
ister John G. Fee warned that by accepting slaveowners into
church membership, "we thereby become partakers in the guilty
practice of slaveholding, and sharers in the future conse-
quen­ces." Fee feared that public morals and even faith in
Christian teaching were in jeopardy as long as the ministry
and churches appeared in the role of mercenary lawyers de-
fending slaveholders' rights. Fee also appealed to denomina-
tions to adopt nonfellowship, because "your usefulness de-
mands it;" that is, on the basis of Finney's benevolent doc-
trine that God requires the converted to aid those suffer-
ing. In response to claims that it would be better to
keep slaveholders in the church for the purpose of enlightening them. Fee noted that that policy had been tried for many years and had done more to damage the morals of the church than to enlighten the consciences of the masters.  

In the 1830s, abolitionists were confident that religious nonfellowship of slaveholders if widely practiced would benefit both the South and the churches. James G. Birney, himself a repentant slaveholder, testified that the northern churches were morally inconsistent in claiming to disapprove of slavery while continuing to invite visiting slaveholders to partake in their communion services. Birney was convinced that if such a method of agitating slaveholders' consciences were adopted by northern Christians "it would be the largest lever that could be used," for "nothing short of the fear of Hell will make him resign his hold." But even if slaveholders broke up the churches along sectional lines rather than accept reproof, as many northerners feared, abolitionists argued that the northern branches would be better off adhering to moral principles regardless of the consequences. Disapproving of all hesitation to discipline slaveholders as expediency, abolitionists contended that "the well-being of a church surely does not consist in its extent and numbers, but in purity of its doctrines and the uniformity and consistency with which they are lived up to." If slavery was a sin, the church risked divine retribution for letting worldly concerns interfere
with the moral responsibility to denounce it.

The abolitionists expected even more from the churches than denouncing slavery as sin and barring slaveholders from church membership. Early abolitionist societies called upon the ministry to enter into secular as well as religious discussions on immediate emancipation. Abolitionists branded the contention that slavery was a political not an ethical question as fallacious. The support of many denominations for the American Colonization Society was criticized by abolitionists as a neglect of the moral duty to make uncompromising attacks upon wrong-doing. Abolitionists denounced the northern churches that segregated Blacks into separate "Negro Pews" because the practice helped to perpetuate the spirit of caste used to justify slavery. In short, the abolitionists wanted the churches to cease all practices which gave even indirect sanction to slavery and to assume a leadership role in calling for its final abolition.

The pronounced role of moral concerns in the motivation and direction of the abolitionist campaign has led some historians to consider the possibility that the movement functioned as a kind of "surrogate religion" for its adherents. In ethical matters most abolitionists shared notions about the corrupt nature of slavery, the guilt of the entire nation for permitting the institution to continue, and the responsibility upon all Americans, especially Christians, to bring the evil system to an end. While shaped by
contemporary evangelical trends, the abolitionist beliefs concerning the moral obligations of emancipation set standards for salvation distinct from those of almost all major denominations. The degree to which abolitionists functioned as members of a "separate sect" will be examined later. It can be noted here, however, that the roots of whatever separation came about between the major denominations and the radical antislavery groups lay in their different assessments of the ethical questions concerning slavery.

The abolitionists' heavily moralistic approach to the problem of slavery inevitably led them into clashes with the nation's religious institutions which had been long under the influence of racial prejudice and the interests of slaveholders. By strict abolitionist standards, the American churches not only tolerated but, in some ways, condoned the practice of slavery. Holding themselves responsible to "principles" and not institutions, the abolitionists had no patience with delays in converting the denominations into antislavery vehicles. As a result, the abolitionists' efforts quickly encountered obstacles so deeply rooted in questions of theology, morality, and church policy that they would endure even after the departure of southern communicants from many of the religious bodies. To understand the exact nature of these obstructions, it is necessary to examine the traditional relations of the churches toward slavery, the objections raised to abolitionist moral
assumptions, and the unique problems originating in the sectarian peculiarities of each major denomination.

II

The modern abolition movement began at the time when the churches in the United States were completing a significant recovery in strength and prestige. For a few dark years following the Revolution, the moral authority of the clergy and churches seemed seriously weakened by the social disruptions caused by the war and the popularity of the deistic beliefs of many Founding Fathers. About the turn of the century, however, the massive wave of revivalistic enthusiasm, commonly known as the Second Great Awakening, had restored sagging church attendance and support for religion. While the most evangelical denominations, the Baptists and the Methodists, were the greatest beneficiaries of this trend, the size of almost every sect increased faster than the population in the first decades of the nineteenth century. During the period 1800-1830, Methodist membership increased seven fold, Presbyterian quadrupled, Baptist tripled, and Congregational doubled. By 1850 approximately one out of seven or eight Americans was an official member of a denomination and two or three times more attended church with some regularity. As already seen in the testimony of the abolitionists, and confirmed by foreign visitors and domestic observers, the revitalized churches of these years
exerted significant influence over the individual, social, and even political and economic behavior of millions of Americans.  

Another important feature of mid-nineteenth century United States religion was its diversity. During these years, the impact of immigration and conflicting theological trends such as evangelicalism and "liberal" rationalism were making the United States into what one observer described as "a motley sampler of all church history." Among other things, American denominations differed on doctrinal questions concerning free will and individual conscience, on the amount of lay vs. ecclesiastical control in church government, and on their distribution among the country's ethnic and regional population groups. These considerable differences in theology, polity, and demographic make-up would have significant influence on the effectiveness of abolitionism's appeal to the various denominations.

More important, perhaps, than any of the above factors in shaping the receptiveness of a denomination for abolitionism was its historic position toward slavery. As the research of David B. Davis reveals, no denomination within the Judeo-Christian tradition could claim a heritage of outright opposition to slavery. With the exception of only a few pietistic sects such as the Friends, slavery received a high degree of toleration in colonial America. In the aftermath of the Revolution, however, the wide acceptance
of ideas about natural rights and human liberty led some other denominations to place condemnations of slaveholding into their disciplines. But this early burst of antislavery vigor in the church barely lasted out the century, and few denominations ever actually imposed disciplinary sanctions upon slaveholding members. What remained of church sentiment against slavery concentrated upon ameliorative programs such as missionary work among the slaves and the advocacy of colonization as a safe and gradual solution to the nation's slavery and racial problems. A brief survey of the standing of slavery in the major religious denominations will reveal both the general pattern of increasing toleration for slavery in post-Revolutionary church policies and the common sources of resistance to antislavery principles and practices which the abolitionists later would encounter.

The Methodist Episcopal Church began its life as a separate denomination in the flush of post-Revolutionary antislavery sentiments. In keeping with the strong expectations of the times, the original Methodist discipline condemned the "buying and selling of men, women, and children." Little effort was taken to enforce this rule, however, due to the widely held conviction that slavery was already rapidly progressing toward its final extinction. Methodism experienced considerable expansion in its first half century, growing to become the second largest denomination in the nation. To maintain this rate of growth in the face of
changing southern attitudes toward slavery, the Methodists gradually ceased all efforts to prohibit slavery in the church except in the ministry and there only in states permitting manumission. Methodist leaders feared that stronger action against slaveholding would cause Southerners to bar the denomination's itinerants from access to their slaves and damage the church's influence as an advocate for projects of amelioration and colonization. To dispel any Southern worries that Methodism might sympathize with the new tide of abolitionism, the denomination's General Conference of 1836 passed a resolution declaring that the church had "no right, wish, or intention to interfere in the civil and political relation as it now exists between master and slave in the slaveholding states of this Union."\(^37\)

In the 1820s, a secession took place from the Methodist Episcopal Church in protest to the arbitrary powers of the denomination's bishops. This movement became the Methodist Protestant Church which numbered 100,000 members by 1850, almost equally divided among Northerners and Southerners. Despite their religious quarrels, the new sect behaved nearly identically to its parent body in suppressing all suggestions to enforce Methodism's traditional antislavery discipline.\(^38\) Abolitionist reforms in either body would face strong opposition not only from Southern members but from denominational leaders interested in preserving the unity and cautious antislavery influence of their church.
The predominantly Scotch-Irish Presbyterians in the United States first created a national organization soon after the Revolution's end. The new denomination had a highly structured church government of sessions, presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies and a discipline outlining procedures to expel unrepentant sinners from its communion. While many staunchly Calvinistic Presbyterians were cool toward the more enthusiastic forms of revivalism, the Presbyterians grew to 225,000 members by 1837. Although the Presbyterians passed vaguely worded pro-emancipation statements in the 1790s, it has long been assumed that they broke from the general pattern of the churches by not making their strongest antislavery profession until 1818. In that year, the Presbyterian General Assembly declared that it considered "the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature, as utterly inconsistent with the law of God..." Fortunately the recent study of early Presbyterian abolitionist, George Bourne, by Dwight L. Dumond and John W. Christie clears up this problem. Dumond and Christie point out that the same General Assembly of 1818 also upheld the deposition of Bourne from the ministry by the Presbytery of Lexington, even though the clergyman's chief offense was preaching that slaveholding was a sin which should be abolished immediately. Dumond's and Christie's well-argued conclusion is that this incongruous
behavior can be explained only by interpreting the famous 1818 resolution as a "pious statement" which had "no teeth" in terms of discipline. As the later history of the Presbyterianians shows, the denomination's preference for regarding slavery as an evil system instead of branding slaveholding as a sin allowed both ministers and lay members to own slaves without the least threat to their good standing in the church. The chief goal of the abolition campaign in the Presbyterian church would be to surmount the General Assembly's hesitancy about passing such a sweeping moral judgment that recognized slaveowning as a disciplinable offence.

The Baptists had become the country's largest faith by the time modern abolitionism arose. Because of their structure of church government, in fact their lack of any central structure, it is impossible to trace the development of an official national Baptist position toward slavery in these years. Only when examining the actions of local Baptist associations and the church's missionary societies does the familiar pattern of colonial toleration, Revolutionary Era opposition, and subsequent backsliding in attitude toward slavery emerge. Most prominent among the Baptist opponents of slavery were the "Friends of Humanity" associations of Kentucky and Midwestern Baptists in the early years of the nineteenth century. By the 1830s, however, the powerful influence of slaveholding members in the denomination and the traditional Baptist hesitancy to mix religion with civil
affairs had quieted nearly all antislavery voices. In addition, the Baptists had suffered so heavily from divisions over questions of mission policy and theology that there was strong sentiment in all portions of the church against raising another disruptive issue.

The loose structure of the Baptist denomination presented great obstacles to abolitionism. Antislavery societies had difficulty convincing northern Baptists that they shared in the guilt of southern slaveholding church members. Even among Baptists professing antislavery opinions, there was a widespread belief that there was no power inside the church that could be used against slavery. The proper relation of the church toward slavery was a problem facing predominantly northern sects like the Congregationalists and Unitarians as well as the more national Methodist, Presbyterians, and Baptist faiths. Congregationalism and Unitarianism emerged as separate sects out of the old New England establishment as a result of theological disputes dealing with the unity of the Diety, the divinity of Christ, and the rights of private conscience. Both churches were slow in penetrating the West and gained almost no southern followers. Before their break up in the 1820s, the old Congregationalists had trailed the dissenting sects in advocating emancipation programs in their home region. In the years since, both the Congregationalists and the Unitarians had discriminated against the northern Free
Blacks and had given moral and financial endorsements to colonization schemes. Already shunned because of their heterodox reputation, Unitarians also professed such a high regard for the dictates of individual conscience that they disdained involvement in cooperative programs of benevolent action. The Congregationalists had few if any slaveholders among their own numbers, but they maintained a fraternal correspondence and participated in joint missionary and religious publication ventures with other sects that had many slaveowning members. The Congregationalists and Unitarians demonstrated that considerable distance from slavery was no guarantee of strong sentiment against the "peculiar institution."  

Two distinct categories of religious bodies broke from the pattern of the sects just discussed. Liturgical or sacramotal faiths in the United States, which included Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and Lutherans, shared a disinclination to admit that slavery was a subject for religious discussion or church legislation. The emphasis of these denominations upon assent to formal doctrine, traditional confessions, and ritual observances proved far less conducive to involvement in social reform than the requirement of continuous proof of genuine conversion demanded by the more evangelical faiths. Members of the ritualistic sects preferred working through their own church organizations rather than involvement in the interdenominational benevolent
societies. Despite the Catholics' unique prohibition of racially discriminatory practices, neither they nor any other of the liturgical denominations hesitated to accept slaveholders into membership. The concept of non-fellowship of slaveholders demanded by the abolitionists was foreign to these churches which only expelled heretics. While the evangelical bodies at least had shared temporarily in some of the antislavery sentiment common in the late eighteenth century, the heritage of their liturgical counterparts was one of careful neutrality in the slavery controversy and implicit toleration of negro bondage.\footnote{44}

A final class of American denominations dissented from the general church practices, in this case by having long histories of opposition to slavery. The Quakers, or the Society of Friends, were the best known of this group. Friends supplied some of the earliest voices against slavery and required church members to emancipate their slaves before the Revolution. The Quakers' pacifistic beliefs, however, made the sect less active in later antislavery movements than their early history would suggest.\footnote{45} Second only to the Friends in terms of early religious antislavery prominence were the Freewill Baptists. Founded in New England in the 1780s over the issue of predestination and numbering almost 60,000 communicants by the 1840s, the Freewill Baptists almost from the time of their inception barred slaveholders from church membership. While they shunned the
major benevolent agencies for being too much dominated by Presbyterians and Congregationalists, the Freewill Baptists were active in their own reform societies and in morally-oriented political causes. Also earning a place in the ranks of the earliest ecclesiastical opponents of slavery were the small Scottish Presbyterian sects. Despite having retained divisions over old-country theological and liturgical disputes, the Associate, the Reformed, and the Associate Reformed bodies of immigrant Scottish Presbyterians all testified to the evils of slavery in the early nineteenth century. By 1830, these churches had taken at least the first steps toward requiring their members to free their slaves. The greatest significance of the Quakers, Freewill Baptists, the Scottish Presbyterians, and an additional few individual congregations and small sects which refused to fellowship slaveholders lay in their demonstrating to northern Christians that a denomination could survive and prosper without the support of slaveholders. The only potential obstacle to bringing these churches into a broad antislavery movement was their sectarian disinclination to cooperate with members of other churches.

III

This survey makes clear some of the major impediments confronting abolitionists in their efforts to bring the churches into the antislavery movement. It is possible
to place these obstacles into two categories: first, disagree­ment with the abolitionist moral arguments about the immorality of slaveholding and the duty of immediate emancipa­tion; and second, objections to abolitionist demands, premised upon the above ethical judgments, that the churches discipline slaveholders and actively participate in the an­tislavery movement. Since the abolitionists encountered such obstacles throughout their dealings with the churches, some of the most frequently occurring points of discord need to be examined.

As already noted, the modest antislavery traditions of many denominations had been almost nullified by the failure of the religious bodies to translate them into actions. One indication of the increased toleration for slavery in the religious community was the willingness of some churchmen, mostly but not exclusively Southerners, to claim that slavery was sanctioned by both revealed and natural religion. Such pro-slavery contentions touched off great debates in church circles which continued until the end of the Civil War and the final emancipation enactments. Both defenders of slavery and abolitionists believed it essential to prove their cause was fully compatible with the basic sources of Christian faith. 48

While both sides in the religious disputes over slavery insisted upon their Biblical orthodoxy, the institution's defenders relied particularly heavily upon a literal
interpretation of Scriptures. A striking number of prominent northern divines including Nathan Lord, president of Dartmouth College, Moses Stuart, professor at Andover Seminary, and John Henry Hopkins, Episcopal Bishop of Vermont, joined Southerners in finding slavery compatible with Biblical teaching. These men cited similar pieces of evidence in their preaching and writing. The pro-Slavery Scriptural argument identified Blacks as the descendants of Ham or of Cain, heirs to curses of perpetual subjugation. These biblical scholars argued that Old Testament Patriarchs practiced a system of servitude much akin to American slavery. Slavery also existed at the time of Christ and his Apostles, and the defenders of the South pointed out that no condemnation of the institution could be found in New Testament texts. Almost invariably, these writers noted that St. Paul in several of his epistles had admonished slaves to be obedient to their earthly masters and in one instance even ordered the escaped slave Onesimus to return to his master Philemon. After arguing that the Bible demonstrated divine approval for slavery, Nathan Lord warned that any human reproach to the institution of slaveholding was "dishonorable to God, and subversive to his government." Abolitionists and less-radical antislavery churchmen countered the pro-slavery advocates' attempt to appropriate the Bible to the cause. The antislavery forces not only rebutted their opponents' scriptural interpretations but also
presented a Biblical case of their own. Abolitionists rejected the contention that Blacks were the heirs of Cain's or Ham's curse or that Southern slaveholders had been appointed executors to carry out any such curse. Moderate antislavery ministers including Henry Ward Beecher and Albert Barnes strove to show that American slavery was much harsher than that tolerated by the Old Testament Jews, while radical abolitionists such as George B. Cheever went as far as to deny that the ancient Hebrew practice was a type of slavery at all. Abolitionists denied that the New Testament showed that early Christians had countenanced slavery. Instead the antislavery party insisted that the Bible and especially the New Testament should be examined for its overriding principles of justice and righteousness, that were completely contradictory to human bondage. John Rankin, probably the leading Presbyterian abolitionist, summed up this argument: "The whole Bible is opposed to slavery. The sacred volume is one grand scheme of benevolence. Beams of love and mercy emanate from every page, while the voice of justice denounces the oppressor, and speaks to his awful doom."

Paralleling the debate over the Bible's position on slavery, was a dispute over whether natural religion, the other accepted source of revelation, sanctioned human bondage. The abolitionist argument heavily relied upon enlightenment concepts of natural law, inalienable human rights,
and the innate goodness of man. Such concepts, however, were promising targets for some religiously oriented defenders of slavery. Not only did the abolitionists' "humanitarian philosophy" conflict with Calvinist views on the fallen state of man, charged orthodox slavery proponents, but it also ignored evidence of moral corruption visible in almost every aspect of society. Pro-slavery churchmen defended the system as a divinely established institution by which the most depraved and dangerous individuals and groups could be brought under the influence of civilization and religion. Slavery, claimed one of its northern clerical apologists, was "a providential exponent of God's wisdom, justice and goodness, in carrying on the affairs of the disordered world during this its probationary state,—a wholesome ordinance, on the whole, for the punishing and restraining vice, and the encouragement of virtue, to the more certain attainment of the ends of God's natural and moral providence." 56 Until Christ's Second Coming removed the sources of man's inherent imperfection, abolishing slavery would be tampering with divine intentions.

In the debate over the revealed nature of slavery, pro-slavery and antislavery spokesmen often exchanged the accusation that their opponents' ideas encouraged the spread of infidelity. Some antislavery reformers actually held aberrant religious views. The charge that abolitionism was a heterodox movement, however, also stemmed from the clash
over Biblical interpretation. Because the antislavery argument denied the literal meaning of several scriptural passages, critics reproached abolitionism for teaching men that "the Bible is an unintelligible book" and that "the writing upon the wall, may be from God, but the impression is, according to their confidence in the interpreter." Abolitionists in turn charged slaveholders with being secret skeptics, hypocritically seeking to have the church and the Bible as their defenders. It was this religious sanction for human bondage that made some opponents of slavery turn against orthodox Christianity, charged abolitionists. Albert Barnes warned the American churches that they stood at variance to a most compelling moral case against slavery: "Men that are not otherwise disposed to be infidels will be infidels if, as the price of faith, they are required to abjure this conviction, and to hold that slavery is from God." The abolitionists had to devote a great deal of their time to proving that slavery and not abolitionism was incompatible with the revealed sources of Christian faith. Even contemporaries who objected to the claim of divine approval for slavery frequently did not accept the abolitionist contention that slaveholding was sin per se. One commonly heard objection held that slavery was a morally neutral institution which had to be judged according to the circumstances surrounding each individual case. This viewpoint conceded that the Bible contained no express
condemnation of slavery but at the same time affirmed that slaveholding was bound by the same scriptural regulations as governed all relationships between men. Conservative churchmen often acknowledged that slaveholding was often the source of sinful abuses, but lay the blame with erring individuals not with the system. This conservative group feared that automatically condemning slaveholders as sinners risked driving the masters out of the churches thereby releasing them from its moral restraints and ameliorative influences. Not surprisingly after a few years of trying to reverse these opinions, the abolitionists began charging that expediency governed the moral determinations of most denominations.

Even more aggressive antislavery churchmen gave reasons for dissenting from the abolitionist description of slaveholding as a sin per se. These antislavery moderates contended that some slaveowners could not be held morally accountable for their actions. One expression of this viewpoint acknowledged grounds upon which slaveholders could escape the guilt attached to their position. For example, if an individual became an owner of slaves "involuntarily," as through inheritance, and found himself legally prohibited from manumitting them, he was not to be adjudged a sinner. Antislavery moderates sometimes claimed that a master who recognized the evil of slavery would be morally correct to delay freeing his slaves if circumstances made such an
action detrimental to their welfare. But even in these cases where immediate emancipation could be temporarily deferred without sin, the true Christian master was required to deal with his servants by the standard that "their slaves though legally property, are morally and actually men" and never mistreat or exploit them for "gain or convenience."  

Edward Beecher, a member of the distinguished Presbyterian clan, advanced a similar assertion that slaveholding was an "organic sin." Beecher recognized the sinfulness of owning human property but denied that slaveholders were sinners. The moral responsibility for the organic sin of slavery, according to Beecher's doctrine, lay with society which passed laws sustaining the system not with individual masters. 

Abolitionists, however, rejected all of the above moral arguments that qualified the belief that slaveowning was a sin per se. Abolitionists contended that any compromise about the sinful nature of slaveowning encouraged Southerners to manufacture excuses for delaying emancipation and hindered the churches from taking any disciplinary actions against slaveholders.

In addition to the resistance against abolitionist opinions about the inherently sinful nature of slavery, efforts to reform church practices that lent moral forbearance to slavery also were received poorly in most denominations. In particular, most denominational leaders rejected
abolitionist proposals to bar all slaveholders from church membership regardless of the Christian piety they evidenced. Even many clergy and laymen who spoke out forcefully against the evils of slavery believed the religious bodies could best hasten emancipation by working to enlighten the consciences of slaveholders as members of the church rather than treating them as outcasts. Liturgical sects disapproved of the nonfellowship of slaveholders, because the contention that individuals could be held responsible for the sins of other church members was contrary to their traditional practice. In other denominations sweeping guidelines on acceptable moral behavior were regarded as infringements upon the local autonomy of lower judiciaries. The question of the propriety of churches' attesting to the Christian character of slaveholders by fellowshipping with them would be one of the major points of contention in the relation of abolitionism with the major national denominations.  

Other objections to abolitionist principles and goals touching upon the nation's churches dealt with more worldly considerations. Many church leaders hesitated to endorse any position toward slavery that might drive away southern members. Such conservativism is attributable both to feelings of denominational pride and to fears of jeopardizing confidence in the church's moral leadership by engaging in divisive public quarrels. Northern opponents of
abolitionism in the religious bodies also expressed worries about offending members of their own congregations on the slavery question. The violent denunciations abolitionists made of slaveholders were frequently disparaged for being "unchristian" and, as one critic put it, for fostering "the worst passions, in the Reformer himself, in the slaveholder, in the slave, and in the whole community." Both popular revivalists and local ministers complained that preaching against slavery would interfere with their work of a purely religious nature. In the later years of the antislavery campaign, some denominational spokesmen cited fear of identifying the church with the growing heterodoxy of a portion of the abolitionists to rationalize inaction on the slavery question. If the churches ever were to be enlisted in the abolition movement, some way would have to be found to demonstrate that continued toleration rather than antislavery agitation was the greater threat to the institutional strength of the nation's denominations.

The opposition of northern church leaders would not have been so strong an obstacle for the abolitionists had the churches not also supported conservative antislavery programs. When abolitionism and proslaveryism began making their disruptive appeals, conservatives deprecated both views as "ultraisms" and professed to be maintaining the scripturally grounded, traditional position of the churches toward slavery. Church conservatives placed greater
confidence than the abolitionists in the reasonableness and Christian character of the slaveholder. Antislavery conservatives insisted that the most effective way to reform the slaveholder was to "speak to them as friends,--as those influenced by the high principles of the gospel of Christ; and with a regard to their highest good, as well as to the good of their suffering slaves."67 Church leaders opposed to abolitionism rejected calls for immediate emancipation and favored a variety of more gradual programs including periods of apprenticeship to prepare slaves for the responsibilities of freedom, compensation for masters, and colonization.68 While antislavery conservatives tended to be a passive group, their influence especially in church leadership circles made them and their programs serious competitors with abolitionists for the support of the religious public.

IV

Before the advent of modern abolitionism in the 1830s, the major religious denominations of the United States had come to terms with the institution of slavery. Whatever previous antislavery professions may have been made, church practice had ceased to be governed by them. Except for a few small sects, slaveholders could hold membership in any denomination. Most churches had placated residual antislavery sentiment by colonization as a safe and gradual solution
to the slavery problem.

The moral perspective from which abolitionism viewed slavery challenged the churches' toleration of the institution. If slaveholding was a sin, the denominations were guilty of condoning wrong-doing when they failed to excommunicate unrepentant slaveholders and when they failed to call for immediate emancipation. While many church members were converted to abolitionism, a greater number opposed the antislavery demands, citing a wide range of objections. As a result of this resistance, the abolitionist campaign to enlist the churches into the antislavery movement would be stormy and disruptive until slavery's final end during the Civil War.
ENDNOTES


8 Loveland, "'Immediate Emancipation'," pp. 181-183.


11 Powell, "Abolitionist Controversy," pp. 82-84.


14 Liberator, 20 July 1838; Anti-Slavery Record, 1 (January 1836): 10-11.

15 Jonathan Blanchard, Sermon on Slaveholding Preached by Appointment Before the Synod of Cincinnati at their Late State Meeting at Mount Pleasant, Ohio, October 20,


23 Ibid., p. 21.

24 Ibid., pp. 33-34.


26 Ibid.
27 Anti-Slavery Record, III (September 1837): 105; also Liberator, 28 June 1834.


CHAPTER TWO

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS ANTISLAVERY QUESTIONS
IN THE DIVISION OF THE ABOLITION MOVEMENT

No decade of the antislavery campaign has been more thoroughly studied than the 1830s. That decade witnessed the final consolidation of the principles of immediate emancipation in the United States and the formation of an organized movement to act upon them. During these years, the abolitionists developed most of the methods of reaching and converting a mass audience to antislavery activism that they would employ for the rest of their campaign. Through their lecturing agents, petition drives, and countless pages of printed materials the abolitionists attracted thousands of followers during the 1830s. At the same time, however, the major targets of abolitionist efforts, the individual slaveholders and the great national institutions, rejected antislavery appeals. In addition, the early abolitionists had to endure attempts to silence antislavery agitation by mob violence and by legal and ecclesiastical enactments. As a result of frustrations produced by lack of success, American abolitionism eventually fractured into hostile factions that
clashed over proposed new strategies for the antislavery movement. This chapter will concentrate upon the abolitionist labors among the nation's religious institutions in the 1830s and upon the role the failure of these church-oriented efforts played in dividing the abolition campaign.

I

Chapter One described the development of toleration toward slavery by the major American religious denominations in the late eighteenth century. Before the beginnings of modern abolitionism in the 1830s, however, a few individuals and small sects attempted to reverse the popular pro-slavery attitudes. Eighteenth century Quakers such as John Woolman and Anthony Benezet endeavored to expose the moral, social, and economic disadvantages of slavery. Such propaganda efforts deserve credit not only for the early end of slaveholding among their co-religionists but for the gradual abolition of slavery in the northern states following Independence. Societies formed by Quakers and other early friends of the Blacks, such as the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and Improving the Condition of the African Race, maintained the post-Revolutionary sentiment for emancipation well past the end of the century. The growing cotton-based prosperity of slavery and the continuing strength of racial prejudice, however, perverted much of the remaining genuine antislavery feeling. In particular,
denomination after denomination gave endorsements to schemes for the colonization of Free Blacks that held out only the faintest hope for eventual abolition. By the 1820s only a handful of plaintive voices such as that of the itinerant Quaker publisher, Benjamin Lundy, kept alive an uncompromised opposition to slavery.¹

By the late 1820s and early 1830s, the effect of new trends and new individuals began to be felt in the antislavery cause. The evangelical fervor of these years brought about significant changes in the perception of individual responsibility for what previously had been considered social ills. Inspired by both British and domestic sources, the idea took hold among a few people that slaveholding was a sin requiring immediate emancipation as repentance. One of those influenced by this new moral evaluation of slavery was William Lloyd Garrison, a one-time associate of Benjamin Lundy. In 1831, in Boston, Garrison founded his own newspaper, The Liberator, and went beyond Lundy in repudiating colonization and demanding immediate emancipation. At approximately the same time in New York City, a group of wealthy and benevolent-minded merchants also became disenchanted with colonization. These influential businessmen, including the well known silk merchant brothers, Arthur and Lewis Tappan, came to believe that owning slaves was sinful and that non-slaveholders had a duty to awaken the South to its erring ways. The impending success of the abolition
campaign in Great Britain demonstrated to Americans that the new moral assessment of slavery could sway the consciences of nations if only religiously motivated men lobbied hard enough.²

Inspired by the British example, American abolitionists began to organize in order to present their views more effectively. In December 1831, Garrison organized the New England Anti-Slavery Society despite having converted, as yet, only a handful to the immediatist dogma. While the New York abolitionists held off forming a public society until October, 1833, they launched an antislavery newspaper, the Emancipator, and hired a full time secretary to correspond with others who might be enlisted in their cause. In the early 1830s, the abolitionists labored to undermine the claims of the colonization program amongst genuine opponents of slavery and awaited an auspicious moment to form a national abolitionist organization.³ The arrival of news in late 1833 that the British Parliament had emancipated the West Indian slaves served as the final impetus for bringing together the American opponents of slavery. New England Garrisonians, New York reformers, free Blacks, and representatives of the old Quaker emancipationist sentiment met in Philadelphia in December, 1833 and founded the American Anti-Slavery Society. This convention's action marked the beginning of a new phase in the campaign to end slavery in the United States.⁴
The principles and objectives enunciated by the American Anti-Slavery Society at its founding and by its supporters in the 1830s revealed that the new trends in religious thought had greatly influenced their view of the slavery problem. Citing contemporary evangelical tenets, abolitionists declared slavery to be unequivocally sinful because it interfered with the obligations both masters and slaves as free moral agents owed to God. The Ohio auxiliary of the national society declared that the physical and spiritual mistreatment of the slaves was an inherent product of the "blasphemous" nature of the institution that "converts persons into things; makes men property, God's image merchandise." Because the practice was sinful, an abolitionist periodical concluded that "its abandonment should be immediate and not gradual...[for] 'To-day' and not to-morrow is God's time for men to cease to do evil." The New England Anti-Slavery Society pointed out that demands for anything less than immediate abolition lacked firm ethical grounding, for: "If we admit that it is right to emancipate slaves gradually, we admit that to hold them for a time in their present state is not sinful." To be good Christians, the abolitionists noted, non-slaveholders had a duty to bear testimony against slavery as against every other evil and to work for its final obliteration.

The statements of early abolitionists regarding the nation's religious bodies showed that the antislavery forces
believed that the churches shared in the moral responsibility for slavery. The American Anti-Slavery Society noted that every year one or more distinguished northern Doctors of Divinity publicly quoted the Scriptures to prove "that 'might makes right,' that he who can, may appropriate to himself the labors of others, without paying for it." The abolitionists were among the first to become aware of the connection between northern prejudice and southern slavery and criticized their churches for discriminatory practices such as segregating Blacks into "negro pews." Because abolitionists believed the American Colonization Society actually propped up slavery, antislavery agitators accused the churchmen who endorsed that organization of dereliction of the Christian's duty to aid the oppressed.

For the same reasons, the new antislavery societies demanded that the churches expel slaveholding members. Abolitionists argued that only by disciplining the practice of slaveowning could the denominations induce Southern church members to abandon their sins. "Nothing but the precious ointment of a good name in the Christian world," argued one abolitionist journal, "saves the abomination from becoming too offensive for the endurance of even most of the slaveholders themselves." The abolitionists warned that the southern churches already were strongholds of slavery and that the national bodies must prepare to sacrifice church "peace" if they wanted to continue to maintain church
The early leaders of the American Anti-Slavery Society saw the nation's churches playing a key role in bringing down slavery. The abolitionists naturally turned to the Protestant denominations for support because of the strong religious orientation of most antislavery leaders and because of the example of the cooperation other benevolent movements received from the churches. In addition, because they viewed slavery from a not widely accepted moral perspective, the immediate abolitionists desired the endorsement of established religious institutions for their views. Regarding slaveholding as a sinful practice, the abolitionists believed it the churches' duty to discipline the sinner and succor the victim. In fact, in the early years of their campaign, most abolitionists even deemphasized primarily secular arguments for emancipation to avoid compromising their movement's character as a "spiritual conflict, with spiritual weapons and for spiritual ends...."13

Under the direction of its New York based executive committee, which included several ministers as well as benevolently inclined businessmen, the American Anti-Slavery Society undertook a great propaganda effort to enlist the churches in their crusade. In addition to the Emancipator, which became the organ of the national society, and the
Liberator which remained in Garrison's hands, new anti-slavery newspapers and journals were founded and widely circulated. In a host of abolitionist tracts as well as these new journals, the antislavery argument was presented in a moralistic language calculated to appeal to an audience used to evangelistic rhetoric. The friends of the cause went to great lengths to get abolitionist literature into the hands of potentially sympathetic church members.

It was by the spoken and not the printed word, however, that the abolitionist message most effectively reached the unconverted. The national antislavery society, as well as its state and local auxiliaries, combined publication activities with the employment of itinerant lecturers. Several facts disclose the religious orientation of this agency campaign. The composition of these lecturing squads, including the almost legendary "Seventy" of 1836 and 1837, reveals a high proportion of ordained ministers and seminary students. The training and written instructions of the early agents strongly encouraged them to stress the moral arguments against slavery. The reports and letters of these traveling advocates of abolition reveal that they particularly sought to address congregations and religious conventions. Despite opposition from unsympathetic religious and civic leaders, these early agents spread the antislavery gospel into previously unreached quarters. While the major denominations still hesitated to commit themselves to
immediate abolition, thousands of northern church members enrolled in antislavery ranks during the 1830s.

In addition to propaganda activities, abolitionists tried to appeal to the conscience of the religious sects through inside channels. Individual abolitionists asked their ministers to read announcements of antislavery meetings or to offer prayers for the oppressed. Special attempts were made to win endorsements from prominent clergymen and leading revivalists. To hesitant ministers, abolitionists asserted that the antislavery question had as much right to be discussed in the churches as temperance, chastity, or any other moral reform cause. In congregations where they achieved an initial hearing, abolitionists tried to set up regular prayer concerts for the slave and form local antislavery societies. To further these efforts in the local churches, the Emancipator advised its readers: "Abolitionists, to be successful, must be men of deep piety; if all our actions be not in accordance with the principles we profess, we give reason to our opponents for standing aloof from us, and suspect us of insincerity." The same article also warned abolitionists against being too "censorous" toward dissenting brethren. This last suggestion, however, would prove impossible for many abolitionists to follow as most churches continued to shun the slightest antislavery commitments.
The abolitionists lobbied higher level ecclesiastical judicatories as well as individual congregations. In 1835 and 1836, the American Anti-Slavery Society called on its members to memorialize the governing bodies of their denominations "to pass resolutions condemning slavery as a sin, and to take such other measures as are proper to effect its speedy removal...." Antislavery agents, like Theodore Weld and James G. Birney, attended the conferences, assemblies, and conventions of the various denominations in the mid 1830s to plead the case for abolition among delegates who would give them a hearing. Within only a few years some northern areas began sending representatives with outspoken antislavery views to these church conferences. Agents and members of the antislavery societies sponsored conventions in various denominations to coordinate abolitionist endeavors within the sects. These activities will be examined more closely later because they proved to be the first steps toward the division of several church bodies.

In addition to the efforts made by abolitionists inside their own local congregations and denominations, several special tactics were adopted in the late 1830s to win over the religious community to antislavery principles. For example, the abolitionists sought the endorsement and active cooperation of the interdenominational network of voluntary societies which solicited and distributed funds for missionary, religious publication, and moral reform causes.
In dealing with the American Bible Society, the abolitionists attempted to reverse that body's long-standing acquiescence in the refusal of most Southerners to permit copies of the Scriptures to be distributed to their slaves. Suspecting that the Bible Society feared alienating wealthy southern contributors, the American Anti-Slavery Society and its auxiliaries again and again offered to help finance efforts to place a copy of the Bible with every Black family in the nation. The "Bibles for slaves" campaign proved a great propaganda vehicle for the abolitionists to expose the corrupt nature of slavery because few conservative northerners could defend denying the enslaved the solace of reading the Scriptures.\(^{21}\)

In a similar fashion, abolitionists objected to the practices of missionary societies in collecting much of their donations from known slaveholders. By abolitionist standards, the reception of such donations demonstrated Christian countenance for the unjust manner in which the money had been earned. Moreover, warned the Emancipator, even indirect association with slaveholding risked rendering missionary ventures loathsome to "the moral sense of heathenism itself."\(^{22}\) At the end of the decade, when the established missionary societies still refused to alter their practices, some abolitionists advocated rechanneling their own contributions to the antislavery Freewill Baptist Mission Society or even founding a completely new Board.\(^{23}\)
Despite appeals to the benevolent organization's moral conscience and threats to their financial well-being, the societies resisted all attempts in the 1830s to bring them into the antislavery movement. Abolitionist activity once begun in this field, however, would continue to grow in later years and would mark out new directions in the campaign against slavery.

Another special tactic adopted by groups of abolitionists in the 1830s was the organizing of interdenominational conventions and societies of antislavery church members. Mixed conventions of laymen and clergymen and exclusively clerical conventions "for discussion and prayer on the subject of immediate emancipation" were held in New England throughout the decade. In Philadelphia in 1838, a group of abolitionist members of evangelical denominations joined together in a "Church Union Anti-Slavery Society" to concentrate on overcoming the predominantly conservative influence of the clergy of their sects. This new society was organized because the older Quaker-dominated local anti-slavery organizations refrained from religious exercises out of deference to the principles of the Society of Friends. The Church Union remained on friendly terms with the Quaker abolitionists, but adopted practices calculated to appeal to the broader evangelically-minded community. The following year, some New York City abolitionists led by Lewis Tappan and James G. Birney founded an "Evangelical Union
Anti-Slavery Society" upon the Philadelphia model. Representing members from at least five different denominations, the new society declared slaveholding to be sinful and charged that with the exception of a few "empty resolutions" the northern churches tolerated slavery as much as "the professed Christians of the slave states." While these original organizations proved shortlived, the idea of interdenominational antislavery conventions and societies would be periodically revived down to the Civil War in the effort to interest the churches in active opposition to slavery.

A final tactic utilized by early abolitionists in their dealings with the churches was to seek the sanction of foreign and particularly British religious bodies for antislavery principles and objectives. The American antislavery societies sent circulars to British churchmen asking for their prayers and sympathies. After the success of their own emancipation campaign, British denominations needed no prompting from American abolitionists to begin petitioning American churches to take antislavery action. Antislavery periodicals in this country gave publicity to the numerous remonstrances sent by British denominations to their United States counterparts. The Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society applauded these foreign rebukes for startling "the dull ear of the American Church...."

Probably the greatest service by non-Americans to the abolitionist cause in United States churches came from the
World Anti-Slavery Convention held in London in 1840. Historians usually remember this gathering chiefly for Garrison's refusal to take part in the proceedings after female delegates were denied seats. The London convention, however, also was notable for its strong condemnation of the relation of the United States churches toward slavery. In a resolution presented by the British clergyman James Angell James, the convention recognized slaveholding to be sinful regardless of mitigating circumstances and declared it to be the "incumbent duties" of Christian bodies "to separate from their communion all those persons who, after they have been faithfully warned in the spirit of the Gospel, continue in the sin of enslaving their fellow creatures...." In their subsequent struggles with conservatives in the various denominations, American abolitionists were at a great advantage being able to cite the endorsement of some of the most respected figures in world Protestantism for abolitionist principles.

III

While this study is interested primarily in later decades, a brief examination is needed of abolitionist activities in the northern churches in the 1830s. The impact of the various tactics employed by the abolitionists in those years differed from denomination to denomination. As already observed, the antislavery movement attracted
adherents from the clergy and laity of nearly every denomination in the nation. With a few exceptions, however, the governing bodies of these churches held back from official support for immediate emancipation. The frustrations produced by the failure to convert the major denominations helped lead many abolitionists to reconsider the direction of their entire campaign.

Evidence that the abolitionists faced an extremely difficult road in dealing with the churches can be seen in their failure to obtain the complete support of even all the small sects which barred slaveholders from their communions. The American Anti-Slavery Society had no complaint about the Free Will Baptists' enthusiasm for abolitionism. That denomination's periodical, the *Morning Star*, advocated immediatism since 1834. The Free Will Baptists' General Conferences declared slavery sinful in 1835 and endorsed the principles and methods of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1837. The *Emancipator* hailed the Free Will Baptists' "prosperity in every department of christianity" as an example to other denominations that abolitionism would not conflict with a church's well-being. Similarly, the American Anti-Slavery Society applauded Scottish Presbyterian sects for enforcing their antislavery discipline and dropping their endorsement of colonization.

In contrast to the behavior of the Free Will Baptists and Scottish Presbyterians, Quaker support for modern
abolitionism fell well below expectations produced by that sect's early history. Some individual Quakers played important roles in the American Anti-Slavery Society in the 1830s. Most members of both the Orthodox and Hicksite wings of Quakerism, however, feared that to sanction abolitionism would conflict with Quaker non-violent principles and jeopardize the denomination's precarious social respectability. As early as 1834, Garrison complained that the Friends had "degenerated from their parent stock." Abolitionists in this country reprinted antislavery remonstrances sent from British to American Quakers. The internal tensions produced by the Friends' continued resistance to abolitionism would eventually create schisms in the denomination.

The divisive influence of abolitionist agitation on the nation's largest denominations, the Baptists, the Methodists, and the Presbyterians, also became apparent at an early date. Because the schism in these churches will be examined in detail in the next chapter, early abolitionist activities in these bodies will be described only briefly here. Even before the formation of the American Anti-Slavery Society, abolitionist Presbyterians, particularly Northwesterners like John Rankin and Samuel Crothers, already were petitioning their denomination's General Assembly to expel slaveholding members. Early abolitionist agents among the Presbyterians made so many converts that Theodore Weld estimated one-quarter of the delegates at the 1835 General
Assembly favored immediate emancipation. Opposition, however, also was mounting as the Philadelphia Synod in the same years condemned abolitionists as "agitators of the public mind" and the Presbyterian Biblical Repository declared that "slaveholding is not necessarily sinful." A clear showdown over abolitionism was prevented by the division of the Presbyterians in 1837 resulting from disputes over the new evangelical doctrines in which the slavery question played only a secondary role.

Divisions in Methodist and Baptist ranks did not occur until the mid 1840s, but when the schisms occurred they were clearly the result of steadily growing disagreement over slavery. Talented, young Methodists such as La Roy Sunderland, George Storrs, and Orange Scott served the American Anti-Slavery Society as officers and lecturing agents in the 1830s. Inspired by remonstrances from British Wesleyans, antislavery Methodists began agitating their conferences to take disciplinary action against slaveholding. Fearful of offending southern church members, conservative northerners censured leading Methodist abolitionists and barred them from positions of influence. Editors of official Methodist periodicals who printed antislavery materials soon were replaced by the denomination's authorities. In the face of official opposition, Methodist abolitionists began forming local "Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Societies" and holding conventions to coordinate antislavery efforts in the denomination.
The abolitionist press circulated antislavery works by Methodist authors. The *Emancipator* warned the Methodist hierarchy in 1838 that their attempts to preserve denominational unity by suppressing antislavery discussion were a failure because they "had pacified nobody at the North, and satisfied nobody at the South." 34

Antislavery developments in the Baptist denomination occurred along a course remarkably similar to that in the Methodist church. Baptist preachers such as Elon Galusha, Cyrus P. Grosvenor, and Nathaniel Colver were prominent early abolitionists and made antislavery lecturing tours among their co-religionists for the American Anti-Slavery Society. As early as 1836, antislavery Baptists in New England began meeting in conventions that aimed at the purification of the denomination "from the reproach of cherishing in its bosom the sin of slavery." 35 While their denomination lacked the strong central organization of the Methodists and Presbyterians, conservative Baptists still took strong steps to quiet antislavery discussion. The Baptist Board of Foreign Missions suppressed pro-abolition remonstrances from British Baptists for over a year. The Baptist General Tract Society required its agents to pledge not to enter into the slavery debate. In the face of such opposition, Baptist antislavery conventions in the late 1830s began discussing secession as a possible necessity if the churches remained obdurate. 36
While many individual Congregationalists and Unitarians joined antislavery societies in the 1830s, the figures of authority in these predominantly northern churches resisted abolitionist appeals. Strong objections were made in these faiths to the abolitionists' blanket condemnation of the slaveholders' moral behavior. In these years influential New Englanders in both denominations still hoped that programs of colonization and amelioration could end slavery without the disruptions of church and state threatened by immediate abolition. The preaching of itinerant antislavery lecturers offended the theocratic ideals of the Congregationalist clergy, and several state ministerial associations barred abolitionist agents from their pulpits in actions dubbed ecclesiastical "gag-laws" by the American Anti-Slavery Society. Some Congregationalists attempted to create new antislavery societies to work for gradualist emancipation programs. Unitarian spokesmen like William E. Channing, however, recommended staying aloof from all reform societies because they diminished the moral influence of the individual. Only outside New England, at centers like Oberlin College in the Western Reserve of Ohio and Illinois College at Jacksonville, Illinois, did Congregationalists take a prominent role in abolitionist leadership in 1830s. As will be seen shortly, the frustrations produced by the failure to win acceptance even among the professedly anti-slavery clergy of New England would play an important part
in dividing the abolitionist movement.

Abolitionist activity among the ritualist religions proved even less rewarding. When abolitionists circulated the endorsement of immediate emancipation by Irish Catholic patriot Daniel O'Connell, it brought few of his co-religionists into the antislavery movement in this country. While some Catholic clergymen agreed with antislavery goals, they preferred not to associate with a movement dominated by evangelical Protestants who often possessed anti-Catholic prejudices. Episcopal Bishops wielded their considerable powers to keep all discussion of the potentially disruptive slavery question out of church sessions. When Black Episcopal minister William Peters of New York City became active in the American Anti-Slavery Society, warnings from his church hierarchy forced him to withdraw. Even Episcopal laymen such as William Jay, who served in several abolitionist offices in the 1830s, were rarities in antislavery ranks. The Lutheran General Synod remained committed to colonization in preference to abolitionism in these years. In upstate New York, however, the Franckean Synod of Lutherans adopted non-slaveholding as a test for membership. Friction between this group and the main Lutheran body eventually would lead the Franckean Synod into secession. With these few exceptions, abolitionists failed to awaken the liturgical denominations to antislavery activism.
The abolitionists made a rather mixed assessment of their success in dealing with the religious community in the 1830s. The annual reports of the American Anti-Slavery Society recognized that abolitionist efforts had provoked an on-going public discussion in the North about the church's relation to slavery. While nearly every sect continued to fellowship slaveholders despite their sinful occupation, growing minorities in those bodies repudiated the practice. Despite these advances, the churches fell far short of the leading role in the antislavery movement that most of the original abolitionists had envisioned for them.

IV

As a result of the abolitionists' disappointment about their rather modest achievements among the churches, a general reassessment of antislavery strategy and tactics took place. The significant role bishops and ministers had played in the church's rejection of abolitionist entreaties produced a growing anticlerical sentiment among a portion of the abolitionists. Even many completely orthodox abolitionists began to consider if it was not time to cut their ties with unrepentant church organizations rather than risk spiritual contamination. One abolitionist faction blamed the heterodox social and religious beliefs of some of their co-workers for keeping the churches at a distance from the movement. Finally, as doubts increased about the likelihood
of a quick conversion of the churches to abolitionism, a growing number of antislavery advocates began suggesting secular approaches, such as launching an independent political party, as better means for shifting public opinion. The advent of these new and conflicting ideas presaged the end of the old American Anti-Slavery Society in a bitter schism which would have great impact on the subsequent course of abolitionism in the churches. \(^{42}\)

One source of the divisiveness growing inside the abolition campaign was a phenomenon dubbed by its opponents as "Garrisonianism." The 1830s are remembered as a decade of intellectual ferment when many long established institutions and beliefs came under questioning. A host of new movements flourished in the cross currents of imported European romantic thought and the revivalistic-inspired quest for personal holiness. Advocates quickly appeared for drastic revisions in family and economic patterns, religious practices and creeds, and the powers of governments and church bodies. Garrison, attracted to many of these reforms and always a champion of free discussion, opened his Liberator columns to articles from proponents and opponents of the latest radical positions. Regarding the other faults of society as much a product of sin as slavery was, Garrison in time adopted a perfectionistic creed summed up in his inquiry "whether 'total abstinence' from all sin is not as obligatory as it is from one sin?" \(^{43}\)
A large proportion of active abolitionists, particularly in New England, also became mainstays of the movements stemming from this radical perfectionism. This group won the title "Garrisonians" because of the deference they showed Garrison's senior standing as a reformer and because of the central role of Garrison's Liberator in advertising their views. The "Garrisonians" included many first-rate minds and dedicated reformers, such as Henry C. Wright, Nathaniel P. Rogers, Stephen S. Foster, Charles C. Burleigh, and Maria Weston Chapman, who cooperated with Garrison on the basis of shared principles. Garrisonian abolitionists participated in extreme pacifistic and anarchistic movements dubbed "nonresistance." Resolutions expressing doubts about the inspiration of the Scriptures and the authority of the clergy were passed by conventions sponsored by Garrison and many of his antislavery colleagues. No cause from sexual equality to dietary reforms lacked Garrisonian champions much to the consternation of their more religiously orthodox and socially conservative abolitionist colleagues who feared the antislavery movement would be irreparably damaged by association with even less popular causes. 4

Particularly worrisome to the more cautious abolitionists were the perfectionistic positions Garrisonians adopted toward antislavery reform in the state and the churches. Many Garrisonians adopted "nonresistant" practices because they believed the use of coercive force conflicted with
Christian principles and was responsible for most of the world's ills including slavery. Strict adherents of this view refused to vote, denying governmental means could bring about true reforms. More important to this study was the growing Garrisonian practice of "coming-out," or ceasing to be members of established church bodies. While "comeouterism" can be attributed in part to the advanced theological views held by many Garrisonians, it was also a protest against the churches' continued fellowship and toleration of slavery. Like many of their political positions, coming-out was recognized by Garrisonians as a valuable propaganda gesture to dramatize the corruption of the churches. Also the series of clashes Garrisonians had with ministers, inside and outside the abolition societies, over proper anti-slavery tactics produced strong anti-clerical sentiments which further encouraged leaving the denominational bodies. While neither non-resistance nor comeouterism had as widespread acceptance among Garrisonians in the 1830s as they would gain after the abolitionist schism, dissenters from these practices regarded both as handicaps to effective political and religious antislavery activity.

Most historians tend to sympathize with the opponents of the Garrisonians. Latter day critics contend that strict adherence to perfectionistic principles forced the Garrisonians to repudiate the very institutions of state and church which could have been used to free the slaves.
Abolitionists adopting non-resistant principles abandoned the ballot as an instrument of coercive government. When Garrisonians despaired of enlightening the churches to their advanced theological as well as antislavery views, they frequently severed their ties with the corrupted religious bodies. According to this interpretation, the Garrisonians, by placing ideological purity ahead of practical achievement, threatened to convert the American Anti-Slavery Society into an isolated and ridiculed "holy fraternity" rather than an effective instrument for abolition.\(^46\)

The above interpretation has not gone unquestioned. Aileen Kraditor, a recent chronicler of the schism of the antislavery movement, explains that division as occurring between abolitionists with different perspectives toward the nature of the slavery problem. Garrisonians, the radicals, regarded slavery as a symptom of such deep-seated national corruption that abolitionism had to be broadened into a campaign to reshape all of American society. The anti-Garrisonians, the reformers, believed the country's institutions inherently sound and only needing to be freed from the contamination of slavery. In addition, Kraditor argues that while the Garrisonians often disagreed among themselves on religious and political doctrines, they differed from their abolitionist opponents in maintaining that complete freedom of advocacy and discussion within the movement was essential to the success of immediate emancipation. Kraditor
convincingly demonstrates that it was the efforts by anti-Garrisonians to purge unpopular radicals rather than a radical attempt to re-make the American Anti-Slavery Society on perfectionist principles, that brought out the final break-up. One shortcoming in Kraditor's interpretation of this division, however, is that it downplays the contribution of disputes over church-oriented abolitionist tactics in order to concentrate on the role of disagreement about antislavery political activities. Even when Kraditor notes that many abolitionists were concerned about the negative reaction of the religious public to the unorthodox religious and social views of many Garrisonians, she considers this problem chiefly as an aspect of the debate over antislavery political rather than church action.

An examination of abolitionist relations with the churches in the 1830s, however, reveals an additional source for the reformer-radical divergence in the antislavery movement. As already noted, many Garrisonian abolitionists in these years had abandoned church membership because they found the climate of most denominations cool toward advanced theological and antislavery views. In addition, the unrelenting opposition of the majority of the ministry to the abolition program led Garrisonians to denounce the clergy with hostile language deeply disturbing to the religious public. In reaction to these developments, the sentiment grew among other abolitionists that Garrisonian heterodoxy
and anticlerical outbursts were handicapping antislavery efforts in the churches. These anti-Garrisonians retained the original hopes expressed at the antislavery movement's founding that the churches would become the central vehicle for propagating the moral principles of abolition. In membership, this group of church-oriented abolitionists overlapped considerably with the advocates of antislavery politics and both ultimately regarded Garrisonians as obstacles to their antislavery strategies. Not until the contribution of those antislavery people still primarily interested in abolitionizing the churches is appreciated, can there be a complete picture of the American Anti-Slavery Society's schism.

Several encounters with the New England clergy in the early 1830s helped encourage anticlerical sentiments among the Garrisonians. Well before charges were made against Garrison's theological soundness, a group of Congregationalist and Unitarian ministers attempted to create a rival antislavery organization. The American Union for the Relief and Improvement of the Colored Race was founded in January 1835 on a platform which attempted to actualize Lyman Beecher's suggestion in the Lane Seminary debate that the abolition and colonization programs could be fraternally joined. The American Union claimed that the antislavery message would gain a more receptive hearing if it abandoned its harsh accusations against the moral character of
slaveholders and the churches granting them membership. The American Union especially singled out Garrison's *Liberator* for unnecessary virulence toward ecclesiastical opponents. A few strong antislavery men, even including Arthur Tappan, were attracted temporarily to the American Union. Most abolitionists, however, heeded Elizur Wright's warning not to "leave [the] firm ground" of recognizing slavery as sinful to plunge into "quagmires of Expediency and policy," and the moderate body survived only briefly.49

The following year, abolition principles and measures were challenged again, this time by William Ellery Channing, the most influential Unitarian of his day. Channing in a widely discussed book conceded that slavery was a system of great evil. However, because he did not share the evangelically inspired moral assumptions of the abolitionists, Channing refused to place the blame for social ills on the behavior of individuals. Channing expressed grave doubts about the efficacy of an organized campaign by northerners to emancipate southern slaves. Driving the slaveholders away from the good influences of the churches and assailing them with vituperative language Channing deemed counterproductive. Garrison denounced Channing's works as "Ishmaelitish," and other abolitionists complained of the Unitarian's "fanciful separation" of the responsibility of the slaveholder from the wrongs he committed.50 In response to Channing's jab at the effectiveness of organized reform,
Massachusetts abolitionist Edmund Quincy, a Unitarian layman, replied that antislavery societies would not have been necessary except for the silent subservience of the clergy to "profitable sins." The warm reception for Channing's arguments by a broad segment of the New England clergy, despite the abolitionist attempts at rebuttal, was another piece of evidence proving to antislavery radicals that the churches' moral sense had become corrupted by slavery.

The full extent of disapproval for Garrisonian practices within the religious community became apparent in 1837 when even many pro-abolition ministers joined protests against the Liberator's attitude toward the churches. A complaint by the Congregationalist General Association of Massachusetts against the impropriety of female abolitionists addressing mixed audiences sparked a succession of "clerical appeals" aimed at curbing this and other Garrisonian "excesses." The first Appeal, signed by five ministers, including two members of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, berated Garrisonians for adopting a language of "hasty, unsparing, almost ferocious denunciation" offensive to the Christian spirit. Later Appeals criticized Garrisonian participation in unorthodox religious and social causes. All the Appeals implied that Garrisonian antislavery practices displayed disrespect for the church and clergy and therefore only increased anti-abolitionist feeling among the religious public.
The accusations of the Clerical Appeals alarmed and angered the Garrisonians. Radical abolitionists' worries received additional confirmation when supporters of the Appeals began to attend meetings of local antislavery societies in an attempt to sway the sentiment of those bodies over to the anti-Garrisonians. The Garrisonians claimed to see little validity in the grievances cited in the Clerical Appeals and responded primarily by assailing their opponents' motives. Although the Appeallants included several abolitionists of previously unimpeachable reputation, Garrisonians described the complaints about violent language as smokescreens to shield pro-slavery clergymen from merited censure. The Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society charged that the signers of the Appeals had forfeited all claims to the trust of true hearted antislavery men because they had demonstrated "a man-pleasing and not a God-pleasing spirit" in promoting conciliation with the slavery-defending churches.\(^{54}\) Garrisonian anticlerical rhetoric reached new heights in exhortations to abolitionists to resist the dictation of antislavery tactics by "spiritual popes" chiefly concerned with protecting the moral authority of their offices.\(^{55}\)

When the Garrisonians applied to the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society for support in rallying abolitionist sentiment against the Clerical Appeals, they discovered the New York-based group sympathetic to the
charges against the radicals and not disposed to intervene. The officers of the national society had joined in earlier replies to the American Union and to Channing because these had been seen as challenges to fundamental abolitionist principles. In the case of the Clerical Appeals, however, the New Yorkers found considerable validity in the accusations against the Garrisonians. As regards the religious soundness of the Garrisonians, most orthodox abolitionists would have agreed with William Jay's statement that "I do not trust any coadjutor who do not act with us from Christian principles." Others among the New York abolitionists accused the Liberator of maliciously judging the entire ministry of New England by the proslavery opinions of a few clergymen. Publicly the Emancipator and the Executive Committee took no side in the controversy over the Clerical Appeals because they regarded the affair as primarily local and personal, and believed it distracted from more serious work. Privately, important abolitionists such as Elizur Wright and James G. Birney hoped that the Garrisonians might secede and thus remove an incubus from the national society.

The behavior of the American Anti-Slavery Society officers toward the Clerical Appeals added to tensions among abolitionists and served to increase Garrisonian anticlericalism. Garrison wrote Lewis Tappan demanding an explanation of the "strange, inexplicable, pernicious silence" of the
New Yorkers, that he warned was universally interpreted as approval for the charges of the Appeallants. Already aware that many other abolitionists disapproved of his religious views, Garrison rapidly surmised the true motives of the national executive committee. To his brother-in-law, George W. Benson, Garrison complained there was "too much sectarianism at [the] headquarters. There appears to be 'something rotten in the State of Denmark.'" The Garrisonian dominated Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society protested that many of the so-called orthodox among the abolitionists desired to erect religious tests for membership in their organization. The Garrisonian body condemned such proposals as certain "to distract antislavery societies, and to turn their efforts against each other instead of slavery."

V

The furor over the Clerical Appeals proved only to be the first of a series of agitations that finally led to the schism in the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1840. In the late 1830s additional questions that exacerbated abolitionist differences came into prominence. Kraditor's study of the women's rights issue in the antislavery movement reveals heated opposition to Garrisonian attempts to win recognition of an equal status for women in the societies. These antifeminists feared abolitionism would be handicapped in
conservative social and religious circles by connection with an even more unpopular cause. In the same period, abolitionists who advocated the formation of an antislavery political party desired to purge the Garrisonians from the American Anti-Slavery Society. These political-minded abolitionists believed that the nonresistant views and extremist reputations of the Garrisonians posed major obstacles for the new program.\textsuperscript{61} As will be seen, these issues reinforced the growing division among antislavery forces over the question of whether or not to continue efforts to abolitionize the churches. The forces opposed to feminism and in favor of political antislavery action could unite with those searching for new church-oriented abolitionist tactics.\textsuperscript{62} The Garrisonians were able to oppose all three as advocates of proscriptive measures that would force dissenting abolitionists out of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

After a short period of relative calm following the Clerical Appeals, controversy again erupted in New England between Garrisonians and more church-oriented abolitionists. When the 1838 New England Anti-Slavery Convention voted to accept women as members many Congregational ministers protested.\textsuperscript{63} At the January 1839 annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, clerical abolitionists led by the Reverends Charles T. Torrey, Orange Scott, Nathaniel Colver, and Amos A. Phelps failed in efforts to prohibit
the participation of women and to censure the Garrisonians for not voting. Unable to turn the old state organization against Garrison and the Liberator, the anti-Garrisonians founded their own body, the Massachusetts Abolition Society, and issued their own newspaper, the Massachusetts Abolitionist. Advocates of the new society traveled through the state claiming that the Garrisonians had abandoned abolitionism for crusades "against human government, the ministry, all the theological institutions, etc." Anti-Garrisonian agents charged that Unitarians and non-resistants dominated the old society while the opinions of abolitionists from more orthodox sects went ignored. The Massachusetts Abolition Society, however, soon proved to be a disappointment to anti-Garrisonian abolitionists in the state and nationwide. The new society expended its energies assailing various Garrisonian heterodoxies and made little progress in launching new church or political antislavery programs.

The Liberator examined the Massachusetts Abolition Society and declared "the new organization is the third edition of the 'American Union'--the 'Clerical Appeal' being the second." The Garrisonians regarded the new society as another attempt by the northern ministry to create a vehicle for soothing their uneasy consciences without having to take any action against slavery which might offend even the most conservative in their churches. Garrisonians especially
deplored the Massachusetts Abolition Society's manipulation of the "spirit of sectarianism" in order to seduce a few true-hearted friends into their "schismatic[al]" and "disorganizing" venture. 67 The greatest danger posed by the new society, according to Garrisonians, lay in its complete domination by the ministry. The Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society warned abolitionists that "Neither the management of the anti-slavery cause, nor the cause, belongs to any professional class." 68 Rallying their forces around opposition to clerical dictation, Garrisonians maintained the loyalty of a large majority of New England abolitionists. 69

The failure of the anti-Garrisonian campaign in New England caused the church-oriented abolitionists to consider ways to re-organize the antislavery movement in order to separate themselves from the anticlerical radicals. Before the formation of the Massachusetts Abolition Society, Lewis Tappan had recommended that Boston opponents of the Garrisonians organize an Evangelical Union Anti-Slavery Society on the Philadelphia and New York City models where abolitionists with heterodox religious views would not be welcomed. In December 1839, a committee from the Philadelphia Church Anti-Slavery Society issued a circular advocating calling a "National Convention of Christian Abolitionists" open only to church members. 70 Many anti-Garrisonians favored political action as the new direction for antislavery activity and became preoccupied with launching an
independent party. Others like Lewis Tappan still had faith in church-oriented abolitionism and hoped that an "Evangelical Association" for that purpose could be founded. 71

Many specific proposals were made in the antislavery press and at public meetings to reorganize the American Anti-Slavery Society. One often heard suggestion was to form a self-perpetuating committee of Christians of unquestionable character to receive and disburse funds from other abolitionists unprepared to cooperate further with the Garrisonians. Another proposed plan, popular with Tappan and frequently seconded, was for members of evangelical denominations to unite in a new voluntary society modeled after the highly centralized American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Other anti-Garrisonians preferred replacing the old national society with a loose federation of denominational antislavery societies like the ones already begun by the Baptists and Methodists. Exponents of the various formats promised that the new organizations would be more effective in church circles because they would not have the stigma of unorthodox and anticlerical elements that the anti-Garrisonians blamed for much of the resistance to the American Anti-Slavery Society. 72

The Garrisonians reacted with predictable hostility to all of the above suggestions. The officers of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society protested that a reorganization of the antislavery societies along denominational lines
would put the movement under the control of the very churches it was trying to reform. Garrison denounced these schemes as "high treason against our glorious cause" because they compromise abolitionist principles to win "respectability and popularity."73 If such plans had been introduced at the Philadelphia Convention of 1833 which formed the American Anti-Slavery Society, Garrison declared, no national society ever would have been formed. The Garrisonians took a strong position opposing all membership tests, religious or political. As Francis Jackson, president of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, explained, the antislavery movement always had been open to anyone who could agree that slavery was sinful and should be immediately abolished: "Upon this basis, it has been found practicable to bring together individuals of almost every conceivable variety of opinion on other subjects. Upon this basis alone, is there any hope that slavery will ever be peaceably abolished...."74

The final schism in the American Anti-Slavery Society came over the women's rights issue and not religious tests. As Kraditor demonstrates, the anti-Garrisonians by the end of the 1830s had despaired of inducing their opponents to leave the national society voluntarily and attempted to purge the radicals. After a stand-off at the 1839 annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, both factions marshalled their supporters for the next year's gathering. The showdown came in the May 1840 convention when the
Garrisonians won a close vote to permit women to serve as officers of the society. In reaction, the anti-Garrisonians bolted and formed their own abolition organization, The American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.

The causes of the fissure in abolitionist ranks in 1840 deserve close scrutiny. The consensus of historians examining this problem is that all abolitionist factions regarded the women's question as a symbol of more substantial differences. On the basis of substantial primary evidence historians also have concluded that the chief source of divisiveness in the movement was the question of shifting abolitionist energies into launching an antislavery political party. Even Kraditor whose radical vs. reformer conceptualization would allow broader application discusses the abolitionists' disagreements primarily in terms of rival political strategies.

Although no overtly religious question was involved in the final division, long-standing difference between abolitionists on antislavery church tactics did contribute to breaking up the American Anti-Slavery Society. By 1840 as a result of a long series of clashes with the ministers of New England, as well as disagreements over theology and church practices, many Garrisonian abolitionists had abandoned membership in religious denominations and adopted pronounced anti-clerical views. Those abolitionists who retained the original hope for converting the churches into
antislavery vehicles, viewed the Garrisonian innovations in religious tactics and theology as counterproductive to the success of this phase of the movement. Even though the Garrisonians did not attempt to make their religious practices the official position of the American Anti-Slavery Society, opponents of these innovations cooperated with those abolitionists committed to political activism in trying to force out the radicals. The proportion of effort given by each group is impossible to discern because their membership overlapped considerably.  

Large delegations were recruited from the New York and Philadelphia church antislavery societies to attend the climactic 1840 annual meeting. Garrisonians reported that their New England abolitionist opponents made furious efforts to rally to their side "Every minister, influential deacon, or active sectarian...." Anti-Slavery ministers played a leading role in opposing women's rights in the abolition movement from the first complaints in Massachusetts down to the final vote in New York in 1840. When the American Anti-Slavery Society split in that year, the long developing disagreements over church as well as political antislavery tactics had been an important cause.

VI

The decade of the 1830s witnessed the birth of the modern abolition crusade and its rending schism. Religion and the churches were close to the center of all these
events. Religious principles were key motivators for abolitionists, and the early antislavery leaders envisioned the churches as playing major roles in bringing about emancipation. Abolitionist tactics were especially geared toward converting churches and reaching an evangelically oriented audience. Despite the abolitionists' effort, the churches continued to resist public commitment to the antislavery campaign. The frustration experienced by abolitionists in propagandizing the churches led some antislavery activists to abandon the nation's religious bodies as hopelessly corrupt. Other abolitionists as nearly dissatisfied with the churches but not prepared to take the unpopular step of repudiating them switched their energies from religious to political antislavery action. A final group of abolitionists preferred neither course but retained faith in eventually winning over the denominations. The disagreements among these groups eventually produced the division in the antislavery movement.

What should not be lost sight of in the quarrels among abolitionists over strategies is that no faction renounced the movement's basic principles that slaveholding was sinful and must be abolished immediately. The antislavery movement regardless of its varied new directions would never drift away completely from its moral base. A strong case can be made that the 1840 schism in the abolition movement did not even damage antislavery efforts in the churches.
Garrisonian comeouterism was a valuable propaganda gesture that exposed church inaction against slavery. The division of the American Anti-Slavery Society freed church-oriented abolitionists from having to apologize for heterodox views among their colleagues. Without the Garrisonian incubus, church oriented abolitionists could be more effective in pursuing traditional methods and in developing new tactics for spreading the antislavery gospel in the churches. In fact, within the five years following the break up of the old American Anti-Slavery Society, several of the nation's leading denominations would make significant antislavery advances that demonstrated that the emancipation cause in the churches was far from dead.
ENDNOTES


3 Dumond, Antislavery, p. 177; Filler, Crusade Against Slavery, pp. 59-63; Barnes, Anti-Slavery Impulse, pp. 44, 55-56.

4 Filler, Crusade Against Slavery, pp. 65-67; Dillon, The Abolitionists, pp. 52-58; Stewart, Holy Warriors, pp. 50-55.

5 Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention. Held at Putnam, on the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th of April, 1835 (New York: The Society, n.d.), pp. 7-8; also Emancipator, 22 September 1836; Jonathan Blanchard, Sermon on Slaveholding Preached by Appointment Before the Synod of Cincinnati at their Late State Meeting at Mount Pleasant, Ohio, October 20, 1841 (Cincinnati: n.p., 1842), p. 5.

6 Anti-Slavery Record, 1 (January 1836): 10-11.

7 New England Anti-Slavery Society, Second Annual Report...1834 (Boston: The Society, 1834), p. 213; also Liberator, 20 July 1838.


11 Anti-Slavery Record, 3 (April 1837): 7; American Anti-Slavery Society, Fifth Annual Report...1838 (New York: The Society, 1838), pp. 52-53; Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, Convention...1835, p. 16.

12 Anti-Slavery Record, 3 (October 1837): 170; Emancipator, 1 May 1840; American Anti-Slavery Society, First Annual Report...1834, p. 19.


15 Dumond, Antislavery, pp. 177-79; Dillon, The Abolitionists, pp. 56-57.


21 American Anti-Slavery Society, Second Annual Report ...1835, pp. 29-30; Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, Convention ...1835, p. 6.

22 Emancipator, 19 December 1839.

23 Gerrit Smith to Elizur Wright, 20 August 1841, Wright Papers; Emancipator, 23 January 40.


Emancipator, 22 May 1840; Liberator, 27 March 1840.

Quoted in Victor B. Howard, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in the Presbyterian Church, 1835-1861" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1961), pp. 19, 26; also Anti-Slavery Record, 1 (July 1835): 80-84; American


35 Liberator, 1 November 1839, also 3 January 1840; Maria W. Chapman, Right and Wrong in Massachusetts (Boston: Dow & Jackson Anti-Slavery Press, 1839), p. 15.


41 American Anti-Slavery Society, Fourth Annual Report ...1837, pp. 40-43, and Fifth Annual Report...1838, pp. 82-83.


44 Filler, Crusade Against Slavery, pp. 120-22.


47 Kraditor, Means and Ends, pp. 7-16, 102-03, 105-06.

48 Ibid., pp. 78-79.


50 William L. Garrison to Thomas Shipley, 17 December 1835, Garrison Letters, I, pp. 584-85; Massachusetts

51 Liberator, 17 April 1840.
52 Quoted in Thomas, The Liberator, p. 244.
54 Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, Eighth Annual Report...1840, pp. 6, 9; Anti-Slavery Record, 3 (October 1837): 120; Senior, "New England Congregationalists," p. 209.
55 Quoted in Dillon, The Abolitionists, p. 118; also Thomas, The Liberator, p. 244; Merrill, Against Wind and Tide, pp. 137-38.
56 William Jay to Lewis Tappan, 22 August 1835, L. Tappan Papers; also J. Mark Stewart, "The Chillicothe Presbytery in Ohio's Antislavery Movement in the 1820s and 1830s" (Masters' Thesis, The Ohio State University, 1971), pp. 41-42.
62 Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, pp. 482-89.
Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, Seventh Annual Report...1839, pp. 31-35.


Liberator, 17 January 1840.

Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, Eighth Annual Report...1840, pp. 10-15; Chapman, Right and Wrong, pp. 35-36.

Francis Jackson and William L. Garrison to the Abolitionists of Massachusetts, 17 July 1839, in Garrison Papers, II, p. 503.

Liberator, 7 February 1840; Chapman, Right and Wrong, pp. 145-46; Kraditor, Means and Ends, pp. 71, 115; Thomas, Liberator, p. 279.

Lewis Tappan To Messrs. William McKee, etc., 11 December 1839, L. Tappan Papers; Kraditor, Means and Ends, pp. 95-97.

Lewis Tappan to "Brother Smith"(?), 24 March 1840, L. Tappan Papers.


Francis Jackson and William L. Garrison to the Abolitionists of the United States, 28 February 1840, in Garrison Papers, II, p. 564; also William L. Garrison to

75 Goodell, Slavery and Antislavery, pp. 587-88.


77 Liberator, 29 May 1840.

The division of the American Anti-Slavery Society only widened the divergence between Garrisonians and their opponents over correct antislavery policy toward the churches. Under Garrisonian control, the AASS became outspokenly hostile to the established religious institutions and encouraged abolitionists to withdraw from denominations guilty of showing even the slightest toleration toward slavery. While party politics attracted most anti-Garrisonian abolitionists after 1840, a hard core of the seceders from the old AASS remained dedicated to time-tested tactics of antislavery propagandizing and lobbying inside the religious bodies. Both abolitionist factions were in a position to observe and, in the case of the anti-Garrisonians, to cooperate with a growing moderate antislavery sentiment among many northern church members. When tensions produced by slavery caused sectional schisms in several of the nation's largest denominations, but on grounds far from satisfactory to most abolitionists, the antislavery campaign underwent even
further reassessments of its future relations with the religious community.

The secession of the anti-Garrisonians from the AASS did not end bitter feelings between the abolitionist factions. The Garrisonians worked hard to undercut the antislavery reputations of the schismatics. The Liberator blasted the seceders' new body, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, as created in a "factious and sectarian spirit" and as dominated completely by the "clergy and their retainers." Garrisonians accused the "new organization" of compromising traditional antislavery principles—particularly the duty not to communion with slaveholders or their apologists and abettors—in order to placate ministerial fears of disrupting church unity. Garrisonians also complained that many of the seceders soon lost all interest in abolitionism except for antislavery politics. Regarding their opponents as compromising, priest-ridden, and thirsting after political office, Garrisonian leaders opposed any reconciliation with their former abolitionist colleagues unless the anti-Garrisonians repented their erring ways.

The Garrisonians also were not prepared to abandon those distinctive opinions and practices in religious as well as secular matters that had alienated their opponents
in the first place. The Liberator defended perfectionism not as a question of theology but as "sound morality" essential to the success of all reform movements. Non-resistant principles led many Garrisonians to refuse to vote. In the early 1840s, the AASS began advocating the dissolution of the Union under the slavery-tolerating constitution. In religious affairs, the Garrisonians played highly visible roles at a series of "Church, Ministry, and Sabbath" conventions where they voiced radical opinions on every possible spiritual subject. Anti-Garrisonian abolitionists joined the chorus of orthodox church members denouncing the proceedings as "infidel." Despite Garrisonian claims of freedom of advocacy in their abolition societies, the AASS and its auxiliaries in the 1840s began adopting forthright endorsements of "disunionism" and "comeouterism" that even prominent members of that faction criticized as "eminently sectarian, intolerant and presumptuous." Although, a few exceptionally radical abolitionists, such as Nathaniel P. Rogers, broke with the AASS as too conservative, the Garrisonians did little to appease the more cautious elements of the antislavery movement.

After the secession of the anti-Garrisonians from the AASS, the Garrisonians' language in assailing the churches' relations with slavery grew even more harsh. For example, repeating the traditional charges that the nation's religious bodies maintained a "profound silence on the sin of
slaveholding" and tolerated slaveowning ministers and members, the Garrisonian-dominated 1840 annual meeting of the AASS resolved that the American "Church ought not to be regarded and treated as the Church of Christ, but as the foe of freedom, humanity and pure religion, so long as it occupies its present position." 8

The most vociferous spokesman for this uncompromising attack on the churches was Stephen S. Foster, a New Hampshire Congregationalist minister until he became a Garrisonian. In his widely quoted work, _The Brotherhood of Thieves, A True Picture of the American Church and Clergy_ (1843), Foster described slavery as a "social crime" which the small number of slaveholders could not sustain without the countenance of "northern watchdogs" particularly the churches and clergy. 9 Like the early abolitionists, Foster regarded the clergy as "the manufacturers of our public sentiment" who held "in their hand the key to the great prison-house of Southern despotism, and can 'open and no man shut, and shut and no man open.'" 10 Doubting that the ministry and the churches were prepared to take any actions that might weaken "their glorious ecclesiastical Union," Foster and many other Garrisonians counseled that abolitionists must make war upon the time-serving religious authorities. 11

In the 1830s, most abolitionists had worked from inside religious bodies by employing the techniques of moral
suasion such as appealing to individual clergymen, propagandizing church members, and petitioning denominational governing bodies. By the late 1830s and early 1840s, however, many abolitionists began to despair of the success of these approaches for remaking the churches into antislavery vehicles. One alternative that attracted abolitionist attention was the ancient Christian practice of "coming-out." Recently revived by groups of millennial revivalists in the rural North, comeouterism implied separation from associations deemed evil rather than risking spiritual contamination by attempting to purify them.\(^{12}\) Comeouter tactics in a variety of forms were adopted by the antislavery forces. These included: first, local congregations renouncing all ties to higher bodies which fellowshipped slaveholders; second, the opponents of slavery creating new denominations with constitutions prohibiting slaveowning members; and third, individual abolitionists separating from all religious connections as a protest to their complicity in slavery. The last, most radical course won the adherence of the leading Garrisonians, including Foster, Parker Pillsbury, Henry C. Wright, and Garrison himself.\(^{13}\) Such action appealed to the anticlerical and perfectionistic religious views of this abolitionist faction. In addition, as skilled propagandists, the Garrisonians recognized that excommunicating one's church for the sin of abetting slavery was a dramatic gesture as sure to agitate the religious community
as disunionism had the politically oriented.¹⁴

In the early 1840s the radicals moved to make their perfectionistic positions of comeouterism and disunionism the endorsed policies of the American Anti-Slavery Society and its auxiliaries. Typical of the comeouter resolutions adopted by the Garrisonian conventions was the following passed by the 1843 annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society:

Resolved, That the Church or minister that refuses to treat the sin of slaveholding, which is the sum of all other sins, its perpetrators and abettors, near and remote, direct and indirect, as they do all other sins and sinners, is not a Church of Christ, or a minister of the gospel; and that it is the duty of all true abolitionists to withdraw all support or countenance from such ministers and Churches.¹⁵

Not all Garrisonians approved of this "teetotal" stand. Some of the dissenters argued for further antislavery agitation inside the church organizations. Other Garrisonians, including David Lee Child, resisted resolutions judging the conduct of fellow abolitionists as unwarranted dictation to individual consciences. Just as political "disunionism" remained a source of controversy in AASS ranks, a significant number of Garrisonians neither approved nor practiced religious comeouterism.¹⁶

Even among those favoring comeouterism, there were disagreements over proper methods and tactics. As already noted, Garrisonians who cut their ties with slavery-tolerating denominations generally preferred not to cooperate with
abolitionists attempting to launch new antislavery churches. While the comeouter sects refused to fellowship slaveholders, most of these new churches remained scrupulously orthodox on religious questions. Garrisonian leaders, however, called for a "Second Reformation." Garrisonians complained that the comeouter denominations while attacking slavery upheld many other religious practices and ecclesiastical prerogatives that conflicted with reason and revelation. Garrisonians also disagreed with other Garrisonians about the proper form of comeouterism. In the 1840s, one group of Garrisonians, including Foster, Pillsbury, and Abby Kelley, disrupted church services with unannounced and usually undesired antislavery lectures. The usual reward for such efforts was a rapid and sometimes violent ejection, even from Friends' meeting houses. Most Garrisonians, however, regarded their coming-out as sufficiently vivid testimony against the churches, and the more dramatic practices eventually were abandoned.

A few observations are in order about the Garrisonians' effectiveness in winning the churches over to abolitionism. Garrisonians did not lead the AASS away from its original religiously inspired principles and definitely not from its commitment to moral suasion. Garrisonian writers and lecturers endeavored to demonstrate how the practices of most denominations aided and abetted slavery. Garrisonians regarded comeouterism as a dramatic propaganda tool to protest
pro-slavery church policies. Because the Garrisonians concentrated upon changing public opinion not institutions, the AASS agitation had important indirect impact on the churches. As Garrisonian labors contributed to strengthening northern antislavery sentiment, the AASS must be credited with helping to make the climate in the churches more receptive for abolitionist advances. Just as the Garrisonians can be regarded as helping prepare the way for the Republicans in politics, the AASS's activities contributed to moderate antislavery gains in the northern churches. The direct effect of comeouterism and other Garrisonian tactics in encouraging strong antislavery stands will be noted in discussions of the individual denominations.

II

While lively historiographical skirmishes have occurred over the contribution of the Garrisonians to the success of the antislavery campaign, few students of abolitionism credit the seceders from the old AASS in 1840 with any important accomplishments. The new organization formed by the anti-Garrisonians, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, is typically portrayed as "a museum of old abolitionists" which neither could keep most of its founders active nor attract a younger generation to the time-honored methods of battling slavery. Even historians critical of the Garrisonians dismiss the AFASS as a "transitional" or
"auxiliary" vehicle to the new political abolitionism. Compared to the Garrisonians' public feud with the nation's religious institutions, the AFASS's relations with churches have been described as "fairly peaceful if not always cordial" and as improving rapidly when northern churches began to progress toward antislavery positions. According to Aileen Kraditor and others, the AFASS's approach to abolitionism was neither sufficiently radical nor innovative to arouse the northern conscience from its long-established patterns of indifference and sufferance toward slavery. A close scrutiny of antislavery activities inside the northern religious community, however, shows that these charges against the AFASS need to be qualified or completely dismissed. While the AFASS attained neither the influence of the AASS before the schism nor its notoriety after the schism, there is considerable evidence that the "new organization" contributed significantly to the increasing antislavery position of the northern churches.

The accomplishments of the AFASS are all the more impressive when weighed against the handicaps that body suffered in its first years. The AFASS was launched in the midst of a severe economic depression which cut heavily into potential contributions. Also by 1840, revivalistic enthusiasm had passed its peak and the spirit of interdenominational cooperation had declined. Many experienced anti-Garrisonian leaders, including Henry B. Stanton, Joshua
Leavitt, and James G. Birney, joined the AFASS but soon left it to concentrate upon political antislavery labors; and others like Theodore Weld and William Goodell and many local and state antislavery societies refused to align themselves with either rival abolition faction.\textsuperscript{24}

The list of AFASS officers and adherents, however, reveals that that body drew strength from new sources. In addition to such long-time stalwarts in the benevolent movements as the Tappan brothers, S. S. Jocelyn, and William Jay, other abolitionists rose into prominence in the AFASS as a result of their leading role in antislavery agitation inside the evangelical denominations. Drawn from both the clerical and lay ranks, these men were the editors of antislavery religious periodicals, the founders of denominational abolition societies, and the perennial disturbers of church conventions with motions for action against slavery.\textsuperscript{25} While the AFASS lacked the funds to carry out propaganda campaigns of lecturing and publishing on the scale of the old AASS, it performed a valuable function in helping to coordinate all the new diverse antislavery ventures at work to reform the churches.\textsuperscript{26} By sharing membership in the AFASS the leaders of these autonomous movements adhered to one common abolitionist program for the churches: demanding that slaveholding be declared a sin and that slaveowners be subjected to the same disciplinary procedures as other wrong doers.\textsuperscript{27} The existence of an abolitionist society speaking
in a language of uncompromising religious principles and free from the heterodox stigma of the Garrisonians provided a unifying standard for the expanding but decentralizing antislavery movement within the churches.

That the AFASS survived as a vehicle independent from the new antislavery Liberty party, largely can be attributed to the stubbornness of Lewis Tappan. Among the early leaders of the AFASS, Birney, Stanton, and Leavitt concluded that the churches were "so entirely identified with the rest of the community, that we are not likely to see them taking a stand, on any subject, greatly in advance of the body of the people." The trio believed the only way likely to carry forward the churches were "those means which affect the mass of the people," meaning political action. Lewis Tappan, editing the society's periodical, The American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter, however, feared that involvement in "independent nominations" might corrupt the reformers and taint the abolitionist cause in the eyes of the high-minded churchmen who frowned upon political scheming. After a struggle for control of the Reporter in the summer of 1841, the politicians conceded active management of the society to those abolitionists still convinced that changing church opinion was the key to progress toward emancipation. Fortunately for the abolitionist cause the anti-Garrisonian factions eventually reached an accommodation that left each autonomous in its own sphere but saw the AFASS encouraging
third party activities and the Liberty party endorsing anti-slavery actions in the churches.\textsuperscript{30}

The AFASS's commitment to abolitionizing the churches is also evidenced by its continued attempts to prove that the antislavery movement was not inherently an enemy of the church. The anti-Garrisonians went to great lengths to demonstrate their own religious soundness by exposing and assailing the "infidel" views of their abolitionist rivals in the AASS. The friends of the new organization attended a Church, Sabbath and Ministry Convention in Boston to introduce a resolution declaring the Bible the "paramount and only authoritative rule of religious faith and duty." When the Garrisonian majority at the convention defeated this motion on the grounds that it was an "extraneous" question and a matter of personal conviction, the AFASS supporters labelled the vote proof of their opponents' free-thinking tendencies.\textsuperscript{31} The AFASS declared itself the only abolition society open to men of orthodox religious views because the AASS required from its members "that they should villify the ministry of the church, [and] abandon the religious persuasion with which they were connected...."\textsuperscript{32} Tappan proclaimed that "good men" could not join the Garrisonians in "a crusade of the impenitent against the church."\textsuperscript{33} At the same time, the anti-Garrisonians were scrupulous about their own religious reputations. Elizur Wright was replaced as editor of the organ of the Massachusetts Abolition Society.
for his theological liberalism. Many anti-Garrisonian clergymen criticized Gerrit Smith, a major contributor to the AFASS, for his practice of making political antislavery speeches on the Sabbath. Only by asserting their orthodoxy did the AFASS members expect to gain influence for the abolitionist cause among the leaders of the churches.

Although the AFASS supporters demonstrated a great concern for their religious reputations, it did not follow that their criticism of the churches was less severe than that of the Garrisonians. The American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter testified that the church's countenance for the crimes of slavery was "highly derogatory to the honour of religion" and damaging to the moral character of the clergy. The AFASS and its auxiliaries regularly declared that northern churches shared in the sin of slavery on account of their silence and praised the few denominations and individual ministers who stood in opposition to such a "time serving ecclesiastical policy." At its annual meetings, the AFASS also firmly endorsed nonfellowship, as in this resolution adopted in 1841:

Resolved, that we earnestly recommend to the churches and Christian societies of every name, the duty of bearing decided testimony against the abomination of slavery, by refusing the privileges of membership and communion to all who are guilty of that sin, or who justify the practice, until they give evidence of repentance, and also to bear decided testimony against the sinful prejudice against color.
Similarly the periodicals sponsored by the AFASS and even by the political abolitionists' Liberty party frequently advocated nonfellowship. The AFASS also undertook great efforts to obtain and publicize the endorsement of foreign abolitionists for the policy of expelling slaveholders from Christian bodies.\(^{38}\) Despite Garrisonian suspicions there is no evidence that the AFASS held any lower standards for church performance on purely slavery related matters.

While the anti-Garrisonians attacked the complicity of the nation's religious bodies in the sin of slavery, the AFASS was divided as to the propriety of comeouterism as the method for individuals to avoid sharing in the church's guilt. There were among the anti-Garrisonians, supporters of comeouter practices but of brands different from that advocated by the AASS. For example, in western New York in the 1840s, many abolitionists abandoned their previous religious affiliations to come together in non-denominational "Union Churches." These new bodies were open to all Christians who refused any longer to give moral countenance to oppression by sharing church membership with slaveholders.\(^{39}\) In other cases, groups of abolitionists in the mid-1840s separated from their old churches and founded new sects which kept up distinctive denominational creeds and practices but added to them a strict enforcement of nonfellowshipping disciplines against slaveholders. While not as anti-institutional as the method recommended by the AASS,
these new comeouter strategies gave the anti-Garrisonian abolitionists the means to challenge the established churches' position toward slavery in a similarly radical fashion.

In addition to their own varieties of comeouterism, the anti-Garrisonian abolitionists at the same time developed other new tactics for advancing antislavery sentiment in the churches. From the late 1830s on, this faction encouraged abolitionist members of the various sects to gather at interdenominational "Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions" to discuss modes of assailing the common enemy, slavery. In the same years, when the established missionary and religious publication societies refused to take antislavery grounds, AFASS adherents launched competing organizations upon abolitionist principles. In all these activities, the AFASS demonstrated a greater innovativeness than their Garrisonian rivals for finding new means to further the abolitionist cause in the churches. The antislavery influence of the comeouter churches, Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions, and pro-abolition benevolent associations upon the religious community will be explored in later chapters.

While anti-Garrisonians experimented with new tactics for abolitionizing the religious denominations, the AFASS faction in the early 1840s continued to concentrate on traditional methods of lobbying inside church channels. Unforeseen developments in the churches in the mid-1840s,
however, produced grave doubts among the anti-Garrisonian abolitionists as to effectiveness of the long-standing strategies for reforming the pro-slavery religious bodies. When the antislavery agitation of these years helped to break up several large denominations along sectional lines, anti-Garrisonians expected that the northern wings of these churches would then take up abolitionist standards. The failure of the northern religious leaders to advance beyond a luke-warm antislaveryism, even following mass defections of southern church members, disappointed abolitionists and forced a reconsideration of future church-oriented antislavery tactics.

III

While no consensus ever existed among abolitionists about whether their movement should work to bring about schisms in the churches, such an outcome always had been implicit in their demand that slaveholders be barred from Christian fellowship. Since the mid-1830s, abolitionist hopes to use the agencies of the churches to carry antislavery arguments into slaveholding territory declined as northern conservatives united with southerners to restrict free discussion in the nation's religious, as well as political, institutions. When influential northern churchmen stated fears that antislavery actions would disturb denominational unity and set back the progress of religion, abolitionists
began expressing preference for a divided church rather than one preserved by a "deceitful calm." The AFASS carried on this attitude toward religious schism. The American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter, for example, while still endor​sing the older approaches of exerting influence upon the churches, conceded that "where opposition is aroused, and warfare persisted in, in spite of meekness and Christian forbearance [on the part of the abolitionists], a separation is often inevitable, unless the cause be betrayed for the sake of unscriptural peace and inglorious and unchristian ease." Since the AFASS maintained close ties with the abolitionists who remained inside the various denominations, the anti-Garrisonians would be especially disappointed when those internal antislavery movements eventually divided several sects but failed to remake northern churchmen into strong antislavery advocates.

The denominational schisms most often identified with antislavery agitation were those of the Methodists in 1844 and the Baptists in 1845, but the 1837 division of the Presbyterians upon questions at least partially associated with slavery also had an important impact on church-oriented abolitionist tactics. The early abolitionists had high hopes for rapid antislavery advances among the Presbyterians because that church as recently as 1818 had condemned slavery as "utterly inconsistent with the law of God." The Presbyterian abolitionists, who made up a large share of the
early leaders of the AASS, argued that their church had an antislavery discipline which only needed enforcement. Early abolitionist propagandizing among Presbyterians succeeded in getting many individual northern presbyteries and synods to declare slavery sinful and to call for immediate emancipation. AASS agent Theodore Weld lobbied at the 1835 Presbyterian General Assembly and felt that a quarter of the delegates, including several from the Border States, already were sympathetic to his cause. The antislavery campaign among Presbyterians, however, suffered a serious setback when the 1836 General Assembly rejected a report calling for the censure of slaveholders. The majority at the Assembly, including more than half the northern delegates, declared such strong antislavery action "would tend to distract and divide" the denomination. Disappointed abolitionists reported that these proceedings showed that the "inroads the spirit of Slavery has made on the Church of Christ" precluded the likelihood of any quick abolitionist triumph in the Presbyterian denomination.

The following year, 1837, witnessed a schism in the Presbyterian church. The causes and consequences of this division offered important lessons for the abolitionists about the complexities of obstacles confronting antislavery church reform. The proportionate weight to accord the factors producing the Presbyterian separation long has been a subject of debate among historians. The reasons given by
the majority in the 1837 General Assembly for expelling four northern synods was that those judicatories had deviated from the church's traditional Calvinism due to the corrupting influence of revivalistic preaching styles and of cooperation with liberal minded Congregationalists in missionary and other benevolent projects. The widely accepted thesis of an article by historian C. Bruce Staiger, however, points out that the "heretical" synods also had been those most outspoken against slavery and suggests that the expulsions were actually the product of a covert deal between southerners and orthodox northerners to purge the church of a common enemy. A more recent interpretation by John W. Christie and Dwight L. Dumond contradicts Staiger and minimizes the role of abolitionism in the 1837 schism. Christie and Dumond contend that as early as the General Assembly of 1818, the Presbyterians had established an unspoken policy of opposing slavery in theory while tolerating it in practice. These authors find no satisfactory evidence that "antislavery" Presbyterians dissented strongly enough from the denomination's consensus on slavery to have caused a schism. The subsequent inaction of both Presbyterian factions toward slavery soon caused abolitionists to interpret the events of 1837 in a way quite similar to Christie's and Dumond's view.

The fate of antislavery efforts within the larger and theologically more orthodox "Old School" Presbyterian sect revealed both the power of northern conservative
anti-abolitionism in the churches and the need for reformers to adopt new tactics to deal with that sentiment. Although white southerners accounted for only one-third of Old School Presbyterian membership in the years following the schism, many northern conservatives joined them in suppressing all discussion of the potentially disruptive slavery question at their national gatherings. A number of veteran abolitionists, including Samuel Crothers and James Dickey, sided with the Old School following the Presbyterian schism. These men, strongest in the Midwest and particularly the southern Ohio, Chillicothe Presbytery, regularly sent remonstrances to the Old School General Assemblies calling for enforcement of the church's 1818 antislavery discipline. The abolitionist press publicized and praised the denominational antislavery conventions held by dissident Old School Presbyterians in Cincinnati in 1842 and again in 1845.

The persistent petitioning of the abolitionist minority finally forced the 1845 General Assembly to define the church's position on slavery. With only thirteen negative votes, the Old School Presbyterian governing body declared that while the church disapproved of the many evils accompanying slavery and hoped for its eventual extinction, the Bible gave no sanction for barring slaveholders from Christian communion. The report went on to warn that "modern abolitionism" threatened the peace of all churches and "so far from removing the evils complained of, tend[ed] only to
perpetuate and aggravate them.\textsuperscript{52} Loud complaints against this action went up from abolitionists inside and out of Old School Presbyterian ranks. The opposition to any antislavery action had shown itself so strongly in control of the denomination, that a number of pro-abolition ministers and congregations began to "come out" from the Old School Presbyterians, and eventually formed a new sect.\textsuperscript{53} Abolitionists were learning that in some churches extreme steps were necessary to carry on the attack against slavery.

In the case of the Presbyterians expelled by the Old School, abolitionists discovered that hesitancy to take decisive antislavery church action existed even among professed opponents of the institution. While only a few southern presbyteries took the side of the "New School," or theologically more evangelistic, Presbyterians, that body proved nearly as solicitous toward slaveholding members as the Old School. In its early years, the New School General Assemblies sidestepped the troublesome question by delegating action upon slavery to the church's lower judicatories.\textsuperscript{54} In response to this policy, several western presbyteries took steps to exclude slaveholders from their pulpits and communions.\textsuperscript{55} Pressure mounted for a definite statement of the church's position toward slavery and the 1846 General Assembly finally issued one. In a statement produced after nine days of debate, the New School Presbyterians acknowledged the oppressive character of slavery
but declared it unfair "by general and promiscuous condemn­ation" to declare all slaveholders sinners and unfit for church membership. 56

While conservatives praised the General Assembly's ac­tion for its "latitude of construction," the antislavery forces were deeply divided. 57 Strict abolitionists of both the Garrisonian and AFASS faction recognized the ruling as a compromise falling far short of long-established antislav­ery principles. Many abolitionists suggested "comeouterism" to antislavery New School Presbyterians, either along Gar­risonian lines or into other denominations or even into a new nonfellowshipping Presbyterian sect. 58 Most New School Presbyterians claiming to disapprove of southern oppression, however, argued that not secession but further agitation from inside the denomination would better encourage anti­slavery advances. A serious problem was emerging for aboli­tionists over church-oriented antislavery tactics. As even predominantly northern and professedly antislavery churches failed to sever their ties to slavery, abolitionists had to decide whether to continue their efforts from within or out­side the ranks of these bodies.

IV

The abolition campaign in the Methodist Episcopal Church moved toward a similar dilemma. In the 1830s, many early and outspoken abolitionists came from among the
descendants of Wesley. Members and agents of the AASS, including Orange Scott, LaRoy Sunderland, and George Storrs, introduced discussion of abolitionism into official church councils and organized denominational conventions and local societies to push for antislavery action. Accepting the principle that slaveholding was sinful, Methodist abolitionists pushed for enforcement of the church's long ignored disciplinary condemnation of the "buying and selling of men, women and children." Despite the thousands of slaveowners who entered Methodism at all ranks except the episcopacy, the church still paid lip service to its antislavery heritage by endorsements of colonization and missionary work among the slaves. Efforts by northern conservatives to uphold this modest antislavery tradition in the face of growing pressure from abolitionists and proslavery southerners, however, backfired and caused a series of secessions.

The year 1840 marked a decisive turning point in the antislavery movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Despite intensive abolitionist lobbying, the Methodist quadrennial General Conference of that year not only rejected all antislavery petitions but increased official discrimination against the Black church members. In protest to these actions, Methodist abolitionists held denominational antislavery conventions and founded a permanent national organization, the American Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society, in October, 1840. The new society espoused the
abolitionist program of nonfellowship with slaveholders and declared its objectives to be "the entire extinction of slavery in the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, and thereby to aid in that great national enterprise...its entire extinction in the United States." Orange Scott established a periodical for the Methodist abolitionists in 1840. The following year, Methodist abolitionists launched an antislavery missionary society.

The Garrisonians and anti-Garrisonians reacted differently to these events. Perhaps because Scott, LaRoy Sunderland, and other organizers of this new movement had been prominent in launching the AFASS, the Garrisonians either ignored or ridiculed the activities of the Methodist abolitionists as ineffective. In contrast, the AFASS and Liberty party praised and publicized the developing abolitionist spirit among these Methodists. Keeping up the practices of the 1830s, the AFASS engaged Methodist abolitionists to labor as lecturing agents among their own denomination. Samuel Lewis, a leader of the Ohio Liberty party, presided at the Western Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention in Cincinnati in 1841. Lewis Tappan in the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter testified from "personal acquaintance" to the "singular constancy, meekness, and resolution" of the leaders of the antislavery Methodists. The American Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society functioned as a powerful auxiliary to the AFASS in pressing forward the
abolitionist cause among the Methodists.

Despite the aid of antislavery groups from outside the denomination, Methodist abolitionists felt they were making little progress. The denominational antislavery society rarely could get its proceedings reported in the Methodist press, and active abolitionists had to endure serious harassment by the church establishment. With the official machinery of the denomination turned against them, many Methodist abolitionists despaired of ever converting their church. Influenced by the perfectionistic strain in Methodism, Scott and other antislavery reformers began to feel that since their labors had no foreseeable success it would be "a sin for us to remain longer in the church." A steady trickle of antislavery-motivated secessions from the Methodist Episcopal Church occurred during the late 1830s, but the November 1842 call for organization of a new abolitionized Methodist church, signed by Scott, Sunderland, and Jotham Horton of Rhode Island, precipitated a mass exit. Attracting abolitionists from other denominations as well as from the Methodist Episcopal Church, the new "Wesleyan Methodist Connection" grew within two years to nearly fifteen thousand members. The Wesleyans prohibited all slaveholders from their communions. Remembering their former troubles with hierarchies, the Methodist comeouters also created a highly democratic form of church government. The True Wesleyan, the organ of the new sect, boasted that "the
influence of [antislavery] seceders is, to say the least, tenfold to what it would be by their remaining in churches where, by necessity, they must sanction, by example, the system of slavery." Wesleyans also claimed that joining their venture afforded Methodists an opportunity to escape moral culpability for toleration of slavery without having to participate in the more "infidel" comeouterism of the Garrisonians.69

Ironically, the bolt of the abolitionist Wesleyans only shortly preceded the secession of most southerners from the Methodist Episcopal Church. While claiming to be glad to be rid of the "restless spirit" and the "distraction" the anti-slavery agitation produced, conservative northern Methodists took steps to minimize the number of departing members.70 The Bishops permitted several Methodist antislavery conventions to be held in New England without official harassment, and some northern church editors opened their columns to antislavery articles. Fearful of encouraging more defections to the Wesleyans, the northern majority of the 1844 Methodist General Conference suspended Bishop James O. Andrew of Georgia because he had become a slaveholder in violation of one of the few still respected antislavery rules of the church. Although this was an extremely mild reproof, most southerners considered it an acknowledgement that a moral stigma was attached to slaveowning. These offended southerners seceded to form the Methodist Episcopal
Church, South in 1845. At least four thousand slaveowning Methodists in local conferences overlapping Free and Slave states, however, remained in their old church relations.  

The most recent historian chronicling these events, Donald Mathews, concludes that this schism was a major anti-slavery advance because it helped sharpen sectional polarization and freed northern Methodists to speak in a moderate but forthright tone against slavery. Mathews believes such developments ultimately proved more effective in turning the North against slavery than the abolitionists' strident moral arguments. Mathews also notes that the sectional break up of the Methodists encouraged the abolitionists.

While abolitionists did voice pleasure over these events, there is no evidence that they believed that their mission among the Methodists had been accomplished. Wesleyans were surprised by the actions of the 1844 General Conference against Bishop Andrews but regarded them as products of "expediency" not of genuine antislavery sentiment. The True Wesleyan complained that nothing had been done to exclude the thousands of Border State slaveholding ministers and members who chose not to secede. The Garrisonians' Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society observed: "the Northern Methodists received their just reward for their wicked attempts to preserve the unity of the Church at the expense of justice and right, in seeing the Church rent in twain by even the feeblest breath of agitation." One
Liberty party newspaper aptly summed up the doubts of the anti-Garrisonians by observing of the Andrews affair: "what has been gained, for if sound principle has not advanced, little has really been gained." The development of a moderate antislavery position in the northern Methodists, as in the case of the New School Presbyterians, fell far short of the standards abolitionists set for the churches.

The relations of the abolitionists to the Baptist schism of 1845 roughly parallels their dealings with Methodist antislavery developments. The Baptist commitment to a maximum of autonomy for individual congregations greatly complicated the endeavors of abolitionists. While Baptist antislavery forces could press their demands at the local level, there was no national denominational organization to establish or enforce the practice of excommunicating slaveholders. Large numbers of Baptists, however, cooperated in voluntary societies for the support of missions and religious publication ventures. Abolitionist efforts among the Baptists therefore concentrated on demanding that those bodies repudiate all ties with slaveowners by refusing their contributions and forbidding their appointment as missionaries.

After several years of agitation at local levels, abolitionists gathered from across the North at the American
Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention in New York City in April, 1840. Long-time members of the American Anti-Slavery Society, including Nathaniel Colver, Duncan Dunbar, Cyrus P. Grosvenor, Charles W. Denison, Elon Galusha, and others, gave focus to the meeting's antislavery sentiment. The gathering sent out pro-abolition addresses to Baptists in both the North and the South. The American Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention along with state conventions of antislavery Baptists met regularly after 1840 to discuss how their denomination's "benevolent societies should be instantly purged from all their guilty connection with slavery, inasmuch as the Lord abhors robbery for a burnt offering, and will not pollute his treasury with the price of blood." To add weight to their protests, the American Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention in 1842 founded a "Provisional Committee" to collect and distribute funds for missionary activities from those no longer willing to cooperate with slaveholders in the regular societies.

The abolitionist factions reacted in different ways to the antislavery Baptists. The AFASS appointed Charles W. Denison as a special agent to travel among his fellow Baptists organizing local antislavery societies. Lewis Tappan, Joshua Leavitt, and other AFASS officers attended the 1841 gathering of the American Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention and reported their approval for its adoption of the "ground of the London Convention on the inherent sinfulness of
slavery, and the duty of Christians on the subject." Only the Garrisonians criticized the Baptist abolitionists for retaining membership in denominational mission societies while at the same time endeavoring to reform those bodies. The prominence of such long time anti-Garrisonians as Nathaniel Colver in the American Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention heightened AASS suspicions about the commitment of Baptist abolitionists to the principles of nonfellowship.

The crisis over slavery in the Baptist denomination came to a head in the early 1840s. Conservative northerners in control of both the Baptist Triennial Convention overseeing foreign missions and the American Baptist Home Mission Society aiding struggling congregations in this country experienced growing pressure from both abolitionists and southerners. While no slaveholders were employed as foreign missionaries, the Triennial Convention of 1841 condemned abolitionists' demands for fellowship tests in benevolent activity and dropped antislavery agitator Elon Galusha from the organization's overseeing Board. The 1844 Triennial Convention witnessed lengthy debates over slavery before the delegates passed a resolution that: "in cooperating together as members of this Convention in the work of Foreign Missions, we disclaim all sanctions, either express or implied, whether of slavery or antislavery...." In 1845, however, the Board answered an inquiry from Alabama Baptists with an admission that it still would refuse to appoint a
slaveholder as a missionary. This reply angered southern Baptists who promptly seceded and formed their own foreign mission society.81

Northern conservatives reorganized the Triennial Convention into the American Baptist Missionary Union in 1845. To stifle further antislavery agitation, the Union's managers were responsible only to a select group of "life members" and not to small contributors or representatives of individual congregations. The founders of the Union rejected all amendments to its constitution that would have erected barriers to a reunion with southern Baptists or prohibited slaveholders from becoming members, officers, or missionaries of the body.82

The American Baptist Home Mission Society similarly debated the question of supporting slaveholding missionaries and in 1845 agreed to a sectional division of the organization's resources "upon amicable honorable and liberal principles."83 Even following the southern withdrawal, Baptist abolitionists failed in attempts to alter the Home Mission Society's constitution to instruct its missionaries not to serve churches with slaveholding members.84

The southern secessions and subsequent reorganizations of the mission societies produced a divided response from Baptist abolitionists. As early as 1843, a militant faction within the American Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention had founded a permanent organization incorporating
nonfellowshipping standards, "the American and Foreign Baptist Missionary Society." Nathaniel Colver, however, argued that the Provisional Committee of the Convention was sufficient for antislavery purposes and warned that a permanent organization threatened "disastrous results" to the unity of northern Baptists. After the secession of the southerners, Colver pronounced the mission associations practically separated from all connection with slavery even though he and other abolitionists repeatedly failed in efforts to get the societies to erect explicit bars against slaveholders. The American Baptists Anti-Slavery Convention dissolved itself in 1845, and many abolitionists remained with Colver in the regular mission bodies. Supporters of the American and Foreign Baptist Mission Society, however, resolved to keep their organization functioning until the constitutions of the Missionary Union and the Home Mission Society "have been so defined that their antislavery character shall be distinctly marked." In 1846, the American and Foreign Baptist Mission Society changed its name to the American Baptist Free Mission Society and claimed to be the only unquestionably antislavery benevolent channel in the denomination.

This complicated series of events temporarily confused the abolitionists about whether the northern Baptists had acknowledged the sinful nature of slaveholding and severed all ties with its perpetrators. The anti-Garrisonians'
opinion of the northern Baptists' Missionary Union and Home Mission Society declined over the years as those bodies refused to adopt explicit antislavery policies and fraternized with their southern counterparts. In 1853, the AFASS finally concluded that while "many" sincere abolitionists "remained in those mission bodies," that connection "prevents to a great extent the effective development of their antislavery tendencies." Although Nathaniel Colver stayed active in the AFASS, church-oriented abolitionists usually established closer working ties with supporters of the American Baptist Free Mission Society. The Garrisonian AASS accurately predicted that abolitionists remaining in the regular mission bodies would fail to bring those societies to an uncompromising antislavery position. The Garrisonians, however, also questioned the consistency of the Free Mission group in continuing to fellowship in local congregations with the supporters of the old societies. While northern Baptists had taken a stronger stand against slavery, abolitionists inside and outside the denomination could not agree if further antislavery efforts were needed.

VI

Large numbers of contemporary observers and subsequent historians regarded the schisms of the nation's largest denominations as significant indicators of growing antislavery sentiment in the North. The abolitionists appraisal of
these same events, however, points to grounds for questioning the strength of antislavery sentiment involved in the religious divisions. As for the motivation of the various church break-ups, the abolitionists assessed the greater share of the credit to a growing southern intransigence rather than to a commitment by a majority of churchgoing northerners to remove slavery from their communions. The abolitionists also complained that even after the schisms neither the northern Baptists nor Methodists nor the New School Presbyterians had declared slaveholding to be inherently sinful, or subjected the practice to church discipline. The abolitionists protested that thousands of slaveholders remained unmolested in each of these denominations. Applying the original, religiously inspired standards of their movement, the abolitionists could not agree that the breakup of the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists had freed northern members of those churches from complicity with slavery.

The antislavery significance of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist divisions also can be assessed by comparison with other denomination's relations toward slavery in the mid-1840s. On the question of sanctioning slavery by accepting slaveholders as members, none of three supposedly antislavery denominations could approach the nonfellowship practiced by the Quakers, Free Will Baptists, and the Scottish Presbyterian sects. Weighed against the
official neutrality toward slavery maintained by the liturgical sects and by the arch-conservative Old School Presbyterians, however, the New School Presbyterians and the northern Methodists and Baptists had made undeniably anti-slavery gestures and statements. The New School Presbyterians and the northern Baptists and Methodists were most comparable to the predominantly northern Congregationalist and Unitarian denominations in their treatment of the slavery question. Although many individual Unitarians and Congregationalists had adopted strong antislavery views, both denominations held back from accepting the fine points of abolitionist principles on the sinfulness of slavery and the duty of the church to discipline slaveholding members. By the mid-1840s, the New School Presbyterians and the northern Baptists and Methodists joined the Congregationalists and Unitarians to create a new mildly antislavery consensus within the religious community of the North.

A final assessment of the importance of the divisions of the Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists in advancing the abolitionist cause must consider several factors. Either by their actions or declarations, the New School Presbyterians and northern Methodists and Baptists had acknowledged slavery to be an inherently evil system but not a sin. Similar moderate antislavery sentiment had existed in religious circles immediately following the Revolution but faded in the face of slaveholders' resistance to
emancipation. There was much evidence in the 1840s that the revived moderate antislavery feelings in the northern church also posed little threat to the southern institution. None of the denominations undergoing schisms enacted ecclesiastical legislation to remove the small minorities of slaveholders remaining in their bodies. While the morality of holding slaves was criticized in theory, all of these sects refrained from taking steps to deprive the slaveowners of their standing as good Christians. By not disciplining slaveholders as they did habitual drunkards, thieves, and adulterers, these religious bodies sacrificed their most powerful means to attest to the morally reprehensible nature of slavery. As the abolitionists long had contended, only by a clear denunciation of slavery as sinful and a strictly enforced policy of nonfellowship with slaveholders, could the churches hope to stimulate the consciences of their members into taking effective action against slavery. Without an unqualified moral condemnation and disciplinary measures against slaveholding, the practices of even professedly antislavery churches only encouraged the continued public tolerance of slavery. 91

The dissatisfaction of the abolitionists with the slavery policies of the post-schism Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians led to further divisions in the antislavery movement over tactics for church reform. While the Garrisonians hoped the religious separations might hasten a
similar political break up, they nevertheless protested against the northern churches' continued complicity with slavery. That northern churchmen still could refuse to take decisive antislavery actions even after the southerners' secessions was additional proof to the Garrisonians of the total corruption of traditional religious institutions and the need for abolitionists to "come out" from them.

For anti-Garrisonian abolitionists, the unsatisfactory outcome of the denominational schisms after more than a decade of agitation within the churches produced disagreements over future church-oriented antislavery strategy. Some anti-Garrisonian abolitionists remained in their old church connections and experimented with new methods of cooperating with more moderate antislavery church members in the hope of bringing the denominations closer to abolitionist standards. Many other anti-Garrisonian abolitionists renounced further agitation inside the churches and founded new religious organizations free from all connection with slavery. In the next three chapters, the anti-Garrisonians' new church tactics will be examined to discover how the northern religious community continued to be pressured for stronger actions against slavery.
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59 Quoted in Goodell, Slavery and Antislavery, pp. 144-150.


61 Ibid., pp. 137-41.

62 The Watchman and Wesleyan Observer, 10 October 1840, quoted in Engelder, "Churches and Slavery," p. 142; also AFAS Reporter, 1 (September 1840): 36, 1 (October 1840): n.p., 2 (January 1843): 119; Friend of Man, 8 April 1840, 28 September 1841; Emancipator, 5 August 1841, 7 October 1841;

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True Wesleyan, 13 January 1844, also 20 January 1844, 25 May 1844; Friend of Man, 26 August 1840, 1 June 1841, 6 July 1841; LaRoy Sunderland to Francis Wright, 2 October 1843, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, (Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress), Goodell, Slavery

69 True Wesleyan, 24 February 1844, 2 March 1844.

70 The Christian Witness and Western Reserve Advocate, 7 September 1843, 28 December 1843.


73 True Wesleyan, 4 May 1844, 15 June 1844, 22 June 1844, 27 July 1844, 3 August 1844; Mathews, Slavery and Methodism, pp. 269-70.

74 Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, Fourteenth Annual Report...1846 (Boston: The Society, 1846), p. 68; also Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, Thirteenth Annual Report...1845 (Boston: The Society, 1845), pp. 52-53; Liberator, 21 June 1844, 15 August 1845; Pillsbury, The Church As It Is, p. 130.

75 Liberty Standard, n.d., quoted in True Wesleyan, 29 June 1844, also Lewis Tappan to William Jay, 14 June 1844, L. Tappan Papers, L. of C.

76 Friend of Man, 24 August 1841, also 15 January 1840, 20 July 1840, 7 September 1840, 19 October 1841; Emancipator, 27 February 1840, 12 March 1840, 9 December 1841, 19 May 1842, 30 June 1842; APAS Reporter, 2 (September 1841): 30, 1 (May 1841): 196; Liberator, 8 January 1841; Baptist Anti-Slavery Correspondent, 1 (March 1841): 46; Andrew T. Foss and E. Mathews, Facts for Baptist Churches, Collected, Arranged and Received by A. T. Foss, of New Hampshire, and E. Mathews, of Wisconsin (Utica: American Baptist Free


78 AFASReporter, 1 (May 1841): 169, also 1 (June 1840): 2, 8; 2 (September 1841): 30-31; Emancipator, 13 May 1841, 9 December 1841, 30 June 1842; Friend of Man, 20 April 1841, 20 July 1841, 24 August 1841, 7 September 1841; Lewis Tappan to William H. Brisbane, 17 December 1842, L. Tappan Papers.

79 Liberator, 28 May 1841, 22 October 1841, 16 June 1843; Foster, Brotherhood of Thieves, pp. 52-55.

80 American Baptist Memorial, 3 (June 1844): 185.

81 Smith, Nathaniel Colver, pp. 185-86; Baker, Southern Baptist Convention, pp. 157-72; Smith, In His Image, But, pp. 126-27.


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Liberator, 17 May 1844, 15 August 1845; Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, Fourteenth Annual Report...1846 (Boston: The Society, 1846), pp. 70-71; Foster, Brotherhood of Thieves, p. 52.


For the opposite conclusion see Mathews, "Methodist Schism," pp. 17-19.

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CHAPTER FOUR

ABOLITIONISTS AND THE "COMEOUTER" SECTS

Beginning in the mid-1840s a new phenomenon emerged in the abolitionist campaign in the nation's churches: The "Comeouter" Sects. As noted in Chapter Three, a segment of Methodist and Baptist abolitionists had seceded and formed their own denominations to protest the slow advance of antislavery sentiment in their old churches. The dramatic sectional divisions of these two faiths in 1844 and 1845 did not halt this trend, and in fact the example spread to other denominations. The creation of these sects was striking testimony against the failure of the churches to eradicate vestiges of tolerance for slavery.

The potential of secessions by antislavery church members to the comeouter sectors helped stimulate antislavery activity in the major denominations. The anti-Garrisonian abolitionists, in particular, recognized the important role the comeouter sects could play in disseminating the antislavery message in the religious community and encouraged and aided the trend. The abolitionists, however, already had learned from dealings with older antislavery
denominations, such as the Quakers, that more had to be demanded from the churches than mere nonfellowship with slaveholders. The Garrisonians set such stringent standards for antislavery church relations that even most comeouter sects fell short in one or more respects. Despite the comeouter sects' occasional problems with the Garrisonians, the new antislavery denominations became an important new facet in the church-oriented abolition movement.

The antislavery comeouter-sect phenomenon derived its main inspiration from the same theological sources as the abolitionists' argument against fellowship with slaveholders. Like the early abolitionists, the comeouters believed slave-owning to be sinful and the churches guilty of tolerating sinners in their memberships. After years of unsuccessful effort to reform the religious denominations, pro-comeouter abolitionists finally resolved to heed the Biblical injunction to "Come out from her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Comeouters considered separation from a contaminated religious body not only a means of protecting one's own soul, but also forceful testimony to alert the church to its unsafe and unchristian course. The comeouter sects cited the precedent of earlier Christians from the fourth century Donatists down to the leaders of the
Protestant Reformation who had felt impelled to secede from a sinning church and form new communions restricted to the uncorrupted. Following the example of these previous religious reformers, the comeouter sects attempted to establish uncompromised institutional bases from which to carry on the work of freeing the churches from slavery.

The comeouter-sect movement has received scant attention from historians of abolitionism because it seldom is distinguished clearly from the better-known Garrisonian variant of comeouterism. As observed in Chapter Three, many members of the post-1840 American Anti-Slavery Society had repudiated all ties with organized Christian bodies. These men were motivated by anti-clerical and perfectionistic religious beliefs as well as the desire to protest the church's complicity with slavery. Under the leadership of William Lloyd Garrison, Stephen S. Foster, Parker Pillsbury, and others, the AASS and most of its auxiliaries denounced the American Church for tolerating slavery and called upon abolitionists "to turn from it with loathing and abhorrence" and withdraw membership.

The AASS's comeouterism is distinguished from the comeouter sect endeavors primarily in that Garrisonian seceders seldom joined other religious bodies. Although only a minority of Garrisonians formally abandoned their old denominations, those coming-out included some of the most prominent spokesmen for the AASS such as Garrison, Foster,
Pillsbury, Abby Kelley, Henry C. Wright, Nathaniel P. Rogers, and Maria Weston Chapman. Some of these comeouters even invaded religious services to denounce ministers and church members for remaining in fellowship with slaveholders. Such practices helped to reinforce the opinion of most orthodox churchmen that the Garrisonians were infidels and enemies of organized religion.5

Few Garrisonians who seceded from the major denominations were content to affiliate with the comeouter sects. The major Garrisonian objection against these new antislavery churches was that most of them failed to carry out scrupulously the principles of religious and political non-fellowship with slavery. For instance, the Garrisonians complained that while the comeouter sects barred slaveholders from their pulpits and communion tables, these denominations fellowshipped with northerners guilty of defending or abetting slavery in church or politics. The AASS accused the comeouter Christians of condoning slavery even in voting for antislavery candidates, because the Garrisonian considered such action as affirming support for a pro-slavery Constitution. Most members of the comeouter sects, in turn, shied away from associating with Garrisonians because of the latter group's reputation for theological heterodoxy. Thus in practice the two forms of antislavery comeouterism remained distinct.
The anti-Garrisonian American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society interpreted the principle of nonfellowship with slaveholders ambiguously enough to give sanction to both the comeouter sects and to antislavery reformers remaining inside their old denominations. The AFASS constitution urged on its members "the duty of embracing every suitable opportunity for exhibiting...[slavery's] utter incompatibility with the spirit of the Christian religion," but the society never defined this exhortation as requiring abolitionists to secede from pro-slavery religious connections. In fact, leading anti-Garrisonians disagreed among themselves about both the propriety and the effectiveness of comeouterism. Often the denominational affiliation of the AFASS member helped guide his personal views toward comeouterism. Because the Baptists and Congregationists lacked a central authority to enforce a uniform discipline against slavery, abolitionists such as Lewis Tappan and Nathaniel Colver could remain in only modestly antislavery churches in good conscience. For theological reasons, the small number of abolitionists in ritualist denominations, like Episcopalian father and son William and John Jay, felt compelled to work from inside their churches for the nonfellowship of slaveholders.

A large number of Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and even Quaker abolitionists, however, adopted the founding of comeouter sects as a legitimate antislavery
tactic. As will be described shortly, many leaders of these comeouter sects became active participants in the AFASS and other anti-Garrisonian abolitionist projects. In addition, a number of anti-Garrisonian abolitionists in western New York left their old churches and formed locally independent, theologically interdenominational, and thoroughly antislavery "Union Churches." Even though not all anti-Garrisonian abolitionists left their denominations, this wing of the immediate emancipation movement cooperated strongly with the comeouter sects as a means toward achieving common antislavery church goals.

II

Even before the emergence of the comeouter sects, abolitionists had had experience in dealing with denominations having strong antislavery disciplines. The Quaker, Freewill Baptist, and Scottish Presbyterian sects all had taken early action against slaveholding among their membership.8 Abolitionist relations with the comeouter sects would be shaped significantly by the expectations and disappointments created by the behavior of the older antislavery denominations.

The antislavery record of the Quakers before the 1840s has been discussed in earlier chapters. In addition to successfully compelling all church members to emancipate their slaves, the Society of Friends became the backbone of efforts to induce all opponents of slavery to abstain from
"purchasing and selling, using and consuming the products of slave labor."

Quakers also conducted educational programs for northern Free Blacks. Despite this enduring antislavery tradition, large numbers of Quakers disapproved of abolitionism. Many Friends feared immediate abolition would result in violence and preferred plans for compensated emancipation and colonization. Devotion to the Whig party led some Quakers to endorse the election of slaveholder Henry Clay as President in 1844. Many Friends frowned upon associating with members of other denominations in antislavery societies. Such conservative sentiments led several Yearly Meetings of both the Orthodox and Hicksite wings of Quakerism to expel active abolitionists from their membership, touching off two comeouter movements which will be discussed later in this chapter.

A notable number of Friends, particularly of the theologically more liberal Hicksite wing, became enthusiastic followers of William Lloyd Garrison. The AASS, nevertheless, frequently complained that worldliness and political concerns had caused most Quakers to betray their noble antislavery heritage. The AFASS summed up its opinion of the Quaker position with the observation that "TESTIMONY against slavery, unaccompanied by appropriate and efficient action, is like FAITH WITHOUT WORKS—'dead, being alone'." Neither abolitionist faction allowed respect for previous Quaker antislavery accomplishments to shield that faith
from criticism for present shortcomings.

Similar problems developed in abolitionist relations with another longtime antislavery church, the Freewill Baptists. This sect had taken early action to discipline slaveholders. The Freewill Baptist Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1842, labored to convert all members of the denomination to immediate emancipation. In the early years of antislavery political action, however, the Freewill Baptists voted Democratic in protest to the alliance of New England Whigs and the more orthodox sects. The abolitionists condemned the Freewill Baptists' political behavior. Garrisonian Stephen S. Foster complained that: "At the ballot-box, no sect in the land is more notoriously subservient to the slave power than the Freewill Baptists." The American and Foreign Anti-slavery Reporter noted that the Freewill Baptists failed to realize that by voting for "a slaveholder, or an abettor of slaveholding" they supported the institution "by proxy." The Garrisonians also charged that the Freewill Baptists gave indirect recognition to the Christian character of slaveholders because the sect maintained friendly relations with denominations still tolerating slavery. Both abolitionist factions demanded that the churches take every possible precaution to avoid lending slavery the least measure of support.

The question of correct political comportment also governed abolitionist attitudes toward the three Scottish
Presbyterian sects—the Associate Synod, the Reformed Synod, and the Associate Reformed Synod. There was little ground for abolitionist criticism of these sects' religious practices concerning slavery. Of the three sects, only the Associate Reformed Synod had failed to enforce church discipline against fellowship with slaveholders by 1840. Eastern and southern resistance to church pronouncement on civil affairs including slavery finally provoked western Associate Reformed Presbyterians to secede and combine with the Associate Synod to form the United Presbyterian Church upon strong antislavery principles. The anti-Garrisonian abolitionists maintained good relations with the groups merging into the United Presbyterian Church because those churchmen had been long-time supporters of antislavery political candidates. The Garrisonians, in contrast, were most pleased with the antislavery behavior of the Reformed Presbyterians or "Covenanters." Members of this sect refused to swear oaths or vote because they regarded the United States government pledged by the Constitution to protect slavery. The Covenanters had no faith in antislavery politics expecting that pro-abolition parties "must become, in time, just about what the other parties are." The Garrisonians recognized and acknowledged that here was a denomination "practically carrying out the motto of the American Anti-Slavery Society—'No Union with Slaveholders, either religious or politically.'"
In their dealings with the Quakers, Freewill Baptists, and Scottish Presbyterian sects, abolitionists demanded an active and consistent program of opposition to slavery in addition to the nonfellowship of slaveholders. Although the AFASS remained vague about the extent of nonfellowship, the Garrisonians maintained that antislavery churches must bar not only slaveholders but anyone defending or abetting slavery. Both the AASS and the AFASS believed that professedly antislavery denominations should endorse and aid the abolition movement, but disagreed about the political obligations of church members. While anti-Garrisonians disapproved of voting for the Whigs or Democrats, the AFASS faction applauded political support for antislavery candidates. The Garrisonians, however, accepted only the Reformed Presbyterians' practice of non-voting, that coincided with the AASS disunion principles, as consistent antislavery behavior. Beginning in the mid-1840s when the comeouter sects were founded, the abolitionists subjected the new denominations to these same strict tests before awarding recognition of a genuine antislavery character.

III

The earliest abolitionist involvement with comeouter-type churches centered in New York state. In the early 1830s, the Tappan brothers played leading roles in founding "Free Churches" in New York City, but these were neither
true comeouter nor abolitionist ventures. While "free" in the sense of having a more democratic form of local church government, these congregations affiliated with neighboring presbyteries. Although the Tappans hoped to make the Free Churches models of nondiscriminatory and antislavery religious practices, these bodies attracted membership primarily because they introduced evangelical preaching styles into conservative eastern Presbyterianism and Congregationalism. Ironically these progressive ventures became so resistant to antislavery reforms that the abolitionists eventually abandoned them.²¹

A more successful and authentic comeouter effort by anti-Garrisonian abolitionists was the "Union Church" movement in upstate New York and western New England in the 1830s and 1840s. In this hotbed of revivalism, considerable numbers of ministers and church members were read out of their denominations for perfectionistic theological excesses. Disregarding prior religious affiliations, these theological radicals gathered into Union Churches dedicated to the eradication of all sin. When antislavery veterans William Goodell and Gerrit Smith joined this movement in the mid-1830s, they helped make abolitionism the most prominent test of godliness in the Union Churches. Emphasis upon complete nonfellowship with the sins of the day, particularly slavery, replaced correctness in ritual and belief as the binding force in the Union Churches. Church Unionists
argued that by coming out of old denominations and joining the new nonsectarian congregations Christians could simultaneously advance the causes of church reform and emancipation. Although several dozen Union Churches were established, the movement faded with the decline of revivalistic enthusiasm and the increasing antislavery sentiment in the established denominations after the 1840s.22

Goodell argued that membership in the Union Churches was the only consistent relation for abolitionists to have with the religious community. Most other abolitionists disagreed. The Liberator applauded the antisectarianism of the Union Churches but complained that Goodell and Smith seemed intent on making the new congregations into religious auxiliaries for the antislavery political movement.23 Only a few supporters of the AASS can be found among Union Church congregations. Most anti-Garrisonian abolitionist leaders also were unenthusiastic about the Union Churches. Lewis Tappan explained his skepticism about the Union Churches to Goodell: "There is not, I fear, religion enough in the great body of Xian abolitionists, to continue to act as a Church harmoniously and rigorously."24 The small number of abolitionists joining Union Churches confirms that there was little inclination to compromise doctrinal beliefs even among militant opponents of slavery. The unwillingness of abolitionists to join in a single church vehicle to promote their movement helped open the way for the development of separate
antislavery comeouter sects in the various denominations.

IV

Antislavery secessions from the major denominations created at least six new religious sects. Large numbers of pro-abolition Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Friends, and both the New and Old School Presbyterians underwent the traumatic processes of denouncing their old churches and severing life-long religious ties to protest the toleration of slavery. Antislavery ministers sacrificed promising careers in wealthy and influential ecclesiastical organizations to affiliate with small, struggling, and unpopular sects. All of these new bodies endorsed the principles of the abolition movement and continued to lobby their parent denominations for antislavery reform. Although individual members of the comeouter sects cooperated with both abolitionist factions, most of the new antislavery churches felt more comfortable working with the AFASS and other doctrinally orthodox, pro-emancipation societies. The anti-Garrisonian abolitionists reciprocated these warm feelings by making support for the comeouter sects an important part of their antislavery agitation in the 1840s and 1850s.

As noted in Chapter Three, the comeouter sect movement first got underway on a significant scale with the formation of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection in May 1843. This new antislavery church had six thousand charter members and
claimed fifteen thousand by 1845. After the southern secession from the Methodist Episcopal Church, however, Wesleyan growth slowed dramatically. Although the Wesleyan church extended from New England to Iowa in the mid-1850s, the total membership of its ten annual conferences numbered only a little over twenty thousand. In their first decade, the Wesleyans also suffered the loss of all three of their founders, with Orange Scott dying, Jotham Horton returning to the Methodist Episcopalians, and LaRoy Sunderland abandoning orthodox religion for spiritualism.25

Fortunately for their survival, the Wesleyans developed several new sources of strength. Because they were often the only religious body in the vicinity free from fellowship with slaveholders, the Wesleyans drew members not only from the Methodist Episcopal Church but also from antislavery Methodist Protestants, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Presbyterians. In several cases Wesleyan ministers attracted nearly all-Black congregations because of the sect's refusal to tolerate discriminatory practices.26

The Wesleyans were able to resupply themselves with talented officers such as the Reverends Edward Smith, Lucius Matlack, and Luther Lee because much of their ministry had gained leadership experience in the religious antislavery campaigns. Finally the comeouter Methodists established close relations with the abolitionist American Missionary Association, that acted as a ready-made channel for the denomination's mission.
energies and aided struggling Wesleyan congregations. Although never rivaling the Methodist Episcopal Church in size, the Wesleyan comeouter movement functioned as a living testament against the parent body's relation toward slavery.

The Wesleyan Methodist Connection grounded itself firmly on abolitionist and comeouter principles. Wesleyan conferences denounced slaveholding as inherently sinful and charged "that the practice of endorsing the Christian character of slaveholders by fellowshipping them as Christians and treating them in any way as the children of God, is giving the most direct encouragement and support to slavery." As long as the major denominations continued to condone slavery in this way, Wesleyans argued that secession from the corrupted churches was a Christian duty. Wesleyan leaders like Lucius Matlack defended coming-out as not only a moral obligation but also as the most effective means to "exert an influence upon the religious community of the land...in favor of the oppressed."

As The Wesleyan noted, antislavery sentiment was the "principal, leading, and controlling" motivation for the secession from the Methodist Episcopal church. The new sect, nevertheless, soon developed other features of denominational polity and theology that distinguished Wesleyans from their old colleagues. Remembering how the Methodist hierarchy had used its nearly arbitrary powers to attempt to silence antislavery agitation, the Wesleyans rejected
episcopacy, allowed greater lay participation in church government, and permitted each annual conference to choose its own presiding officers. Even more important than these democratizing innovations were the Wesleyans' increasingly perfectionistic rules of conduct for church members. As early as 1844, the comeouter sect adopted a prohibition against Wesleyans' belonging to secret societies, and various annual conferences enacted pro-temperance and anti-tobacco legislation.

In 1848, the Wesleyan Methodist Connection formally acknowledged its adherence to the doctrine of "entire sanctification" or Christian perfectionism by adding the following article to its Discipline:

Sanctification is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Ghost, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleanseth from all sin, whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and are enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts, and to walk in His holy commandments blameless.

Although this intense striving for human perfection was a logical outgrowth of both traditional Methodist beliefs and contemporary revivalist preaching, the adoption of strict guidelines for personal behavior probably hindered the new denomination's growth. Luther Lee reminisced that the ban against membership in secret societies probably kept away thousands of potential Wesleyans.
An important phase of the Wesleyans' antislavery activity was the comeouters' testimony against pro-slavery practices in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The role of Wesleyan agitation in helping to cause the great sectional division of the Methodist Episcopal Church already has been discussed. After this schism, Wesleyans complained that thousands of slaveholders remained in the border conferences of the northern Methodist body. Although discipline had been enforced against a slaveholding Bishop in 1844, Wesleyans pointed out that Methodist laymen and most ministers guilty of the same offense went unmolested. Orange Scott declared the Methodists were as wrongfully connected with slavery as ever: "the only difference is there are not so many slaveholders in the northern M. E. Church, but the fellowship of slaveholders is as actual and as sinful."  

In the Wesleyans' opinion active antislavery sentiment had declined in northern Methodist circles since the southern secession. The *True Wesleyan* reported that conservative Methodists had suppressed antislavery agitation and prevented any strengthening of the church's regulations against slaveholding in the late 1840s.  

When the antislavery movement finally began to revive its power in the Methodist Episcopal Church in the 1850s, the Wesleyans predicted that "a large portion of the Church North in the non-slaveholding states is so proslavery as to go with the South, if these border slaveholders are driven off." Since many of the
new generation of Methodist antislavery reformers showed
deferece to northern conservative scruples about the proper
manner to discipline unrepentant slaveholders, the Wesleyans
pronounced the new abolition movement inside the church
foredoomed. 37

Another Wesleyan contribution to the abolition movement
was the comeouter sect's attempt to plant antislavery con­
gregations in slaveholding states. In 1846, the True Wes­
leyan learned that North Carolina Quakers had distributed
printed copies of Wesleyan antislavery sermons among local
Methodists and created interest in the new denomination. In
1847, Pennsylvania Wesleyans dispatched twenty-three year
old preacher Adam Crooks to explore this southern field. By
1850, three Wesleyan missionaries were laboring in western
North Carolina and Virginia to establish congregations that
refused to fellowship with slaveholders. The Wesleyans at­
tracted surprisingly little opposition to their operations
except from local Methodist Protestant and Methodist Epis­
copal ministers who were losing members to the new denomina­
tion. In 1851, however, mobs accusing the Wesleyan preachers
of distributing incendiary literature and aiding runaway
slaves drove the missionaries from the South. Some native
Wesleyans followed their pastors to the North, but others
remained to keep alive an antislavery spirit. 38

In 1853 and 1854, Wesleyan clergyman Daniel Worth, a
former southerner and a successful Indiana politician,
worked under the independent minister John G. Fee at the American Missionary Association station at Berea, Kentucky. Worth travelled to North Carolina in 1857 as an agent for the American Missionary Association and reassembled the antislavery congregations there. The Wesleyans and the American Missionary Association cooperated financially in supporting Worth, who reported considerable success while never compromising abolitionist principles. In December, 1859, however, Worth was arrested and convicted of circulating antislavery tracts including Hinton Helper's inflammatory Impending Crisis. Antislavery sympathizers raised $3,000 to post bail for Worth, and the last Wesleyan missionary left the South in the Spring of 1860. A demonstration of the effectiveness of this southern missionary labor came during the Civil War when many North Carolina Wesleyans refused to bear arms for the Confederates.

Despite these varied antislavery endeavors, the Wesleyan Methodist Connection had a history of poor relations with the Garrisonian wing of the abolition movement. At its organizing convention, the Wesleyan church rejected a rule to prohibit fellowship with not only slaveholders but also members of denominations sanctioning slavery. Regarding this question "as one of those nice points of Christian practice on which it would be difficult to legislate," the Wesleyans allowed local congregations to decide the matter on the merits of individual cases. The Garrisonians never
forgave the Wesleyans for that equivocation. The *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, official organ of the AASS, acknowledged the new sect's antislavery professions but told the Wesleyans that in fellowshipping the religious abettors of slavery "you are not true to your standard."43

Garrisonians also charged that the Wesleyans' political behavior conflicted with nonresistant and disunionist principles. The *Liberator* contended that the Wesleyans' voting for antislavery candidates only acknowledged allegiance to a constitution sheltering slavery. Several leading Wesleyans, including James M. Walker and Richard Illenden, became converts to Garrisonianism and eventually withdrew from the comeouter sect. There is evidence, however, that a significant minority of Wesleyans adopted the Garrisonian position on voting and remained in the denomination to agitate for a change in its political practices.44 The Garrisonians erected high standards of antislavery conduct for the churches and regarded the Wesleyans as falling considerably below consistent abolitionist behavior.

The Wesleyans defended their practices against the Garrisonian onslaught. Instead of replying to criticism of their nonfellowship policies, Wesleyans launched a counterattack on the AASS's qualifications to judge religious practices. The Wesleyans equated Garrisonianism with infidelity and warned that slavery would never be ended except through the instrumentality of a purified Christian church. Scott,
Matlack, and a majority of Wesleyans rejected disunionism and denied that voting implied sanction for pro-slavery government activities. The True Wesleyan dismissed Garrisonian "no-human government, no-organization, anti-church, anti-Sabbath, and anti-ministry notions, as the quintessence of transcendental nonsense." 45

In contrast to their poor relations with the AASS, the Wesleyans maintained close ties with anti-Garrisonian abolitionists. Orange Scott and Luther Lee were influential members of the AFASS executive committee. The Wesleyan Methodists also cooperated with other ventures of the anti-Garrisonian faction, especially the American Missionary Association, the Liberty party, and the Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions, all of which will be explored in later chapters. 46 As these varied activities testify, the comeouter Wesleyan sect became the anti-Garrisonians' primary vehicle for anti-slavery agitation among the Methodists in the 1840s and 1850s.

V

A second group of abolitionists who may be considered as composing an antislavery comeouter sect were the members of the American Baptist Free Mission Society. As previously noted, antislavery Baptists began seceding from their denomination's home and foreign missionary societies even before the sectional division of those bodies in 1845.
Following that well-known schism, the Free Mission organization became the rallying point for Baptist abolitionists who still remained dissatisfied with the antislavery position of their church's established or "regular" societies. The exact number of Free Mission Baptists is impossible to estimate. The society's own claim to represent one-sixteenth of all northern Baptists may be accurate since it approximates the ratio of contributions received by the Free Baptist and regular Baptist mission treasuries.47

In keeping with the Baptist tradition of substantial congregational autonomy, the Free Mission Society performed only those religious functions that customarily united Baptists on the national level. Through its central board and treasury, the American Baptist Free Mission Society dispatched foreign missionaries to Hayti, Jamaica, Burma, and Japan, and home missionaries to congregations from New Hampshire to Oregon. The same board also managed the printing and distribution of newspapers, Bibles, religious books, and tracts. The Free Mission Society had auxiliaries across the country that both collected funds and appointed missionaries.48 While not directly affiliated with the comeouter organization, New York Central College at McGrawville, New York, and Elentherian College at Lancaster, Indiana, were founded by Free Mission Baptists and were open to students of all races. Comeouter Baptists pointed to the wide range of religious functions that their organization represented
The comeouter Baptists conducted an intensive propaganda campaign against the toleration of slavery in the denomination's established mission and publication societies. Free Mission Baptists called for a cessation of support for the denomination's Bible societies because those bodies still solicited southern contributions, elected slaveholders as officers, and refrained from distributing Holy Scriptures to slaves. The foremost complaint of Free Mission supporters against the denomination's missionary association was that those bodies had failed to incorporate antislavery principles into their constitutions following the secession of southerners in 1845. For example, abolitionists criticized the repeated refusal of the American Baptist Missionary Union to adopt rules rendering slaveholders ineligible for membership, offices, or appointments in the society. In the late 1840s, Free Mission spokesmen protested most loudly against the Missionary Union's continuing to receive funds from slaveholders and permitting owners of slaves to become members of mission congregations established among the American Indians. In the following decade, as examples of such transgressions became harder to substantiate, Baptist abolitionists still denounced the cordial relations maintained between the Missionary Union and its southern counterpart.
Free Mission advocates similarly criticized the American Baptists Home Mission Society for refusing to instruct missionaries not to accept slaveholders into their communions. Free Mission Baptists contended that the absence of such professions of nonfellowship principles in the Home Mission Society was "proof conclusive that it contains no antislavery element." Since the withdrawal of southerners, the Baptist mission societies had reorganized themselves to be responsible only to a small group of "life members." The Free Mission faction charged that the Baptist societies' officers had deliberately isolated themselves from the denomination's growing antislavery sentiment. The comeouters claimed that the only way for the Baptist rank and file to reform their societies was to switch their benevolent contributions to unquestionably antislavery channels.

The American Baptist Free Mission Society spared no effort to affirm that it was an uncompromising enemy of slavery. The comeouter body's constitution declared: "This Society shall be composed of Baptists, of acknowledged Christian character, who are not slaveholders, but who believe that involuntary slavery, under all circumstances, is sin, and treat it accordingly...." Circulars of the new society announced that the organization would refuse to fraternize with slaveholders or knowingly accept contributions from them. The Free Mission group claimed to be the
only faithful descendants of the Baptist abolitionist movement of the 1830s and early 1840s and criticized early anti-slavery leaders who retained their connection with the regular mission societies. Free Mission Baptist spokesmen upheld traditional abolitionist principles in their newspapers, tracts, and sermons. Writings by Free Mission Baptists against secret societies and war also revealed perfectionist tendencies that the group never formally acknowledged. The Free Mission supporters frequently stated that the "moral power" of refusing to fellowship with slavery was an indispensable element in the campaign to abolish that "monstrous iniquity." 

In addition to its propaganda, the American Baptist Free Mission Society utilized more active means to agitate the antislavery question in their denomination. The Baptist comeouters successfully appealed to several missionaries of the regular societies to transfer their loyalties to the Free Mission organization. Itinerant lecturing agents presented the Free Mission Society's case to Baptist congregations and local associations that would give them a hearing. Free Mission supporters revived the practice of holding Baptist Anti-Slavery Conventions to publicize their accusations against the other mission societies. For example, the Brandon, Vermont, Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention, resolved in January, 1849:
That the constitution of the American Baptist Missionary Union and that of the American Baptist Home Mission Society have permitted and are permitting their respective missionaries to sanction and justify slaveholding and hence those societies have no claim on the followers of Christ for their support.

Free Mission Baptists also attended interdenominational Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions to seek endorsements from other abolitionists for their comeouter practices.

Some Free Mission Baptists went beyond their colleagues in protesting the denomination's connections with slavery. William Goodell observed that most New York Free Mission Baptists had ceased to take part in their state association because it continued to endorse the Missionary Union. In southern Ohio and Indiana, Baptist abolitionists seceded from their local associations because most ministers and churches in those bodies continued to fellowship visiting slaveholders. More than a dozen churches joined together to form the "Free Regular Baptist Association" on a perfectionist platform condemning "the prevailing sins of covetousness, slavery, war, intemperance, licentiousness, secret societies,...and in favor of the principle of Free Missions and Free Churches." 59

Two other antislavery activities undertaken by Free Mission Baptists deserve particular note. In both cases, Elder Edward Mathews was the principle figure. A British immigrant to the United States, Mathews served the Free Mission Society in the 1840s as a lecturing agent in New
England and as a missionary in Wisconsin. For several years the Free Mission Society had proclaimed an interest in dispatching missionaries to the South both to carry an uncensored gospel to the slaves and to form whites into antislavery congregations. In 1850 and 1851, Mathews preached in western Virginia and northern Kentucky in an attempt to fulfill the goals of the Free Mission Society. Mathews founded at least one antislavery Baptist church and distributed peace, temperance, and abolitionist tracts in the region. On February 18, 1851, however, a white mob seized and physically abused Mathews and drove him into Ohio. Mathew's offense had been preaching to slave members of a Black Baptist congregation at Richmond, Kentucky, without the permission of the slaves' masters. The Free Mission Baptists tried to capitalize on public disapproval of the rough handling of a clergyman. Mathews toured the North describing the "outrage" and at the same time soliciting funds for the Free Mission Society.

In 1851 Mathews travelled to Great Britain, where he made his second valuable contribution to the church-oriented antislavery cause. To British audiences, Mathews again described his persecution at the hands of the slaveholders and added his eyewitness account of the mistreatment of slaves in the South. After delivering testimony against the evils of slavery, Mathews beseeched the British Christians to use their influence against slavery. Mathews counselled the
British to give fellowship and financial aid only to unquestionably antislavery religious bodies, such as the American Baptist Free Mission Society. Mathew's efforts in Britain were a good example of the campaign conducted by American abolitionists to enlist foreign church sentiment in the antislavery cause. By trying to transfer the support of British denominations to the comeouter sects, the abolitionists hoped to demonstrate to northern churchmen that continued association with slaveholders would forfeit the respect of the rest of the Christian world.61

Like the Wesleyans, the American Baptist Free Mission Society's relations with other abolitionist groups were complicated by questions of consistent nonfellowship behavior. Garrisonian abolitionists raised objections to the consistency of some Free Mission Baptist practices. Applying their strict interpretation of nonfellowship obligations, Garrisonians charged Free Mission Baptists with indirectly sanctioning slavery by continuing to share their pulpits and communion tables with northern Baptists who had refused to sever fraternal church relations with slaveholders.62 Even some anti-Garrisonian abolitionists like William Goodell worried that the members of the Free Mission Society endangered their cause by continuing to associate with non-abolitionist Baptists.63

Most anti-Garrisonian abolitionists, however, cordially cooperated with the Free Mission Baptists. The
annual reports of the AFASS listed the Free Mission Society as a bona fide pro-abolition religious body, and the periodical of the American Missionary Association declared that the Free Mission Baptist organization "differs from our society only in being denominational." Several comeouter Baptists served the AFASS as officers and agents. By the 1850s, the American Baptist Free Mission Society had achieved roughly the same standing among the abolitionist factions as the other comeouter church ventures.

VI

The third comeouter sect generated by the abolitionist agitation of the religious community was the Free Presbyterian Church. Following the schism of the Presbyterian denomination, both Old School and New School church authorities avoided any antislavery gesture that might anger their southern membership. Abolitionist withdrawals from the Old School Presbyterians began when the 1845 General Assembly went as far as to declare "that Slavery under the circumstances which it is found in the Southern portion of this country is no bar to Christian communion." Among the New School Presbyterians, the Synod of Cincinnati and particularly the Presbytery of Ripley in southern Ohio went well beyond the rest of the denomination in taking antislavery actions. In 1846, the New School General Assembly overruled the Cincinnati Synod's suspension
of a minister guilty of delivering pro-slavery sermons. In reaction, eleven of the twelve ministers of the Ripley Presbytery renounced New School Presbyterian jurisdiction. In keeping with Scottish Presbyterian tradition of protest, the Ripley group called for secession from a corrupt church. Led by long-time abolitionist John Rankin, these ministers founded the independent Free Presbytery of Ripley. Soon numerous antislavery Old School and New School Presbyterians were enrolling in the comeouter venture. In November 1847, the Presbyterian comeouters formally united into the Free Synod of Cincinnati upon a confession of faith blending the standard Presbyterian creed with abolitionist tenets of racial equality, the sinfulness of slaveholding, and the non-fellowship of slaveholders or defenders of slavery.

Details about the size and operations of the Free Presbyterian Church are sketchy because only a small portion of the records of this body have survived. While it is impossible to determine the exact number of Free Presbyterian church members, the sect grew by the mid 1850s to include more than seventy ministers and licentiaties in seven presbyteries stretching from eastern Pennsylvania to Iowa. Between the meetings of the Free Synod, denominational periodicals including the Free Presbyterian, the Christian Leader, and the Free Church Portfolio linked the widely scattered congregations. The Free Presbyterians also united in support of Iberia College, in Ohio, that admitted
students of all races. Rather than create their own mission board, the Free Presbyterians made their sect an auxiliary to the American Missionary Association and thereby received much needed funds to maintain ministers in struggling congregations. Free Presbyterians also were the instrumental figures in founding the American Reform Tract and Book Society of Cincinnati for the publication of antislavery religious works.

The antislavery creed of the Free Presbyterian Church can be summed up in three abolitionist principles, by now familiar: nonfellowship, comeouterism, and perfectionism. The Free Presbyterians claimed to be merely enforcing the Presbyterian General Assembly's recognition of the sinfulness of slavery when the new sect ruled "No person holding slaves, or advocating the rightfulness of slaveholding can be a member of this body." Free Presbyterians interpreted this prohibition to exclude from their communion not only slaveholders but also all members of churches with slaveholding members and even all voters for slavery-tolerating political candidates.

The Free Presbyterians defended their coming-out as the last resort open to Christians who after years of effort concluded their churches were hopelessly corrupt. If there was such a thing as the "sin of schism" as some charged, the Free Presbyterians named as the guilty
Those who by holding religious fellowship with slavery, and justifying it from the Scriptures, have destroyed the unity of judgement and feeling upon which alone the peace and integrity of the Church can rest....

Comeouter Presbyterians claimed that founding new churches on antislavery principles was the only way to avoid the contamination of slavery and work to bring about its destruction. The Free Presbyterian charged that antislavery churchmen who failed to secede inadvertently misled the public about their denomination's true pro-slavery character.

The Free Presbyterian concern for separation from sin was not limited to slavery but extended to other forms of wrongdoing. The Free Synod's original confession of faith listed aggressive war, membership in secret societies, and intemperance as well as slaveholding as grounds for nonfellowship. The Reverend Joseph Gordon, the influential editor of the Free Presbyterian, argued that it was impossible for men "to carry out truth and righteousness too far in the practical duties of life." In keeping with their perfectionistic beliefs, the Free Presbyterians warned other abolitionists that the problem of slavery could never be solved without a general moral reformation of the entire country.

The most valuable contribution of the Free Presbyterian Church was the comeouter sect's relentless exposure of the pro-slavery practices of the major Presbyterian denominations. The Free Presbyterians charged that since the Old School Presbyterian General Assembly of 1845 had declared
slaveholding insufficient grounds for nonfellowship, pro-
slavery ministers had rushed to join that denomination. The
Free Church Portfolio reported that northern "cotton-hearted
Hunkers" in the Old School Presbyterian Church endeavored to
silence the few remaining abolitionists in the denomination
lest potential southern converts be frightened away.77 The
Free Presbyterian accused the New School Presbyterians of
being even more hypocritical than the Old School because the
New School denounced slavery as evil but still hesitated to
discipline slaveholders. The Free Presbyterian predicted
that New School leaders would not adopt nonfellowship with
slavery until they calculated that their denomination would
"lose more members by retaining slaveholders than by casting
them out."78

Abolitionist principles also governed Free Presbyterian
dealings with other sects. The antislavery question entered
into the competition between Free Presbyterians and Congre-
genialists for the loyalties of potential defectors from
western New School Presbyterian judicatories. Free Presby-
terians claimed a more consistent antislavery record because
they supported the nonfellowshipping American Missionary As-
sociation while many Congregationalists still cooperated
with the slavery-tainted New School Presbyterians in mis-
sionary projects.79 In contrast to their unfriendly atti-
dude toward the major Calvinist denominations, the Free
Presbyterians established fraternal ties to the Scottish
Presbyterian sects and the other small nonfellowshipping denominations and benevolent societies. Only by scrupulously maintaining antislavery standards in church relations did the Free Presbyterians expect to influence other denominations to adopt abolitionist principles.

Even the Garrisonians appreciated the Free Presbyterians' concern for correct antislavery church relations. The AASS had criticized Wesleyan Methodists and Free Mission Baptists for giving indirect countenance to slavery by their church practices. The Garrisonians, however, applauded the Free Presbyterian discipline that denied communion not only to slaveholders but also to all members of churches that shared fellowship with slaveowners. Although the Free Presbyterians disapproved of the AASS disunionist political views, the Garrisonians usually acknowledged that most Presbyterian comemtters at least voted consistently with their sect's belief that the Constitution was an antislavery document.

Where Free Presbyterians and Garrisonians differed was over the importance of religious orthodoxy to the abolitionist movement. The Free Presbyterians complained that the extreme position of many Garrisonians on the Sabbath, the Bible, and the Clergy caused many churchmen to regard abolitionism as a movement of infidels. Spokesmen for the Free Presbyterians frequently warned that unless the nation's religious bodies ceased giving shelter to slaveholders, the
"Garrisonian type of antislavery sentiment will sweep the masses of the people away" from the churches. The Garrisonians, in reply, disavowed hostility to Christianity but admitted being enemies of the "sectarian bigotry" displayed by church-oriented abolitionists such as the Free Presbyterians.

The Free Presbyterians established close ties to the anti-Garrisonian abolitionist faction that shared their conception of antislavery reform as a religiously orthodox and church-oriented movement. Although no Free Presbyterian member served as an officer in the AFASS, both groups traded endorsements and cooperated in such projects as the distribution of antislavery tracts. The Free Presbyterian Church functioned as an auxiliary to the American Missionary Association, and many of the sect's ministers received financial aid from that pro-abolition society. Free Presbyterians became staunch supporters of antislavery political parties in the 1840s and 1850s. The anti-Garrisonian abolitionist presses gave the Free Presbyterian Church publicity far beyond what the small denomination's own periodicals could have achieved.

Despite the friendship of other church-oriented abolitionists, the Free Presbyterian Church had difficulty attracting a sizeable membership. In 1848, the Free Presbyterians announced their willingness to merge with the antislavery Scottish Presbyterian sects, but the churches could
not overcome doctrinal differences. Large numbers of New School Presbyterian abolitionists preferred to affiliate with the Congregationalists rather than the Free Presbyterians after seceding from their old denomination. The advance of antislavery principles in the larger Presbyterian denominations immediately before and during the Civil War eventually brought about the Free Presbyterian Church's dissolution. Although the numbers of Free Presbyterians remained small, their unceasing agitation made the sect an important antislavery agency among Calvinist-inclined churchmen.85

VII

Another small comeouter sect produced by the turmoil over slavery was the Franckean Evangelical Lutheran Synod. American Lutheran governing bodies refused to discuss the question of slavery because they deemed it a secular matter inappropriate for consideration by an ecclesiastical body. In protest to this inaction and to the generally pro-colonization attitude of their denomination, a group of Lutheran abolitionists in western New York seceded from the church in 1837. The comeouter Lutherans created their own independent Franckean Synod with a constitution incorporating both nonfellowship with slaveholders and perfectionist pro-temperance provisions.86 By 1850, the Lutheran abolitionist sect had grown to number twenty-five ministers,
fifty congregations, and more than thirty-two hundred communicants. The Lutheran General Synod of 1839 censured the Franckeans, but the comeouters continued to send out "Fraternal Appeals" to encourage their fellow Lutherans to take action against slavery. In the 1850s, the Franckeans protested the growing strength of the "Slave Power" in national affairs, and the comeouter Synod pledged itself to work "in all proper channels, to oppose, arrest, and overthrow this system of despotism...." As early as 1840, the Franckean Synod endorsed the anti-Garrisonian AFASS. Franckean Lutherans, while maintaining their own home mission board, contributed generously to the foreign projects of the abolitionist American Missionary Association. The comeouter activities of the Franckean Lutherans demonstrate that church-oriented abolitionism could penetrate into even ritualist and immigrant religious groups.

VIII

As described earlier in this chapter, the traditionally antislavery Quakers displayed little enthusiasm for abolitionism in the 1830s and 1840s. For example, in 1842, a conservative majority in the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Orthodox Quakers disqualified eight members from all offices in the Society as punishment for abolitionist activities. Instead of quietly accepting this disciplining, the censured Quakers seceded from their old body. Led by long-time
abolitionists Levi Coffin and Charles Osborn, the comeouter Quakers formed the independent "Indiana Yearly Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends," that eventually grew to over two thousand members in forty local "meetings." The Quaker comeouters defended their secession by charging that the leaders of the Indiana Yearly Meeting had been seduced into abandoning their antislavery heritage by commercial dealings with the South and by racial prejudice against Blacks. The parent Yearly Meeting had erred in censuring abolitionists, the comeouters explained, because genuine antislavery principles "lead to Anti-Slavery action, and you cannot cease from the latter without sacrificing the former."

The Anti-Slavery Friends heeded their own admonition. Levi Coffin and other comeouter Quakers in Indiana participated in the Free Produce movement and the Underground Railroad. The Indiana Anti-Slavery Friends petitioned the state and federal government and other denominations against slavery and anti-Black discrimination. Both the AASS and AFASS favorably compared the labors of the Anti-Slavery Friends to the inactivity of most of that sect. The comeouters' prodding finally succeeded in creating a more friendly attitude toward abolitionism among Orthodox Friends, and the Indiana schism healed itself just before the Civil War.
Just as Orthodox Friends in Indiana quarreled over the propriety of antislavery activism, yearly meetings of the theologically more liberal Hicksite wing of Quakerism also harassed abolitionists among their membership. Beginning in Indiana in the mid-1840s and spreading across the Midwest and Pennsylvania, Hicksite abolitionists seceded from their old meetings and formed a loose comeouter organization, the Congregational or Progressive Friends. This group of comeouter Quakers rejected doctrinal tests, an ordained ministry, and any form of racial or sexual discrimination. In particular, the Progressive Friends discarded the "quiet testimony" of other Quakers against slavery for more active means to aid the slave. The Congregational Friend meetings became popular forums not only for antislavery but also a wide range of reform causes such as temperance, women's rights, and the abolition capital punishment.

Unlike the other antislavery comeouter sects, the Congregational Friends established closer ties with the Garrisonians than with the church-oriented abolitionist faction. Numerous Garrisonian abolitionists joined the Progressive Friends, including Joseph A. Dugdale, Oliver Johnson, and Thomas McClintock. Congregational Friend meetings passed resolutions praising the AASS and sympathizing with disunionism. The *Liberator* reported favorably on this
comeouter group, and Garrison himself addressed a meeting of Congregational Friends and later remarked "there is something about progressive Quakerism for which I feel a special attachment." In contrast, anti-Garrisonian abolitionists seldom associated with the Progressive Friends because of the comeouter Quakers' toleration of unorthodox religious, social and political views. As in the case of the Reformed Presbyterians, the AASS's cordiality with the Congregational Friends demonstrates that the Garrisonians were not antagonistic to those sects that met the AASS's high antislavery standards.

X

Two additional examples of antislavery related religious comeouterism must be noted. The first of these, the creation by Black Christians of their own independent denominations deserves much more detailed attention than this study can devote to it. Scholars of the antebellum churches describe in great detail the practices of racial discrimination that drove some northern Blacks to found their own denominations. These Black comeouters made some significant contributions to the abolitionist campaign in the churches. In the 1840s and 1850s, for example there was a steady drain of Black Methodist Episcopalians dissatisfied with their church's conservatism on the race and slavery questions, into the nation's two oldest Black sects, the American
Methodist Episcopal Church and African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion. Similarly, several Black Baptist organizations arose in different parts of the North. In the largest of these bodies, the east coast American Baptist Missionary Convention, however, ministers remained in fellowship with regular local associations. Although Black Congregationalist and Presbyterian ministers cooperated in antislavery conventions and the abolitionist Union Missionary Society, no independent Black sects were created in these denominations. Some Black leaders like Frederick Douglass opposed the formation of separate Black churches on the ground that they reinforced segregation.

Whether comeouters or not, a majority of Black churchmen preferred cooperating with the antislavery projects of the theologically more orthodox anti-Garrisonian abolitionist faction. Black clergymen like Christopher Rush, Theodore Wright, and Samuel Cornish served as officers of the AFASS. The Union Missionary Society merged with the abolitionist American Missionary Association. The Black American Baptist Missionary Convention associated closely with the American Baptist Free Mission Society. Most abolitionists regretted the creation of Black comeouter churches but recognized that their success might serve to counteract the anti-Negro and pro-slavery sentiments of most denominations.
One final example of antislavery comeouterism was the defection of numerous New School Presbyterian ministers and churches to Congregationalist ranks. After a half century of cooperation in missionary endeavors, Congregationalists rebelled against the famous Plan of Union of 1801, that had placed thousands of their denomination under the control of western Presbyterian judicatories. Entire presbyteries were wiped out and scores of New School churches suffered secessions to the Congregationalists.

Although a number of factors were responsible for the revival of Congregationalist self-consciousness outside of New England, antislavery sentiment was a major motivator for the movement away from the New School Presbyterians. In the 1830s and 1840s, western New School Presbyterians complained loudly against the continued fellowship of slaveowners in their denomination and in the American Home Missionary Society, the principal vehicle of Congregationalist-Presbyterian collaboration. In contrast, western Congregationalist associations being founded in these years took stronger stands against the fellowship of slaveholders than did either the Presbyterians or eastern Congregationalists. After years of failure in attempting to reform their denomination, thousands of the most militant New School Presbyterian abolitionists defected to the Congregationalists. The American Missionary Association aided this trend by extending financial help to struggling Congregationalist
churches founded by antislavery comeouters. Abolitionists such as Lewis Tappan and Jonathan Blanchard played leading roles in agitating for the spread of an abolitionized Congregationalism. The growth of western Congregationalism was evidence that antislavery comeouterism could mean switching from one major denomination to another rather than creating a small abolitionist sect or quitting organized religion altogether. 101

XI

As discussed briefly in the first chapter, some historians have suggested that the abolition movement functioned as a kind of "surrogate religion" for its adherents. Whatever degree of truth there is in this observation must center around the abolitionists' church practices. Sociologists studying the creation of new religious sects have found the phenomenon easier to explain in terms of the function performed by the new bodies than as products of abstract theological disputes. According to this interpretation, sects arose to supply spiritual guidance for individuals who had lost faith in the ability of existing religious institutions to supply valid answers to the question "What shall we do to be saved." 102 Based upon this sociological definition, abolitionism did have many sectarian characteristics. Abolitionists denounced the nation's churches for having become corrupted by association with slavery.
Believing that slaveholding was a sin, abolitionists felt obliged by evangelical moral standards to cease all practices sanctioning that iniquity or jeopardize their salvation. By seceding from the nation's major denominations in response to the ethical questions raised by slavery, the abolitionists were acting in a genuine sectarian fashion.

If abolitionism was an authentic sectarian theology, then comeouterism must have provided the institutional expression of this new faith. For Garrisonian comeouters, membership in the post-1840 AASS can be viewed as a genuine not just a "surrogate" religious act. For abolitionists not prepared to make such a dramatic break from familiar church forms, membership in the various antislavery comeouter denominations unquestionably was in keeping with a well-established religious precedent. In at least the cases of the Garrisonian comeouters and the comeouter sects, abolitionism functioned in all respects as a distinct Christian sect.

The establishment of comeouter sects became an important new means for keeping up antislavery pressure against the religious community. Abolitionist-motivated secession was a dramatic means of protesting the toleration shown to slavery by northern denominations. The comeouter sects provided church-oriented abolitionists with the means to separate themselves from reproachful relations with slaveholding
sins and yet retain familiar religious practices. Abolitionists pointed to the new denominations as evidence that churches could survive and prosper without the fellowship of slaveowners. Even the Garrisonians could single out the Progressive Friends as one of the few Christian bodies not supporting the interests of slaveholders. As will be seen in following chapters, comeouter churchmen played key roles in various religious abolitionist activities and were among the most dependable antislavery voters. While never amounting to more than small minorities in any of the denominations or abolitionist projects, the comeouter sects were a major component of the overall church antislavery campaign.
ENDNOTES


8 One other, even smaller denomination which had erected bars against slaveholding members was the Primitive Methodist Conference, see American Anti-Slavery Society, Fifth Annual Report...1838 (New York: The Society, 1838), pp. 51-52.


11 National Anti-Slavery Standard, 27 October 1842 and 23 March 1843; Parker Pillsbury, The Church As It Is: or, The Forlorn Hope of Slavery (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1847), pp. 50-51; Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, Thirteenth
Annual Report...1850, pp. 31, 34; Drake, Quakers and Slavery, pp. 176-77.

12 American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Thirteenth Annual Report...1853 (New York: The Society, 1853), pp. 103-104; also p. 113; AFAS Reporter, 1 (December 1840): 79.


14 Stephen S. Foster, The Brotherhood of Thieves: or, A True Picture of the American Church and the Clergy: A Letter to Nathaniel Barney, of Nantucket (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1843), pp. 61-62; also Pillsbury, The Church As It Is, pp. 51-52.

15 AFAS Reporter, 2 (March 1843): 142-43.


19 The Covenanter, n. d., quoted in the Liberator, 4 December 1846; also National Era, 30 August 1849.


23 Christian Investigator, 6 (March 1846): 306; Liberator, 31 July 1840 and 16 October 1840.

24 Lewis Tappan to William Goodell, 30 October, 1843; Lewis Tappan to Gerrit Smith, 13 January 1844; Lewis Tappan to John Morgan, 25 March 1840, L. Tappan Papers; Emancipator, 18 February 1841; Perkal, "William Goodell," pp. 167-68, 172-73.


28 Principia, 7 April 1860, also 23 June 1860; True Wesleyan, 2 August 1845 and 8 November 1851; Orange Scott, The Grounds of Secession from the M. E. Church, or Book for the Times (New York: C. Prindle, 1848), pp. 65-66.

29 Lucius C. Matlack, The History of American Slavery and Methodism from 1780 to 1849; and History of the Wesleyan


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True Wesleyan, 3 February 1844.

True Wesleyan, 13 April 1844, 27 April 1844, 24 March 1853, 7 July 1853, 10 November 1853; American Jubilee, 2 (February 1855): 73-74; Scott, Grounds for Secession, pp. 92-93; Lee, Autobiography, pp. 218-30, 281; Matlack, Anti-Slavery Struggle, p. 17.


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62 Liberator, 9 March 1855; Ruchames, Garrison Papers, IV, p. 317.

63 Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 508.


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95Liberator, 1 June 1855; Drake, Quakers and Slavery, p. 176.


99American Baptist Missionary Convention, Twentieth Annual Report...1860, p. 14; Pease, Bound With Them, pp. 157-58; Pease, They Who Would Be Free, pp. 81-82; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery (Cleveland: The Press of the Case Western Reserve University, 1969), 292.

100Lewis Tappan to Richard S. Storrs, 23 February 1857, L. Tappan Papers; American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Address to the Anti-Slavery Christians, pp. 6-7.


In the 1840s and 1850s, a second new dimension in the church-based abolitionist movement emerged: the interdenominational religious antislavery conventions and societies. Following the 1840 break-up of the American Anti-Slavery Society, both Garrisonian and political abolitionist factions abandoned traditional church-oriented antislavery tactics as unpromising. The anti-Garrisonian American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society had the inclination but lacked the strength to provide the same strong central direction to religious abolitionist efforts as the old AASS. Abolitionists became disturbed over the growing number of northern church leaders who professed to be antislavery yet failed to regard slaveholding as sinful or nonfellowship with slaveowners as a Christian duty. To counter this drift from what they regarded as basic moral principles, anti-Garrisonian abolitionists sponsored regional conventions, open to all church members opposed to slavery. The primary objective of these gatherings was to provide a forum for church-oriented abolitionists to discuss common problems
and to win converts to a more thorough-going religious anti-slavery program. Many of these interdenominational anti-slavery conventions also expressed a similar protest against the antislavery political parties for failing to use ethical as well as sectional and economic appeals against slavery. In the late 1850s, these attempts to provide moral guidance to religious and political antislavery endeavors finally became embodied in a permanent organization, the Church Anti-Slavery Society. These various interdenominational antislavery activities provide additional evidence that the abolitionist campaign in the churches continued with some force right down to the Civil War.

I

Historians usually overlook abolitionist activities in the churches after the mid-1840s perhaps because of the apparent absence of any vigorous central structure to undertake such efforts. As shown in Chapter Three, the anti-Garrisonian abolitionists' replacement for the AASS, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, had more life than historians usually credit it. The new society, however, did suffer from a number of handicaps that significantly restricted its capabilities. For its entire history, the AFASS lacked funds to conduct antislavery propaganda ventures on the scale of either the old AASS or the rival Garrisonian organization. Although it established a new system
of denominational affiliates among antislavery churchmen, the AFASS suffered from a shortage of local and state auxiliaries. The attention of more and more anti-Garrisonian abolitionists shifted from religious to political antislavery endeavors after 1840. The AFASS finally disbanded in 1855 in order to facilitate the transfer of most of its leaders into a new, more politically oriented vehicle, the American Abolition Society.¹

While the AFASS was aware of its decreasing effectiveness and almost annually promised to reverse the trend if sufficient funds were made available, the anti-Garrisonian organization contributed to its own decline in several ways.² For example, anti-Garrisonian abolitionists in the 1840s and 1850s founded their own missionary and religious publication associations. These new bodies competed with the AFASS for funds and displaced it as the major vehicle for agitating the nation's benevolent societies. Similarly although the various comeouter sects endorsed and cooperated with the AFASS, the new churches replaced the old society as the major focal point for antislavery demonstrations against the old churches. The officers of the AFASS also weakened the society by dividing their effort among various antislavery enterprises instead of concentrating upon revitalizing the national abolitionist body. Lewis Tappan, in particular, the dedicated corresponding secretary of the AFASS, spent more and more of his time serving as treasurer
of the American Missionary Association. Although these other bodies were valuable adjuncts to the church-oriented antislavery movement, their functions were too specific and sectarian to appeal effectively to the broader religious public. As the AFASS gradually succumbed to these debilitating forces, a need arose to find new machinery to carry the uncompromised abolitionist creed to the unconverted mass of church members.

A number of interdenominational antislavery conventions and societies emerged in the 1840s and 1850s to provide some of the missing coordination for the wide variety of church-based abolitionist activities. The sponsors of the meetings, usually veterans of antislavery agitation in the 1830s, remained committed to the early abolitionist goal of enlist­ing the nation's religious institutions in the antislavery campaign. Not prepared to allow the movement against slavery to fall under the exclusive control of "infidel" Garrisonians or amoral politicians, antislavery members of northern denominations began meeting together to discuss strategies for abolitionizing their churches. Although locally organized, the planners of these gatherings called for and often received support from the leaders of the AFASS and the American Missionary Association. Several of these meetings approached the scale of national gatherings of church-oriented abolitionists. While these "Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions" were not part of a well-integrated
system, they occurred so frequently as to be considered a regular feature of the anti-Garrisonian abolitionist program. After the demise of the AFASS, a permanent organization, the Church Anti-Slavery Society, arose to continue the principle of interdenominational cooperation in abolitionist religious efforts.

It should not be overlooked that Garrisonian abolitionists played an important, though distinctly secondary role, in the history of the interdenominational antislavery conventions and societies. A few of these gatherings permitted AASS advocates to introduce the Garrisonian position respecting churches and politics into the general discussions. More often, the interdenominational antislavery gatherings barred the "infidel" Garrisonians from membership, creating suspicion among AASS spokesmen about the new movement's commitment to abolitionism. The editor of the National Anti-Slavery Standard expressed typical Garrisonian misgivings about the "Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions":

> Experience has taught us to distrust, as altogether unreliable, the antislavery professions of men who are always careful to repel the cooperation of men whose religious opinions differ from their own. Such men we have usually found subordinating the cause of the slave to the interests of their sects.

Because of the large claims made for the conventions by anti-Garrisonian abolitionists, the AASS subjected the gatherings and later the Church Anti-Slavery Society to
careful scrutiny. While never satisfied, the Garrisonian press more than once expressed pleasant surprise at the radical stand church-oriented abolitionists were willing to endorse. The opinions of the Garrisonians provide important contemporary criteria by which to evaluate the interdenominational antislavery conventions and the Church Anti-Slavery Society.

II

Abolitionists of the 1840s and 1850s had several precedents for forming interdenominational conventions and societies to promote antislavery church reform. Ministers and church members played prominent roles in the early AASS, and most antislavery gatherings of that period had a distinctly religious cast. In Philadelphia, however, the presence of Quakers with their disinclination to participate in meetings having the slightest sectarian (i.e. non-Quaker) appearance, led to the prohibition of prayers and other religious observances at abolitionist functions. In 1838, non-Quaker abolitionists in Philadelphia organized an interdenominational "Church Union Anti-Slavery Society" with a style of meetings more attractive to evangelical Christians. The new Philadelphia organization was successful enough to prompt James G. Birney, Lewis Tappan, and a number of other New York City abolitionists to copy it with an "Evangelical Union Anti-Slavery Society." The New York and Philadelphia
societies were limited exclusively to church members and endeavored to persuade area ministers to endorse the abolitionists' positions on the sinfulness of slaveholding and the duty of immediate emancipation. Although these societies later participated in maneuvers to form abolitionist organizations inhospitable to the anti-clerical Garrisonians, these new bodies originally were founded to bring more concerted pressure on the northern churches to separate themselves from the guilt of tolerating slavery.

Another model for later interdenominational abolitionists activities was the series of "Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions" held at Pen Yan, Auburn, Litchfield, and Clinton in western New York in 1841 and 1842. The earliest of these meetings brought together just Presbyterians and Congregationalists but members of all evangelical denominations attended the later antislavery gatherings. The conventions' deliberations centered on questions of nonfellowship and the duty of antislavery members of slavery-tolerating churches. There was general agreement at these gatherings that slaveholders should be banned from church communion. Many delegates, however, balked at proposals to subject apologists for slavery to the same discipline. Throughout this series of conventions, William Goodell advocated the idea of comeouterism and particularly the formation of "Union Churches." Beginning in 1843 and continuing until the end of the decade, Goodell and Gerrit Smith were the
principal sponsors of several additional interdenominational gatherings where "Anti-Sectarian" church reform replaced antislavery as the chief topic of discussion. 10 Although only a small minority of evangelical abolitionists accepted Goodell's plans of comeouterism as a means of purifying religious practices, the Union Church movement eclipsed the Christian Anti-Slavery Convention drive in New York in the 1840s.

Although the New York Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions were sidetracked, New Englanders soon revived the concept of interdenominational cooperation among antislavery churchmen. At least a dozen "Religious" or "Christian" Anti-Slavery Conventions were held in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts from 1844 to 1847 and infrequently thereafter. The New England conventions were more conservative than those in New York. In order to appeal to the broadest possible range of the religious antislavery public, these gatherings often avoided taking stands on controversial questions such as the sinfulness of slaveholding and fellowship with slaveowners. 11 In Maine and Vermont, these meetings functioned as adjuncts to the Liberty Party movement, with the religious and political antislavery conventions scheduled to reinforce each other's attendance. In Massachusetts, several religious antislavery conventions and Congresses concentrated on demonstrating opposition to the Mexican War. 12 The church-related goal the New England
conventions most frequently promoted was the cause of Bible distribution to the slaves, which attracted the support of many more churchmen than those prepared to endorse immediate emancipation.\textsuperscript{13}

Garrisonian abolitionists subjected these gatherings to considerable criticism especially after one of the conventions expelled Stephen Foster for not meeting the description of its call for "ministers and church members." The \textit{Liberator} described these conventions as "generally, if not invariably, characterized by a timid policy, a lack of free utterance, a dread of being thought fanatical or a pro-slavery church, a daubing with untempered mortar, and a great deal of verbal piety."\textsuperscript{14} Anti-Garrisonian William Goodell agreed with the \textit{Liberator}. He too believed that the New England gatherings cared more for the show than the substance of antislaverism. AFASS supporters like Joshua Leavitt and Nathaniel Colver, however, attended the conventions and applauded their accomplishments.\textsuperscript{15} Although an occasional interdenominational antislavery convention was held in the 1850s, this movement faded in New England about the time of the end of the Mexican War and the launching of the Free Soil party.

\textbf{III}

In the late 1840s anti-Garrisonian abolitionists were preoccupied with the events surrounding the Free Soil
movement. At the beginning of the next decade, however, interdenominational antislavery efforts began again, this time in the West. The outcome of the Free Soil campaign with its diluted platform, unprincipled politicians, and disappointing results, revitalized interest in church-oriented abolitionist endeavors. Among those looking for new ways to battle slavery was a committee of Ohio and Indiana antislavery veterans who issued a call for a "Convention of Christians, to consider upon the connection of the American Church with the sin of Slaveholding" to meet in Cincinnati in April 1850. The group of fifteen who issued the call included twelve clergymen from eight different denominations. Among the committee's members were abolitionist notables such as Quaker Levi Coffin and Free Mission Baptist William H. Brisbane, as well as Free Presbyterian Jonathan Cable, Congregationalist Charles B. Boynton, and antislavery politician Samuel Lewis. In their correspondence and circulars, the callers denied they were a "disorganizing element" but admitted they were prepared to discard slavery corrupted ecclesiastical forms in order to "save the Church."

The Cincinnati committee sent personal invitations to many leading anti-Garrisonian abolitionists and antislavery politicians but significantly no Garrisonians. An indication of the widespread interest in this convention was the fact that the invitations committee received over two
thousand responses to its request for endorsements. In addition, the convention received letters from Lewis Tappan, Gerrit Smith, James G. Birney, Cyrus Grosvenor, John Rankin, William Jay and other important antislavery figures. With only a few exceptions, this correspondence advised that the meeting adopt strong resolutions favoring comeouterism as the last resort of antislavery Christians. 19

Over a hundred and fifty ministers and church members braved threats of a riot from unsympathetic Cincinnatians to gather for the four-day convention. Two Free Soil politicians, Samuel Lewis of Ohio and Stephen C. Stevens of Indiana, chaired the sessions. The moving spirits of the gathering, however, were mainly clergymen, particularly midwesterners Boynton, Brisbane, John Rankin, John G. Fee, and Edward Smith and two visiting easterners, Goodell and George Whipple. Wesleyans, Free Mission Baptists, Free Presbyterians, and comeouter Quakers as well as most long established denominations were represented. The convention's atmosphere was solemn with opening and closing prayers. Presiding officers allowed neither applause nor psalmsinging, in order to satisfy the scruples of two Covenanter delegates. 20 Meeting in the midst of the Compromise of 1850 debate, several speakers at the convention endorsed the ideas that antislavery politics needed an acknowledged moral foundation and that church action as well as political action was essential to abolitionism.
Whipple, the corresponding secretary of the American Missionary Association, exposed slavery-tolerating practices of other missionary societies. The most important discussions in the convention, however, dealt with questions of church relations with slavery. Goodell, Rankin, and Fee, all comeouters, argued in favor of a resolution sanctioning secession "from all churches, ecclesiastical bodies, and missionary organizations, that are not fully divorced from the sin of slaveholding" and pledging those present to "come out from among them unless such bodies shall speedily separate themselves from all support of, or fellowship with, slaveholding." After lengthy debate, this radical resolution passed unanimously when the small number speaking against it abstained.

The repercussions produced by this convention were more significant than the gathering itself. Except for the Liberator, the Garrisonian press had closely followed this new antislavery development and complimented the convention's support for nonfellowship with slaveholders. The AFASS and anti-Garrisonian propagandists like Goodell were optimistic about the "fresh impulse" the meeting would give to antislavery agitation in the churches. More important were the reactions of the various religious groups. The comeouter sects were happiest with the convention. The Reverend Edward Smith wrote the True Wesleyan that "the Convention came to the Wesleyan ground...." The Free Mission
Baptist Christian Contributor declared that the Cincinnati convention would have "the most powerful influence" for secession from pro-slavery churches.\(^{25}\)

In other denominations, attitudes toward the Cincinnati convention varied according to the source's degree of commitment to abolitionism. Several Congregationalist and New School Presbyterian newspapers praised the antislavery sentiment of the Cincinnati delegates but not the meeting's enthusiasm for comeouterism. Most of the press of these and other northern denominations, however, was much more critical. The Cincinnati Presbyterian of the West denounced the deliberations of the Convention as a "species of wholesale declamation and denunciation which has characterized the Abolitionists for years past."\(^{26}\) The colorful Illinois Methodist preacher Peter Cartwright visited a session of the Christian Anti-Slavery Convention and dismissed its membership as "composed of a heterogeneous mass of disaffected, censured, or expelled preachers" and its comeouter principles as "clearly disorganizing and revolutionary in their nature, and in all their tendencies."\(^{27}\)

Despite its mixed reception, the Cincinnati gathering stimulated antislavery churchmen to increased activity. The success of the 1850 Cincinnati Christian Anti-Slavery Convention led to a number of similar meetings. Only a month after the original Cincinnati Convention, local antislavery ministers and church members gathered in that city to form
the Western Home and Foreign Missionary Association as an auxiliary to the abolitionist American Missionary Association. In the summer of 1850, interdenominational anti-slavery conventions at Ottawa, Illinois, and Medina, Ohio, took advanced ground on the duty of churches to separate themselves from slavery. In May, 1851, Indiana abolitionists held a Christian Anti-Slavery Convention in Indianapolis on the day preceding a political gathering called to oppose the adoption of anti-Black amendments to the state constitution. The Indianapolis religious meeting not only endorsed church nonfellowship with slaveholders but reinforced the political conclave by declaring opposition to racial discrimination and to the newly passed Fugitive Slave Law. These events encouraged western abolitionists to make plans for even larger scale interdenominational anti-slavery religious projects.

IV

The most important Christian Anti-Slavery Convention of 1851 and of the entire movement took place in Chicago that July. The Chicago convention was called by a committee from the previous year's Cincinnati gathering. The Chicago convention's callers attracted the presence of major eastern abolitionists such as Lewis Tappan, George Whipple, and William Goodell by a promise to discuss the slavery question as related to the missionary societies as well as the
churches. This prospect so worried western supporters of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the American Home Missionary Society that they held their own convention in Chicago two weeks before the Christian Anti-Slavery Convention to deny that their societies gave any sanction to slavery.\(^{30}\)

Despite such opposition, more than two hundred and fifty delegates from eleven states met in Chicago, including such a notable as the renowned revivalist Charles G. Finney of Oberlin, who seldom actively cooperated with abolitionists. Nearly every denomination had one or more representatives at the gathering, but Congregationalists and members of comeouter sects predominated.\(^{31}\) Reverends Jonathan Blanchard of Knox College in Illinois, John G. Fee of the American Missionary Association station at Berea, Kentucky and William Brisbane of the Free Mission Baptists took the lead on the convention floor in arguing that individual church members shared responsibility for the sins sanctioned by their church. Over and over again, various comeouters charged that antislavery sentiment had retreated among old abolitionists who had failed to secede from churches tolerating slavery. The number of delegates from regular denominations, especially New School Presbyterians, who endorsed these views seemed a portent of further secessions.\(^{32}\)
The convention's public address accused all the major denomination's missionary societies of practices giving "respectability to slaveholding." Free Mission Baptists successfully persuaded the convention to reject the plea of that recalcitrant Baptist abolitionist Nathaniel Colver to exempt his denomination's missionary operations from that sweeping condemnation. The Chicago gathering also attacked the toleration of slavery by the interdenominational American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the American Home Missionary Society. Most of the convention's Presbyterian and Congregationalist delegates proclaimed their preference for the American Missionary Association. The convention also passed resolutions against the Fugitive Slave Law and the moral deficiencies of the major political parties. Only one question seriously divided the delegates, a proposal for calling another convention "for the purpose of devising a plan for a more perfect union of antislavery churches." This suggestion, however, never reached the convention floor due to behind-the-scenes lobbying against the Union Church idea by sectarian-minded Congregationalists.

The private disagreements over the question of Union Churches did not lessen the impact of the Chicago convention on the debate over how to satisfactorily separate the churches from slavery. The Chicago meeting's attack on the relation of missionary societies to slavery provoked well-publicized exchanges between abolitionist churchmen and
northern defenders of the established mission organizations. Among Baptists, for whom the question of missions held particular importance, the Free Mission Society's press expressed pleasure that a predominantly non-Baptist convention had endorsed the comeouters' charges against the denomination's regular mission boards. Most Baptist newspapers, however, applauded Nathaniel Colver's reply in the same convention to the comeouters' arguments. The Chicago Watchman of the Prairie, for example, claimed that northern Baptists "are ten years ahead of other denominations in their freedom from the charge of supporting or sympathizing with slavery through their mission organizations...." Among Congregationalists and New School Presbyterians similar exchanges took place over the correct slavery policies for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the American Home Mission Society. A sign of the growing influence of abolitionist principles was the fact that the defenders of the established missionary bodies usually did not attack the practice of nonfellowship with slaveholders but rather claimed that their societies already adhered to it.

Church-oriented abolitionists believed that the Chicago Christian Anti-Slavery Convention had aided their purposes in other ways in addition to promoting the antislavery cause in the missionary enterprises. Abolitionists cited the attack by many professedly antislavery clergymen as evidence that those ministers were "more attached to a sect, than
they are opposed to slavery." The enthusiasm for interdenominal antislavery cooperation stimulated by this gathering also produced an upper northwest auxiliary to the American Missionary Association and a brand new abolitionist religious publication organization, the American Reform Tract and Book Society. The callers of the Chicago convention claimed that their efforts had helped increase the pressure on the major denominations and missionary societies for antislavery actions not just professions.

Only the Garrisonians believed that the Chicago meeting fell short of its promise. The western Garrisonian Anti-Slavery Bugle berated the Chicago gathering for claiming to be "Christian and religious" when advocating comeouterism but then describing the followers of Garrison as "Infidel" for doing the same thing. The Bugle also charged that the religious radicals would not have taken such high ground if not for the prodding of Garrisonians who held antislavery truth "paramount to the interests of church or government...." But despite these criticisms, the Garrisonians generally agreed with other abolitionists that the Chicago Convention had added to the pressure on northern religious bodies for antislavery reform.
While the Chicago meeting was the highpoint of the Christian Anti-Slavery Convention movement, at least a dozen more similar gatherings were held throughout the 1850s. Congregationalists from Oberlin College and the Free Presbyterians sponsored several small interdenominational anti-slavery conventions in Ohio and western Pennsylvania between 1851 and 1855. These gatherings took strong ground against the fellowship of slaveholders in church or missionary connection. In 1852 Lewis Tappan attended a "Religious Anti-Slavery Convention" in Augusta, Maine, that passed a resolution counselling disobedience to the Fugitive Slave Law. This gathering also adopted the strongest endorsement of nonfellowship with slaveowners yet obtained from the eastern antislavery clergy. Garrisonians observing this convention, however, claimed that the nonfellowship resolution had passed only "in the confusion, at the final adjournment" through a maneuver by Tappan and a few others. The Liberator criticized a Boston "Christian Anti-Slavery Meeting" in 1857 as a meeting of churchmen who mostly neither endorsed nor practiced religious nonfellowship with slaveholders. The eastern interdenominational antislavery projects continued to be less popular and less abolitionist in principle than those in the western states.
An interesting spin-off from the western interdenominational abolitionist gatherings was a well publicized series of annual antislavery conventions conducted in Cincinnati from 1851 to 1855. Although frequently labelled as "Christian" antislavery conventions, these meetings were called under the auspices of the "Ladies' Anti-Slavery Sewing Circle of Cincinnati" and intended to bring together the broadest possible range of opponents of slavery. A resolution of the 1851 gathering endorsed all attempts "to enlist the combined energy of all who hate oppression, in one determined system of efforts...." The success of the callers in assembling the diverse antislavery elements is attested by the attendance over the years of moderate and radical antislavery political figures, pro-abolition church leaders, and Garrisonians, including even William Lloyd Garrison in 1853.

The Cincinnati meetings did not shy away from religious antislavery questions. These conventions usually endorsed nonfellowship with slaveholders but not always comeouterism. Representatives of comeouter sects demanded and got exemptions for their denominations from Garrisonian sponsored resolutions that branded the whole American church as pro-slavery. The political viewpoints at these conventions varied from Garrisonian disunionism to arguments that slavery was unconstitutional. Free Soilism as advocated by politicians in attendance such as George Julian, however,
won the warmest reception from the delegates. But even in the convention's political deliberations, an overriding concern with moral principle appeared in resolutions advising obedience to the "higher law" of God when human legislation like the Fugitive Slave Law contradicted it. The proceedings of the Cincinnati antislavery conventions revealed that militants in all antislavery factions agreed that the religious principles, if not religious institutions, still had roles to play in the emancipation cause.

VI

A lull in interdenominational antislavery activities occurred in the mid-1850s. The growing acceptance of antislavery principles in several northern churches encouraged abolitionists to concentrate upon intra-denominational agitation. More importantly, the political antislavery activities of the new Republican party, which opposed slavery's extension, and the Radical Abolition party which, argued slavery's unconstitutionality, attracted unprecedented participation by church-oriented abolitionists in the mid-1850s. Interdenominational antislavery efforts, however, reappeared in 1859. An Ohio State Christian Anti-Slavery Convention was held in Columbus in August, 1859, and a Northwestern Christian Anti-Slavery Convention met in Chicago that autumn. These two conventions were contemporaries of the interdenominational Church Anti-Slavery Society which began in New
England and spread across the East and into the Midwest in 1859 and 1860. The highly political orientation of all three of these interdenominational antislavery ventures demonstrated the increased willingness of church-oriented abolitionists to work through secular as well as religious channels.

The Ohio State Christian Anti-Slavery Convention hoped to exert a major influence toward guiding the antislavery movement back to its original religiously inspired principles. The attendance by a strong delegation from Oberlin and the participation of Joshua R. Giddings, leading Republican antislavery radical, highlighted the Ohio convention. The gathering passed resolutions demanding that the antislavery political movement return to moral arguments and adopt a stronger pro-emancipation and pro-racial equality platform. The convention endorsed the higher law doctrine and criticized conservatives, including Republicans, who counselled obedience to pro-slavery legislation such as the Fugitive Slave law. The convention's public address claimed the right for "Christian men" to bring the slavery question, "supposed by some to be exclusively political, to the test of morality and religion."^48

An indication of the Columbus meeting's overriding concern with the political situation was its comparatively restrained pronouncements on religious antislavery questions. The convention spent time proclaiming the importance of
prayer in the antislavery campaign and defining the moral evils inherent in slavery. The Columbus gathering, however, failed to advocate nonfellowship with slaveholders despite the large number of comeouters and other church radicals present. Although Garrisonians chided this concentration upon the political rather than the ecclesiastical obligations of antislavery Christians, the meeting won heavy praise from most other abolitionist circles. The Columbus convention was evidence of the growing conviction among antislavery churchmen in the late 1850s that their greatest aid to the emancipation cause lay in lobbying northern politicians to take more principled grounds.

In October, 1859, a Northwestern Christian Anti-Slavery Convention was held in Chicago as part of a week of religious antislavery activities including an anniversary of the American Missionary Association and a convention of abolitionist churchmen desiring to reform the American Tract Society. Like its 1851 predecessor, the Chicago convention brought together leading western church-oriented abolitionists and several likeminded easterners, such as Lewis Tappan and George B. Cheever, a New York City Congregationalist minister. This convention improved upon the Columbus gathering by passing resolutions endorsing nonfellowship with slaveholders and warning that the "integrity and perpetuity" of the church would be in danger unless it opposed slavery.

Convention speakers exhorted ministers to preach
against slavery and to form permanent church-oriented anti-slavery organizations.

Like the Columbus convention, the Chicago gathering took strong stands on political matters, opposing the Fugitive Slave law and recent suggestions for reopening the slave trade. After a heated debate, a majority of the convention delegates voted to "deplore" the violence of the recent Harper's Ferry incident and to recommend instead "the use of moral and peaceful means for the abolition of slavery." With the 1860 presidential election approaching, Republican aspirant Salmon P. Chase wrote to advise delegates to the convention "who are in earnest for practical success next year...not to go too far..." in demanding that the government actively intervene against slavery. Although the gathering passed resolutions protesting "compromising platforms" and the selection of candidates chiefly because of their "availability," most speakers declared their intention to work within the party, as Chase had hoped. The church-oriented abolitionists' desire to apply moral standards to antislavery political movement failed to have significant impact on the 1860 election but would influence the course of politics during the Civil War.

VII .

A final example of interdenominational abolitionist effort was the Church Anti-Slavery Society founded in the
spring of 1859. Although the new society quickly grew to include several hundred ministers and church members, the major sources of its inspiration and activities were two brothers and Congregationalist ministers, George B. and Henry T. Cheever. Both Cheevers had been members of the old AASS but had dropped out of the active antislavery movement before 1840 because of dislike for the Garrisonians' religious views. After ministerial work in his native New England, George Cheever relocated in New York City, where he first edited the New York Evangelist and then became pastor of the wealthy Church of the Puritans. During the 1840s, George established a reputation as a dynamic preacher and leading pamphleteer in the pro-temperance and anti-Catholic causes. In the 1850s, George became a regular contributor to the New York Independent, an influential Congregationalist periodical. The younger Cheever brother, Henry, had less success as a clergyman but finally established himself in a congregation in Jewett City, Connecticut. Not until he became active in the Church Anti-Slavery Society would Henry emerge as an important figure in religious and reform circles.54

Political events of the 1850s like the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the abolitionist-inspired debate over the relation of the religious benevolent societies to slavery helped draw the Cheevers slowly back into the antislavery movement. George Cheever's sermons
attacking proslavery legislative enactments received national circulation through the columns of the Independent. Not even the courting of such Republicans as Salmon P. Chase removed the Cheevers' dissatisfaction with the low moral tone of mainstream antislavery politics. Although George showed some sympathy for the candidacy of John C. Fremont in 1856, both brothers eventually accepted the Radical Abolition party's position that slavery was unconstitutional. After once more becoming actively antislavery, George Cheever accepted invitations to address Garrisonian gatherings but continued to publicly question the religious soundness of that group. The Garrisonians, in turn, both defended George Cheever from criticism by more conservative Congregationalists and complained of his inconsistent fellowship with churches and societies which sanctioned slavery. Rejecting close association with the Republicans or the Garrisonians, the Cheevers instead enlisted in the ranks of church-oriented abolitionism.

In the mid-1850s, long-time religious abolitionists including Lewis Tappan and William Goodell wrote to George Cheever applauding his antislavery sermons and writings and encouraging him to participate in their reform projects. Responding favorably to these invitations, both George and Henry Cheever became leading figures in efforts to induce the various benevolent societies and their fellow Congregationalists to sever all ties with slaveholders.
addition to these activities, George Cheever began producing books and tracts advancing essentially the same moral arguments against slavery as had the early abolitionists of the 1830s. George's *The Guilt of Slavery and the Crime of Slaveholding* was perhaps the most scholarly expression of the abolitionist assertion that the Bible did not sanction slavery. In this and other works, George underscored the necessity of rebuking slaveholding as inherently sinful if the antislavery movement was ever to muster enough moral power to be successful. He also defended the often-criticized practice of clergymen applying moral judgments to current political affairs. Henry Cheever in 1859 wrote a *Tract for the Times*, that echoed his brother's arguments and also drew up guidelines by which Congregational associations and local churches could withdraw all manner of support for slavery. Moderate antislavery Congregationalists, such as the editors of the *Independent*, frequently censured and censored the Cheevers' uncompromising abolitionism. George Cheever even encountered serious protests in his own congregation against his antislavery activism.

VIII

Since the AFASS had dissolved in the mid-1850s, the Cheever brothers believed there was a need for a new national organization to coordinate church-oriented abolitionism. In the fall of 1858, the Cheevers conferred with New
England friends about the possibility of establishing a new abolitionist society exclusively for ministers and church members. A convention to launch such an organization was planned for Worcester, Massachusetts, in March 1859 with invitations being made by a private circular not a public call. In the meantime, to give direction to the meeting's deliberations, George prepared a declaration of sentiments and Henry a constitution for the new body.60

Approximately fifty delegates attended the Worcester gathering, with Massachusetts alone supplying over half the attendance. After two days of sessions, the convention founded the "Church Anti-Slavery Society" and selected Henry Cheever for the key office of secretary of the organization. The new society adopted orthodox abolitionist principles, for example endorsing by resolution the "total extinction [of slavery] to be demanded at once."61 The convention also declared it the duty of Christian churches to refuse fellowship to slaveholders and their defenders, an opinion still hotly debated in many northern churches in the late 1850s. Several delegates objected to the proposed condemnation of slaveholding as "inherently," sinful but a large majority of the convention voted to retain that critical clause.62 The new abolition society announced that its distinctive goal was not merely to absolve the churches' complicity with slavery but to enlist them as institutions in the antislavery crusade. The Church Anti-Slavery Society fixed as its
primary objective "the acknowledgment and adoption by the American clergy and the American Churches, as the great providential and divinely appointed duty of this generation--to destroy Slavery." 63

The Church Anti-Slavery Society experienced a healthy growth in the two years between its founding and the start of the Civil War, thanks especially to the lecturing and writing of Henry Cheever, who became its general agent in July, 1859. The new society established local auxiliaries in several New England towns, New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and at points as far west as Illinois. The organization kept no exact figures on membership, though it certainly numbered several hundred by 1861. From scattered newspaper reports and the few surviving official records, the society appears to have drawn supporters from across the denominational spectrum, with Congregationalists and members of the small nonfellowshipping sects enrolling in the greatest numbers. 64 The new society obtained large attendance at its public anniversaries and annual meetings by arranging for speeches from antislavery luminaries such as: Wesleyan minister Daniel Worth, just expelled from North Carolina; Henry Wilson, Republican governor of Massachusetts; and John Brown, then only of Kansas fame. Several important clergymen never previously associated with an abolitionist organization, including New School Presbyterian Albert Barnes and Methodist Episcopalian Gilbert Haven, gave endorsements
to the Church Anti-Slavery Society. The society's officers similarly represented a mixture of experienced abolitionist veterans, including the redoubtable Lewis Tappan, and men new to the antislavery movement. Despite this energetic start, Church Anti-Slavery Society's expansion eventually slowed due to the hesitancy of most of the religious press to print accounts of the organization's activities.

In addition to attempting to draw church members into its ranks, the Church Anti-Slavery Society found more direct means to work for antislavery reform in the religious community. When most denominational newspapers and periodicals ignored the new society, those abolitionists turned to the political antislavery press for coverage. Henry Cheever wrote a regular column exposing pro-slavery ecclesiastical actions for the organ of the Radical Abolition party, Principia. He also attended official assemblies of Congregational and New School Presbyterian ministers in New England and New York. Although Cheever failed to win endorsements for either his society or the policy of nonfellowship with slaveholders, he stimulated discussions in all of those bodies over the church's responsibility for slavery.

To foster antislavery sentiment in local congregations, the Church Anti-Slavery Society encouraged abolitionists to form quarterly or monthly prayer concerts for the enslaved. Henry Cheever wrote to the Ohio State Christian Anti-Slavery Convention and George Cheever travelled to the companion
Chicago gathering to recommend that western religious abolitionists join forces with the Church Anti-Slavery Society. 69

Although the Church Anti-Slavery Society never publicly advocated comeouterism and condemned the Garrisonian form of that practice, the organization enjoyed good relations with the comeouter sects. The new society regularly praised the seceder churches' efforts to agitate their parent denominations on the slavery question. The press of the comeouter sects, in turn, favorably reported the new abolitionist group's activities. The Free Presbyterian Synod even encouraged its member churches to form Church Anti-Slavery Society auxiliaries. 70

The Church Anti-Slavery Society also aided the abolitionist cause in the religious community by allying itself with the movements to reform the benevolent institutions. The Cheevers attended the annual meetings of these societies to agitate against policies deemed conciliatory to slavery. Speakers at Church Anti-Slavery Society meetings warned the mission organizations that pro-slavery attachments would prove fatal to their labors. Many who joined the new anti-slavery organization also contributed to the abolitionist American Missionary Association. One-third of the delegates to the Worcester Convention, including Lewis Tappan, were life members of the American Missionary Association. 71 The executive committee of the church society awarded two one
hundred dollar prizes in a competition to obtain persuasive tracts proving the Bible condemned slavery and arguing for the necessity of nonfellowship with slaveholders. The organization's officers then arranged the publication of these tracts by the breakaway Boston branch of the American Tract Society to more securely enlist that body in the antislavery movement.\textsuperscript{72} The Church Anti-Slavery Society made great strides before the Civil War in establishing itself as the AFASS's successor as the coordinator of church-oriented abolitionism's varied endeavors.

The Church Anti-Slavery Society also attempted to mobilize the churches' moral power to influence government policy toward slavery. The religious abolitionist group frequently passed resolutions against the Fugitive Slave law, the Dred Scott decision, and numerous additional legislative or judicial actions denying equal rights to Black Americans. Leaders of the Church Anti-Slavery Society criticized Garrisonian disunionism as an evasion of northern responsibility for slavery. The new society also condemned violent antislavery tactics despite an address by John Brown to the organization's annual meeting just five months before the Harper's Ferry Raid.\textsuperscript{73}

On the question of which political party to support, however, sentiments among members of the society were so divided that no official position was taken in elections. Republican speakers, nevertheless, frequently appeared on
Church Anti-Slavery Society platforms. The Pittsburgh auxiliary of the organization had strong ties to that city's Republican leadership. Jonathan Blanchard of Illinois stated that he endorsed the new abolition society because it could advance a higher moral case against slavery than could the Republicans who had to deal with current political realities. Many other members of the society, however, turned this argument on its head and refused to vote for Republicans as long as that party failed to recognize the justice of immediate emancipation. The Cheevers established warm relations with most Radical Abolitionists, except Frederick Douglass who complained that they and their colleagues were primarily concerned "for the salvation of the church rather more than for the destruction of slavery." Not until the Civil War began would the Church Anti-Slavery Society overcome its internal divisions and become an important political lobby capable of influencing the Lincoln administration's policies toward slavery.

Although Henry Cheever frequently remarked that the Church Anti-Slavery Society was not founded to be an enemy to any existing abolitionist organization, troubled relations soon developed between the new society and the Garrisonians. Both Cheevers occasionally praised the AASS's fidelity to the cause of the slave. Church Anti-Slavery Society spokesmen, however, concluded that the heterodox religious views of most Garrisonian leaders rendered that
class of abolitionists unfit to represent the antislavery sentiment of the American churches. The Garrisonians, in turn, regarded the Church Anti-Slavery Society's claim to be the only "distinctively and exclusively Christian" abolitionist association as an implicit attack on their own organization. Garrisonian spokesmen objected to the Church Anti-Slavery Society's assumption of the right to define what principles were "Christian" and regarded that attitude more in line with the teachings of the Pharisees than of Jesus Christ. The AASS's press defended the necessity of keeping the emancipation movement free from religious tests and wondered how the Church Anti-Slavery Society hoped to aid the slaves by slandering other abolitionists. The Garrisonians especially complained that the new society's members refused to cooperate with the supposedly infidel AASS while nevertheless continuing to support churches and benevolent societies that fellowshipped with the assuredly anti-Christian slaveholders. The Garrisonians also described the Church Anti-Slavery Society's political behavior as inconsistent on account of the religious abolitionist group's occasional cordiality toward the Republicans.

Despite this exchange of criticism, Garrisonians surprisingly conceded that the antislavery position of the Church Anti-Slavery Society was "far in advance of any stand yet taken by the popular churches," and "second in thoroughness only to the platform of the American Anti-Slavery
Society." As in the case of the AASS's relations with the comeouter denominations, the Garrisonians could both acknowledge that other groups had honest antislavery intentions yet point out how excessive concerns for sectarian matters could interfere with abolitionist effectiveness.

IX

These various interdenominational antislavery activities reveal that church-oriented abolitionism continued in some force down to the Civil War. Despite the defections to antislavery politics and the alienation of the Garrisonian leadership from religious institutions, a significant portion of the abolitionists remained committed to their movement's original objectives of working through the nation's churches. When the AFASS declined as an agency capable of coordinating religious abolitionist endeavors, the Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions and Church Anti-Slavery Society emerged to fill a portion of that void. These new vehicles supplied representatives of antislavery movements in the various denominations and benevolent fields with forums in which to discuss and propagandize their ideas. With a few exceptions, these projects attempted to guide the growing antislavery sentiment of northern churchmen toward long established abolitionist principles and policies. The conventions and the new society particularly urged the recognition of slaveholding as inherently sinful and the denial of the
comfort of Christian fellowship to that class of sinners. In addition, on several occasions, other religious antislavery practices such as secession from pro-slavery denominations, the free-mission cause, and the reform of existing religious publication institutions won the endorsement of the interdenominational abolitionist councils. Several new antislavery benevolent societies were direct products of the new spirit of cooperation among religious abolitionists fostered by these conclaves. By acting together, abolitionist churchmen were able to encourage northern politicians to consider the moral dimensions of the approach to government's policy toward slavery.

Most standard interpretations of American abolitionism regard the Garrisonians as heirs to the traditional moral suasion tactics after the rest of the movement switched to political action. The evidence this chapter presents about the interdenominational religious antislavery activity during the 1840s and 1850s, however, necessitates a substantial revision of that view. The Garrisonians only occasionally participated in these projects. AASS spokesmen, however, served this movement by alerting religious abolitionists to any compromise of antislavery principles. The often-stated concern of these antislavery churchmen for the moral well-being of the nation's religious institutions made it more difficult for opponents to characterize abolitionism as an infidel movement. The public agitation of these conventions
and societies for an unqualified religious abolitionist pro-
gram, in turn, exposed the reluctance of self-designated "antislavery" church leaders to take decisive actions to separate their denominations from all responsibility for slavery. The events of the 1850s increased the willingness of church-oriented abolitionist organizations to apply strict ethical standards to political affairs touching slavery. This experience enabled the religious community to apply well-organized pressure on government officials to eradicate the oppressive system when the Civil War presented the opportunity. As the following chapters will show, the various interdenominational abolitionist endeavors had an important impact in furthering both ecclesiastical and political antislavery sentiments before and during the Civil War.
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CHAPTER SIX

ABOLITIONISM AND THE BENEVOLENT EMPIRE

The voluntary benevolent society was an important new phenomenon in early nineteenth century United States religious life. These interdenominational organizations supplemented the efforts of the regular churches to disseminate the teachings of evangelical Protestantism and virtuous Christian living. Benevolent-minded churchmen joined together in bodies like the American Home Missionary Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to aid struggling congregations in the United States and abroad. These same people also cooperated in the American Bible Society, the American Tract Society, and the American Sunday School Union to put the Holy Scriptures and other religious and moral works into the hands of the unconverted.

This broad range of charitable and evangelical projects received the endorsement and assistance of many of the economic and political, as well as religious, leaders of the country. The costs of these institutions were borne by wealthy patrons and periodic collections in local congregations. Because Baptists, Methodists, and Episcopalians
usually contributed to their own sectarian missionary and religious publication societies, Presbyterians and Congregationalists became the most important backers of the interdenominational benevolent ventures. Although some historical interpretations stress social control and status anxiety as major motivating forces for these activities, evangelically inspired principles of disinterested benevolence also should be credited with playing key roles.

It was in the area of Christian principle that the benevolent societies ran afoul of the abolitionist campaign. While the benevolent effort envisioned itself as a national movement embracing all Protestant Christians, the abolitionists objected to any definition of good Christians that included slaveholders. By abolitionist standards, the benevolent organizations erred in many respects. Antislavery reformers complained that these societies accepted the "wages of sin" in the form of contributions from slaveholders and welcomed slaveowners as their officers and life members. Abolitionists also criticized the missionary societies for dispatching slaveholding and pro-slavery ministers to supply their stations. Even the non-slaveowning missionaries of these organizations disappointed abolitionists by accepting slaveholders into their churches as bona fide Christians. The Bible society became a special target of antislavery protest for failing to distribute copies of the Scriptures to the slaves. Pro-abolition churchmen charged that the
Tract and Sunday School associations censored every anti-slavery remark out of works they published. Antislavery reformers denied that any Christian benevolent organization should be officially neutral upon an ethical question like slavery. Lewis Tappan concluded that the moral respectability which the benevolent societies lent to slavery by fellowshipping slaveholders "propped up and kept in countenance" that "iniquitous system."

Because of the moral aid and comfort the benevolent associations gave to slavery, the abolitionists devoted considerable effort to reforming those bodies. As in their efforts to abolitionize the churches, antislavery groups employed a variety of tactics in attempting to redeem the benevolent structure. A number of prominent abolitionist clergymen and laymen had been important officers and contributors to those societies in the 1820s and 1830s and attempted to use their influence to change organizational policies. On several occasions, abolitionists made common cause with more moderate antislavery members of the benevolent societies to try to alter particularly offensive pro-slavery practices. To intensify their agitation for an internal reform of the benevolent associations, abolitionists appealed for a cessation of donations until an antislavery posture was adopted. In general, the Garrisonians advocated secession from fellowship with slaveholders in the voluntary societies as well as in the churches. In the 1840s and
1850s, a large portion of the anti-Garrisonian abolitionists not only came out of the established benevolent institutions but began creating new ones of their own upon uncompromising antislavery standards. The antislavery proponents denied repeated accusations that they desired to transform the benevolent societies into abolitionist ventures. The abolitionists claimed their only wish was that those bodies would publicly rebuke slavery by explicit statements and nonfellowship practices.

These abolitionist tactics encountered stiff opposition inside the benevolent societies. Many northern churchmen resisted applying nonfellowship to slaveholders because they disagreed with the abolitionist contention that the practice was inherently sinful. These northerners occasionally favored cautious antislavery professions by the benevolent societies, but believed that expelling slaveholders from the company of Christians would turn them permanently against emancipation. The societies' defenders opposed all actions that handicapped the work of spreading Christian principles among slaveholders, which was regarded as the best hope for eventual abolition. Practical considerations also contributed to the benevolent institutions' resistance to abolitionism. The societies' leaders feared that the slightest antislavery gestures would offend important patrons particularly southerners and northern merchants and manufacturers doing business with slaveholders. In a higher ethical vein,
many of these managers also believed their societies should do nothing to add to the divisive trends that threatened to sever the nation and the Protestant community along sectional lines. 9

This chapter will analyze how successful abolitionists were in overcoming this resistance and thereby depriving slaveholders of the toleration of these important church auxiliaries. The course of antislavery developments will be examined in first the mission societies, then the Bible and other publication organizations, and finally several miscellaneous interdenominational projects.

I

The abolitionists channelled the largest portion of their efforts among the benevolent organizations into reforming the two interdenominational missionary associations, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the American Home Missionary Society (AHMS). The origins of both societies predated the rise of modern abolitionist sentiment, the Board having been founded in 1811 and its domestic counterpart in 1825. Since the division of the Presbyterian church in 1837, these missionary societies were primarily cooperative ventures between evangelically oriented Congregationalists and New School Presbyterians. In theory, both associations were responsible to the contributing members. In practice, however, the executive committees
of each society managed the election procedures so as to en-
sure annual re-election virtually intact. Wary of the sec-
tional antagonisms engendered by abolitionism, these self-
perpetuating groups of clergymen and wealthy patrons seldom
expressed sympathy for any antislavery measure stronger than
colonization. At the same time, the missionary associations
avoided taking any stand on slavery-related matters that
might discourage southern donations or impinge upon the
ecclesiastical authority of cooperating denominations. As
a consequence of these guiding attitudes, both missionary
societies adopted policies that abolitionists regarded as
sanctioning slavery. Over the years, the abolitionists and
the missionary societies came to odds over such practices as
choosing slaveholders as officers or missionaries, receiving
slaveowners as members into mission churches, and accepting
contributions from slaveholders.¹⁰

Individual abolitionists, not the antislavery socie-
ties, conducted the earliest efforts to reform the American
Home Missionary Society in the 1830s. Ministers, congrega-
tions, and lower-level church judicatories sent remonstrances
to the directors of that organization requesting changes of
policies tolerating slavery. The AHMS was particularly
vulnerable to sectarian rivalries between Congregationalists
and New School Presbyterians, and abolitionist petitions
often tried to exploit this weakness. In 1846, for example,
Jonathan Blanchard and other western Congregationalists
abolitionists complained that cooperation with New School Presbyterians in the domestic missionary organization meant sharing fellowship with slaveholders in that denomination.  

The AHMS, however, resisted being prodded into a position offensive to Southerners and conservative northern supporters. In particular, the domestic missionary body attempted to remain officially neutral on the question of slaveholding's sinfulness. To act otherwise, the society's officers claimed, would violate the prerogative of ministers and denominations to "dictate terms of church membership." Under mounting pressure from antislavery churchmen, the AHMS obliquely acknowledged the evils attached to slavery by ceasing to appoint slaveowning missionaries in the mid-1840s. Despite this one concession, the society still accepted slaveholders into their churches and received contributions from the same group. Out of frustration, many abolitionists began to abandon the society for more congenial comeouter alternatives.

The early abolitionist agitation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions generally paralleled that of the domestic missions. Groups of abolitionist churchmen addressed petitions to the Board requesting that that society sever all ties with slavery, no matter how indirect. In 1840, after years of publicly ignoring anti-slavery remonstrances, the Board rejected demands that it cease accepting funds from slaveholders citing the "practical
difficulties" of attempting to judge the moral character of contributors. In 1841 and 1842, the Board tried to appease antislavery sentiment by declaring that it would "sustain no relation to slavery, which implies approbation of the system...." Despite this bold claim, abolitionists soon recognized that except for no longer appointing slaveholders as missionaries, the Board still continued in fellowship with slaveowners. To add strength to their protests, the abolitionists solicited statements from a number of foreign missionaries testifying that the Board's connection with slavery handicapped their labors. In spite of these varied attacks, the Board defended its resistance to abolitionism as essential for keeping evangelism free from distracting political questions.

In 1844 and 1845, revelations of the extent of the Board's toleration of slavery stimulated the movement for antislavery reform of the foreign missions. In those years, the Board investigated and confirmed reports that its missionaries to the western Indian tribes accepted slaveholders into their congregations. In reaction to this admission, the Reverend Amos A. Phelps, corresponding secretary of the AFASS, led a petition campaign to pressure the Board into ordering an end to that practice.

At its 1845 annual meeting at Brooklyn, New York, the Board rejected these remonstrances. While acknowledging the system of slavery to be a social evil or an "organic sin,"
the Board denied the fairness of automatically treating every slaveholder as a sinner. Instead, in the famous Brooklyn Report, the Board defended the independence of the missionary to judge each applicant for church membership on the basis of his personal piety. Phelps failed in two attempts during this meeting to get the Board to reverse that decision. The Board managers even rejected a compromise that instructed missionaries to discipline masters guilty of violating the sanctity of slave marriages and families.  

Garrisonian and church-oriented abolitionists joined in a chorus to protest the Board's ruling. One Garrisonian group chided the logic of the organic sin concept as arguing "that provided a sin be only sufficiently prevalent to have become a recognized institution, it ceases to be a sin ...." Anti-Garrisonians similarly asked the Board if Christianity opposed only unpopular sins. After an unsuccessful effort in 1846 to get the Board to reconsider the Brooklyn Report, a large portion of the anti-Garrisonian abolitionists adopted a "double policy" of continuing to agitate the Board while simultaneously launching their own full-scale missionary projects.  

II  

Even before the Brooklyn Report, many abolitionists abandoned the American Board to found antislavery missionary projects. In 1839, the sympathy of much of the northern
public was attracted to the plight of the Amistad captives. These men were recently enslaved Nigerians who had successfully revolted while being shipped to Cuba on the Spanish ship, Amistad. Unfortunately these self-emancipated members of the Mendi tribe blundered into United States waters and were arrested for piracy. After a highly publicized legal battle, the Supreme Court freed the Mendians in March 1841. Lewis Tappan and other abolitionists had befriended the Africans while in custody. After the court ruling, church-oriented abolitionists attempted to induce the Board to appoint missionaries to accompany the Mendians back to Africa. The Board, however, balked at the abolitionists' demand that donations for the Mendi mission be kept in a special fund closed to slaveholders' money.23

Rebuffed by the Board, Church-oriented abolitionists initiated their own effort to Christianize Africa and received support from far beyond militant antislavery circles. This project soon evolved into the Union Missionary Society, with Black Congregationalist minister J. W. C. Pennington as its president, Lewis Tappan as its corresponding secretary, and nonfellowship with slaveholders as its guiding principle.24 Not only did the AFASS endorse the Union Missionary Society, but even the Garrisonians' National Anti-Slavery Standard applauded that body's freedom from ties to slavery. Antislavery churchmen founded two more organizations in the early 1840s, the Western Evangelical Mission
Society and the West Indian Mission Committee, to finance missions to the Jamaican freedmen and the Northwestern American Indians. In the mid-1840s, supporters of these three societies decided to merge their efforts into a single interdenominational antislavery missionary society.  

Antislavery churchmen who had despaired of reforming the established missionary institutions held two conventions for "Bible Missions" in 1846 and founded the American Missionary Association. The AMA embodied long-standing abolitionist principles in its public condemnation of "the spirit of caste" and its policy never "to receive the known fruits of unrequited labor or to welcome to its employment those who held their fellow beings as slaves." The new society's pre-Civil War officers included many long-time leaders of the AFASS and of the three earlier antislavery mission groups. Veteran abolitionists, including Lewis Tappan as treasurer, the Reverend Simeon Jocelyn as secretary for the domestic missions, and the Reverend George Whipple as secretary for the foreign missions supplied the day-to-day management of the AMA. The AMA launched its own periodical, the American Missionary, under Whipple's editorship and dispatched itinerant agents to preach the gospel of free missions.

In the decade and a half before the Civil War, the AMA grew from a small, primarily foreign, operation to an organization supporting over a hundred domestic and fifty
overseas missionaries. The AMA established several denominational auxiliaries, primarily among the comeouter sects, and a number of regional auxiliaries. One of the latter, the Cincinnati-based Western Home and Foreign Missionary Association, seceded and functioned as an independent body in the early 1850s before returning to the fold. The funds for these projects came chiefly in small donations with the Congregationalists being by far the most generous contributors.

Historian Clifton H. Johnson has documented the pre-Civil War activities of the AMA. Johnson contends that the AMA was neither conceived of nor acted primarily as an abolition propagating society. Instead, Johnson stresses that the AMA functioned as a genuine missionary outlet for those whose views on slavery prevented them from cooperating in good conscience with established missionary channels. While Johnson's conclusion accurately describes the routine operations of the AMA, that society's important contributions to antislavery movement in the churches can not be dismissed. The AFASS, and important individual abolitionists, including Lewis Tappan, William Goodell, and George Cheever, testified that the AMA's refusal to fellowship with slaveholders set a valuable example for other religious institutions. By the mid-1850s, Tappan even came to believe that abolitionist finances and energies could be better spent on the AMA than on the AFASS. Although the
Garrisonians occasionally criticized the AMA, they exempted that body from their lists of benevolent societies guilty of pro-slavery policies. Some of the ways the AMA aided the religious antislavery campaign need to be examined in greater detail.

The AMA performed a significant role in the agitation for antislavery reform of the American Board and the AHMS. The abolitionists appealed to the consciences of the older societies' missionaries about their financial ties to slaveholders' contributions. Abolitionists publicized the fact that several of these missionaries switched to the AMA. Advocates of the AMA, however, experienced great difficulty in overcoming the loyalty of New School Presbyterian and Congregationalist contributors to their traditional mission channels. To breakdown these habits, AMA supporters labored to expose the toleration of slavery in the established missionary bodies. AMA proponents publicly debated friends of the rival societies over the necessity of complete nonfellowship with slaveholders in the missionary enterprises.

At first, the Board and the American Home Missionary Society seemed able to make the appropriate gestures to retain the confidence of moderate antislavery church opinion without having to make substantial changes in policy toward slavery. Every minor concession of the established societies to antislavery pressure prompted calls for the AMA to disband as no longer necessary. Few church-oriented
abolitionists heeded this advice and the AMA continued to appeal to the northern religious public for funds. The AMA's competition for benevolent contributions functioned as a major incentive for other missionary societies to adopt stronger antislavery positions.34

The AMA also became an important abolitionist instrument to lobby the nation's churches. The older antislavery sects--the Quakers, the Freewill Baptists, and Scottish Presbyterians--generally steered clear of interdenominational cooperation in strictly religious matters such as missionary work. Members of those churches who desired to take a more active role in the abolitionist movement, however, occasionally contributed to the AMA.35 The AMA also established close relations with the comeouter sects. The AMA served as the foreign missionary vehicle for the Wesleyan Methodists, the Free Presbyterians, and the Franckean Lutherans. In addition, the AMA gave crucial financial assistance to the Wesleyans' and Free Presbyterians' domestic expansion projects. AMA funds similarly aided a number of "Independent" or "Union" congregations of antislavery churchmen in New York and Ohio. Only the comeouter Baptists preferred their own organization, the American Baptist Free Mission Society, to working in the AMA. The availability of AMA funds to such abolitionist secession movements spurred the campaigns for nonfellowship inside denominations by threatening further losses of antislavery church members.36
The AMA had less success cooperating with antislavery agitators inside the major denominations. Because of the AMA's evangelical character, it established few ties with the weak antislavery movements in the liturgical denominations. The liberal theological views of most AMA missionaries and agents also made the Association unattractive to antislavery Old School Presbyterians. Sectarian feelings minimized support for the AMA among Baptist groups regardless of opinion toward slavery. The AMA's influence on the Methodist Episcopal Church was felt only indirectly through Wesleyan activities. Abolitionist missionaries, however, received the support of some smaller antislavery Methodist groups including a faction of the Methodist Protestants and the immigrant Welsh Calvinistic Methodists.

The AMA's impact was greatest on events among the New School Presbyterians and Congregationalists. By offering financial aid to struggling congregations, the AMA enabled several antislavery western churches to secede from New School Presbyterians as a protest against fellowship of slaveholders. These defectors usually moved into affiliation with the Free Presbyterians or the Congregationalists. While eastern Congregationalists tended to remain loyal to the older societies, many western Congregationalists, including ministers trained by Finney at Oberlin seminary and more orthodox types such as Jonathan Blanchard favored the AMA. Rivalry between the AMA and the established missionary
societies offered abolitionists an important opportunity to agitate the Congregationalist and New School Presbyterian establishments to take higher antislavery grounds.  

The AMA also undertook projects calculated to spread antislavery sentiment outside the church. The AMA's entire home missionary department functioned, in part, to encourage both political and religious abolitionist activities. In particular, the AMA established and publicized a number of special missions chosen to act as "exemplifications" of the "practicability" of Christian antislavery principles. The AMA conducted several missions to the Free Blacks in the North and in Canada. The AMA hoped that the spiritual guidance and education which the missions gave to the Blacks would help dispel prejudice against them. When competition began between pro- and anti-slavery settlers in Kansas, the AMA dispatched missionaries to preach an abolitionist Gospel to bolster the morale of free-state settlers.

The special domestic missions of the AMA that attracted the greatest popular interest were those in the slave states. AMA funding helped make possible the work of Wesleyan Methodist missionaries in North Carolina in the late 1850s. The longest running AMA mission in the South was that conducted at Berea, Kentucky, by the Reverend John G. Fee and several associates. These missionaries founded congregations and even a college, Berea, on uncompromised antislavery and anti-caste standards. The AMA hoped that the success of such
activities in the slave states would inspire northern churchmen "to look more earnestly at their duty in relation to slavery, and to the adoption of our principle of no fellowship with slaveholders." When the South violently expelled all of the AMA missionaries and agents during the panic following John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry, the association sent the "exiles" on lecturing tours across the North as living testimony to the brutal nature of slavery.

The AMA was an important agency in the church-oriented abolitionist campaign. Through its varied activities, the AMA supplied coordination to antislavery work in both the benevolent societies and the religious denominations. The AMA provided opponents of slavery with a channel for their mission contributions that was unquestionably free from suspicion of giving countenance to slavery. Not all antislavery churchmen, however, abandoned the old interdenominational mission societies for comeouter organization, and agitation for reform continued inside the American Board and the American Home Missionary Society down to the Civil War.

III

The transferral of the loyalties of many abolitionists to the AMA marked the beginnings of a new phase of the antislavery campaign in the American Board. In a sense, the AMA supporters joined the Garrisonians as outside critics of the Board’s complicity with slavery. Whether envisioning the
AMA as a permanent replacement for the Board or as a "lever" to reform the older body, many abolitionists diverted their financial contributions to the comeouter society. Despite these secessions, a number of abolitionists, including Jonathan Blanchard, the Cheever brothers, and William Jay, remained inside the Board for several more years and kept pressing for nonfellowship with slaveholders.\(^4\)

Opposition to abolitionist demands came from two distinct groups within the American Board. The more conservative faction argued that the Board should stick to missionary work and ignore slavery on the ground that it was a political not a religious question.\(^4\) A moderate group professed strong antislavery feelings but resisted the abolitionists' demand that the Board treat all slaveholders as sinners. The moderate faction claimed that the Board could be more instrumental in ending slavery if allowed to preach Christian principles to both masters and slaves. Abolitionists attempted to disapprove this last contention by showing how the Board's behavior sanctioned slavery and thereby eased the consciences of slaveowners. By such efforts, the abolitionists hoped to induce the moderates either to quit the Board or force the organization to take stronger antislavery actions.\(^4\)

The American Board could not shake off complaints against the fellowship of slaveholders in its Cherokee and Choctaw missions. At its 1847 annual meeting, the Board
agreed to a request by Blanchard to investigate conditions at the Indian missions. The following year, the Reverend Selah B. Treat, one of the Board's secretaries, reported on his personal meetings and correspondence with the missionaries to the Indians. Treat's letters to the missionaries criticized the institution of slavery and recommended careful examination of the Christian character of slaveholders who joined Board-supported congregations. Even though the Board's annual meeting of 1848 gave no endorsement to Treat's Report, most antislavery churchmen praised the secretary's actions. More conservative Board supporters, however, protested that Treat’s action violated the independence of the missionaries.

The volume of complaints against Treat's Report led the Board's officers to issue a public explanation that the Secretary's correspondence had contained "opinions" not "instructions." The Board declared that it still stood by the 1845 Brooklyn Report declaring slaveholding per se no bar to good Christian standing. Both the AASS and the anti-Garrisonian abolitionists condemned this capitulation to the interests of slavery and noted that so-called antislavery men quietly acquiesced in that ruling. Despite continuing abolitionist criticism, especially from the Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions, and competition for funds from the AMA, the Board escaped any more significant disruptions over slavery until well into the 1850s.
In the mid 1850s, pressure grew on the Board to make concessions over slavery. Public outcry forced the Board's secretaries to coerce the Choctaw Indians into repealing prohibition against the education of Black children at their mission. Lewis Tappan embarrassed the Board by drawing public attention to its election of a Virginia slaveholder as a vice-president. Abolitionists also harassed moderately antislavery clergymen, such as Henry Ward Beecher and Leonard Bacon, and religious newspapers, including the Independent and the Congregationalist, for defending the Board regardless of its policies toward slavery.50

After years of resisting abolitionist demands, the Board decided to rid itself of "increasing embarrassments and perplexities" by dropping its missions to the Choctaws and Cherokees.51 The Board denied stopping work with the Indians on account of the slavery issue and instead claimed that the tribes had been successfully Christianized. The missionaries to the Indians had a different opinion and quickly found financial support from other societies more tolerant of slaveholding. Predictably the abolitionists branded the Board's action as a "remarkable evasion" of "the responsibilities connected with their long indulged complicity with slavery."52 As if to confirm abolitionist accusations, the Board's annual meetings of 1859 and 1860 rejected requests that it publicly condemn the contemporary agitation for a re-opening of the slave trade.53 Although
the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had dropped its most blatant ties to slavery by the time the Civil War began, the society continued to remain aloof from the principles of the abolitionist movement.

In many respects, the later phase of the dispute over slavery in the American Home Missionary Society paralleled that in the Board. Abolitionists had many complaints against that society but concentrated their attack upon the acceptance of slaveholders into missionary congregations in the South. In the ensuing debate, some of the society's defenders voiced strong opposition to abolitionism, while others claimed that the home missionary effort in the South would help end slavery. Growing sectarian rivalry between New School Presbyterians and Congregationalists added to the Society's problems. Offended by Congregationalist badgering over slavery, Presbyterians began founding their own missionary organizations. A rising denominational consciousness, as well as antislavery sentiment, accounts for large numbers of Congregationalists switching their missionary donations to the AMA. The famous 1852 Albany convention of Congregationalists endorsed the AHMS but resolved that only missionaries of known antislavery opinions should be sent into the South.

In response to these trends, the AHMS chose to placate Congregationalist antislavery sentiment by gradually reducing the number of its missionaries in the slave states to
only fifteen in 1856. In December of that year, the Society's executive committee went even further by resolving not to

grant aid to churches containing slaveholding members unless evidence be furnished that the relation is such as, in the judgment of the Committee, is justifiable, for the time being, in the peculiar circumstances in which it exists.

Although Garrisonians and AMA leaders protested that this action still fell short of nonfellowship with slaveholders, antislavery moderates called it a vindication for their non-comeouter policies.  

While many abolitionists believed that the AHMS had not become sufficiently antislavery, a number of conservative northern churchmen became convinced of the exact opposite. In 1853, benevolent-minded northerners opposed to abolitionism's spread into the domestic mission field met with religious representatives from slave states and founded the Southern Aid Society. The new association protested the abandonment of struggling southern congregations by other mission societies and announced its intention to collect money to come to their aid. The Southern Aid Society declared its opposition to agitation in religious quarters against any "domestic institution established by law." By 1860, the new society was aiding churches in fourteen southern states. Although attracting financial contributions from slaveholders and conservative northern business and
religious circles, the Southern Aid Society's collections never rivalled those of either the old missionary bodies or even the AMA. 59

Antislavery groups worked to make the Southern Aid Society unpopular in the North. Abolitionists protested that the new organization's standard practice of aiding ministers already in slave state congregations virtually assured pro-slavery preaching. Criticizing the motives of most northern supporters of the Southern Aid Society as mercenary, antislavery moderates joined the campaign against that body. The Independent's editors declared that assisting southern missionaries who never even preached against the mistreatment of slaves "would convict us of contributing to upholding the system." 60 Although the Southern Aid Society functioned until 1860, its attitude and policy toward slavery had the support of a shrinking portion of the northern religious community.

IV

Abolitionist agitation of the nation's religious publication societies proved less successful than their labors to reform the missionary bodies. Greater numbers of conservatives on the slavery question, especially Episcopalian, Old School Presbyterian, and Dutch Reformed Church members, supported the Bible, Tract, and Sunday School organizations than the mission bodies. The complicated systems of
management of the publication societies added to abolitionist difficulties, because the direction of the societies was even more remote from the pressure of the average contributor than those of the mission associations. Finally the nonfellowship principles, while easily applied to the operations of missionary societies that supported congregations of Christians, seemed less applicable to the printing and distribution of Bibles and other religious materials. These obstacles led church-oriented abolitionists to work for less rigorous antislavery goals than nonfellowship in hopes of enlisting the cooperation of more moderate opponents of slavery. Although this "Popular Front" strategy accomplished less than originally hoped, it still produced several important antislavery advances in the religious community.

The earliest abolitionist efforts in the religious publication organizations were attempts to reform the interdenominational American Bible Society. Even though this society had both slaveholding officers and patrons, the abolitionists first concentrated upon correcting an even more glaring example of the organization's toleration of slavery. The Bible Society, founded in 1816, had as its professed goal to supply every family in the United States with a copy of the Scriptures. Hundreds of thousands of dollars contributed by benevolent-minded Protestants had gone into that ambitious project by the 1830s. In the middle of that
decade, however, the American Anti-Slavery Society began
complaining that few Bibles had reached the southern slaves.
The abolitionists loudly protested this situation because it
meant that the slaves had no other source but their master's
instructions for knowledge of Christian principles. In
1834, the AASS offered to aid the Bible Society in raising
$20,000 to correct this undesirable situation. The Bible
Society's managers, however, declined to undertake such a
campaign contending that their organization's constitution
delegated responsibility for distribution to local auxiliaries.
The national officers claimed to have no authority
to supersede the jurisdiction of their southern branches
even though those bodies continued to show no interest in
spreading Bibles among the bondsmen.

Such self-serving reasoning offended the abolitionists
who argued that the Bible Society had a moral obligation to
carry God's word to everyone--by the use of auxiliaries when
convenient--but also by the direct action of the national
organization if other means failed. To increase pressure on
the Bible Society's managers, veteran abolitionist Joshua
Leavitt promoted a campaign of donations to that organization
designated specifically for financing distributions to
southern Blacks. Leavitt believed that neither the Bible
Society nor southerners could resist if enough Christians
demonstrated support for that cause by such contributions.

Henry Bibb, a Black abolitionist, also noted that the
"Bibles to the Slaves...subject takes well upon the public mind generally—they are more ready to hear upon this branch of the subject than upon the naked question of antislavery ...." As a propaganda vehicle, the "Bibles for Slaves" drive gave abolitionists the opportunity to convince northerners of the depraved nature of the southern institution that even denied its victims the comfort of reading the Scriptures.

Despite apparent promise, Leavitt's "Bibles for Slaves" campaign neither moved the American Bible Society nor pleased all abolitionists. The Bible Society accepted and recorded the contributions "for the slaves." Little of the money was spent for that purpose, however, due to the southern auxiliaries' continued resistance. The Garrisonians denounced the whole project even before its outcome became apparent. An AASS gathering derided the distribution of Bibles to slaves where laws forbade them to learn to read as being as much "a burlesque of a philanthropic enterprise" as supplying the blind with spectacles. Even worse, the Garrisonians worried that the "Bibles for Slaves" cause diverted "attention from the great question of immediate emancipation" by "discarding a doctrine which is morally, philosophically, and historically true, that the liberation of the slave is essential to his intellectual development."

In time, even stalwarts of church-oriented reforms despaired of changing Bible Society practices. In another
example of the comeouter trend, pro-abolition churchmen abandoned the Bible Society in growing numbers in the late 1840s and 1850s. In 1848, the American Missionary Association started its own "Slaves' Bible Fund" and its missionaries and colporteurs distributed copies of Scriptures to bondsmen in Kentucky. To counter this competition, the managers of the Bible Society occasionally encouraged its southern auxiliaries to supply the spiritual needs of literate Blacks. Although accomplishing little, these gestures proved sufficient to retain the loyalty of the large majority of benevolent-minded northerners. On the whole, the abolitionist agitation of the American Bible Society failed to produce any significant concession to northern antislavery sentiment.

V

The abolitionists also had little success in dealing with the American Tract Society. Founded by a merger of regional societies in Boston and New York City in 1825, the American Tract Society annually printed and distributed millions of pages of moral exhortory pamphlets and books in the 1850s. The real control of the Tract Society lay in its Publishing Committee consisting of five or six ministers, each representing a different denomination and each possessing a veto against the printing of any work. The Tappan brothers and other abolitionists who had been early patrons
of the Tract Society began to worry about its relation toward slavery in the 1840s and 1850s.

As in the case of the American Bible Society, abolitionists could have complained about slaveholding members and contributors to the Tract Society but instead concentrated against even more blatantly proslavery practices. Specifically, abolitionists charged the Tract Society with publishing against every evil or sinful practice except those associated with slaveowning. Abolitionists similarly complained that the Tract Society censored even the mildest antislavery reference or allusion from its reprints of established works. The editor of the abolitionist Free Presbyterian labeled these policies as evidence of the "readiness" with which "the conductors of the large printing establishments of the land 'bend the pliant hinges of the knee' in meek submission to [the] Moloch of oppression." Despite a mounting number of churchmen who repeated these charges, the officers of the Tract Society did not even acknowledge the antislavery protest until 1852.

Confronted with the indifference of the American Tract Society's officers to calls for reform, a group of western abolitionists founded their own antislavery religious tract organization. In December 1851, in the aftermath of the successful Chicago Christian Anti-Slavery Convention, a small number of church-oriented abolitionists met in Cincinnati and formed the American Reform Tract and Book Society.
The new body issued a public address which argued that the established religious publication societies were "so tram-melled by pecuniary interests" that antislavery churchmen needed their own vehicle to spread the unpopular truths of nonfellowship with slaveholders. Free Presbyterian John Rankin served as president of the new society for over twenty years. Other notable western abolitionists holding offices in the Cincinnati organization before the Civil War included Charles B. Boynton, Jonathan Blanchard, John G. Fee, and Levi Coffin. Congregationalists and Free Presbyterians supplied the greatest numbers of active officers and agents, but most denominations with antislavery movements had at least one representative. The same groups which gave energy and direction to the Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions and western auxiliaries of the American Missionary Association cooperated to make the Cincinnati-based American Reform Tract and Book Society a serious rival to the interdenominational American Tract Society and sectarian presses unsympathetic to abolitionism. Eastern church-oriented abolitionists also recognized the value of the ARTBS and both the AFASS and AMA endorsed the new tract society.

Although hard hit by the depression of 1857, the ARTBS's catalogue grew to over a hundred titles by the end of the decade. The society distributed over four million pages of religious literature in 1859. In its first years,
the ARTBS mainly published works dealing with the moral questions surrounding slavery as these representative titles reveal: "Hebrew Servitude and American Slavery"; "Fellowship with Slavery"; "Colonization"; and "Slavery and the Bible." After 1857, the ARTBS sought broader support by adding the whole normal range of religious and moral tracts, books, and Sunday School materials to its catalogue of publications. At the same time, the ARTBS printed new anti-slavery works by such popular authors as George B. Cheever and Harriet Beecher Stowe. In addition, the ARTBS published its own periodical, The Christian Press, that also occasionally served as the official voice of the Western Home and Foreign Missionary Association and the Free Presbyterian Church. For a few years, under the editorship of the brilliant but contentious Congregationalist minister Charles B. Boynton, The Christian Press established itself as an influential advocate for religious and political abolitionism. The ARTBS had no distribution system of its own but depended upon the efforts of sympathetic Christian abolitionists. The ARTBS developed close ties with the AMA, and the latter organization's missionaries and colporteurs spread the Cincinnati-printed tracts and books all across the North and even into the Border States.

In its various publications, the ARTBS advocated the fundamental moral principles of abolitionism in an uncommitted form. In its tracts, books, and Christian Press
articles, the ARTBS condemned slaveholding as a sinful practice and encouraged Christians to cease fellowship with slaveholders. The ARTBS's publications also frequently attacked the policies of the New School Presbyterian churches, which claimed to be antislavery yet continued to have slaveholding members in their southern synods. The ARTBS also accused Congregationalist associations which corresponded with Presbyterian assemblies of indirectly giving countenance to slavery. A few ARTBS authors even endorsed the controversial premise of the moral necessity of coming-out from all religious institutions that tolerated slavery.

The ARTBS took a similar moralistic approach to political questions concerning slavery. With the exception of a tract favoring compensated emancipation, published at the insistence of society president John Rankin, the ARTBS's works invariably favored a moderate to radical antislavery political course. Under Boynton's editorship, The Christian Press generally supported the standard of the Free Soil-Free Democratic party. More radical antislavery men, nevertheless, applauded the ARTBS's endorsement of the proposition that it was sinful for Christians to vote for "wicked and designing men" who made government the friend of "slavery, ...intemperance and Sabbath-breaking." 79

Although clearly setting the American Reform Tract and Book Society apart from the American Tract Society, such views gave the new organization an "ultra" image. Some of
the ARTBS's backers worried that undiluted radicalism handicapped the society in competing for financial support from more moderately antislavery northern churchmen. Severely hurt by the monetary contraction of 1857, the ARTBS was floundering when antislavery agitation in the American Tract Society came to head in 1858.\textsuperscript{80}

While many western antislavery radicals abandoned the American Tract Society in the early 1850s, eastern church-oriented abolitionists continued to work to reform the established publishing body for several more years. As noted earlier, anti-Garrisonian abolitionists attempted to enlist the support of antislavery moderates in their campaign against the Tract Society's policies. Lewis Tappan, William Jay, and other abolitionists called public attention to the Tract Society's refusal to print any statement critical of slavery or of any practice attached to it. In 1852, Tract Society officers finally responded to this criticism with a statement that their constitution allowed them to print only material "calculated to receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians." In the Tract Society's managers' opinion that clause ruled out all publications touching on the controversial topic of slavery.\textsuperscript{81} To add further insult, the Tract Society elected Reverend Nehemiah Adams of Boston to its Publishing Committee in 1854. Abolitionists objected that Adams, the author of \textit{A South-Side View of Slavery}..., a work defending the Christian character of the
average slaveholder, now had the power to veto any antislavery work submitted to the Tract Society for publication.\(^8\)2

To conciliate angered feelings, the 1856 annual meeting of the American Tract Society appointed a committee of fifteen distinguished churchmen to determine the organization's proper relation to slavery. The next annual meeting adopted this committee's report that nothing in the society's constitution prohibited publishing works exhorting masters to treat their bondsmen according to Christian precepts. Inundated by southern objections, the Publishing Committee of the Tract Society unanimously decided to authorize no such work.\(^8\)3

This history of unrelenting indifference to northern antislavery sentiments set the stage for a great showdown at the Tract Society's 1858 convention. Moderate antislavery churchmen, such as Baptist Francis Wayland and Congregationalist Leonard Bacon, resented the Publishing Committee's decision to disregard the instructions of the preceding annual meeting. In a rare show of cooperation, antislavery moderates met with church-oriented abolitionists in an unsuccessful attempt to map out a common strategy for the upcoming Tract Society convention. Abolitionists, including Lewis Tappan and George Cheever, argued that the entire antislavery group must demand that the Tract Society oppose slavery as a sin. The moderates at the preliminary gathering balked at this undiluted dose of abolitionist principles.
This group instead decided to try to censure the Publishing Committee for disregarding the previous year's decision to circulate works on the duties of masters. 84

All factions rallied as many supporters as possible for the annual meeting of the Reformed Dutch Church of New York City in May 1858. The American Tract Society's constitution, however, restricted voting rights to life members only. The all-out abolitionist position lost heavily because even Bacon and other moderates spoke against it. Soon after that vote, the combined antislavery forces failed by more than a five-to-one margin to defeat a resolution endorsing the performance of the Publishing Committee. The victorious conservatives then re-elected every member of that body including Nehemiah Adams. The Liberator scornfully concluded that the entire reform movement in the American Tract Society had been foredoomed because it had been "compromising in character" and therefore "utterly unreliable" to bring about any truly antislavery advances. 85

After the 1858 debacle, prospects for changing the Tract Society through internal agitation appeared slim.

The unwillingness of the conservatives who dominated the American Tract Society to make even the slightest concessions forced moderate antislavery churchmen into taking uncharacteristically strong counteraction. Soon after the national body's 1858 annual meeting, the Boston auxiliary of the Tract Society announced it would no longer contribute
to the parent society and would print tracts of its own. In May 1859, the Bostonians formally seceded and established themselves as an independent society. The American Tract Society, Boston, as the new organization became known, won the support of distinguished New England churchmen including Bacon, Wayland, Edward N. Kirk, and John Tappan, a brother of the New York philanthropist Arthur and Lewis Tappan. With the endorsement of such long-time leaders in benevolent enterprises, the Boston tract society soon founded its own auxiliaries across the Northeast.  

The new organization announced that its primary objective would be to carry out the plan originally adopted by the 1857 annual meeting of the American Tract Society to publish tracts advocating "those moral duties which grow out of the existence of slavery, as well as those moral evils which it is known to promote...." The Boston tract society printed a number of works fitting that description but seldom discussing the character of slaveholders or ways to abolish slavery. Noting these last shortcomings, the Garrisonians warned that the new society did not merit most of its antislavery reputation. One Garrisonian writer branded the American Tract Society, Boston, a dangerous "palliative" which deluded its northern patrons into believing that the "radical cure" of nonfellowship would not be needed to deal with the "disease" of slavery infecting the northern church.
Church-oriented abolitionists also worried about the low antislavery standards of the American Tract Society, Boston. Most abolitionist churchmen who quit the old American Tract Society in the early 1850s had supported the American Reform Tract and Book Society. The Cincinnati organization's radical reputation and financially strapped printing operations, however, handicapped it in competition with the Boston tract society for the benevolent donations of the general religious public. While the ARTBS attracted little monetary aid from New Englanders, the Boston-based organization began expanding into the Northwest in mid-1859. This threat to its financial base led the ARTBS to issue circulars against the Boston tract society. The ARTBS noted that while the Boston group published works upon only the "Duty of Masters," the Cincinnati society "takes up Slavery itself, especially as it exists among us, and exposes its inherent sinfulness and enormous evils. Its avowed object is to rid the world of Slavery, as well as of every other moral evil." 89

The rivalry between the Boston and Cincinnati societies climaxed at the Northwestern Reform Tract Convention held in Chicago in October, 1859. Delegates to the gathering weighed claims of greater printing efficiency from representatives of the Boston group and of superior antislavery principles from the Cincinnati society. To head off this unwanted clash, the gathering created an agency for a united
solicitation and distribution effort in the Northwest and left the Cincinnati and Boston societies free to decide what style tracts to publish. Although abolitionists continued to prefer the ARTBS, most western churchmen opposed to the American Tract Society divided their contributions between the Cincinnati and Boston organizations. While the American Reform Tract and Book Society never had financial resources equal to those of the American Tract Society, Boston, both groups survived through the Civil War and performed important antislavery work during that conflict.

The most important objective of the ARTBS and the Boston tract society in the late 1850s, was to draw funds away from the American Tract Society and thereby force that body to reform its position toward slavery. Representing the sentiments of most long-time church-oriented abolitionists, the ARTBS announced it would remain an opponent of the American Tract Society until the senior body ceased placating slaveowners and again became "a preacher of complete righteousness to the land." Churchmen with more moderate antislavery views, including a number of supporters of the American Tract Society, Boston, however, continued to attend American Tract Society conventions to agitate for antislavery actions.

Despite this internal and external antislavery pressure, the managers of the American Tract Society remained opposed to the adoption of any policy which would alienate
the confidence of the South. Eastern merchants and politicians joined Episcopalians, Old School Presbyterians, and conservatives of other denominations in endorsing the American Tract Society's neutral position on slavery. At the 1859 and 1860 annual meeting of the American Tract Society, backers of the executive and publishing committees easily defeated the antislavery faction's new rallying cause—the issuance of a tract against the slave trade. The American Tract Society even launched a counterattack against its New England opponents by chartering a new Boston auxiliary in August 1859. Despite the persistent antislavery pressure, the American Tract Society refused to print a single word against any aspect of human bondage until the Civil War.

Antislavery activities in one additional religious publication society, The American Sunday School Union, deserve brief mention. Founded in 1824, the interdenominational Union printed and circulated hundreds of religious and moral works for juveniles. Like the American Tract Society, the Union refrained from involvement in the slavery debate. The Sunday School Union, however, attracted little abolitionist attention until 1848, when it dropped Thomas Gallaudet's *Jacob and His Sons* from its catalogue. Sunday School Union officers took this action in response to southern complaints against the works' harsh description of Joseph's sale into slavery. Abolitionists as well as moderate antislavery churchmen protested against this submission to slaveholders'
In the 1850s, the ARTBS started to print a line of antislavery Sunday School materials, and antislavery Congregationalists founded their own society for the same purpose. Although this competition caused the American Sunday School Union to suffer financial losses, that organization joined the Bible and Tract societies in refusing to publish works against slavery before the Civil War.  

VI

Questions of slavery and especially of fellowship with slaveholders arose to disturb other aspects of interdenominational religious cooperation besides the mission and publication societies. Probably the most spectacular example of this problem occurred in the deliberations of the Evangelical Alliance in the late 1840s. The Alliance was an attempt to form an international as well as interdenominational association to promote the spread of evangelical Protestantism. This movement began when a British group issued a call for a world Protestant convention in August 1846. Over nine hundred clergy and church members attended the London gathering including seventy-seven from the United States. Among these Americans were prominent northern ministers such as Lyman Beecher, Stephen Olin, Samuel H. Cox, and Edward N. Kirk. In addition, several slaveholders including the Reverend Thomas Smyth of South Carolina participated. The appearance of slaveholders offended the moral sensibilities
of a number of the meeting's sponsors. A motion to bar
slaveowners from becoming members of the Alliance soon dis-
rupted the proceedings of the London convention.95

When American delegates caucused to discuss this prob-
lem, slaveholder Smyth reported with pleasant surprise that
"patriotic feelings" led most northerners to oppose the pro-
posed prohibition.96 The northerners preferred to explain
their attitude as opposition to sweeping judgments about any
class of professing Christians without regard to individual
circumstances. Several of the Americans also hinted that a
United States auxiliary of the Evangelical Alliance could
take more effective antislavery action on its own if not
subject to foreign dictation. With the United States dele-
gation remaining adamant against nonfellowship rules involv-
ing slaveholders, the convention gambled on the antislavery
sentiment of most American churchmen and voted to allow each
national affiliate to form its own regulations governing
membership.97

All factions of American abolitionists reacted with
hostility to news of the London convention's decision upon
slavery. Both Garrisonian and church-oriented abolitionists
charged that the British had been duped by those American
deleagtes who claimed to be active opponents to slavery.
Several Garrisonians were touring England at the time of the
London meeting and organized well-attended rallies to pro-
test the countenance afforded slaveholders by the
Evangelical Alliance. The AFASS sent a Remonstrance to Britain complaining that the Evangelical Alliance's action on the nonfellowship question had been hailed in this country "as a complete triumph of the American policy of building up religious institutions, which shall be precluded, by their very constitution, from bearing an effective testimony against slavery."98

The abolitionists also brought down a rain of criticism upon the American churchmen trying to establish an auxiliary to the Evangelical Alliance. True to abolitionist predictions, these men considered a motion to bar slaveholders, but settled for a mild declaration that slavery was a "stupendous evil" which Christians should endeavor to end.99 This action had the effect of pleasing almost no one. Abolitionists believed that the Evangelical Alliance's stand fell far below the Christian duty to rebuke and exclude sinners. Southerners and other conservatives branded the statement on slavery's evils as unwarranted interference in political matters and as submission to British meddling in American affairs. Having offended partisans on both sides of the slavery question, the American branch of the Evangelical Alliance failed completely in its projects for united Protestant activism.100

The moral questions raised by the abolitionists affected at least one other interdenominational benevolent organization. The evangelistic orientation of the Young
Men's Christian Association, especially in the pre-Civil War years, should not be obscured by its sponsorship of social activities. Abolitionists saw no reason to exempt this new society from the moral obligation not to fellowship slaveholders. Despite abolitionist protests, the convention that founded the YMCA adopted a constitution forbidding discussion of divisive topics such as slavery. Although antislavery pressure induced a few local affiliates in the North to secede from the national association, a minor resurgence of revivalism in the late 1850s helped the YMCA to expand even in the face of abolitionist opposition.\textsuperscript{101}

\textbf{VII}

The abolitionist campaign in the benevolent societies was a microcosm of their overall movement in the church. Abolitionists argued from nonfellowship principles that the policies of these societies helped to sustain slavery by testifying to the satisfactory Christian character of the slaveholders. At first, the societies attempted to ignore the antislavery protest and then responded with claims that their work would be damaged by meddling in political questions and that nonfellowship would not end the evils which accompanied slavery. Since most northern churchmen still did not accept the practice of nonfellowship with slaveholders, abolitionists often concentrated on attacking the even more blatant proslavery policies of the benevolent
societies. Although Garrisonians criticized this strategy as a sacrifice of principle, church-oriented abolitionists cooperated in reforming the publication societies with the very same moderate antislavery churchmen who simultaneously resisted abolitionist efforts in the mission organizations. Sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of moderates, church-oriented abolitionists put pressure on the missionary and religious publication societies by "coming-out" from them and founding rival institutions.

The labors of abolitionists and their moderate allies, both inside and outside the benevolent organizations, achieved several important victories. Although none of the old societies came all the way to nonfellowship grounds by the time of the Civil War, antislavery advances drove most southerners from cooperating with the major interdenominational missionary boards. Where benevolent institutions failed to become sufficiently antislavery, abolitionists created a number of new missionary and religious publication societies to provide channels for benevolent contributions completely free of complicity with slavery.

By their own strict standards of nonfellowship, the church-oriented abolitionist campaign to reform the interdenominational benevolent societies was only partially successful. Nevertheless these abolitionist efforts made an important contribution to the overall antislavery movement in the churches. The benevolent organizations were major
national institutions and antislavery activities in them attracted coverage and discussion in the secular as well as the religious press. The interdenominational character of the missionary and publication societies allowed the abolitionist agitation of those bodies to have broad impact. Members of a wide range of churches had to consider seriously whether cooperation with slaveholders helped or hurt their favorite benevolent projects. Changes in missionary society policies toward slaveholders affected the internal affairs of all the sects whose ministers received financial support from the societies. Most significantly, the abolitionists' success in encouraging moderate antislavery churchmen to actively question slavery's standing in the benevolent institutions encouraged similar activism inside many of the denominations. The benevolent organizations' increasing acknowledgment of slavery's moral defects created a more hospitable climate in the northern churches for the abolitionists to call for the cessation of all practices sanctioning human bondage.
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CHAPTER SEVEN

CHURCH-ORIENTED ABOLITIONISM AND THE GROWTH OF ANTISLAVERY SENTIMENT IN NORTHERN POLITICS

From the 1840s onward, the antislavery movement in the United States became progressively more involved in questions of political action. In the 1830s, abolitionists employed moral suasion tactics to try to awaken other Americans to the sin of slavery. After years of failure in these efforts, many abolitionists turned to the more conventional practices of party politics to advance the cause of immediate emancipation. At the same time, sectional disagreements over government economic policy and over the disposition of western lands added to the attention slavery received in public debate. Several pieces of controversial legislation and episodes of premeditated violence fired hostility between northerners and southerners in the political arena. Ultimately these sectionally divisive events helped lead to civil war but not before they also had influenced the progress of the abolitionist campaign in the nation's religious institutions.
This chapter will examine the various ways the rise of antislavery politics affected the standing of slavery in the churches. The radical and, to a surprising degree, the moderate antislavery political groups supported efforts of churchmen to end toleration of slavery in the religious bodies. Both antislavery political factions also encouraged the general public as well as church leaders to pass moral judgments on sectionally divisive issues. As a result, growing numbers of northern clergymen who had been indifferent to abolitionism now publicly protested proslavery government policies. This growing commitment of northern churchmen to antislavery political action eventually prompted them to make similar exertions in their ecclesiastical connections.

I

When first organized in the 1830s, the American abolition movement envisioned itself as an agency for propagating the evangelically-inspired concept of slaveholding as sin. In its first years, the American Anti-Slavery Society sought to place irresistible moral pressure on southern masters by launching a propaganda campaign to convert influential men and institutions to abolitionism. The early abolitionists' attitude toward political action as a method of moral agitation was complex. Many abolitionists shared the antebellum religious community's mistrust of politics as sordid and
corrupting. Just as abolitionists maintained an anti­sec­tarian, nondenominational approach to the churches, the AASS feared direct involvement in the political arena would offend northerners who had strong partisan loyalties. Despite these qualms, the abolitionists found ways to utilize the political processes to advance their cause. Abolitionists petitioned legislatures and offered antislavery testimony to any law-making body willing to take up the subject. Anti­slavery groups interrogated political candidates to determine whether any had acceptable views on slavery-related issues. When no candidate expressed antislavery sentiments, abolitionists often protested by "scattering" their ballots among write-in candidates. The early abolitionists, nevertheless, refrained from making their own nominations due to fear of compromising the moral character of the antislavery movement.¹

In the late 1830s, however, many abolitionist reassessed their opposition to an independent antislavery political party. After half-a-decade, the abolitionists' moral suasion campaign had reached none of its goals. Abolitionists had induced few southern masters to manumit their slaves. No major religious institution had accepted the abolitionists' moral case against slavery. In those same years, however, the abolitionist petition campaigns had enrolled the support of thousands for limited antislavery measures like the prohibition of the interstate slave-trade and abolition
in the District of Columbia. Attempts to suppress the abolitionist agitation by legal or violent action had backfired and strengthened moderate antislavery sentiment in the North.\(^2\)

This combination of trends led many abolitionists to reconsider the usefulness of an antislavery third party. Nearly all Americans, including the abolitionists, believed that the Constitution forbade a direct assault on slavery by federal authorities. This consensus enabled politically-minded abolitionists to construct a limited antislavery program that would appeal to the new northern sentiments and yet not sacrifice emancipationist principles. By threatening to draw off votes, an abolitionist party would encourage the major parties to adopt a more antislavery position. Presented as a political issue, abolitionism also could gain access to public forums usually oblivious to moral reform causes.\(^3\) By the late 1830s, the growing sentiment for an abolitionist third party sparked serious debate in the councils of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

The principal abolitionist dissent against independent antislavery political endeavors came from the faction gathered around William Lloyd Garrison and the \textit{Liberator}. Until recently, historians have credited the Garrisonian opposition to an abolitionist political party to the group's pacifistic nonresistance creed. Thanks to the insightful
research of Aileen S. Kraditor and James B. Stewart, the Garrisonians' position toward political action is shown to be more sophisticated and pragmatic than previously thought. The nonresistants refused to vote because they considered such action an endorsement of the coercive powers of government. Kraditor, however, demonstrates that neither before nor after 1840 did the Garrisonians attempt to make adherence to nonresistant doctrine a membership test in the AASS. Similarly, although many Garrisonians advocated the dissolution of the union between Free and Slave states, the AASS always welcomed abolitionists of other political views. Kraditor and Stewart interpret the call for disunion as a rallying cry for moral agitation not a blueprint for practical politics. While not prepared to force their nonresistant views on other abolitionists, the Garrisonians questioned the wisdom of an abolitionist political party.

The Garrisonians based their chief objections to third party politics on questions of expediency not principle. All antislavery veterans believed the key to abolitionism lay in changing public opinion toward slavery. Garrisonians worried that a one-issue antislavery party would be ignored by the vast majority of voters who remained apathetic to the problems of slavery. AASS advocates also warned that political abolitionists would become captive to the interests of their party and be tempted to compromise principles to gain ballots. Garrisonians claimed that the older tactics of
moral suasion, in contrast, would foster the growth of anti-slavery sentiment in both major parties and eventually force the politicians to reflect the constituents' new sentiments. Garrisonians realized that governments usually respond faster to vocal pressure groups inside the major parties than to small third parties spurned by the mass of voters.\(^5\)

As discussed in Chapter Two, a combination of conflicts concerning abolitionist tactics in church as well as political affairs finally caused the schism of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1840. For most opponents of the Garrisonians, the AASS produced two legitimate successors, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and the Liberty party. The AFASS kept up traditional moral suasion strategies particularly in church circles. After a few years of hesitation, the AFASS also committed itself to aiding the Liberty party.\(^6\) To a degree infrequently recognized by historians, the Liberty party similarly promoted both political and religious abolitionist agitation. By both direct and indirect means, the Liberty party contributed to increasing antislavery sentiment inside northern churches.

The Liberty party hoped to benefit politically by stressing moral as well as political aspects of the slavery question. While some Liberty men made efforts to introduce economic considerations into their party's arguments against slavery, the new party's platform in the 1840 and 1844 presidential elections differed little from those of the
old antislavery societies. The abolitionist political party branded not only slaveholding but also the nation's pervasive racial prejudice an affront against God's laws. The Liberty party called for the immediate abolition of slavery wherever constitutionally possible and the repeal of all racially discriminatory legislation as a religious as well as political duty. By describing slavery as "a great question of public morality, Liberty party spokesmen hoped to win the votes of churchmen who believed politics should be conducted according to Christian principles."

After pointing out the moral implications of slavery-related political issues, the Liberty men denounced those who still voted for a proslavery party or refused to vote at all. In their battles with the Garrisonians, Liberty party backers charged that nonresistant principles conflicted with a moral duty to vote for antislavery candidates. Third-party spokesmen also rejected the Garrisonian policy of encouraging voting for the more antislavery candidate of the major parties. Liberty men complained that this practice was based on the unacceptable "axiom, that politics, of necessity, must be impure—that they must be conducted on principles of mere expediency, and that moral principle, for the time being must be laid aside." The Liberty party similarly attacked antislavery churchmen who continued to vote for the Whigs and Democrats. For example, political abolitionists from across the nation
criticized two Ohio antislavery ministers, John Rankin and Jonathan Blanchard, for endorsing the Whigs instead of the Liberty party in 1840. Hoping to capture the loyalties of the growing numbers of pro-abolition churchmen, third-party advocates developed an argument that ethically consistent church members must "vote as they pray"; that is, those opposed to holding fellowship with slaveholders in their churches should likewise refuse to vote for candidates and parties that took no stand against slavery.9

Besides defining the moral responsibilities of voters in relation to slavery, the Liberty party encouraged the churches to undertake antislavery reform. Liberty party conventions endorsed the view that slavery was inherently sinful. Occasionally these meetings recommended nonfellowship with slaveholders and even comeouterism. In 1842, the nominating convention of the New York Liberty party called on church members to renounce the "sin of patronizing pro-slavery preachers."10 Liberty party newspapers also acted as forums for the public discussion of purely church-related abolitionist questions. The Liberty party nominated James G. Birney, a vocal critic of slavery in the churches, for president in 1840 and 1844. Liberty party editors and politicians did more than just express support for the principles of abolitionism in church affairs. Birney, Samuel Lewis of Ohio, John Pierpont of Massachusetts, Alvan Stewart of New York, and numerous other political abolitionists
combined careers as Liberty party politicians and as agitators for antislavery practices in their denominations. Liberty party newspapers provided invaluable publicity to the antislavery movements in the Methodist and Baptist churches where denominational editors often censored out news of abolitionist activities.¹¹ The Liberty party's concern that the churches not become obstacles to abolitionism set an important example for later antislavery political organizations.

It is important to note the impact of the Liberty party on the voting habits of northern church members. In recent years, American political historians have developed sophisticated quantitative techniques to measure the voting behavior of various religious, social, and economic groups. For the early period of antislavery politics, however, sufficiently accurate data for this method of research are available only through considerable culling of local and church records. As a consequence of this problem, only a few state and local studies contain information about the slavery-related voting patterns of the antebellum denominations. Even though the evidence is fragmentary, this new research tends to confirm the older impressionistic supposition that antislavery voters tended to belong to the evangelical denominations.¹²

Historians explain this relationship as a product of the value structure of evangelicals. With its requirement
of continuous proof of genuine conversion, evangelical theology inclined its adherents toward both religious and political efforts to hasten the elimination of sin. Non-evangelical sects, in contrast, placed greater emphasis on other requirements for salvation and therefore disapproved of the evangelicals' attempt to regulate personal behavior. The Democrats' laissez-faire ideology and the Whigs' moralistic program and rethoric roughly represented the non-evangelical versus evangelical split in nineteenth century politics before the rise of the slavery question.\(^{13}\)

By thrusting a new ethically defined issue into politics, the Liberty party challenged the Whig hold on evangelical voters. Once convinced of the evil nature of slavery, these moralistically inclined voters would be tempted to support the Liberty party. Birney's totals of 7,000 votes in 1840 and 62,000 in 1844 showed that the single issue of slavery was not yet strong enough to sway most evangelicals away from the Whigs. The Liberty party nevertheless posed a sufficient threat in some parts of the North to cause several Whig congressmen, including Joshua Giddings of Ohio, Seth Gates of New York, and John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, to make accommodations to antislavery sentiment. The nine hundred percent increase in Birney's totals also appeared to augur well for the future of slavery as a political issue.\(^{14}\)
Fundamental disagreements over how to build upon the Liberty party's limited success in 1844 eventually destroyed the unity of the political abolitionist movement. Some "one-idea" men remained satisfied with the original standards of the Liberty party. Most party leaders, however, contended that the purely abolitionist platform should be expanded to increase its political appeal. One proposal made by Birney, Gerrit Smith, William Goodell, and others was to broaden the Liberty party platform to include a program of universal reform such as advocacy of free trade, free public lands, and disarmament. Dubbing themselves the Liberty League, this faction also advanced the theory that the Constitution did not sanction slavery and that therefore Congress had power to abolish the institution everywhere. A rival suggestion advanced by Salmon P. Chase, Gamaliel Bailey, and Henry B. Stanton, among others, was to seek out common ground for electoral cooperation with moderate anti-slavery groups in the major parties. The Mexican War and the subsequent opposition of many northerners to the admission of slavery into western lands provided a ready issue for constructing an antiextensionist coalition for the election of 1848.15

In a complicated series of intra-party battles, the pro-coalition forces out-maneuvered their opponents and
merged the Liberty party with antiextensionist Whigs and Democrats. The new Free Soil party enticed defectors from the major parties by nominating the former Democratic president Martin Van Buren and Whig scion Charles Francis Adams, son of John Quincy Adams. Neither man was an abolitionist but both opposed the spread of slavery into land gained by the Mexican War. To increase their voter appeal, Free Soilers emphasized the benefits to northern White labor of confining slavery. Unlike the Liberty party, the Free Soilers gave no endorsement to immediate abolition or equal rights for Blacks.\(^{16}\) What the Free Soil party offered in place of the Liberty party's high standards was the chance to vastly increase antislavery influence, although of a limited nature, on the political system.

Not all former Liberty men could accept the compromised antislavery position of the Free Soil party. In 1848, the Liberty League ran Gerrit Smith for President in opposition to Van Buren and the major party candidates. Winning the reluctant support of some former "one-idea" men including Lewis Tappan, the Liberty League continued to function as an independent party until the beginning of the Civil War. In 1855, this group reorganized itself as the American Abolition Society and absorbed the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. The new body's constitution declared slavery "sinful, illegal, and unconstitutional" and acknowledged the Christian obligation not to fellowship slaveholders in
any religious or benevolent institution. The American Abolition Society ran its own political candidates under the banner of the Radical Abolition party. The new organization numbered among its spokesmen such prominent antislavery leaders as Gerrit Smith, William Goodell, Lewis Tappan, George and Henry Cheever, Frederick Douglass, and Samuel J. May. The Liberty League-Radical Abolitionist group went beyond even the old Liberty party in combining political and church-oriented abolitionism in one common movement. As representatives of contrasting approaches to antislavery politics, the Free Soilers and the Liberty Leaguers need to be compared as to the influence each had on northern church affairs.

In encouraging churchmen to view slavery as an immoral as well as an undesirable institution, the Liberty League took ground in advance of even the old Liberty party. The Liberty Leaguers presented a host of philosophical, legal, and historical arguments to support their cardinal tenet that slavery was unconstitutional, but the capstone of their case was the contention that

slavery is so evidently contrary to the paramount law of nature, to justice, to fundamental morality, and the law of God, that it never was, and never can be legalized; and that no legislature nor monarch possesses the power to make it legal.

By defining slaveholding as both sinful and illegal, the Liberty Leaguers could tolerate no compromise on any
political question touching slavery. Thus the Liberty League charged the Free Soil movement with sanctioning the sin of slaveholding because the antiextension platform recognized slavery's right to remain undisturbed in the South.

The Free Soilers, however, found several ways to defend antiextensionism as a morally responsible policy. Free Soilers pointed out that the Liberty League's view of slavery as unconstitutional conflicted with the widely accepted belief that the federal government could not abolish slavery where it already existed. Free Soilers also observed that Americans commonly believed their country had a divine mission to Christianize the world. The spread of slavery to the West jeopardized this mission by threatening to pervert the Christian character of the nation. Free Soilers therefore contended that their program to arrest the expansion of slavery served an important moral purpose and not merely the selfish interests of the North. Similarly, although the Free Soilers took no official position on the rights of Blacks, many party members and newspapers exhorted their fellow citizens to abjure racially discriminatory practices. For reasons such as these, George Julian, the anti-extensionists' candidate for vice-president in 1852, defended his party's platform because it "embodies...the unfashionable political virtue of recognizing the distinction between right and wrong, and the government of the world by a
Compared to the Whigs and Democrats, the Free Soilers allowed moral considerations an unquestionably larger role in shaping party position toward slavery.

Although both the Liberty League and the Free Soil party took a moral approach to political issues, the Free Soilers trailed their rivals in fulfilling the old Liberty party's other role of encouraging antislavery reform in the northern churches. The highpoint of Free Soil action in this regard was a resolution passed by their 1852 national convention declaring "that slavery is a sin against God and a crime against man, which no human enactment nor usage can make right...." Unlike the original political abolitionists, the Free Soilers refrained from stating that Christians should not fellowship with slaveholders. While Free Soil newspapers frequently reported on church affairs, most of their editors hesitated to endorse nonfellowship or comeouterism as the duty of antislavery Christians.

In their personal church relations, leading Free Soilers set no consistent example for their followers. Charles Francis Adams disapproved of abolitionist harassment of the churches. In contrast, New School Presbyterian layman Joshua Giddings actively agitated his denomination to discipline slaveholding church members. George Julian attended several Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions and advocated secession from pro-slavery churches. Ohio Free Soiler Samuel Lewis was a leader of the antislavery movement in the
Methodist Episcopal Church but disapproved of the Wesleyan secession. Gamaliel Bailey quit the Methodist Protestant Church for antislavery reasons but joined no comeouter body.  

The Liberty League-Radical Abolitionists political faction took a more activist role than the Free Soilers toward the problem of the churches' complicity with slavery. In their political platforms and convention resolutions, the Liberty Leaguers gave clear, unqualified endorsements to the doctrines of slavery's inherent sinfulness and of the Christian's obligation not to communion with slaveholders. Pro-Radical Abolitionist party newspapers, edited by William Goodell, Frederick Douglass, and others, regularly condemned the toleration shown slavery by the churches and benevolent societies. Liberty Leaguers placed major blame for the proslavery tone of the nation's politics on the churches and warned

That so long as the Church and ministry stumble at the problem, whether or no 'the sum of all villanies' is malum in se--it is not strange that graceless politicians should stumble at the problem whether the temple of the Holy Ghost can be legislated into a commodity of lawful merchandise.

Like the old Liberty party, the Liberty League-Radical Abolitionist group viewed antislavery agitation of religious and political institutions as inseparable parts of the same movement.
The only dissension in Radical Abolitionist ranks over questions of proper antislavery church relations concerned the practice of comeouterism. The Radical Abolitionists condemned the Garrisonian variant of comeouterism as an evasion of moral responsibility. Although the Radical Abolitionist newspapers publicized the activities of the comeouter sects, neither that party nor the American Abolition Society officially endorsed the establishment of new antislavery denominations. In their private lives, William Goodell, Gerrit Smith, and several other leading Radical Abolitionists were exponents of the nondenominational "Union" form of comeouter congregation. Goodell, in particular, feuded with the leaders of the comeouter sects over the comeouters' "sectarianism." This quarrel was especially unfortunate for Liberty League-Radical Abolitionist political candidates because the comeouter denominations became important new antislavery political constituencies.

Founded after the advent of the Liberty party, the comeouter sects committed themselves to political action. While a Garrisonian minority existed in several of these denominations, comeouter sect officers and editors generally opposed the policies of nonresistance and disunionism. In fact comeouter sect leaders were among the foremost exponents of the anti-Garrisonian argument that antislavery Christians had a religious duty to use all means--moral and political--to abolish slavery. The Free Presbyterian Church
made it a disciplinable offense for sect members to vote for any candidate "guilty of the crimes of slaveholding, dueling, or other scandalous offences against the law of God." The Wesleyans placed a similar declaration in their denominational rules although they did not single out slaveowning by name. The conventions and the newspapers of the Free Presbyterians, Wesleyans, and Free Mission Baptists all counselled voting for antislavery candidates as a moral obligation. As a result of this prompting, comeouter sect members took an active interest in Liberty party affairs. Liberty party leaders, however, often complained that comeouter sect members worked to nominate only those men who shared their advanced religious views. The division of the political antislavery movement into moderate and radical wings posed a dilemma to these groups of dedicated abolitionist voters.

It would be valuable to compare the political support the Free Soilers attracted among church groups with that drawn by the Liberty Leaguers. The results of the two presidential elections, 1848 and 1852, in which the two parties competed tell much of the story. The 1848 Free Soil ticket of Van Buren and Adams received 290,000 votes to only 2,500 for the Liberty Leaguers. In 1852, the antiextension party's totals dropped to 156,000, but the Liberty League's presidential nominee, William Goodell, collected so few ballots that no state reported them. Even after Van Buren
and most of his Democratic followers returned to their old loyalties, the antiextensionists in 1852 drew two-and-a-half times as many ballots as the united Liberty party in 1844. As in the case of that Liberty party vote, however, no precise data exist to show which candidates the various religious denominations supported. In particular, exact statistics cannot be calculated for the impact of the free-soil issue on the traditional Whig sympathies of the moralistically inclined evangelical sect members. Nevertheless, two important facts can be deduced from these election returns: first, the small size of the Liberty League vote indicates that most antislavery churchmen chose the more moderate antislavery political position; and second, the large majority of northerners preferred the Whigs or Democrats to any antislavery party in the late 1840s and early 1850s.

Impressionistic evidence tends to confirm these conclusions. Compared with the Free Soilers, the Liberty League received few endorsements from antislavery church leaders or editors. The Liberty League did receive support from influential Black Christians because of the small party's affirmation of racial equality. The officers of the American Missionary Association also backed the Liberty League but without fanfare. Most antislavery members of the major denominations, however, agreed with Charles G. Finney's complaint that the Liberty League's "Political Sectarianism" unjustifiably divided the opponents of slavery. Although
Goodell believed that most of the Liberty League's support came from voters who had left pro-slavery churches, even in that comeouter group many preferred the Free Soilers. Goodell's and Gerrit Smith's strong advocacy of the interdenominational "Union Church" movement alienated many of the churchmen struggling to create the various comeouter sects. While the press of the comeouter denominations often criticized the low antislavery standards of antiextensionism, the majority of comeouter editors eventually endorsed the Free Soilers as the only realistic hope for political abolition. A number of these editors acknowledged the Liberty Leaguers' superior principles but conceded that antislavery Christians could vote in good conscience for the Free Soilers. This lack of support for the Liberty League among even the most militantly abolitionist churches underlined the general lack of enthusiasm for radical antislavery politics in the northern religious community.

While far more popular than the Liberty Leaguers, the Free Soilers still were supported by only a small minority of northern churchmen. Despite some resentment against pro-slavery actions by the federal government, most northerners still shunned the antislavery parties in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Old party loyalties died hard. Free Soil attractiveness to traditionally Democratic groups declined sharply after Van Burenites made peace with their old party after 1848. Northern Whig politicians made gestures
calculated to appeal to the antislavery sentiments of their evangelical constituents. Nevertheless, the moderate anti-slavery party made important gains in the religious community. A large portion of the northern religious press endorsed the principle of the nonextension of slavery. The moral tone of the 1852 Free Soil party platform and the nomination of George Julian for vice-president pleased antislavery churchmen. Free Soilers attracted many moderate antislavery ministers, such as Henry Ward Beecher, Joseph Thompson, and Leonard Bacon, who never had voted for the Liberty party. The Free Soilers also drew the qualified endorsement of veteran church-oriented abolitionists including the comeouter sect leaders and such influential antislavery ministers as Finney, John G. Fee, and Theodore Parker. This precedent for political activism by churchmen would have important impact upon the religious community as the troubled events of the 1850s increased anti-southern and antislavery sentiment in the North.

III

Historians long have noted the repercussions on northern public opinion of such incidents as the Fugitive Slave Law, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the "Bloody Kansas" feuding, and the Harper's Ferry raid. As more and more northerners became alarmed at what they perceived as aggressive acts of
the "Slave Power," the fortunes of antislavery political parties rose. These events and the northern reaction to them also produced a perceptible increase in antislavery activism among the clergy. Because of differences in theology, polity, political traditions, and demographic make-up, however, the degree of this change varied from denomination to denomination. These developments would cause an increasing interaction between the political and religious antislavery movements in the late 1850's.

The first important event of the 1850s that helped stimulate antislavery sentiment in the northern churches was the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Part of the famous sectional compromise of that year, the new law created stringent procedures to facilitate the rendition of runaway slaves. The legislation of 1850 denied an alleged fugitive most of the traditional legal safeguards accorded the accused and required citizens to help apprehend runaways. There was great pressure on the clergy to support the entire 1850 compromise, and the abolitionists encouraged ministers to oppose the unprincipled concessions Congress had made to the Slave Power. At the abolitionists' urging, large numbers of northern churchmen entered antislavery ranks through attacks on the Fugitive Slave Law.31

The volume of debate over the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was extensive. While the northern clergy cited legal, constitutional, and political objections to the legislation
of 1850, the most telling complaints of that group were against the law's requirement that individual citizens assist in capturing runaways. Clerical opponents of the Fugitive Slave Law recalled the Old Testament law of the Jews: "thou shalt not deliver to his master the servant [who] is escaped from his master to thee...."\(^{32}\) To help re-enslave fugitives was giving direct personal aid to the abominable system of slavery, and many northern ministers denied that any law could command such an act. In their sermons and writings, scores of clergymen proclaimed that their first duty was to the "Higher Law" of God and therefore they could not obey the Fugitive Slave Law.\(^{33}\)

Church-oriented abolitionists applauded this application of the Higher Law doctrine because such arguments led churchmen to acknowledge the moral deficiencies of slavery and the North's guilty role in preserving the institution. The Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions counselled disobedience to the Fugitive Slave Law. The AFASS called the unprecedented number of clergymen preaching an antislavery gospel on account of the Fugitive Slave Law "the most encouraging sign of the times," and expressed the hope that when those men "proclaim the truth in its fullness with regard to this giant iniquity, the churches may be expected to be right on the subject."\(^{34}\)

Despite such promising signs, large numbers of northern ministers defended the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.
Conservative clergymen warned that the preservation of the Union depended upon the North's compliance with the Constitution's provision for the rendition of escaped slaves. More than one minister described St. Paul's epistle to Philemon as an inspired commandment to obey the Fugitive Slave Law. Supporters of the legislation of 1850 described government as God's instrument to order man's relations and counselled obedience to all properly established laws. These conservatives acknowledged the existence of a "Higher Law" but argued that the constituted authorities, not personal whim, were sounder and safer judges of God's precepts. One study that compares the backgrounds of northern ministers who defended the Fugitive Slave Law with those who opposed it finds they were older, from the socially dominant denominations of their region, and from sects with theologies placing less emphasis on individual conscience. Ministers in the ritualist and old-line Calvinist denominations upheld the Fugitive Slave Law as part of their traditional treatment of slavery as a political not a religious question. In addition, such prominent northern ministers as Unitarian Orville Dewey, Baptist John Mason Peck, Methodist George Peck, and Congregationalists John Lord and Moses Stuart compromised their antislavery reputations by publicly recommending obedience to the new law. Abolitionists condemned these men for wounding "the cause of Christian morals" by professing their "ignorance of a higher law
than the Federal Constitution."  

While neither side won the debate over the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, several features in that controversy worked to the advantage of the antislavery movement in the churches. The strength of anti-Fugitive Slave Law opinion forced articles on the subject into religious periodicals that hitherto had practiced the strictest silence on slavery. The well-publicized series of renditions of captured runaways created unprecedented sympathy for the plight of all Blacks. Although many ministers speaking out against the Fugitive Slave Law still opposed abolitionism, their actions, nonetheless, made antislavery expressions more respectable in religious circles. While the majority of northerners acquiesced in the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, this political event bolstered antislavery sentiment in the northern churches.

The northern clergy reacted even more strongly against the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act that repealed the Missouri Compromise ban on slavery in western territories north of 36°30'. Citing economic, political, and moral arguments, antislavery Congressmen appealed to northerners to publicly protest this measure. Free State ministers responded in unprecedented numbers to this call. Even some defenders of the Fugitive Slave Law spoke out against the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Clergymen complained that the new law violated established sectional compromises and threatened to disrupt the
peace of the Union. Ministers also repeated the argument that the extension of slavery would perpetuate the system with all its attendant evils and thereby further corrupt the moral character of the nation. In addition to writing and preaching against the act, thousands of northern clergymen signed memorials to Congress denouncing the legislation. Ministers and congregations also contributed to the societies aiding Free State settlers in Kansas to ensure the antislavery complexion of the territory. Abolitionists and antislavery politicians hailed these activities as an indication that the northern churches were "waking up at last to a sense of their duty."

Proponents of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and particularly its chief sponsor, Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, reacted with hostility against this clerical onslaught. Douglas charged that abolitionists and Free Soilers had induced northern ministers "to desecrate the pulpit, and prostitute the sacred desk to the miserable and corrupting influence of party politics." A number of clergymen joined the Democratic press in echoing Douglas' attack on "political preaching." Even more ministers, however, defended their right to speak out on political issues that touched on moral questions. The editor of one normally conservative Baptist newspaper claimed that clergymen had not only the "right" but the "duty...to 'declare the whole counsel of God,' in certain circumstances to weigh
schemes of public policy in the balance of the sanctuary." Abolitionist churchmen had been subjected to the same kind of criticism for years, and they defended the anti-Kansas-Nebraska Act clergy. Antislavery politicians also affirmed the minister's responsibility to preach against evil wherever it occurred, and claimed that only the friends or dupes of slaveholders contested that legitimate role of the clergy. Although the Kansas-Nebraska Act passed Congress despite this protest, the re-opened issue of slavery in the territories greatly increased antislavery activism among northern church leaders.

Another secular trend that affected antislavery opinion in the northern churches was the increasing use of violent tactics by participants on both sides of the slavery debate. The plight of fugitive slaves led many northern churchmen to break the law to assist them. A few antislavery activists went even further by aiding slaves to escape and by battling authorities to free captured runaways. The sectional rivalry for the Kansas territory often resulted in hostile clashes between pro- and anti-slavery settlers. The Kansas Free State faction looked to the North for arms to contend with southern encroachments. The most important incident of antislavery violence was John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry. After a short but bloody fight, Brown's attempt to start a slave rebellion ended in his capture and execution.
The sentiments of northern churchmen were deeply divided by these events. Even many antislavery ministers and religious periodicals recoiled from the violence committed in the name of their cause. The participation of clergymen in several well-publicized slave rescues attracted both praise and censure in northern religious circles. Because most northerners blamed the violence in Kansas upon pro-slavery aggression, there was much support for the Free State settlers from the religious press and ministry. Conservatives predictably damned the Harper's Ferry incident, and many antislavery moderates denied Brown represented responsible northern opinion. Nevertheless, a surprisingly large number of clergymen defended not only Brown's motives but his methods as well. Methodist Gilbert Haven, for example, placed the ultimate blame for Harper's Ferry bloodshed on "the violent enslavement of forty hundreds of thousands of our kindred...." Most veteran abolitionists remained committed to peaceful antislavery tactics, but younger men in the antislavery ranks began espousing more revolutionary actions during the 1850s. The attention recent historians have paid to this last phenomenon, however, should not obliterate the substantial evidence that most abolitionists kept up an intense campaign of moral suasion throughout the violent decade. In fact, the antislavery emotions stirred by the troubled times would assist greatly the efforts to end church sanction for the southern system.
Another political issue in the 1850s that stimulated antislavery activism among northern churchmen was the revived interest in compensated emancipation schemes. Compensation to the slaveholders had been a respectable part of most antislavery programs until the 1830s. The moralistic re-orientation of abolitionists in that period led to the rejection of compensation as a reward for past sinning. In reaction to the increasing incidents of violence in the 1850s, a few antislavery veterans returned to compensation as a peaceful solution to the slavery problem. The leading abolitionist advocates of this plan were Elihu Burrit, Gerrit Smith, and John Rankin, who sponsored the Cleveland Compensated Emancipation Convention in 1857. Few other genuine abolitionists attended this meeting but the project won considerable support among moderate antislavery clergymen including Congregationalist Leonard Bacon, Methodist Abel Stevens, and Episcopalian Dudley A. Tyng. The Cleveland gathering launched a National Compensation Society to agitate for emancipation financed from the sale of public lands. The slaveholders whose cooperation was essential in this program, however, either ignored or scorned the idea of compensation. Most abolitionists also rejected the program because compensation implicitly recognized the right of property in man and thereby undermined the moral position of the entire antislavery movement. The compensation proposals, nevertheless, received a respectful hearing in most of the
religious press. In private, at least one abolitionist opponent of compensation acknowledged that clerical interest in any plan to end, and not just to geographically confine, slavery was "a great stride for old conservatives."\textsuperscript{49}

A final political issue producing increased antislavery commitment among northern churchmen was the proposal by southern militants to reopen the slave trade with Africa. Although never endorsed by most southerners, the growing frequency in the late 1850s of suggestions for a revival of the international slave trade alarmed northerners. Abolitionists attempted to capitalize upon the general repugnance toward the well-known cruelties of the capture and shipment of Africans to American plantations. Abolitionist churchmen offered resolutions against the slave trade's resumption at meetings of various denominations and benevolent societies. Conservatives suppressed such motions as inappropriate but could not stop many religious periodical from editorializing against the slave trade. Having located a sensitive spot in the northern conscience, abolitionists asked what abuse of the foreign slave trade was not common to the perfectly legal domestic interstate trade. Abolitionists also pointed out that slave-trading and slaveholding were but two "necessary parts of one gigantic system of crime."\textsuperscript{50}

Church-oriented abolitionists argued against a distinction between these practices and for disciplinary actions against both. Although this argument was too extreme for most
church leaders, the slave trade debate increased northern willingness to publicly acknowledge the evils connected to slavery.

The turbulent events of the 1850s had a significant impact on the posture of the northern churches toward slavery. Although some denominations were affected less than others, there was a general increase in the willingness of clergymen to speak and act against slavery. This trend also had important repercussions on the political behavior of the northern churches. By the middle of the decade, the anti-slavery parties began attracting growing numbers of northern churchmen. As a result of this trend, demands became louder that antislavery politicians take a more principled stand against slavery. While not completely satisfied with the standards and motivation of all of the newly converted antislavery churchmen, abolitionists frequently cooperated with these movements in order to guide them to higher moral grounds.51

IV

The greatest casualty of the divisive political issues of the 1850s was the Whig party. No longer able to satisfy either northern or southern militants, the Whig party did poorly in the 1852 election and finally disintegrated in the turmoil accompanying the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The demise of the Whig party produced a period of intense competition for
the allegiance of the evangelical voters who had supported that party. The importance of religion and other ethnocultural factors in the politics of the mid-1850s is attested to by the temporary success of nativism as a campaign issue. The Kansas-Nebraska issue, however, strengthened the popularity of anti-extensionism among northerners. In 1854, the Free Soilers merged with other antislavery factions to create the Republican party. The new party attracted a broad range of voters including many concerned more with economic development and freedom from competition with Black labor than with ending slavery. The presence of these large conservative and racist elements disturbed abolitionists and troubled relations between Republicans and antislavery groups. It is important to examine the interaction of the new party with the northern churches in order to discover the effect Republican politicking had on antislavery developments in the nation's religious institutions.

One method by which the new party encouraged antislavery sentiments among northern churchmen was the moral connotations many Republicans attached to antislavery issues. The Republican coalition represented a wide spectrum of viewpoints, but abhorrence to slavery was the party's most distinguishable characteristic. The famed "Radical" Republicans only differed in degree from most other party spokesmen in acknowledging the immorality and inhumanity of slavery. Republicans advocated nonextensionism not just as a
means to confine slavery, but as an unquestionably constitutional program to hasten the ultimate extinction of the institution. The Democrats favored "popular sovereignty," which allowed territorial referendums to decide the question of slavery's expansion. In reply, Republicans extolled the ethical superiority of an absolute ban on slavery's growth, thus affixing an unequivocal stigma on the system. Aware of the racial biases of most northerners, the Republican platform emphasized the ways slavery restriction would serve the interests of free labor. While seldom challenging the pervasive racial prejudice, Republican rhetoric nevertheless was superior to the demagogy practiced by northern Democrats. In the late 1850s, when economic antislavery arguments seemed on the rise, abolitionist churchmen would rush to assist radical and moderate Republicans in preserving the morally grounded character of the party's stand on slavery.53

In addition to agitating political issues in a moral context, a number of Republicans actively worked for antislavery reform in the northern churches. Like the Free Soilers, the Republican party avoided commenting officially upon ecclesiastical affairs in its platform. Most Republican leaders were not conspicuous advocates for denominational action against slaveholding. There were some significant exceptions, particularly among Republicans who had been active in earlier third-party ventures. Midwestern
Republican Congressmen Joshua R. Giddings and George M. Julian attended Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions. Massachusetts Republican Senator Henry Wilson addressed an annual meeting of the Church Anti-Slavery Society. Gamaliel Bailey's *National Era* gave invaluable publicity to the activities of religious antislavery movements often shut out of the denominational presses. Ohio Republican Senator Salmon P. Chase declared that the political toleration for slavery would end as soon as

...each Christian man and every Christian Church [resolved] to stand up in the sacred majesty of a solemn testimony against slavery; to free themselves from all connection with the evil and utter a calm, deliberate voice to the world.  

Several of these men also participated in campaigns for stronger antislavery disciplines in their own denominations. Giddings, the most prominent of these Republicans, however, drifted from orthodoxy into perfectionist extremes and embarrassed his co-workers. While most leaders of the new party concentrated on purely secular affairs, a few Republicans believed that the antislavery cause could be aided by gaining the assistance of religious institutions.

While some Republicans attempted to link political and religious antislavery reform, the Radical Abolitionist party was committed to working for both goals. The Radical Abolitionists endorsed the religious position of the old Liberty League concerning "the duty of Christians to hold no church
relations that involve religious fellowship or ecclesiastic

tical connection with slaveholders.” On political ques-
tions, the Radical Abolitionists campaigned for immediate
federal action to abolish slavery in the states and for the
repeal of all racially discriminatory legislation. The
Radical Abolitionist party suffered from serious disagree-
ments among its adherents over the precise political func-
tion of their organization. A few of its leaders, including
William Goodell, contended that the Radical Abolitionist
program was the only one antislavery men could support without compromise with sin. Gerrit Smith, the chief financial
backer of the Radical Abolitionists and its presidential
candidate in 1856 and 1860, viewed his party as an agita-
tional vehicle to prod Republican politicians and to
strengthen northern antislavery opinion. Smith candidly
acknowledged that the Republicans were the biggest bene-
ficiary of Radical Abolitionist activities. Caught be-
tween the pull of principle and expediency, the small
party's rank and file balloted in an erratic fashion. An
amazing proportion of Radical Abolitionists informed the pub-
lic that they either voted for their own party while hoping
for a Republican victory or voted for the Republicans while
proclaiming the superiority of their own party's platform
and candidates.

Regardless of differing opinions on their party's role,
Radical Abolitionists agreed about the moral deficiencies of
the Republicans. Radical Abolitionists argued that voting must be governed by Christian principles not by political calculation. The Republican program of antiextensionism particularly offended Radical Abolitionists. While Republicans conceded that the Constitution tolerated slavery where it already existed, Goodell declared the Bible did not allow northerners "to recognize any such States' rights as the sovereign right to make merchandize of men's souls." Radical Abolitionists protested that condoning slavery's existence even temporarily conflicted with the religious obligation not to sanction sinful practices. Goodell contended that "success in a good cause" depended upon "the consciousness of moral power," which the Republicans lacked because "they have substituted the issue of mere 'non-extension' for that of 'abolition.'" Radical Abolitionists also berated Republicans for equivocating on other moral reform measures such as prohibition legislation out of fear of offending German and Irish immigrants. While holding out hope for a few Republican leaders such as Giddings, Radical Abolitionists warned that the North would not remain loyal indefinitely to "the tactics of timeserving politicians."

Republicans occasionally responded to Radical Abolitionist criticism. Republican advocates sometimes accused the Smith-Goodell faction of "moral dilettantism" in refusing to "come down from their perch on platforms which
embraced all the moralities, to work on one which only said to slavery 'not another foot of territory.'"62 Old-time abolitionists among the Republicans, however, were more sensitive to the Radical's accusations of compromise. Gamaliel Bailey's National Era protested that "a political party is not a church nor a philanthropic association" and therefore could neither define slaveholding as a sin nor justify unconstitutional measures merely to satisfy the dictates of individual consciences.63 The New York Tribune replied to Radical Abolitionist attacks with a warning that the small party aided the Democrats by dividing the ranks of antislavery voters.64 Such cautions, however, did not stop an increasing number of churchmen from echoing Radical Abolitionist criticism of Republicanism's low ethical tone.

Church-oriented abolitionist groups also tried to influence the Republicans to take a higher moral stand toward slavery. The various interdenominational Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions of the 1850s customarily passed resolutions upon slavery-related political questions. These gatherings expressed opposition to the Fugitive Slave Law, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Dred Scott Decision, and the proposed resumption of the slave trade. The Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions also stated disappointment that first the Free Soilers and then the Republicans stressed other than moral arguments against slavery. These interdenominational meetings especially warned Republicans "against the
adoption of compromising platforms, and the nomination of candidates whose only recommendation is their 'availability.' Giddings, a Republican radical, attended one Christian Anti-Slavery Convention and encouraged the churchmen to bring pressure upon the temporizers in his party. The more cautious Chase also applauded these meetings, but privately advised clergymen "not to go too far" by insisting the Republicans violate the Constitution "in order to satisfy the demands of the moral principle." Despite the Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions' criticism of the Republicans, few delegates at the meetings announced their readiness to defect to another political party.

Founded in the turbulent late 1850s, the Church Anti-Slavery Society also protested the low moral tone of northern politics. Like the Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions, the new society condemned the pro-slavery and racially discriminatory policies practiced by all levels of government. The Cheever brothers had favored the Republicans in the 1856 presidential election, but soon after converted to Radical Abolitionism. Many other members of the society, however, supported the more moderate antislavery party. As a result of this division of political sympathies, the Church Anti-Slavery Society endorsed no candidates or parties. Nevertheless, the Cheevers continued to attack the cautious tone most antislavery ministers adopted "out of fear of damaging the miserable cause of a most purely selfish and
unprincipled republican party." When the Civil War began, the Church Anti-Slavery Society overcame its internal divisions and became an important political lobby for a federal emancipation program.

Church-oriented abolitionists also acted individually to encourage antislavery politicians not to compromise the ultimate goals of emancipation and racial equality. Republican leaders received considerable correspondence from the abolitionists counselling about the moral obligations of the slavery question. Sermons and religious newspaper articles discussed the duty of voting for antislavery candidates. Church-oriented abolitionists loudly protested against the introduction of nativism into politics. While often fervently anti-Catholic, these abolitionists believed that the new issue distracted attention from the more pressing matter of slavery. Abolitionist churchmen who were aligned with the Republicans rallied behind those party leaders perceived to be most strongly antislavery. Giddings and Julian were the usual favorites of abolitionists pursuing this tactic. After tireless courting, Chase also attracted the backing of several prominent abolitionist ministers in his unsuccessful attempt to win the 1860 Republican presidential nomination.

Garrisonians also agitated for more attention to the ethical considerations of the political question of slavery. The American Anti-Slavery Society continued to denounce the
Union for giving moral aid and comfort to slavery. The Garrisonians criticized the constitutional position of the Radical Abolitionists and dismissed that party's political efforts as hopelessly ineffectual. The Garrisonians, however, joined church-oriented abolitionists in chastising the Republicans for their timidity on racial topics and for the compromising nature of the antiextensionist program. Unlike the Radical Abolitionists, most Garrisonians tempered criticism of the Republicans with sympathy for that party's electoral cause. Although Stephen and Abby Foster and Parker Pillsbury pronounced the Republicans as morally deficient as the Democrats, most Garrisonians regarded the new party as a step in the right direction. In private correspondence, the Garrisonians established cordial relations with many Republican leaders and encouraged them to take more forthright stands against slavery. While most Garrisonian leaders still abstained from voting, their lobbying of the Republicans nevertheless helped to elevate the moral tone of antislavery politics.

Like the Garrisonians, abolitionist and more moderate antislavery churchmen had difficulty in deciding upon which political party to support in the late 1850s. The Radical Abolitionist party offered an undiluted antislavery program but not the slightest realistic hope for electoral success.
The alternative, the Republicans, had made few concessions to the abolitionist agitation for a stronger stand on the moral questions of emancipation and racial equality. In their platforms and presidential nominations, the Republicans evinced greater concern for assuaging conservative rather than abolitionist worries. Nevertheless, antiextensionism's indisputable censure of slavery appeased many troubled northern consciences. In addition, the number of Republican leaders acknowledging the inherently evil nature of slavery encouraged antislavery churchmen to believe that that party would grow in the right direction. The prospect of electing a Republican president, at least, attested to how far the North had advanced in support of antislavery politics.

Although losing in 1856, the Republican candidate John C. Fremont carried all but five Free States. Four years later, Republican Abraham Lincoln was elected president by a minority of the popular vote but with an outright majority in every free state except California, Oregon, and New Jersey. The Republicans accomplished this feat by combining the support of the old Free Soilers with that of northerners converted into antislavery voters during the 1850s. In 1856, the nativist issue temporarily confused the pattern of realignment. By 1860, however, the Republicans had captured the bulk of the northern evangelical religious groups who previously supported the moralistically-oriented Whigs.
This new coalition put an antislavery man into the White House.

The success of the Republicans was paralleled by the final collapse of the Radical Abolitionist party. By the late 1850s, the small party functioned primarily as a last refuge for political abolitionists unwilling to compromise antislavery principles in the interest of electoral expediency. This moralistic approach to politics, however, had a declining appeal even among the religious groups most committed to abolitionism. In 1856, the Radical Abolitionist ticket received a few thousand votes, at most. When Gerrit Smith began advocating a "Religion of Reason" in 1860, the Radical Abolitionist party fell apart. Rather than support a man of suspect religious orthodoxy, many Radical Abolitionists, including William Goodell, sat out the election. Only a few die-hards like Frederick Douglass, Lewis Tappan, and the Cheever brothers cast votes for Smith. Although a failure at the polls, the Radical Abolitionist party had kept an undiluted abolitionist program alive in the political debates until the beginning of the Civil War. When that conflict commenced, long time Radical Abolitionists would be among the leading agitators for emancipation.

Except for the small number committed to the Radical Abolitionists, the bulk of church-oriented abolitionists supported the Republicans. Even most leaders of the
comeouter denominations and the Free Will Baptists and the Scottish Presbyterian sects, who preached that religious principle must govern a Christian's voting, endorsed the Republican's limited antislavery position. Frequently these groups conceded that they were "discouraged with the diluted notions of the anti-slavery-for-white-men-party." Nevertheless, most abolitionist churchmen believed that they could elevate the Republican program by cooperating with the advanced antislavery element of the party. Events in the 1850s convinced many in the antislavery sects that the Democrats must be driven from control of the federal government at all costs. While the comeouter denomination's press praised much of the Radical Abolitionist program, they were repelled by Gerrit Smith's heterodox views on the Bible and church organization. All of these considerations led the majority of church-oriented abolitionists to believe that they faithfully served the antislavery cause by helping to elect Republicans. The editor of a Free Presbyterian journal aptly expressed that sentiment:

All great enterprises, especially those which are moral in their character and aim, reach success through a slow and painful process....The election of Lincoln we well know is not the equivalent to the abolition of slavery, but it will be a long step toward that result.

The Republicans received the support of a much wider range of northern churchmen than just those belonging to the strongly abolitionist sects. Former Free Soilers enrolled
en masse in the new party. Congregationalist Henry Ward Beecher took leave of his Brooklyn church to stump for Fremont. New School Presbyterian Albert Barnes gave the opening prayer at the 1856 Republican National Convention. In 1860, the Congregationalist Independent acted like a political newspaper in endorsing Lincoln because he stood for "impartial justice and universal liberty in the Federal territories." In addition, the Republicans attracted many first-time antislavery voters from among influential churchmen. Often, but not exclusively, former Whigs, these men were alarmed by the growing power of slavery in national affairs. The Republicans were least successful among the liturgical or ritualist denominations, which preferred that politicians shun moralism in politics. Among the staid Episcopalians, however, at least a few ministers preached against the slave power. While many other factors also contributed to the Republican victory, the growing willingness of northern churchmen to act against slavery played a major role in placing Lincoln in the White House.

VI

The church-oriented antislavery movement of the 1840s and 1850s cannot be considered as isolated from the political events of those decades. The men who broke with the Garrisonians and founded the Liberty party believed the abolitionist campaigns in the political and religious arenas
to be linked inseparably. When the Liberty party disintegrated in the late 1840s, the Liberty League—Radical Abolitionist faction kept up the policy of pursuing both goals. Except for a relatively small handful, however, even abolitionists committed to extreme measures to separate the churches from slavery preferred a more pragmatic approach in politics. The parties that pursued this limited antislavery political program, the Free Soilers and the Republicans, did not ignore the churches' attitude toward slavery. Some leading Republicans even participated in the abolitionist campaign to expel slaveholders from the religious bodies. More importantly, Free Soil and Republican arguments for antitensionism encouraged northerners to view slavery as a morally unacceptable institution.

The close connection between the political and ecclesiastical antislavery movements would have two important repercussions. As the events of the 1840s and 1850s made many Free State churchmen into antislavery voters, these northerners also took stronger stands against slavery in their religious organizations. At the same time, whether on the side of the Radical Abolitionists or the Republicans, the northern churches took an active role in demanding that the government treat slavery as a moral problem. When the Civil War began, these same churchmen would redouble their pressure until the religious bodies finally acknowledged the sinfulness of slaveholding and the Republican
administration agreed to make emancipation the goal of the North's military effort. Appropriately, the political and religious antislavery campaigns would not end until the Thirteenth Amendment had once and for all abolished slavery.
ENDNOTES


2Sewell, Ballots for Freedom, pp. 6-15; Kraditor, Means and Ends, pp. 119-120, 255-56; Stewart, Holy Warriors, pp. 81-83; Dillon, The Abolitionists, 121.

3Sewell, Ballots for Freedom, pp. 20-23.


5Kraditor, Means and Ends, pp. 119-122, 158-160, 165-166; Stewart, Holy Warriors, pp. 107-08; Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, pp. 269-70; Sewall, Ballots for Freedom, pp. 43-44.


10. Emancipator, 10 February 1842; also Weekly Chronotype, 25 March 1847; Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, pp. 488-89.


Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, pp. 571-72; Political Abolitionist, 10 September 1857; Radical Abolitionist, 2 (January 1857): 56; Edward Van Horn to Gamaliel Bailey, 13 December 1848, in National Era, 25 January 1849.


Quoted in Blue, Free Soilers, p. 298.


28 Charles G. Finney to Gerrit Smith, 13 September 1852, Robert S. Fletcher Collection (Oberlin College Archives); also Western Citizen, 28 December 1847; Blue, Free Soilers, pp. 248-49; Sewell, Ballots for Freedom, p. 160.

29 Free Presbyterian, 7 September 1853; True Wesleyan, 4 October 1851; The Wesleyan, 7 April 1853; Christian Contributor, 16 August 1848, 13 and 20 September 1848; Christian Reformer, 28 July 1847; American Jubilee, 1 (October 1854): 48; Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, p. 543; Formisano, Michigan, pp. 150-51.

30 North Star, 21 July 1848; National Era, 17 August 1848, 2 November 1848; Congregationalist, 23 January 1852, 1 October 1852; Joseph P. Thompson, Duties of the Christian Citizen (New York: S. W. Benedict, 1848), p. 23; Freewill Baptist Anti-Slavery Society, Seventh Annual Report...1853


41 Quoted in Rietveld, "Moral Issue of Slavery," p. 43.


William Goodell to T. B. McCormick, 3 September, A.A.S. Papers; also Zion's Herald, 14 January 1857; Liberator, 4 September 1857, 9 October 1857; Political Abolitionist, 26 March 1851; Lewis Tappan to F. J. LeMoyne, 8 February 1849, Carter G. Woodson Collection (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress); Lewis Tappan to George L. Weed, 23 January 1857, L. Tappan Papers; William Goodell to Gerrit Smith, 26 August 1857, A.A.S. Papers; Dillon, The Abolitionists, pp. 230-31; Perkal, "William Goodell," pp. 289-90.

American Baptist, 12 July 1859; also National Era, 25 August 1859; Independent, 10 February 1859; Douglass's Monthly, 3 (November 1860): 355.

Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform in the Mid-Nineteenth Century America (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), pp. 205-06; Dunham, Northern Clergy, pp. 35-36, 60; Conrad J. Engelder, "The Churches and Slavery: A Study of the Attitudes Toward Slavery of the Major Protestant Denominations" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1964), pp. 84, 156-59. The ways heightened antislavery sentiment affected the internal affairs of the religious denominations will be examined in Chapter Eight.
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56 *Radical Abolitionist*, 1 (December 1855): 36; also (May 1858): 76-77. The church-oriented activities of the Radical Abolitionist party will be examined in Chapter Eight.


58 The *Wesleyan*, 11 March 1856; *American Baptist*, 3 July 1856, 23 October 1856; Samuel Aaron, *His Life, Sermons, Correspondence, Etc.* (Norristown, Pennsylvania: M. R. Wills, 1890), p. 195; William G. Kephart to Gerrit Smith,
15 August 1855, in Radical Abolitionist, (November 1855): 27; Lewis Tappan to Frederick Douglass, 27 November 1856, L. Tappan Papers; Sewell, Ballots for Freedom, p. 338; Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, pp. 334-36; McPherson, Struggle for Equality, pp. 19-22; Foner, Free Soil, p. 303.

Radical Abolitionist, 3(August 1857): 2; also American Jubilee, 1(March 1854): 14, 1(September 1854): 37, 2(June 1855): 11; William Goodell to Joseph Plumb, 23 August 1856, A.A.S. Papers.

American Jubilee, 1(March 1854): 6; also Radical Abolitionist, 3(August 1857): 1-2; Political Abolitionist, 24 September 1857.

American Jubilee, 2(June 1855): 11; also Radical Abolitionist, 3(January 1858): 40; William Goodell to William B. Palmer, 20 October 1858, William Goodell to Gerrit Smith, 28 and 30 June 1858, 23 September 1858, A.A.S. Papers; Daniel Worth to George W. Julian, Giddings-Julian Papers; Stewart, Joshua Giddings, pp. 255-56.


20 May 1858.


Resolution of the Northwestern Christian Anti-Slavery Convention quoted in Oberlin Evangelist, 9 November 1859, also Ohio State Christian Anti-Slavery Convention, Proceedings (Columbus, Ohio: n.p., 1859), pp. 10-11, 16-18, 21-24; Christian Anti-Slavery Convention, Minutes...1850 (Cincinnati: Ben Franklin Book and Job Rooms, 1850), 13-14.

Salmon P. Chase to James Monroe, 15 October 1859, James Monroe Papers (Oberlin College Library); also Ohio State Christian Anti-Slavery Convention, Proceedings, pp. 10-11; Dillon, The Abolitionists, pp. 199-202.


71 Sewell, Ballots for Freedom, pp. 361-64, emphasizes just the opposite tendencies in the Republican campaign of 1860.

72 National Era, 24 July 1856, 11 December 1856; Principia, 29 September 1860, 6 and 27 October 1860, 3 November 1860; American Baptist, 2 October 1860; Radical Abolitionist, 2 (March 1857): 66; James Monroe, Oberlin Thursday Lectures, Addresses and Essays (Oberlin, Ohio: Edward J. Goodrich, 1897), pp. 148-49; Foner, Free Soil,
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CHAPTER EIGHT

ABOLITIONISM AND THE ADVANCE OF RELIGIOUS ANTI SLAVERY PRACTICES, 1845-1860

The highly publicized sectional divisions of several large religious denominations caused many contemporaries and most historians to overestimate the antislavery reputation of the northern church after 1845. With the exception of a few small sects, the northern denominations continued policies that condoned the system of slavery. For example, neither the northern Baptists and Methodists nor the New School Presbyterians took effective action to expel the small slaveholding minorities that remained in their memberships after the schisms. These denominations, as well as the predominantly northern Congregationalists and Unitarians, maintained fraternal relations with southern Christians and admitted visiting slaveholders to their pulpits and communion tables. No major denomination acknowledged the abolitionists' central contention that slaveholding was an inherently sinful calling. As the abolitionists pointed out, without unqualified moral condemnation and disciplinary actions against slaveowning, even professedly antislavery
churches contributed to the continued public toleration of slavery.

In the decade and a half before the beginning of the Civil War, however, there was a significant growth of anti-slavery sentiment in many northern denominations. This antislavery progress in the churches is attributable to a combination of factors. Both the Garrisonian and anti-Garrisonian abolitionist societies kept up the propaganda campaign of the 1830s. Some abolitionists also continued to lobby in person at the councils of the denominations. In addition, abolitionists employed three important new tactics to influence religious institutions in the 1840s and 1850s: the creation of comeouter sects; the agitation of benevolent institutions; and the use of interdenominational antislavery conventions and societies. Finally, the sectionally divisive events of these years both created more antislavery feeling in the North and encouraged political leaders to cooperate with church-oriented abolitionist efforts. As a result of these forces, many northern denominations strengthened their antislavery testimony during the years from 1845 to 1860.

I

An infrequently acknowledged contributor to the church antislavery campaign in the 1840s and 1850s was the Garrisonian American Anti-Slavery Society. Beginning with
Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond in the 1930s, historians minimized the effectiveness of the Garrisonians in the overall antislavery cause. More recent studies rehabilitated the Garrisonians' historical reputation but concentrated mainly on the group's political activities.¹ Such findings, however, overlook considerable evidence that the Garrisonians gave valuable assistance to the antislavery movement in the churches.

In their writings and speeches, the Garrisonians expressed concern about the moral respectability that the churches gave to slavery. The Garrisonians never abandoned the original American Anti-Slavery Society position that slaveowning was a sin and that the churches condoned sin through fellowship with slaveholders. The Garrisonians criticized the northern churches for cowering before the commercial interests and racial prejudices of their parishioners on slavery-related questions. Garrisonian rhetoric, however, expressed greater hostility to the slavery-tolerating clergy and less hope for the churches' redemption than the statements of other abolitionist groups. Two Garrisonians, Parker Pillsbury and Stephen S. Foster, became notorious even in antislavery circles for haranguing the clergy as "a brother-hood of thieves" and the churches as "the palladium of the foulest iniquity ever perpetrated in the sight of heaven."² Another Garrison, Henry C. Wright, Jr., renounced the divine inspiration of the Bible
because of its pro-slavery passages. Because the churches sanctioned slavery, Garrisonian societies resolved that the American denominations were not authentic Christian bodies and that abolition required "nothing less than a Reformation of the Religion...of the Country."³

The Garrisonians employed a variety of old and new tactics to attempt to remake the American church along antislavery principles. The AASS utilized time-honored methods of moral suasion to awaken the church-going public to slavery's evil nature. In their literature and speeches, Garrisonians tried to convince northerners that there was no moral or Christian alternative to immediate emancipation. Garrisonian newspapers, annual reports, and travelling lecturers exposed the ways the northern religious bodies supported slavery. AASS spokesmen applauded clergymen and politicians who interjected moral considerations into the public debates over slavery. The Garrisonians also lobbied foreign churchmen and denominations to send antislavery remonstrances to American Christians.⁴

Garrisonians also participated in several of the church-oriented antislavery efforts developed in the 1840s and 1850s. The Garrisonian presses published literature calculated to undermine the confidence of the religious public in the benevolent societies. AASS members also played a limited role in the Christian Anti-Slavery Convention movement. While critical of the nonfellowship and
political practices of most of the antislavery comeouter sects, the Garrisonians established very friendly relations with one of these bodies, the Progressive Friends. The chief obstacle to greater Garrisonian cooperation with these new antislavery endeavors stemmed from the same quarrels that broke up the original AASS. The principal leaders of these new church-oriented abolitionist activities had been seceders from the AASS in 1840. In the ensuing decades, the Garrisonians continued to accuse their ex-colleagues of sectarian bigotry and adulterated antislavery principles. A Liberator columnist charged the anti-Garrisonian abolitionists with endeavoring "to propitiate a time-serving clergy and [to] shield from exposure a corrupt church...."5 Personal animosities combined with ideological disagreements to limit the Garrisonian contribution to the antislavery efforts of the comeouter denominations, the Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions, and the reform movements in the benevolent societies. Nevertheless, many younger antislavery churchmen including Henry Ward Beecher and George B. Cheever cooperated with the Garrisonians without joining the AASS.

The most distinctive approach Garrisonians took toward the churches was their own variant of comeouterism. In the 1830s and 1840s, many prominent Garrisonians separated from all religious connections as a protest against the churches' complicity with slavery. Such radical action harmonized with the anticlerical and perfectionistic religious views
of many Garrisonians. AASS leaders also advocated "coming-out" because it was a dramatic means to highlight the abolitionist charge that slavery had corrupted the churches. In 1853, the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society advised abolitionists to turn from the churches "with loathing and abhorrence—to waste no time in attempts to bring it to repentance...."6 Despite annual resolutions of this nature by the AASS and its auxiliaries, the Garrisonians never adopted comeouterism as a membership test. Although the public associated comeouterism along with disunionism as essential parts of the AASS program, the majority of Garrisonians continued to work for abolitionism from inside conventional religious and political institutions.7

Several factors handicapped Garrisonian antislavery efforts toward the churches. In the 1840s and 1850s, Garrisonians played leading roles in several conventions challenging the infallibility of the Bible, the spiritual authority of the clergy, and the sanctity of the Sabbath. Many Garrisonians espoused the doctrine of nonresistance that orthodox Christians regarded as a perversion of Christ's gospel of peace. Because of the AASS's freedom from religious tests, the society attracted conspicuously large numbers of Unitarians, spiritualists, feminists, communitarians, and other theological and social radicals.8 The connection of the Garrisonians with these assorted heterodox movements plus the virulence of Garrisonian
criticism of the churches encouraged outsiders to presume that the AASS was an "infidel" organization. Typical accounts in the religious press of a Garrisonian convention noted little besides "the vulgarisms, and infidel slang, the coarse ribaldry, the kicks and curses aimed at the ministry, Church, Bible, etc."

The Garrisonians had little success in rebutting these charges. AASS spokesmen denied that their society, in its collective capacity, was responsible for the religious views of individual members. Wendell Phillips contended that the AASS never had attacked the Bible or the churches per se, only the use of their authority to shield slavery. While a few Garrisonians defended their theological views, most heeded William Lloyd Garrison's warning that the infidelity accusation was "an old device to divert attention from the true issue" of slavery and abolitionism. Whether deserved or undeserved, the suspicion of heterodoxy damaged Garrisonian influence on the churches. Northern churchmen hesitated to denounce slavery for fear of being accused of other Garrisonian tendencies. As already noted, religiously orthodox abolitionists only rarely cooperated with Garrisonians in church-oriented antislavery projects. Nevertheless, as a survey of the slavery controversy inside the various northern denominations will show, the Garrisonians significantly contributed to abolitionist advances in several denominations.
II

The contribution of anti-Garrisonian abolitionists to antislavery developments in the northern churches also needs to be highlighted. After the 1840 schism in the old AASS, many anti-Garrisonian abolitionists concentrated on political antislavery projects, but few completely abandoned church-oriented activities. Anti-Garrisonian abolitionists both employed traditional approaches and developed new tactics to promote antislavery action by religious bodies. Aided by the growth of political antislavery sentiment in the 1850s, the anti-Garrisonian faction played a leading role in strengthening the northern church's testimony against slavery.

After the 1840 schism in the old AASS, the church-oriented activities of the anti-Garrisonian abolitionists simultaneously expanded and decentralized. Comeouter sects, interdenominational conventions, and antislavery benevolent societies arose during the 1840s and 1850s as new means to agitate for antislavery church reform. The national organization of the anti-Garrisonian abolitionists, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, temporarily provided coordination to the varied new projects. By the 1850s, however, the proliferation of sectarian and benevolent abolitionist institutions and the competition from antislavery politics fatally diverted energy and finances away from the
AFASS. The merger of AFASS supporters and Liberty Leaguers into the American Abolition Society failed to reverse the debilitating trend because most antislavery churchmen disagreed with the new group's controversial political views. Periodic Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions attempted to compensate for the absence of an effective central organization for church-oriented abolitionists. In the late 1850s, the Church Anti-Slavery Society united a number of anti-Garrisonian veterans and younger reformers to spread uncompromised abolitionist principles in northern denominations. By sharing membership in these church-oriented abolitionist associations, antislavery leaders in the various denominations pledged themselves to a common program for the churches.\textsuperscript{11}

Like the Garrisonians, supporters of the AFASS and its successors remained committed to the religious-based principles of the original AASS. Church-oriented abolitionist societies branded slaveholding as sinful and as ground for expulsion from Christian institutions. The anti-Garrisonian organizations also condemned the racial prejudice and pro-colonization sentiment prevalent in northern religious circles. Like the founders of the AASS, the anti-Garrisonians believed that the churches' conversion to abolitionism was an essential prerequisite for ultimate emancipation. The unceasing agitation of these abolitionist churchmen for non-fellowship with slaveholders challenged the claim of
conservatives and antislavery moderates that the northern denominations had done everything possible to assist the bondsmen. 12

Religious questions played an important role in preventing a reconciliation of church-oriented abolitionists with the Garrisonians. Despite agreement on basic principles concerning the sinfulness of slavery and nonfellowship with slaveholders, anti-Garrisonians shared the suspicions of other orthodox Northerners about the theological orthodoxy of Garrisonian leaders. In the late 1830s, such misgivings had contributed to the schism in the abolitionist movement. Spokesmen for the AFASS and its successors, including Lewis Tappan, William Goodell, Frederick Douglass, and George and Henry Cheever, charged leading Garrisonians with infidelity. Because most Garrisonian seceders from slavery-tolerating denominations made no new church affiliations, anti-Garrisonians questioned the motivation of that type of comeouterism. Anti-Garrisonians complained that the AASS's prevailing hostility to the churches and clergy made that group incapable of recognizing and encouraging authentic antislavery action by the religious community. Lewis Tappan and several other evangelical abolitionists also betrayed a prejudice against all forms of liberal theology in their attacks on Garrisonians as "Unitarians, Universalists, [and] Nothingarians" who acted "under the guise of a profession of Christianity." 13 The failure of several attempts
to reunite abolitionist factions in a common "Anti-Slavery League" was due as much to religious antagonisms as to quarrels over political programs.¹⁴

One important motive for the anti-Garrisonians' attack on the religious views associated with the post-1840 AASS was their desire to emphasize the orthodox character of church-oriented abolitionism. Anti-Garrisonians denied that heterodoxy was an inherent accompaniment of abolitionism. Several prominent anti-Garrisonians, including James G. Birney, Gerrit Smith, and Elizur Wright, also received both private and public chastisements from their compatriots for espousing unconventional theological opinions. For years, William Jay lobbied the AFASS for more explicit declarations of abolitionism's commitment to Christian principles. Jay's desire for "a rallying point for Christian abolitionists," eventually was fulfilled by the Church Anti-Slavery Society's restriction of membership to practicing Christians.¹⁵

A survey of the northern religious press discloses that antislavery editors usually acknowledged the anti-Garrisonians' religious soundness, while more conservative editors often described all abolitionists as infidels.¹⁶

The church-oriented abolitionist organizations attempted to keep up the moral suasion tactics of the old AASS. After the mid-1840s, however, the AFASS and its successors lacked the financial resources to carry out an extensive propaganda campaign. Although all of these
societies printed occasional pamphlets and circulars, only the Radical Abolitionists had their own periodical, and that journal concentrated more on political than religious topics. The secretaries of the AFASS and the Church Anti-Slavery Society, however, wrote hundreds of articles advocating abolitionism in the churches for publication in sympathetic newspapers. As a supplement to these efforts, the anti-Garrisonians recruited prominent church figures to draft antislavery pamphlets and petitions that would attract widespread notice because of their authorship. To challenge the antislavery pretensions of the Free state clergy, church-oriented abolitionists exposed the pro-slavery views of distinguished northern ministers. In a similar fashion, the anti-Garrisonians publicized the persecution abolitionist churchmen suffered on account of their antislavery principles. Church-oriented abolitionists encouraged foreign Christians to support the American antislavery movement by addressing remonstrances to the United States denominations and by denying fellowship to visiting slaveholders. Through these labors, the anti-Garrisonian organizations brought great pressure on the churches to reform their slavery-tolerating practices.17

The anti-Garrisonians utilized several the new church-oriented abolitionist tactics in the 1840s and 1850s. While the anti-Garrisonians disagreed among themselves about the wisdom of secession from slavery-tolerating churches, the
founders of most of the come-outer sects affiliated with the AFASS. By creating their own denominations, these anti-Garrisonian groups threatened the major churches with a loss of members and influence. Only effective disciplinary action against slaveholders could prevent further loss. The anti-Garrisonians used interdenominational conventions to supply coordination to their decentralized movement in the churches. These well-publicized gatherings also served as excellent propaganda tools to get unadulterated religious antislavery principles before the northern public. In a similar fashion, the anti-Garrisonians' pressure on the voluntary benevolent organizations had a larger goal than just reforming those societies' policies toward slavery. The abolitionist agitation of the benevolent institutions provoked debate over slavery in even normally conservative northern religious circles due to the broad interdenominational interest in those bodies. Through these varied church-oriented abolitionist projects, the anti-Garrisonians helped make the moral climate in many northern churches less inhospitable to slavery.

III

In addition to the abolitionists' efforts, certain events in the 1840s and 1850s helped to advance the anti-slavery cause in the northern churches. Before the mid-1840s, political leaders avoided divisive slavery-related
questions. After that time, the growing influence of anti-slavery sentiment in politics encouraged a parallel trend in the churches. An increasing number of antislavery politicians attacked slavery's moral deficiencies. Some politicians even counselled the religious denominations to take action against slaveholding members. The turmoil of the 1850s also prompted clergymen to enter into the political debate usually on the antislavery side. The violent and aggressive acts of the "slave power" helped convince many northern churchmen of the truth of abolitionist assertions about the depraved nature of slavery.

Several ecclesiastical developments in the late 1840s and 1850s aided the antislavery campaign in the churches. With a few exceptions, British denominations actively encouraged their American counterparts to adopt stringent non-fellowship policies against slaveholders. Also in these years, many northern churchmen became deeply involved in other religiously inspired reform movements such as temperance, sabbatarianism, and anti-Catholicism. Like abolitionism, these drives utilized both moral suasion and political means to exact correct behavior. The abolitionist drive benefitted from the increased willingness of church members to apply moral standards to secular affairs.18

Of surprisingly little help to church-oriented abolitionism was the temporary upsurge of revivalism in the late 1850s. Compared with the great evangelical wave of the
1830s, revivalists in this later religious awakening displayed little enthusiasm for controversial causes like abolitionism. Both Garrisonians and anti-Garrisonians complained that revival prayer meetings often banned discussion of the potentially disruptive slavery question. A few abolitionists even challenged the sincerity of this revival because of the prominence of slaveholders and pro-slavery northerners among its new converts. Nevertheless, many abolitionists reported that they participated effectively in this revival without having to compromise their abolitionist doctrines.19

Under the pressure of the abolitionists' agitation and the shifting political and religious trends, important developments took place in the northern churches' relations with slavery. Due to differences in theology, polity, and demographic make-up, these changes affected each denomination to a different degree. During the 1840s and 1850s, the traditionally antislavery Quaker, Freewill Baptist, and Scottish Presbyterian sects overcame most of their previous hesitation about participating aggressively in the abolitionist movement. In contrast, liturgical and immigrant sects and denominations with a large proportion of southern members continued to reject all abolitionist entreaties. Although their membership became more outspokenly antislavery, the theologically liberal Unitarian and Universalist churches refused to abandon their official neutrality.
toward slavery. Antislavery sentiment also advanced in the major evangelical denominations, especially among the New School Presbyterians, Methodist Episcopalians, and Methodist Protestants where southern members seceded from those churches in the years immediately before 1861. Despite such antislavery progress, most northern churches still stopped short of adopting abolitionist principles and practices before the Civil War.

IV

Although the Quakers, Freewill Baptists, and Scottish Presbyterian sects had disciplines barring slaveholding members, abolitionists criticized those denominations for not taking an active part in the antislavery campaign of the 1830s. This situation had improved significantly by 1860. Most Freewill Baptists abandoned their traditional Democratic political allegiances to back first Free Soilers and then Republicans. The Freewill Baptists also undertook a mission to aid fugitive slaves in Canada, and actively propagandized against religious fellowship with slaveholders. Despite their strict sectarianism, the Scottish Presbyterians participated in the interdenominational Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions and the Church Anti-Slavery Society. Except for the Reformed Presbyterians who shunned politics, the Scottish immigrant sects also became committed antislavery voters.20
The abolitionists, however, continued to complain about the Quakers. In the mid-1850s, the Free Produce Movement died out among the Quakers. Few Quakers spoke out against pro-slavery government policies such as the Fugitive Slave Law. Persistent abolitionist criticism and two antislavery comeouter movements, however, finally emboldened many Friends to live up to their antislavery heritage. By the late 1850s, most Quaker Yearly Meetings ceased disciplining members who became active abolitionists. Although Friends lamented the sectional turmoil, they voted more and more with the antislavery parties, especially the Republicans. Such actions helped to heal the schism among Indiana Orthodox Friends over the antislavery question and quieted abolitionist charges against Quaker acquiescence in the great national sin.21

The Quakers, Freewill Baptists, and Scottish Presbyterians, therefore, were among the few sects that most nearly met the abolitionists' requirements for unadulterated antislavery churches. Not only did those denominations deny membership to slaveholders, but they actively aided the abolition movement. To this small number of churches could be added the various comeouter sects and several small German immigrant denominations such as the Evangelical Association and the United Brethren in Christ. The Garrisonians still occasionally criticized the political practices and the negligent enforcement of the nonfellowship disciplines in
some of these denominations. Nevertheless, in the late 1850s, the Garrisonians acknowledged the existence of "exceptional cases" among the generally pro-slavery character of American denominations. With less hesitation than the Garrisonians, church-oriented abolitionists accredited the small bodies as genuine antislavery denominations and cited them as examples to other northern Christians. While several major denominations made significant advances in opposing slavery before 1860, this handful of thoroughly abolitionized sects was the high point of the antislavery movement in the churches before the Civil War.  

V

The abolitionists were least successful in their dealings with the ritualist and the old-line Calvinist denominations. Among the ritualist sects, the Roman Catholic Church had become the nation's largest denomination by the 1850s due to the massive Irish and German immigration to America. In spite of their numbers, almost no Catholic priest or layman joined the abolition movement. These recent immigrants resented the nativist and anti-Catholic sentiments that many abolitionists shared with other Protestants of the period. Catholics developed close ties to the Democrats who generally opposed antislavery as well as nativism in politics. Historically the Catholic church had tolerated slavery, and the American hierarchy's studied silence on the question
implied no change in that policy. Catholics expelled only heretics from communion and therefore erected no barriers against slaveholding-members. Abolitionists protested that the Catholics' official neutrality toward slavery actually lent moral sanction to the institution. The abolitionists made a particularly strong attack on the refusal of a visiting British priest, Father Theobald Mathew, to add antislavery remarks to his well-received temperance lectures. The Catholic press defended Mathew by repeating the charges about abolitionist infidelism, in particular labelling Garrison "not only a traitor to God, but also to his country." Fired by such remarks, Catholics gave little support to abolitionism.

The Protestant Episcopal Church was another ritualist sect that attempted to remain neutral on the slavery question. Alarmed at the schisms plaguing other denominations, one Episcopal editor warned his fellow churchmen "that to intermeddle with it [slavery] would not only seriously endanger the safety of our Union, but produce a division in our own Church...." A few northern Episcopalians, including Bishop John Henry Hopkins of Vermont, made no pretense at conservatism but publicly defended slavery from the Scriptures. Black Episcopalians encountered discrimination in all departments of their church.

William Jay and son John were the leading abolitionists inside the Episcopal denomination. After years of
agitation, the Jays succeeded in obtaining more nearly equal treatment for Blacks in northern church councils. A few northern Episcopalians also publicly supported the antislavery cause in the benevolent societies and in politics. Abolitionists praised these exceptional Episcopalians but ranked that church among the most faithful friend of slaveholders. The Episcopal Church remained united until the start of the Civil War and even then the northern branch refrained from criticizing slavery or slaveowners.25

Several denominations of non-English speaking Protestant immigrants also displayed extreme conservatism on the slavery question. Like other liturgical churches, the Lutheran General Synod deemed the question of slavery inappropriate for consideration by an ecclesiastical body. Most Lutheran leaders were strong supporters of the American Colonization Society and the Democratic party. Although Calvinist rather than ritualist, the German and Dutch Reformed Churches also avoided taking any stand on slavery beyond endorsing colonization. Abolitionists criticized these denominations for indifference to slavery's evils, and sent special lecturers and literature to disseminate an antislavery gospel among the German-speaking churchmen. Several Lutheran synods in New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania seceded to protest their denomination's slavery policies. Although a growing number of Lutheran and German and Dutch Reformed Church members adopted abolitionist principles in the 1840s
and 1850s, none of these denominations ever officially con-
demned slavery or advocated abolition.26

Another denomination which remained immune to aboli-
tionist entreaties was the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Founded in Tennessee by Presbyterians who desired greater freedom to conduct revivals, Cumberland Presbyterianism had spread across the upper South and into Pennsylvania and the Midwest by 1850. This northern presence in the predomi-
nantly southern denomination eventually produced conflict over slavery among church members. In 1851, antislavery memorials forced the General Assembly of the Cumberland Church to break its silence on the question by a resolution declaring that slavery "should not be regarded as a bar to communion."27 This ruling stimulated antislavery activity by some northern church members. In 1855, the Indiana Presbytery of the Cumberland Church suspended Reverend T. B. McCormick for disobeying its instructions not to preach against slavery. At least four Cumberland Presbyterian ministers in Indiana seceded to show support for McCormick and to protest their churches pro-slavery position. McCormick went on to become a leading western spokesman for the Radical Abolitionist party and the Church Anti-Slavery Society. Despite the agitation of these abolitionists, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church took no action against slavery before the Civil War.28
The largest Protestant denomination that successfully resisted abolitionist demands was the Old School Presbyterian Church. After the 1837 schism in the Presbyterian denomination, the Old School branch inherited most southern church members as well as the least evangelical northerners. Although the church still professed allegiance to the anti-slavery Presbyterian discipline of 1818, Old School leaders interpreted this statement as favoring gradualism and colonization rather than nonfellowship or abolitionism. In 1845, the Old School Presbyterian General Assembly acknowledged the evil of slavery but declared that the Bible did not sanction excluding slaveholders from the church. Old School spokesmen described their church as a genuine anti-slavery body opposed to both pro-slavery and abolitionist fanaticism. By such a conservative policy, the Old School claimed that the church could win the slaveholder's confidence and persuade him to manumit his slaves. In the meantime, the Old School Presbyterian Church would act as a bulwark against disunionists in both sections who threatened the nation's remaining political and spiritual bonds.

The abolitionist agitation of the 1840s and 1850s had little effect on the Old School Presbyterians. After the General Assembly's action on slavery in 1845, several dozen antislavery ministers deserted the Old School for the Free Presbyterian Church. Old School leaders, however, successfully minimized this defection by charging the comeouter
sect with fanaticism on the nonfellowship and the political antislavery questions. The Old School's defenders denied that the Free Presbyterians could help the slaves by slandering the slaveholders' Christian character with blanket condemnations. The interdenominational antislavery projects attracted few Old School Presbyterian participants because that denomination's press skillfully dismissed those activities as comeouter ventures. Whether in their own or interdenominational mission and publication boards, the Old School Presbyterians contended that the adoption of abolitionist principles would impede benevolent work. Northern Old School ministers' denunciations of political preaching did not prevent them from defending obedience to the Fugitive Slave Law. On the whole, Old School Presbyterians voted with the Democrats down to and through the Civil War. Despite the abolitionists' efforts, the frequency of antislavery pronouncements by Old School judicatories actually declined in the two decades preceding 1860.30

The Old School Presbyterians' inflexible conservatism on the subject of slavery caused them to become progressively more isolated from other denominations. Among the reasons why the New School Presbyterians failed to open a correspondence with the Old School General Assembly was the fear of appearing to sanction the latter's slavery policies. Several Congregationalist state associations discontinued relations with the Old School on account of the
Presbyterians' slaveowning members. When other Congrega- 
tionalist groups persisted in demanding that the Presby-
terians expel all slaveholders, the Old School dissolved its 
remaining connections with New England Congregationalism. 
Antislavery remonstrances from British Presbyterian churches 
to the Old School caused a similar cessation of heretofore 
cordial exchanges. Such acts of ostracism, however, pro-
duced no antislavery concessions from the Old School Pres-
byterians. 31

Having dealt with outside critics, conservative Old 
School Presbyterians moved to suppress the remaining anti-
slavery voices inside their church in the 1850s. The chief 
antislavery stronghold in the Old School church was in 
southern Ohio and Indiana, where competition from the Free 
Presbyterian Church was greatest. To minimize secessions, 
the Old School Synod of Cincinnati continued to petition the 
General Assemblies for enforcement of the denomination's 
1818 discipline against slaveholders. The two leading anti-
slavery spokesmen in this synod, the Reverends Erasmus D. 
McMasters and Thomas E. Thomas, were both professors at the 
New Albany Theological School in Indiana. Conservatives led 
by two staunch colonizationists and Democrats, the Reverend 
Nathan L. Rice and wealthy layman Cyrus P. McCormick, at-
tacked New Albany as an abolitionist institution. In 1859, 
Rice got the General Assembly to assume control over New 
Albany, and to accept a $100,000 endowment from McCormick
to move the seminary to Chicago. The Old School selected Rice as president of the new Northwestern Theology Seminary and purged MacMasters and Thomas from the faculty. Thomas denounced the action as a "triumph of ambition, injustice, dishonesty, and pro-slaverism" and concluded that "Our church is sold to the South." The antislavery minority vowed to fight on, but its influence had been effectively curtailed. With abolitionism completely overpowered in the denomination, thousands of slaveholders remained unmolested in the Old School Presbyterian Church until the Civil War.

VI

While conservatism on the slavery question held sway in the ritualist and the old-line Calvinist denominations in the 1840s and 1850s, abolitionists made significant advances among the more evangelical sects. The pressure of the new antislavery church tactics had greatest effect in these denominations. Abolitionists helped many moderate antislavery churchmen overcome doubts about disciplining recalcitrant slaveholders in their denominations. More importantly, abolitionist agitation and the darkening political climate of the 1850s encouraged increasing numbers of northern religious leaders to voice their disapproval of slavery. By the late 1850s, the growth of aggressive antislavery sentiment in the churches produced three more sectional schisms. While still not adopting all the fine points of abolitionist
doctrine, northern New School Presbyterians, Methodist Episcopalians, and Methodist Protestants in practice stopped communing with slaveholders before the start of the Civil War.

As noted in the discussion of the 1837 Presbyterian schism, the New School church did not become a strongly antislavery denomination after its separation from the Old School faction. Several thousand southern Presbyterians sided with the more evangelistic New School after the church division. Among these southerners were not only slaveholders, but ministers such as Frederick A. Ross, who unapologetically defended slavery from the Bible. Also in the New School were many northern conservatives including Samuel H. Cox, an apostate abolitionist, and Sydney E. Morse, editor of the influential New York Observer. These men were proponents of colonization and opponents of all new church legislation on the subject of slavery. Also in New School ranks were numerous antislavery moderates who acknowledged the great evil of slavery but objected to the abolitionists' sweeping condemnation of all slaveholders as sinners. After abolitionists repeatedly failed to convince the New School General Assembly to enforce the denomination's 1818 discipline against slaveowning, a minor secession to the Free Presbyterian Church occurred in 1846. Many other abolitionists, however, remained inside the New School and labored to convince antislavery moderates to take more decisive
action against slaveholders. Abolitionists utilized both traditional and new church-oriented antislavery tactics to reform the New School Presbyterian Church. Garrisonian propaganda complained that the New School enforced rules against "promiscuous dancing" but not against the more serious matter of slaveholding. The AFASS publicized antislavery activities by New School Presbyterians and encouraged those churchmen to adopt uncompromised nonfellowship grounds. The anti-Garrisonians accused conservatives in the New School of regarding "the unity of the Church as the supreme good." New School Presbyterians in New York and the Midwest played important roles in the Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions and worried denominational leaders by endorsing comeouterism as a last resort for antislavery reformers. The abolitionist agitation of the benevolent institutions deeply divided the New School Presbyterians. Conservatives supported the societies' officers while moderates frequently allied with abolitionists in working for less extreme antislavery goals than nonfellowship with slaveholders. Likewise on political antislavery issues, northern New School spokesmen expressed quite different opinions. The editors of the New York Observer and Philadelphia Christian Observer counselled obedience to the Fugitive Slave Law, while many New England and western synods and presbyteries endorsed the "Higher Law" doctrine. After the Kansas-Nebraska Act, however,
northern New School members became notably more active in both political and religious antislavery campaigns.\textsuperscript{36}

The greatest single factor that motivated the New School Presbyterians to adopt stronger antislavery grounds was the mounting numbers of pro-abolition churchmen quitting the denomination. Perhaps two dozen abolitionist ministers came-out from the New School and joined the Free Presbyterian church in the late 1840s. Several additional western presbyteries threatened secession unless the General Assembly soon acted against slavery. The New School also lost dozens of western ministers and churches to the Congregationalists. The New School's continued failure to discipline slaveholders heavily contributed to the collapse of the Plan of Union with the Congregationalists. New School conservatives bitterly protested that Congregationalists raised the nonfellowship question in the American Home Missionary Society and in the correspondence between the two sects "in order to break in on the integrity and order of sister denominations."\textsuperscript{37} Abolitionist observers predicted that the New School would expel slaveholders only when faced with the potential of a greater loss of northern church members.

The combination of all these forces resulted in northern New School Presbyterians taking stronger antislavery action in the 1850s. While still unwilling to declare slaveholding a sin \textit{per se}, the General Assembly of 1853
condemned Christians who became slaveowners for reasons other than "unavoidable necessity."\textsuperscript{38} In the mid-1850s, antislavery moderates in the New School pressured southern presbyteries to report the numbers of slaveholders among their members. Southerners either ignored these requests or replied that they believed slaveowning to be morally unobjectionable. Antislavery moderates in the denomination such as Albert Barnes responded indignantly to this last claim, and the 1857 General Assembly censured the Presbytery of Lexington for pro-slavery pronouncements. In reaction to this ruling, southern New School Presbyterians seceded and formed the United Synod of the Presbyterian Church with seven presbyteries and fifteen thousand communicants. The new denomination defended slavery so aggressively that the Old School Presbyterians rejected the idea of a merger.\textsuperscript{39}

While a \textit{de facto} separation between the New School and the slaveholders took place in the late 1850s, abolitionists nevertheless denied that the denomination had assumed a sufficiently antislavery position. Abolitionists observed that New School leaders denied that their church had adopted a stronger antislavery discipline and blamed the schism on pro-slavery extremists. In 1859, the Free Presbyterians offered to merge with the New School if the latter would adopt an explicit rule barring all slaveholders from membership. The New School, however, rejected these terms, and
its General Assembly said nothing more on the subject of slavery until 1862. Both Garrisonian and church-oriented abolitionists agreed that the New School Presbyterians still hindered the progress of emancipation by refusing to rebuke slaveholders as sinners.40

The suspension of a slaveholding bishop had caused the 1844 schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Despite the secession of sixteen southern annual conferences, the Methodists took no stronger steps toward nonfellowship with slaveowners. In fact, northern Methodists repudiated the 1844 General Conference's Plan of Separation and began competing with the newly formed Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for the allegiance of denomination members in the border states. Conservative northern Methodists endeavored to convince abolitionists that the denomination was sufficiently antislavery, while simultaneously assuring southerners that slaveholders would not be expelled from the church. Conservatives voiced approval for colonization as a gradual and safe means of emancipation. This faction also denied that slaveholding was inherently sinful and opposed rules disciplining slaveowners without regard to extenuating circumstances. A leading conservative spokesman, Abel Stevens, contended that this qualified toleration of slaveholding by the church acted not for slavery's "perpetuation, but for its amelioration and final 'extirpation.'"41 This conservative position succeeded in holding thousands of southerners in the
Methodist Episcopal Church after 1844.

Conservative Methodist policies were considerably less satisfactory to the abolitionists, who continued to agitate for disciplinary action against slaveholders. Garrisonian and church-oriented abolitionist propagandists charged that since the northern Methodist denomination still had slaveholding members "its difference from the Southern Church will be one of degree only, and not of kind." The secession of thousands of Methodist abolitionists into the Wesleyan Methodist Connection had forced northern church leaders to take the antislavery actions that provoked the departure of far greater numbers of southerners in 1844. After 1844, however, there was no great additional outflow of Methodists to the Wesleyans. Nevertheless, antislavery Methodists of the 1850s angered church conservatives by praising the integrity and zeal of the original abolitionist seceders. Only modest numbers of Methodists participated in the movement to reform the benevolent societies and in the Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions. Gilbert Haven, a prominent younger clergyman of the denomination, however, was a leading member of the Church Anti-Slavery Society. On political questions, antislavery Methodists forced open the columns of their denomination's official periodicals by debating the moral aspects of slavery-related issues.

This outside abolitionist agitation slowly revived dormant antislavery sentiment inside the denomination.
The Bishops and important conservative Methodist ministers, such as George Peck, Nathan Bangs, and Abel Stevens, managed to suppress antislavery dissent at the 1848 and 1852 General Conferences. Abolitionists and antislavery Methodists, however, destroyed this enforced calm by exposes of the prevalence of slaveholding in Border conferences and of the official harassment of antislavery ministers in those districts. A new generation of Methodist abolitionists, including Haven, William Hosmer, and Hiram Mattison, argued the case for nonfellowship with slaveowners to a growing number of supporters. In the late 1850s, both conservative and antislavery Methodist factions held conventions and founded societies to fight for control of the denomination.44

Antislavery Methodists divided over how to expel slaveholders without violating the church's constitution. A highly perfectionist element desired a change in the denomination's General Rules, while more cautious reformers believed that a reinterpretation of the discipline on slavery would be sufficient. As a result of lack of cooperation between these two antislavery groups, motions to rewrite the General Rules were defeated in the 1856 and 1860 General Conferences. Despite the quarrels among antislavery reformers, the 1860 Conference amended the discipline to declare the "holding of human beings to be used as chattels" as grounds for nonfellowship. Conservatives, however, destroyed the impact of this action by convincing the General
Conference to acknowledge the above ruling as merely "advisory." The action of the 1860 General Conference had wide-reaching consequences. A number of dissatisfied New York abolitionists seceded and formed the "Free Methodist Church" with a perfectionistic discipline including a rule against fellowship with slaveholders. Eastern conservatives launched their own periodical, The Methodist, to convince southerners that the new Discipline on slavery was unconstitutional and unenforceable. Despite these reassurances, most southern Methodists defected to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, during the summer and fall of 1860. Garrisonians and church-oriented abolitionists closely followed the antislavery movement in the Methodist denomination and agreed with the conservatives that no clearly stated bar to slaveholding members had been erected. William Goodell observed that the Methodists' "purification" from slavery would not be a "finality" until the "man stealers" were formally excommunicated. Although still falling short of abolitionist standards, the Methodist Episcopal Church like New School Presbyterians effectively had ended fellowship with slaveowners before the Civil War.

In the 1850s, an even more dramatic antislavery advance occurred in a sister church of the Methodist Episcopalians, the Methodist Protestant Church. In the 1850s, the Methodist Protestants numbered more than 100,000 members, divided
nearly equally between the Free and Slave states. During the 1830s and 1840s, the Methodist Protestants suppressed the abolition issue by denying the inherent sinfulness of slaveholding and by leaving the matter to the jurisdiction of regional Annual Conferences. The AFASS, however, noted growing antislavery sentiment among northern Methodist Protestants. The American Missionary Association supported several antislavery preachers of this denomination. The defection of several strongly antislavery ministers and congregations to the Wesleyan Methodist Connection alarmed northern Methodist Protestants and fired a debate over slavery in the denomination.48

In the 1850s, the foremost grievance of northern Methodist Protestants was the censorship of antislavery materials from denominational publications and from the official periodical, The Methodist Protestant. To placate antislavery churchmen's feelings, the General Conference of 1844 authorized a second denominational newspaper and publishing society to be controlled by northerners. The convention of northern annual conferences called to discuss the establishment of the new newspaper, however, decided that only a complete break with the slaveholding portion of the sect would suffice. Northerners boycotted the Methodist Protestant General Conference of 1858 and instead sent an ultimatum demanding that the church bar all "voluntary" slaveholders from membership. When the General Conference took no action
toward reconciliation, every Free state conference except New Jersey "suspended" its communion with southern Methodist Protestants "until the evil of slavery...be removed." Through this schism, northern Methodist Protestants joined northern New School Presbyterians and Methodist Episcopalians in severing ties with slaveholding church members. Although none of these churches had accepted the abolitionist moral position on slaveholding's sinfulness, their actions testified to the growing acceptance of moderate anti-slavery sentiments during the 1850s.

VII

Falling somewhere between the churches making no progress toward nonfellowship with slaveholders and those achieving at least the form of the abolitionist position in the years between 1845 and 1860 was a diverse group of denominations including the Unitarians, Universalists, Disciples of Christ, Congregationalists, and Baptists. Theologically, revivalism had moderated the traditional Calvinism of many Congregationalists and Baptists, while the Unitarians, Universalists, and Disciples of Christ were expressions of various "liberal" religious trends. The Universalists and Disciples of Christ had nationwide memberships, the Congregationalists and Unitarians were predominantly New Englanders, and the Baptists had divided along sectional lines in 1845. One similarity among all these
denominations, however, was the lack of a strong central church government to enforce a common discipline over all members. This characteristic proved the major obstacle to the acceptance by these churches of abolitionist demands for the nonfellowship with slaveowners. While antislavery sentiment grew in the denominations during the 1840s and 1850s, none satisfied abolitionists that it had satisfactorily ceased all practices sanctioning slavery.

The evaluation of the Unitarian position toward slavery in the years from 1845 to 1860 is complicated by the denomination's traditional deference to the rights of individual conscience. Slaveholders may have joined the few southern Unitarian congregations, but the denomination had no power to discipline members. Unitarians opposed abolitionism's condemnation of all slaveholders as sinners because such a view made no allowance for the circumstances of particular cases. Most Unitarians stayed aloof from reform societies because they believed those bodies diminished the moral influence of the individual reformer. Unitarians argued that the most effective way to eradicate a social evil such as slavery was by "a long process of organic growth" during which rational persuasion could be brought to bear upon the misguided.

As a result of such individualism, Unitarians differed widely in their relations with the abolitionist movement. Some of the most important Garrisonians, including Samuel
J. May, Francis Jackson, Lydia Maria Child, and Samuel May, Jr., were Unitarians. The Reverends Theodore Parker, James Freeman Clarke, and Monecure Daniel Conway never joined abolitionist societies but actively participated in the anti-slavery campaign. William Ellery Channing, the most influential Unitarian minister of his day, publicly attacked slavery but deemed the abolitionists' sweeping condemnations of slaveholders as counterproductive. Other leading Unitarian clergymen such as Francis Parkman and Ezra Stiles Gannett of Boston and Orville Dewey of New York City, remained colonizationists despite criticism from the abolitionists.51

The new church-oriented abolitionist tactics developed in the 1840s and 1850s had little impact on the Unitarians. Prejudice against the liberal denomination ran high among abolitionists of orthodox religious views. The sponsors of the interdenominational antislavery conventions and societies seldom invited Unitarians to their gatherings. Unitarians were not welcome in the benevolent societies and so were unaffected by the antislavery reform movements in those organizations. Political issues like the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act stimulated debates among Unitarians, but the denomination refused to take any official position on the questions.52

Ironically Garrisonian abolitionists became the leading antislavery agitators inside the Unitarian denomination in the 1840s and 1850s. While on a speaking tour in England,
Samuel May, Jr. successfully convinced British Unitarians to remonstrate against the toleration shown slavery by their American counterparts. Samuel May, Jr., his older cousin Samuel J. May, and other Garrisonians failed in several attempts to get the American Unitarian Association, the denomination's missionary and publication society, to condemn slavery. Garrisonians championed Theodore Parker, whose extreme free thinking and antislavery views had alienated many of his fellow Unitarians. Under this influence, a majority of Unitarian ministers in their individual capacity signed antislavery petitions. In 1857, delegates from Unitarian societies in Kentucky and Missouri seceded when the Conference of Western Unitarian Churches resolved that slavery was "evil and wrong" and "doomed by God to pass away" through the influence of Christian teachings. The denomination, however, still refused to endorse the antislavery movement, and abolitionist criticism of conservative Unitarians continued until the Civil War.

As with the Unitarians, the Universalists' distinctive theology shaped antislavery developments in the denomination. Universalism denied the Calvinist principle of eternal damnation and believed in the salvation of all mankind. At their first national convention in 1790, the Universalists called for the abolition of slavery but rejected machinery to enforce such ordinances on the church membership. Universalist ministers and conventions frequently made
antislavery statements in the 1840s. Over three hundred Universalists signed a public declaration in 1846 condemning slavery as "an insurmountable barrier to the promulgation of the great truth of Universal Brotherhood...."\textsuperscript{54}

Despite their antislavery professions, Universalists rejected abolitionist demands for the indiscriminate denunciation and proscription of the small number of slaveholders in their denomination. Universalists instead expressed hope that temperate appeals to the slaveowners' consciences would produce practical remedies beneficial to both slaves and masters. Universalists were strongly Democratic in their political views perhaps in part because of that party's greater tolerance on questions related to religion. Orthodox abolitionists regarded Universalists as near-infidels and refused to associate with them in antislavery projects. Garrisonians were more tolerant, but almost no Universalists became active abolitionists. Abolitionists acknowledged that many Universalists spoke against slavery, but attacked the denomination's lack of action to hasten emancipation. As one abolitionist observed, there was no effective barrier to Universalists becoming slaveholders before the Civil War except "their pecuniary ability to purchase slaves."\textsuperscript{55}

A final theologically "liberal" denomination that rejected abolitionist entreaties for antislavery action was the Disciples of Christ or the "Christian Church." Founded
in the early nineteenth century by seceders from a number of denominations, the Disciples came together on a doctrine of Bible literalism that rejected all human-made divisions of Christians. While often thought of as a predominantly Border state denomination, actually more than one-half of the Disciples' pre-Civil War congregations were in the North. The church's policies toward slavery, especially as expressed by its leading spokesman Alexander Campbell, were pro-colonization and anti-abolitionism. While critical of the cruel practices accompanying slavery, Campbell could find no evidence in the Scriptures that slaveholding was inherently sinful and so opposed church discipline against masters. The Disciples' American Christian Missionary Society refused aid to any applicant with outspoken antislavery views.  

Abolitionists criticized the Disciples' position. Garrisonian Parker Pillsbury attacked Campbell's Biblical arguments as attempting "to establish the doctrine of the Divinity of American Slavery." Other antislavery writers charged that the Disciples' preference for colonization over abolitionism was based on considerations of expediency not morality. While the Disciples' heterodox reputation kept them aloof from church-oriented abolitionist projects, anti-slavery sentiment nevertheless grew inside the northwestern wing of the denomination in the 1850s. Pro-abolition Disciples launched their own newspaper and college and
eventually their own mission society. Despite the action of these radicals, the unity of Disciples remained essentially untouched not just by the turmoils of the 1850s but also by the Civil War that followed. The evangelically-inspired moral principles of abolitionism made only slight advances among the theologically liberal Unitarians, Universalists, and Disciples of Christ.

In the 1840s and 1850s, Congregationalism was almost exclusively a northern religion. Although numerous abolitionists belonged to the Congregationalist church, that denomination's antislavery reputation is exaggerated in most contemporary and historical accounts. Few Congregationalists openly defended slavery, but most also rejected the abolitionist program for the churches. In particular, non-abolitionist Congregationalists rejected the condemnation of all slaveholders as sinners preferring to acknowledge circumstances that could absolve an individual's guilt. Many churches and local associations of Congregationalists adopted rules against fellowship with slaveholders, but no authority existed to make such a policy binding on the whole church. Even moderate antislavery Congregationalists cooperated in benevolent projects and corresponded fraternally with denominations known to include slaveowners. Except for its abolitionist minority, Congregationalist antislavery sentiment before the Civil War usually expressed itself in support for such gradualist programs as colonization and
Quarrels between the Garrisonians and the New England Congregationalist ministry had helped divide the abolitionist movement in the 1830s. Events of the 1840s and 1850s produced no rapprochement between the American Anti-Slavery Society and that denomination. The Garrisonians harassed the Congregationalists for not disciplining the Reverends Nehemiah Adams and Nathan Lord for their notorious pro-slavery views. AASS spokesmen also criticized moderate antislavery Congregationalists, and particularly the editors of the influential Independent, for inflexibly defending the benevolent societies against evidence of slavery-tolerating practices. The Garrisonians accused even active abolitionists among the Congregationalists, such as George and Henry Cheever and the graduates of Oberlin College, of inconsistency for remaining in their denomination. Small wonder that most Congregationalists, regardless of their opinions about slavery, agreed that the Garrisonians were "Infidels ...of a most degraded class."\footnote{60}

Church-oriented abolitionists and antislavery politicians had more success than the Garrisonians in working among the Congregationalists. Congregationalists such as Lewis Tappan, Joshua Leavitt, Amos A. Phelps, and Jonathan Blanchard were important figures in the anti-Garrisonian American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and later religious abolitionist projects. The Congregationalists' only
losses to the comeouter sect movement were a few seceders to Union Churches in western New York. Abolitionist comeouters from the New School Presbyterians and other denominations, however, often joined the Congregationalists. In interdenominational abolitionist projects, Congregationalists were among the most active members of the Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions, and George and Henry Cheever were key figures in the Church Anti-Slavery Society. Political issues similarly aroused Congregationalist antislavery sentiments. The "Higher Law" position on the Fugitive Slave Law was popular among much of the Congregationalist ministry. The Kansas-Nebraska Act provoked Congregationalist state associations to pass resolutions "to sound an alarm to God's holy mountain against the extension of organized and systematized oppression." 61

The church-oriented abolitionists' campaigns to end the benevolent societies' toleration of slavery had mixed success in winning Congregationalist support. Moderate antislavery Congregationalists joined abolitionists in protesting the American Tract Society's resistance to publishing even the mildest reproofs of slavery. Congregationalist moderates, however, refused to support abolitionist-run religious publication bodies and founded their own organization to print less aggressive antislavery tracts. The question of the proper relations of the mission societies to slavery divided Congregationalists even more deeply. The
American Missionary Association's stand against fellowship with slaveholders attracted many Congregationalists as contributors and as missionaries. Moderate antislavery Congregationalists refused to break from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, but their antislavery protests helped to convince that society to drop its mission to slaveholding Indians. Congregationalists also successfully pressured the American Home Missionary Society to end aid to churches with slaveholding members. Although the missionary associations still fell short of abolitionist standards, the progress made by those bodies was in a significant measure due to growing antislavery sentiment among the Congregationalists.62

The abolitionists agitated hardest against the Congregationalists' fraternal relations with the New School and Old School Presbyterians who still numbered slaveholders among their members. The politically unsettling events of the 1840s and 1850s and the breakdown of cooperation in home missionary projects bolstered abolitionist demands that Congregationalists cut their ties with Presbyterians. To quiet dissension, Congregationalist state associations addressed remonstrances to the Presbyterians advising those denominations to discipline slaveholding members. For example, Connecticut Congregationalists resolved that Presbyterian inaction on slaveowning was "painful evidence of delinquency in respect to principles and sympathies that are essential to
the Christian integrity...." Presbyterians reacted in different ways to this campaign. In 1857, Old School Presbyterians ended formal communications with the Congregationalists. The same year, however, the New School Presbyterians took antislavery actions that caused a southern secession from the church but redeemed the denomination in most Congregationalists' estimation.

Despite these Congregationalist antislavery advances, most abolitionists remained dissatisfied with that denomination's overall position on slavery before the Civil War. Most Congregationalists still contributed to benevolent societies that refused to cast out the slaveholders. As agents of the Church Anti-Slavery Society discovered in the late 1850s, few Congregationalists would declare slaveholding invariably sinful and automatic grounds for excommunication. In fact, moderate antislavery spokesmen in the denomination, especially Leonard Bacon and Joseph Thompson of the Independent, harassed Congregationalist abolitionists such as George B. Cheever as extremists. Despite the Congregationalists' antislavery reputation, the denomination was not fully abolitionized before 1860.

The final and perhaps the most difficult denomination to evaluate for antislavery progress in the years 1845 to 1860 was the Baptist church. Because of the lack of strong unifying machinery among nineteenth century Baptists, contemporaries debated the thoroughness of the denomination's
schism in 1845. According to most northern Baptists, including a few veteran abolitionists such as Nathaniel Colver, their church had gone beyond all other major sects in cutting ties with slavery. Most abolitionists, including Garrisonians, anti-Garrisonians, and especially the comeouter American Baptist Free Mission Society, disagreed with this claim. In particular, the abolitionists complained that northern Baptist congregations and missionary and publication societies still maintained cordial relations with southern slaveholding Baptists. Because of these objections, abolitionists continued to lobby northern Baptists for antislavery reforms down to the Civil War.

Abolitionists applied their church-oriented tactics to the Baptist denomination. Although non-comeouter Baptist abolitionists remained active in the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, that organization endorsed the Free Mission Baptists. Despite the objections of Nathaniel Colver, the Chicago Christian Anti-Slavery Convention of 1851 certified the American Baptist Free Mission Society as the only genuine antislavery body in the denomination. All Baptist factions preferred their own sectarian missionary and Bible organizations to the interdenominational societies and so were little affected by the antislavery reform movements in those bodies. In the case of the American Tract Society, however, many New England Baptists sided with the antislavery groups that formed the breakaway American Tract
Abolitionists more effectively protested against the Baptists about the standing of slavery in the denomination's own missionary and publication societies. The abolitionists observed that since the secession of southerners in 1845 neither the American Baptist Missionary Union nor the American Baptist Home Missionary Society had erected any bar to slaveholding missionaries or contributors. Efforts by antislavery members of the missionary organizations to erect such explicit prohibitions had died out by the 1850s. The abolitionists also complained that southerners participated in the Baptist Bible societies and the American Baptist Publication Society long after the schism in the missionary associations. Abolitionists charged that these organizations printed no antislavery works and distributed no Bibles to slaves out of fear of offending slaveholding supporters. The American Baptist Free Mission Society added force to these criticisms by attempting to attract missionaries and contributors away from the established northern Baptist bodies.

These abolitionist efforts in the Baptist societies had mixed success. Conservative northern Baptists including Francis Wayland, Spencer Cone, and Daniel Sharp resisted every action that might prevent an eventual reunion with southerners. Although contributions from the slave states to the American Baptist Missionary Union tapered off, that
body remained on friendly terms with its southern counterpart. The American Baptist Home Mission Society withdrew almost completely from southern fields but stationed missionaries among the slaveholding Choctaw Indians until 1859. Southern Baptists founded their own Bible society in 1851 but remained in the American Baptist Publication Society until well after the Civil War. Although most northern Baptist benevolent operations greatly reduced their dealings with southerners in the late 1840s and the 1850s, abolitionists such as William Goodell concluded that "in reality" substantial fellowship with slaveholders continued in the denomination. 

Besides the behavior of the benevolent societies, the practices of Baptist congregations and local associations reveal that many northerners still retained some bonds of fellowship with slaveholders. After the Baptists divided in 1845, many northern Baptist associations passed strongly worded antislavery resolutions and ceased fraternizing with slaveowners. In the Midwest and in some eastern cities, however, many Baptist churches continued to welcome southerners to their pulpits and communion tables even during the Civil War. Some Baptist abolitionists considered these usages so objectionable that they seceded and formed their own churches and associations on uncompromising antislavery principles.
Because the denomination lacked a central authority to enforce uniform slavery policy, it is impossible to make sweeping conclusions about abolitionists' success or failure among the Baptists. Some northern Baptist had achieved complete nonfellowship with slaveholders. On account of their membership in congregations, associations, or benevolent societies that still fellowshipped with slaveholders, many other Baptists fell short of strict abolitionist standards. While the political issues of the 1850s helped make the northern Baptists more antislavery than in earlier years, the denomination's practices reveal that the church as a whole was not successfully abolitionized before the Civil War.

VIII

Although many northern churches made significant anti-slavery advances in the decade and a half before the Civil War, most still fell short of abolitionist standards. The amount of this antislavery progress differed from denomination to denomination. Only the historically antislavery denominations and the new comeouter sects enacted the entire abolitionist program by branding slaveowners as sinners and subjecting them to church discipline. Southern secessions from the New School Presbyterian, Methodist Episcopal, and Methodist Protestant churches effectively ended the fellowship of slaveholders, but those denominations still
refrained from formally endorsing abolitionism. Although
many northern Unitarians, Congregationalists, and Baptists
strengthened their antislavery testimony, all of those de-
nominations continued to fellowship with slaveowners. The
ritualist and old-line Calvinist denominations even refused
to acknowledge that slavery was a fitting subject for church
legislation. While northern churchmen had become more
vocally antislavery by 1860 than ever before, most denomina-
tion's practices still continued to tolerate slaveholding.

Garrisonian abolitionists had a small but important in-
fluence on antislavery developments in the northern churches
during the late 1840s and 1850s. The public's image of
Garrisonians as infidels handicapped the group's efforts
among orthodox churchmen. Opponents of abolitionism branded
Garrisonian criticism of the churches as the product of
irreligious, not antislavery, sentiment. The secession of
many AASS members from the churches to protest pro-slavery
policies only reinforced suspicions about the soundness of
Garrisonian religious views. Many Garrisonians, however,
remained members of religious bodies and contributed to
antislavery advances especially in the Hicksite Quaker and
Unitarian denominations. In addition, Garrisonians opened
their platforms and presses to non-Garrisonian churchmen
striving to obtain stronger antislavery action from their
denominations. Most importantly, the Garrisonians' exten-
sive propaganda operation aided church-oriented abolitionists
by spreading primarily moral antislavery arguments among northerners. By both direct and indirect means, therefore, the Garrisonians contributed to the northern church's growing antislavery activism in the years immediately preceding the Civil War.

The anti-Garrisonian abolitionists had even greater success than their rivals in provoking antislavery action by the churches. Church-oriented abolitionist propaganda resources were fewer than those of the Garrisonians but concentrated more upon developments in the religious community. Because the orthodoxy of most anti-Garrisonian leaders was beyond question, this faction had more success in gaining the cooperation of moderate antislavery church groups. Much of the anti-Garrisonians' accomplishments was due to the new church-oriented tactics devised in the 1840s and 1850s. The formation of pro-abolition come-inner sects influenced many denominations to take stronger antislavery stands in order to prevent further secessions. Interdenominational antislavery conventions and societies attracted invaluable publicity for an uncompromised abolitionist program for the churches. The antislavery reform movements in the voluntary benevolent societies enlisted the participation of antislavery moderates in a large number of denominations. Through these efforts, church-oriented abolitionists helped guide many northern churches toward stronger actions to repudiate all toleration of slavery.
Even the limited success of abolitionist tactics with the religious community revealed the declining effectiveness of church-oriented efforts toward ending slavery. As the testimony of northern churchmen against the immorality of slaveowning increased, the influence of such censures on southerners dwindled. While far more northerners than ever before denounced slaveholding as a sinful practice, increasing numbers of southern churchmen reacted by defending slavery as a divinely ordained institution. The abolitionist agitation had induced several northern denominations to discipline slaveholders, but southern members escaped this reproach by seceding and forming their own churches. Ironically the impact of the growing antislavery sentiment in the churches was felt more strongly in secular affairs. Abolitionist moral principles reinforced and gave direction to the antislavery political movement. When the Civil War began, abolitionized northern churches would play a leading role in eventually making emancipation the goal of the North's military effort.
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CHAPTER NINE

ABOLITIONISM AND THE CHURCHES DURING THE CIVIL WAR

The election of 1860 touched off the greatest crisis in the nation's history. For the first time, a candidate pledged to the containment of slavery was elected to the presidency. Although neither Abraham Lincoln nor the Republican party was abolitionist, eleven southern states chose secession and civil war rather than risk the consequences of an unfriendly federal government. The southerners' rebellion, however, placed slavery in extreme jeopardy. As the war to restore the Union dragged on, abolitionist proposals to punish the South and aid the military effort by ending slavery gained in popularity. Both the abolitionists and the churches took leading roles in pressuring the Republican administration to adopt emancipation as a war goal.

The Civil War also brought about the final showdown on the slavery question in the northern churches. The military conflict increased antislavery and anti-southern feelings among northern churchmen. Southern secession weakened the
ability of conservative religious leaders to resist abolitionism by warning of the threat that antislavery action posed to church and national harmony. Several hitherto only cautiously antislavery denominations now reformed their practices by prohibiting slaveholding and racial discrimination. The war also caused unprecedented participation by the churches in the nation's political debates. Conservatives, antislavery moderates, and abolitionists battled in religious councils over the churches' proper position in questions of support for the Union, emancipation for the slaves, and assistance for the freedman. With a few significant exceptions, northern religious bodies became active antislavery agencies by the war's end.

The coming of the Civil War also caused considerable alterations in abolitionist strategies. All abolitionist factions realized that southern secession made slavery pre-eminently a political question. In particular, the abolitionists recognized that the war gave them an unprecedented opportunity to press for the adoption of a federal emancipation policy. Even long-time pacifists and disunionists joined veteran political abolitionists in endorsing the war and in calling for decisive antislavery action by the federal government. When the Republican Congress and administration hesitated to take such a revolutionary step, both Garrisonian and church-oriented abolitionists attempted to embolden the politicians by producing evidence of the
northern public's support for emancipation.

The abolitionists' preoccupation with political questions during the war affected their behavior toward the churches. Support for a federal emancipation policy and aid to the freedmen rapidly replaced nonfellowship with slaveholders as the chief demands made upon northern religious institutions by the abolitionists. The bulk of Garrisonian commentary on religious affairs after 1860 shifted from criticism of weak antislavery church disciplines to complaints against denominations that endorsed the war without also advocating action against slavery. Church-oriented abolitionists remained convinced of the necessity for consistent antislavery religious practices, but converted their immediate goal to enlisting the churches' moral authority behind the political emancipation drive. Numerous abolitionists echoed William Goodell's description of the war as God's punishment for the toleration of slavery by "Churchianity" and called on religious leaders to endorse emancipation as a sign of their "repentance."¹

The secession of seven slave states during the winter of 1860-61 disturbed and divided northern church leaders. A few abolitionist churchmen welcomed disunion as a means of relieving the North of responsibility for the sin of slavery. All abolitionists, however, opposed any concessions to
the slaveholders by the federal government as the price of sectional harmony. Many conservative church leaders and editors blamed the abolitionist agitation for the calamities besetting the nation. These men endorsed the various plans of conciliation circulating during the secession crisis. But even as they worked to placate southern grievances, conservative northern churchmen announced "that while we offer concession, conciliation, compromise, we are determined that this Federal Union shall be preserved."  

When fighting began at Fort Sumter, most northern denominations gave an early and unqualified endorsement to a war to suppress the rebellion. Some strongly antislavery religious bodies also announced their hope that the war would bring an end to slavery. Most churches, however, complied with the qualms of their conservative element and proclaimed support just for military efforts to maintain the civil government and the Union. For example, the New School Presbyterian General Assembly of 1861 endorsed war against secession but recommended prayer as the proper cure for slavery. A few denominations even hesitated to make a pledge of loyalty to the northern cause. Their hesitancy causes them to deserve closer scrutiny. 

As befit a heavily Border state denomination, members of the Disciples of Christ disagreed among themselves about the Civil War. Several Disciples' leaders, including the influential Alexander Campbell, were committed pacifists and
refused to endorse or take up arms for either side. Many rank and file Disciples, nevertheless, sided with their section. For example, James A. Garfield resigned as principal of a Disciples' school to become a Union army officer, while one of Campbell's sons enlisted under the Confederate banner. In October 1861, the American Christian Missionary Society, the denomination's only national agency, refused to adopt a formal pro-Union resolution. Not until 1863 would the society officially declare its opposition to "the attempts of armed traitors to overthrow our government." Because of their quest for an undivided Christianity, Disciples only reluctantly abandoned their neutrality on sectional issues.

The beginning of hostilities produced great trauma among Old School Presbyterians, for the war caused the secession of southern members that the denomination had long avoided. No delegates from twenty-six southern presbyteries appeared at the Old School General Assembly of 1861. In this gathering, the Reverend Gardiner Spring, an antislavery moderate from New York, introduced a resolution "to acknowledge and declare our obligations to promote and perpetuate... the integrity of these United States...." Spring's motion sparked a lengthy debate in which Border state representatives and many northern conservatives denied the General Assembly's right to declare sentiments on political matters. Sixty-six out of two hundred and twenty-two delegates voted
against the passage of Spring's resolution. Throughout the military conflict, a strong minority of Old School Presbyterians continued to deny the authority of all the denomination's pronouncements on the war and slavery.  

Ritualist denominations also tried to avoid taking sides in the Civil War. Only the Roman Catholic Church, however, successfully preserved its neutrality on the question of preserving the Union. Lutherans postponed their General Synod's meeting from 1861 until 1862 to avoid recognizing the division of their denomination. The Synod, nevertheless, condemned secession and asked God to grant speedy victory to the northern armies. The Protestant Episcopal Church's General Convention also met without southern members for the first time in 1862. The Presiding Bishop, arch-conservative John Henry Hopkins of Vermont, opposed making any acknowledgment that secession or war had taken place. The Conference finally adopted a weak statement deploring the evil effect of secession upon the Church and the country, but containing no condemnation or reproach for the seceders. The hesitation of these denominations even to endorse the Union cause revealed that the conservatives in the northern churches retained the strength and determination to resist the abolitionist program.

The abolitionists closely monitored the reaction of the northern churches to secession and the advent of war. Frederick Douglass accused many prominent eastern clergymen
of preaching strongly pro-slavery sermons to reassure the wavering Border states that the North had not turned abolitionist. Church-oriented abolitionists described the secession of southern church members from the Old School Presbyterian and Episcopal churches as evidence of the failure of those denomination's traditional policies of appeasing slaveholders. Most of all, abolitionists complained that many larger denominations still hesitated to blame slavery for the great national calamity. Columnists in both the Liberator and the Principia charged that many northern churchmen had endorsed the war only to avoid falling behind the sentiment of their congregations.10

II

Abolitionists labored to expand northern support for the war into advocacy of the emancipation cause. The war nurtured anti-southern sentiment among northern churchmen, and most denominations needed little encouragement from the abolitionists to endorse action against slavery. Abolitionists labored to guide the newly antislavery churchmen clear of rival programs of gradualism, compensation, and colonization and toward immediate emancipation and recognition of racial equality. Although not all religious groups adopted the abolitionist program during the war, the churches exerted significant influence for the enactment of anti-slavery legislation.
When the Civil War broke out, the church-oriented abolitionist groups were among the very first to insist that the war to save the Union be used to eradicate slavery everywhere in the country. As early as the secession crisis, William Goodell had revived the suggestion originally espoused by John Quincy Adams that the federal government had the constitutional power to abolish slavery in time of war. The Church Anti-Slavery Society quickly endorsed this view, and resolved that the government possessed "in the case of rebellion or insurrection, the right to suppress rebellion and to abolish slavery, the cause of it." After a few months of fighting, other church-oriented abolitionist organizations including the American Missionary Association and the American Reform Tract and Book Society joined the call for the government to use its war powers to abolish slavery. The Garrisonians, at first, hesitated to disrupt the northern public's support for the war by advancing emancipation demands. By the summer of 1861, however, the American Anti-Slavery Society began its own agitation for government action against slavery.

Church-oriented abolitionists adopted a variety of tactics during the war to promote emancipation's acceptance by the northern public in general and by the religious community in particular. The Church Anti-Slavery Society called for a monthly prayer concert for the slaves in every northern congregation. George Cheever, William Goodell,
John G. Fee, and many other abolitionist ministers went on lecturing tours for emancipation. Cheever even offered to debate prominent ministers who still held doubts concerning the wisdom and necessity of immediate abolition. Church-oriented abolitionists also got their friends in foreign churches to address remonstrances to their American counterparts counselling the need for emancipation. American abolitionists wrote hundreds of public letters, tracts, and newspaper articles calling for church support for wartime emancipation. Antislavery groups utilized petition drives and interdenominational conventions to publicize the enlistment of large numbers of ministers and church members in the emancipation drive. The propaganda efforts of both Garrisonian and church-oriented abolitionists helped create considerable support for an uncompromising antislavery program among northern churchmen.\(^{13}\)

The churches that responded most promptly to the abolitionists' wartime emancipation campaign were the traditionally antislavery denominations and the comeouter sects. The periodicals and public meetings of these churches declared slavery to be the cause of the national calamity. The Reformed Presbyterians were typical of these militantly antislavery churchmen in resolving "that this war is the infliction of the just punishment of an offended God upon our country..." for its toleration of slavery.\(^{14}\) The sentiment of most of these denominations also coincided with the Free
Presbyterians' statement that "there will be no peace in this country, in either Church or state, until Slavery... shall be entirely and forever removed." With the exception of the pacifist Quakers, all of these denominations publicly argued that the war should continue until slavery ended. As early as the summer of 1861, these denominations began to bring pressure on Lincoln and the Republican Congress for a commitment to emancipation. With the exception of the pacifist Quakers, all of these denominations publicly argued that the war should continue until slavery ended. As early as the summer of 1861, these denominations began to bring pressure on Lincoln and the Republican Congress for a commitment to emancipation.

Beginning in 1862, other northern denominations also began endorsing wartime emancipation. In May 1862, the New School Presbyterian General Assembly blamed the rebellion on slavery and concluded that the war must bring about its destruction. The Methodist Episcopalians did not meet in General Conference until 1864, but earlier local conferences and official periodicals had announced the denomination's pro-emancipation bias. For example, one Detroit Conference acknowledged that "slavery is the real cause, and that liberty or slavery is the real issue of the contest." The Methodist Protestant General Convention of 1862 condemned secession and pronounced emancipation a suitable punishment for southerners. The American Baptist Missionary Union and most local Baptist associations endorsed emancipation as an essential war measure. The more cautious American Baptist Home Missionary Society waited until 1864 before announcing its "hearty assent to the policy of conquering disunion by uprooting slavery its cause." Even such spokesmen for the
conservative northeastern element of Congregationalism and Unitarianism as Leonard Bacon and Henry Bellows conceded that all southern prerogatives must be restored after the war save the right to hold property in man.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite these strong antislavery expressions, sizable anti-emancipation minorities existed in many northern denominations throughout the war. As late as the summer of 1862, church-oriented abolitionists complained that eastern Congregationalist periodicals contained no endorsement of emancipation. More seriously, several New School Presbyterian editors declared a national emancipation program unconstitutional. One of these men, The Reverend Amasa Converse finally moved his \textit{Christian Observer} from Philadelphia to Richmond, Virginia, to escape harassment by northern officials. The editors of \textit{The Methodist} of New York City supported a war against rebellion, but argued that so many slaveholders had remained loyal to the Union that the institution of slavery "cannot legally enter into controversy."\textsuperscript{20} Discontent with the growing antislavery consensus in their denominations even sparked small secessions in the Midwest from the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations during the war. These seceders protested that northern abolitionists as well as slaveholders shared blame for the nation's trouble. Wartime political disputes added to the quarrels in these denominations with the conservatives opposing their churches' encouragement of Republican
emancipation action. A few northern denominations hesitated or completely refused to endorse emancipation during the war. Still possessing a strong Border state element, the Old School Presbyterian church passed resolutions against the rebellion, but did not mention slavery. Only in 1864, did the Old School General Assembly finally resolve that the war had "taken away every motive for [slavery's] further toleration." The Disciples' American Christian Missionary Society showed even more deference to Border state sentiments and never went beyond acknowledging allegiance to the Union cause. Among the ritualist sects, only the Lutherans gave official approval to emancipation during the war and even then they qualified it with a suggestion to compensate slaveholders. Roman Catholics and Episcopalians clung to policies of ignoring slavery as a worldly rather than religious matter. Many northern Episcopalians, nevertheless, expressed embarrassment when Bishop John Henry Hopkins of Vermont continued to defend slavery until the war's end. Hoping to win back the loyalty of southern church members, these conservative denominations refused to sanction actions likely to alienate slaveholders.

III

The abolitionists attempted to use the northern churches' growing support for emancipation as part of their
propaganda campaign to lobby the federal government for forceful action against slavery. The abolitionists enlisted churchmen in wartime petition drives and interdenominational public meetings to demonstrate public backing for emancipation. At the wartime assemblies of most northern denominations, antislavery majorities passed resolutions calculated to impress on Republicans the moral case for ending slavery. Pro-abolition churchmen actively participated in wartime maneuvers within the Republican party. Many church-oriented abolitionists joined the unsuccessful effort in 1864 to replace Lincoln with a more committed antislavery president.

The churches played an important part in the abolitionist drive for emancipation that was satisfied finally by the Thirteenth Amendment.

One method that the abolitionists hoped would demonstrate public support for antislavery action was the emancipation petition addressed to the President and Congress. Church-oriented abolitionists remembered the attention attracted by the clerical remonstrances against the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and strove to circulate antislavery petitions among clergymen and church members. As early as May, 1861, the Church Anti-Slavery Society sought signatures of northern churchmen for a memorial to Lincoln which demanded emancipation because of "national exigencies" and

because we believe the National neglect of this heaven required duty is rebellion against
God; because a nation wielding the war power to suppress a pro-slavery rebellion cannot afford to risk the divine judgments for a single day, by a continuance of rebellion against God, in neglecting to abolish slavery.24

The volume of emancipation petitions to Washington officials grew so great that Goodell organized the "National Emancipation Association" in New York City to serve as a clearing-house. When the Congregationalist Independent criticized the emancipation petitions as "just the thing to divide the loyal people," Henry Cheever responded that such remonstrances gave the nation's churchmen their best opportunity to exert influence "in shaping the policy of the nation according to the law of God and of Eternal justice."25

The church-oriented abolitionists had less success in arranging shows of interdenominational support for a federal emancipation program. The Church Anti-Slavery Society proposed a "National Christian Convention" in 1861 and again in 1862 to agitate for emancipation, but they failed to attract sufficient support to hold the gatherings. The Society also unsuccessfully called for a series of regional "Christian Mass Meetings" for July 4, 1863 "to encourage and fortify the National Government" to enact "a universal and immediate abolition of slavery out of obedience to God...."26 The only significant wartime interdenominational antislavery conventions met in Chicago and New York City in the fall of 1862. Both meetings wrote memorials to the President
expounding moral arguments for emancipation. Veteran church-oriented abolitionists including William W. Patton, George Cheever, William Goodell, Simeon S. Jocelyn, Duncan Dunbar, and Hiram Mattison were the leading figures at these meetings. Delegations from both conventions met with Lincoln, but failed to convince him to adopt a stronger antislavery policy.\textsuperscript{27}

Individual denominations also acted to lobby federal officials for emancipation. The editors of a growing number of religious periodicals endorsed the abolitionists' argument that the constitution empowered the national government to end slavery in time of war. Several of these editors criticized Lincoln for annulling antislavery proclamations issued by Union commanders in the field. In April, 1862, an article in the \textit{Freewill Baptist Quarterly} complained that Lincoln resisted emancipation for fear of offending the Border state "semi-secessionist who is prevented only by his locality and interests from being an active rebel."\textsuperscript{28} To overcome this hesitation, most of the smaller abolitionized denominations wrote remonstrances and dispatched delegations to argue the emancipation case to the President and Congress in 1861 and 1862. Even among the more moderate antislavery denominations, numerous ministers, laymen, and local judicatories proclaimed their desire for immediate and complete emancipation.
The culmination of the agitation for emancipation came when Lincoln issued his preliminary emancipation proclamation in the fall of 1862. Although that measure exempted at least one million slaves from its provisions and was surrounded by an aura of expediency, most antislavery churchmen and many abolitionists responded favorably to Lincoln's action. By 1864, most northern denominations had applauded the proclamation and sent delegations to Washington to congratulate Lincoln. The New School Presbyterian General Assembly of 1863, for example, declared that the church recognized the Emancipation Proclamation as a product of "that wonder-working providence of God, by which military necessities become the instruments of justice in breaking the yoke of oppression." Even the arch-conservative Old School Presbyterians finally enlisted in the antislavery ranks, leaving only the Catholics and Episcopalians as denominations not endorsing emancipation. Among church-oriented abolitionists, such stalwarts as Lewis Tappan, John Rankin, and John G. Fee, applauded the Emancipation Proclamation as promising the general overthrow of slavery in the near future. In a similar manner, William Lloyd Garrison described the proclamation as "an historic step in the right direction," while he continued to lobby for a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery.

Not all abolitionists and antislavery churchmen were pleased with the Emancipation Proclamation. The old Radical
Abolitionist-Church Anti-Slavery Society faction, now led by William Goodell and the Cheever brothers, protested the shortcomings and expedient motives of Lincoln's action. George Cheever denounced the Emancipation Proclamation as "nothing more than a bribe to win back the slaveholding states to loyalty by confirming to them the privilege of tyrannizing over millions of their fellow creatures in perpetual slavery." Goodell, George Cheever, and Nathan Brown, a Free Mission Baptist leader, met with Lincoln in December, 1862, and unsuccessfully attempted to convince the President that the federal government possessed sufficient constitutional power to abolish slavery everywhere in the United States. A large group of Garrisonian abolitionists led by Wendell Phillips, Stephen Foster, and Parker Pillsbury, similarly complained that Lincoln still shrank from immediate and complete emancipation.

The dissatisfaction of many abolitionists with Lincoln's hesitant emancipation policy finally resulted in an attempt to block his re-election in 1864. After a short-lived movement for the Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase, many Republican antislavery radicals turned to John C. Fremont as a candidate with whom to challenge Lincoln's renomination. Abolitionists quickly enlisted in this campaign. Goodell's *Principia* endorsed Fremont in March, 1864. Later that spring, the Church Anti-Slavery Society condemned Lincoln's inclination "to drift with events and wait for
'indispensable necessity' before acting against slavery.\textsuperscript{34}

At the same time, anti-Lincoln resolutions were passed by narrow majorities at various Garrisonian conventions. The Fremont movement failed to block the Republican's renomination of Lincoln, but discontent would not die. In July and August, the Cheever brothers, Wendell Phillips, and other abolitionists joined radical Republicans in an unsuccessful effort to persuade Lincoln and Fremont to stand aside so that antislavery men could unite behind a new candidate pledged to complete emancipation.\textsuperscript{35}

One important reason for the failure of these anti-Lincoln efforts was the discontented abolitionists' inability to gain support from the religious community. The Church Anti-Slavery Society lacked the financial resources to conduct lecturing tours to spread its radical political views. Goodell's \textit{Principia} was forced to suspend publication when pro-Lincoln Republicans withdrew their financial subsidies. The only religious group that praised the Fremont movement was the American Baptist Free Mission Society, and it stopped short of an official endorsement. More typical of the sentiment of antislavery northern churchmen was the \textit{Independent}'s statement that the anti-Lincoln campaign had led many "good men into a snare."\textsuperscript{36} The New School Presbyterian General Assembly even ordered its ministers to "urge all Christians to refrain from weakening the authority of the Administration by ill-timed complaints and
unnecessary criticism..." Fear of dividing the antislavery vote and allowing the Democrats to capture the White House caused most pro-emancipation churchmen to remain loyal to Lincoln. After Lincoln's re-election in November, antislavery groups would reunite in efforts to obtain more effective federal legislation abolishing slavery and aiding freedmen.

After the election, antislavery groups were able to cooperate in a movement for a constitutional amendment to abolish slavery nationwide. Garrisonians cooperated closely with the Women's Loyal National League in collecting signatures on a petition calling for an emancipation amendment. Although still contending that the President and Congress possessed sufficient power to outlaw slaveowning, the Church Anti-Slavery Society also endorsed a constitutional amendment to prevent any later judicial challenges. With a few exceptions, the editors of the northern religious press observed that the progress of public opinion during the war demanded legislation to end the divisive slavery question once and for all. As a response to the unabated antislavery pressure, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment that extinguished slavery, on January 31, 1865, and the necessary three-fourths of the states completed ratification by the end of the year.
The wartime antislavery advances in religious and political life ironically created a crisis for the church-oriented institutions created in the 1840s and 1850s. Founded principally to promote abolitionism, the comeouter sects had to reassess the justification for their continued functioning as separate denominations. The approaching end of slavery forced the abolitionist benevolent societies to launch new programs in order to continue attracting financial contributions. Not all of those church-oriented abolitionist bodies survived the resolution of the original slavery dispute, but the subsequent history of those that did reveals that many antislavery reformers believed their mission was far from completed.

The coming of the Civil War accelerated the dissolution of the Free Presbyterian Church that had begun soon after the secession of southerners from New School Presbyterians in 1857. Free Presbyterian spokesmen claimed that the southerners' secession proved the correctness of the comeouters' long-standing opposition to compromise with slavery. The editor of the Free Presbyterians' periodical, however, admitted that "a revolution of public sentiment" toward slavery had taken place since Fort Sumter. The war also caused the American Missionary Association to drop its assistance to Free Presbyterian congregations in the Northwest
in order to finance work with southern freedmen. The small denomination founded its own "Home Missionary Fund" in 1862, but nevertheless had to abandon many non-self-supporting congregations.  

The fatal blow to the Free Presbyterian Church came from its most important founder, the Reverend John Rankin. Despite protests from Free Presbyterian die-hards that the New School still held fellowship with "slaveholders and even secessionists," Rankin convinced the Free Presbytery of Ripley to return to the larger Presbyterian denomination in 1862. The last recorded meeting of the Free Synod was in 1863, although some presbyteries met annually until the war's end. A few Free Presbyterian congregations retained their comeouter identity a few years longer, but the sect was disbanding rapidly with members and ministers going into the New School, Old School, or Scottish Presbyterian denominations. Having lost the rallying point of uncompromising opposition to slavery, the diverse elements in the Free Presbyterian Church lacked sufficient common bonds to remain together. The Free Presbyterians, nevertheless, wrote a triumphal epitah for their comeouter denomination, declaring the slavery issue which called us into existence as a sect is now practically obsolete. The churches have substantially adopted our principles, and the contingency has occurred when, according to our original intention, it is proper to disband our organization by connecting ourselves with some other body.
The American Baptist Free Mission Society came to an end quite similar to that of the Free Presbyterian Church. During the Civil War, Free Mission Baptists harassed Republican politicians until Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment officially abolishing slavery. The Free Mission Baptists launched a vigorous freedmen's aid program in 1862. The Society condemned the War Department for turning over control of southern congregations without loyal ministers to the American Baptist Home Mission Society. Free Mission Baptists complained that the larger missionary board had been laggard in endorsing emancipation and in supplying ministers to the freedmen and therefore merited no government assistance. The Free Mission Society doubted "the conservative element" of their denomination was yet "ready to treat our colored brother as a man." Not until 1869 would the American Baptist Free Mission Society finally merge their operations with the denomination's established missionary organizations signaling an end to the slavery controversy among northern Baptists.

The war and the end of slavery also threatened the continued existence of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection. During the war, the Wesleyans strongly advocated emancipation. Unlike many other abolitionists, the Wesleyans announced confidence that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation decreed the certain demise of American slavery. In religious affairs, the Wesleyans found little to criticize in the
Methodist Episcopal Church's strengthening of its antislavery discipline in 1864. As prominent a Wesleyan as Luther Lee declared that the Wesleyans had lost "their influence and progressive power" due to the advance of antislavery sentiment among other northern denominations. A large portion of Wesleyans, including Lee, returned to their old denominational affiliations soon after the war.

The Wesleyan Methodist Connection survived these defections because the sect had developed distinctive positions on other moral and theological questions in addition to slavery. In keeping with the Methodists' doctrine of "entire sanctification," the Wesleyans had adopted strong rules against the use, sale, or manufacture of tobacco and alcoholic beverages and against membership in secret societies. While not irreconcilable with the positions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Wesleyans' perfectionism was much more clearly stated and enforced in the church discipline. One Wesleyan spokesman defended the denomination's continued independent existence as necessary "that we might be freer, to exercise our religious agency in the general field of Xian effort." The perfectionism that had added fervor to the Wesleyan Methodist Connection's antislavery activities was the ingredient that made the comeouter sect into a viable denomination that has lasted down to this day.

Wartime events brought different ends to the two smallest comeouter sects, the Franckean Evangelical
Lutheran Synod and the Progressive Friends. Since their secession in 1857, the Franckeans had adopted both a stronger antislavery discipline and a theologically more liberal confession. During the war, southern Lutherans formed their own denomination, and the Lutheran General Synod took an unqualified pro-emancipation stand. Although still occasionally quarreling over doctrinal questions, the Franckeans were satisfied with the antislavery position of other northern Lutherans and accepted the jurisdiction of the General Synod. Among the Friends, a greater toleration of abolitionist activity had caused the return of Orthodox Quaker comeouters before the war. No such reunion of Progressive Friends with Hicksite Quaker Yearly Meetings took place even after the war. The Progressive Friends vigorously participated in abolitionism and other reform movements. This activism and cooperation with radicals such as the Garrisonians eventually diluted the Progressive Friends' Quaker strain. In keeping with their abolitionist heritage, heirs of the original Progressive Friends met annually to advocate causes such as racial equality until 1940.

The war also created serious problems for the antislavery benevolent institutions: the American Missionary Association, the American Reform Tract and Book Society (ARTBS), and the American Tract Society, Boston. These organizations functioned to propagate an antislavery gospel and to protest
the fellowship of slaveholders by the established benevolent societies. Southern secession produced only a limited reform in the policies of most of the older bodies. As the prospects for emancipation increased during the war, however, the antislavery benevolent associations had to find new justifications for their separate existence from the established institutions. To combat the moral dissoluteness of military life, both antislavery publication societies distributed tracts to Union soldiers. The ARTBS also printed works advocating racial equality. Most importantly, the war opened up a new field of operations for the antislavery benevolent societies in caring for the religious needs of the freedmen. In fact, the passing of the slavery question as a divisive question allowed these organizations to attract a broader range of support than ever before and to continue functioning for many more years.

V

Even before the Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery, many abolitionists began working to ensure that freedom would have genuine substance for the ex-slaves. Among the most important goals of this later phase of abolitionism were supplying education to the freedmen and erasing legal and social barriers to equal participation by Blacks in American life. Through both the American Anti-Slavery Society and new specialized societies, Garrisonian
abolitionists remained active in aiding the freedmen. The Church Anti-Slavery Society disbanded soon after the war's end, but the American Missionary Association and the American Reform Tract and Book Society continued to function in the interests of the Blacks. In addition, many antislavery churchmen acted through their own denominations to aid freedmen and to remove barriers to racial equality. In the last years of the war and thereafter, many northern churches cooperated with abolitionists in efforts to add meaning to emancipation.

Church-oriented abolitionist organizations began supporting freedmen's aid projects very early in the war. The Church Anti-Slavery Society resolved that emancipation would throw "a vast burden of responsibility and care for [slavery's] victims" upon religious institutions. The American Reform Tract and Book Society began publishing works for the instruction of ex-slaves in 1862. The American Missionary Association launched religious and educational work with Blacks behind Union army lines in the fall of 1861. Although the AMA's leadership remained heavily Congregationalist, churchmen from many denominations supported the society's work with the freedmen. Garrisonians founded secular freedmen's aid societies, but the AMA surpassed all other non-governmental agencies in post-war assistance programs for the Blacks. Lewis Tappan bragged that the AMA's combination of missionary and educational programs offered "something
more" to the ex-slaves than the secular societies by en­deavoring that they "be free citizens, and good men and women also...free from sin as well as free from slavery."  

As early as 1862, many northern denominations also be­gan dispatching missionaries and teachers to the southern freedmen. Strongly antislavery denominations got an early start in aiding the southern Blacks. The various Scottish Presbyterian sects, the Freewill Baptists, the American Baptist Free Mission Society, and many other abolitionist church groups dispatched agents into new liberated Confed­erate territory. Because of their antislavery tradition, these groups concluded that they had "a special call of Providence to this great work." With perhaps a greater claim to southern Black loyalty were the small Black sects, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, that also undertook wartime relief and missionary work among the freedmen. 

The major northern denominations, the Baptists, Metho­dists, New School Presbyterians, and Old School Presby­terians, also began sending missionaries into the South be­fore the war's end. All of these denominations became ac­tive in the education and the religious training of the freedmen. Methodist and Baptist missionaries also seemed intent on re-uniting their denominations on northern terms. In 1862, for example, Gilbert Haven, a veteran Methodist abolitionist, called on "the religion of the North [to] move
southward" to regenerate the slavery corrupted southern churches. The American Baptist Home Mission Society similarly urged northern Christians to oversee an "entire reorganization of the social and religious state of the South...." Beginning in 1863, the War Department assisted northern missionaries in taking over the pulpits of disloyal ministers. Such close associations of the missionaries with the Union military effort, however, only further alienated southern Whites and added to resentment against the freedmen's aid campaign.

Abolitionists hoped that the education and religious training of the freedmen could overcome some of the evil effects of slavery and win greater acceptance for the Blacks. During and after the war, however, rivalry between sectarian freedmen's aid societies, the AMA, and secular agencies handicapped the work with the ex-slaves. Despite disagreements over the place of religion in the freedmen's education, hundreds of northern teachers and missionaries were laboring with southern Blacks by the late 1860s. The desire of northern Baptists and Methodists to reunite their denominations eventually caused those denominations to acquiesce in southern White demands for the segregation of freedmen's schools and churches. Even the AMA agreed to this compromise of the abolitionist principle of racial equality, in order to satisfy Congregationalist aspirations to attract southern White members. The abolitionists and
antislavery churchmen who began the freedmen's aid campaign during the war could not have predicted its unfortunate outcome. Although falling short of its original goals, the freedmen's aid movement nevertheless allowed abolitionists and antislavery churchmen to supply significant help to southern Blacks.  

Churchmen gave support to other wartime efforts by abolitionists to guarantee the reality of Black freedom. In particular, abolitionists and their allies in the churches battled against northern racism that threatened to curtail freedmen's rights. Many northern churchmen backed abolitionist efforts to repeal racially discriminatory state and local legislation. Garrisonian and church-oriented abolitionists called for the enlistment of slaves in the Union army in order that the Blacks' performance could dispel racial prejudices. The same groups opposed suggestions circulated during the war for a massive colonization of freedmen out of the country. In January, 1865, the Freewill Baptist Quarterly declared that antislavery churchmen were "duty bound to testify against prejudices which deprive [freedmen] of their rights and equality before human law. When they are emancipated the struggle is not over. It is yet a long march to millennium."  

To reinforce their attacks on racially discriminatory government policies, antislavery churchmen also attempted to reform their own denomination's practices toward Blacks.
During the war, the Church Anti-Slavery Society expressed fears that "every other door in the nation would be opened to the negro before the pew door." In most denominations, the question of integrating northern churches was decided by individual congregations and regional judicatories. For example, the New England and Erie conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church removed all rules discriminating against Black members. In 1863, White Episcopalians in Philadelphia admitted Black delegates to their conventions for the first time. Numerous New England Congregationalist churches voted to abolish the custom of "Negro Pews." Although many northern churches continued to discriminate against Blacks, these wartime advances helped the abolitionists combat the racial prejudices in other areas of life that threatened to rob much of the meaning from emancipation.

VI

The Civil War produced the culmination of the abolitionist campaign in the churches. During the war, all but the most conservative denominations eventually enlisted in the antislavery movement. While abolitionists still worked for stronger church disciplines against slaveholding, most of their wartime activity concentrated upon converting northern churchmen into advocates for emancipation. In the conflict's first years, most denominations resisted
abolitionist calls for a strong antislavery declaration. By the war's end, however, only the Catholics and Episcopalians had failed to condemn slavery and to demand its speedy destruction. Abolitionists used the churches' endorsements of emancipation to reinforce their own pressure on federal officials for decisive antislavery action. Efforts by some abolitionist factions to replace Lincoln with a more anti-slavery president, however, attracted little church support. Nevertheless antislavery churchmen continued to lobby Congress until the Thirteenth Amendment was passed to end slavery.

The northern churches contributed significantly to the abolitionists' success during the Civil War. The end of the war did not end cooperation between abolitionists and the churches to aid the Blacks. In fact, such cooperation increased. Most of the comeouter sects merged with their parent denominations after the end of slavery removed the divisive question of fellowship with slaveholders. The abolitionist benevolent societies shifted their operations from competition with the established institutions to work with the freedmen. The abolitionists' wartime efforts to aid the ex-slaves and to give substance to their freedom attracted broad support from northern denominations. After the war, northern religious bodies continued to support such projects until the desire to conciliate southern White churchmen caused them to submit to segregation.
The necessity of a civil war to awaken the northern churches to their responsibility to the slaves revealed the fragility of their dedication to helping the Blacks. Before the war began, only a minority of northern churchmen had fully accepted the abolitionist movement's moral principles or even its goal of immediate and complete [unconditional] emancipation. Despite three decades of abolitionist agitation, many denominations still preferred to view slavery as an abstract social problem rather than as a sinful practice perpetuated by the slaveholders. Only in response to the divisive political events of the 1850s, would large numbers of northern churchmen endorse the limited program of confining slavery to the South. Perhaps as a result of their lack of commitment to abolitionist tenets of freedom and equality for the Blacks, most denominations acquiesced in post-Reconstruction racial discrimination as the price of sectional harmony. Save for a few years during and immediately after the Civil War, the northern church like the rest of American society was a disappointment to the abolitionists and the Blacks.
ENDNOTES


3 The Methodist, 22 December 1860; also 10 November 1860, 2 and 16 February 1861; Western Christian Advocate, 30 January 1861; Protestant Episcopal Quarterly Review, 8 (January 1861): 245; Princeton Review, n.d., quoted in Free Church Portfolio, 17 January 1861; John C. Rankin to Editors of the New York Observer, 26 January 1861, Simon Gratz Collection (Historical Society of Pennsylvania); William E. Tucker and Lester G. McAllister, Journey in


9 Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register, 14 (April 1861): 153-63, 15 (April 1863): 109-13; John Jay, Correspondence Between John Jay, Esq., and the Vestry of
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10 Liberator, 1 November 1861; Principia, 8 June 1861; also Douglass's Monthly, 3 (March 1861): 418, 3 (April 1861): 445, 3 (June 1861): 471; Free Church Portfolio, 17 January 1861; Principia, 1 and 8 June 1861, 26 October 1861, 14 December 1861.

11 Principia, 26 January 1861; also 13 April 1861, 1 June 1861, 8 June 1863; McPherson, Struggle for Equality, p. 39; Perkal, "William Goodell," pp. 300-01.

12 Principia, 9 November 1861; Douglass's Monthly, 4 (July 1861): 492-93, 4 (February 1862): 603; A. L. Stone, Emancipation; Occasional Tract Number Eight (Cincinnati: American Reform Tract and Book Society, n.d.), pp. 2-3, 10; George B. Cheever to Frederick Douglass, 3 April 1862, Frederick Douglass Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress); Charles B. Boynton to George Whipple, 13 December 1861, John G. Fee to Simeon S. Jocelyn, 25 December 1861, American Missionary Association Manuscripts (Amistad Research Center, Dillard University), (hereinafter cited as AMA Manuscripts); Lewis Tappan, Diary, 12 September 1861, Lewis Tappan Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress), (hereinafter cited as L. Tappan Papers); McPherson, Struggle for Equality, pp. 55-61, 67-68.

13 Principia, 1 June 1861, 30 May 1862, 17 December 1862, 31 December 1863; Douglass's Monthly, 4 (February 1862): 603; Anti-Slavery Reporter, 9 (May 1861): 111, 12 (September 1864): 214-17; John G. Fee to Simeon S. Jocelyn, 26 March 1863, AMA Manuscripts; Frederick Douglass to George B. Cheever, 5 April 1862, Cheever Family Papers (American Antiquarian Society), (hereinafter cited as Cheever Papers); L. Tappan, Diary, 12 September 1861; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery (Cleveland: The Press of the Case Western Reserve University, 1969), p. 336.


20 The Methodist, 7 September 1861; also Principia, 10 July 1862; Presbyterian Quarterly, 11 (January 1862): 487-88; Vander Velde, Presbyterian Churches, pp. 370-71.


24 Quoted in Principia, 25 May 1861, also 15 June 1861; Douglass's Monthly, 4 (July 1861): 492.

25 Principia, 28 December 1861, also 9 and 30 November 1861, 9 June 1864; J. C. Webster to Henry T. Cheever, 19 September 1862, Cheever Papers; McPherson, Struggle for Equality, pp. 80, 93, 110-11; Perkal, "William Goodell," p. 381.

26 Principia, 25 June 1863; also 28 December 1861, 10 April 1862, 30 May 1862; Liberator, 30 May 1862.

27 Liberator, 19 September 1862, 3 October 1862; Principia, 25 December 1862, 8 January 1863; Perkal, "William Goodell," pp. 306-08.
28 Freewill Baptist Quarterly, 10 (April 1862): 159-61; also American Wesleyan, 18 September 1861; Western Christian Advocate, 2 October 1861.


32 George B. Cheever to Elizabeth C. Cheever, 29 September 1862, quoted in McPherson, Struggle for Equality, p. 118.

33 Principia, 1 and 8 January 1863; McPherson, Struggle for Equality, pp. 118-22, 133; Dillon, The Abolitionists, pp. 257-58; Perkal, "William Goodell," pp. 306-08.

34 Principia, 24 March 1864, also 21 April 1864, 16 June 1864; Salmon P. Chase to John G. Fee, 5 February 1863, AMA Manuscripts; McPherson, Struggle for Equality, pp. 260-68; Perkal, "William Goodell," pp. 320-22.

George B. Cheever to Elizabeth C. Washburn, 10 and 22 September 1864, Cheever Papers; McPherson, Struggle for Equality, pp. 261, 268-69, 274-75, 278, 280-81.


37 Quoted in Vander Velde, Presbyterian Churches, p. 351.

38 Voegeli, Free But Not Equal, pp. 122-23; McPherson, Struggle for Equality, pp. 281-84.

39 Freewill Baptist Quarterly, 13 (January 1865): 80; Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register, 15 (January 1864): 574-75; Congregationalist, 28 April 1865; Principia, 16 June 1864; Thompson, Christianity and Emancipation, pp. 85-86; McPherson, Struggle for Equality, pp. 125-26, 132-33, 286; Dillon, The Abolitionists, pp. 259-60.


51 Quoted in Principia, 4 June 1863; also Liberator, 29 May 1863; Stephen Tabor et al to George B. Cheever, 27 October 1864, Cheever Papers.


56 American Baptist Home Mission Society, Thirtieth Annual Report...1862, pp. 50-51.


Principia, 4 June 1863.

CONCLUSIONS

While historians have recognized the religious origins of the abolitionist movement, they have not systematically studied the relations between the antislavery reformers and the northern churches. Historical accounts have concentrated almost exclusively on the political and other secular aspects of the abolitionists' activities following the American Anti-Slavery Society's schism in 1840. Historians similarly have regarded the sectional division of several large denominations in the mid-1840s as evidence of rapidly growing northern antislavery sentiment that imperilled political institutions as well. Such interpretations, however, ignore the abolitionists who claimed that the post-schism northern churches still vacillated regarding strict antislavery principles and who worked to remedy this deficiency down through the Civil War. By examining the abolitionists' relations with northern religious institutions from 1830 to 1865, considerable insight can be gained into the problems that antislavery activists encountered with the northern public in general.

While many denominations had made antislavery professions in the immediate post-Revolutionary War period,
the nation's major religious bodies had come to terms with slavery by the mid-1830s. In that decade, however, the revivals of the Second Great Awakening led many churchmen to regard social evils, such as slavery, as the product of sin. Abolitionists sought the churches' endorsement for their new moral appraisal of slavery as a sin requiring immediate and complete repentance in the form of emancipation. The abolitionists hoped that the denominations could convince slaveholders to manumit their slaves by threats of church discipline. Early abolitionists believed that once the churches were enlisted in the antislavery movement, southern slave masters would capitulate to their opponents' superior moral power.

Although many northern churchmen disapproved of slavery, only a minority accepted the entire abolitionist program for the churches. Instead of excommunicating slaveholders, antislavery moderates hoped to use the churches' moral influence to encourage southern Christians to manumit their slaves voluntarily. Conservative northern churchmen even refused to acknowledge that slavery was a proper subject for ecclesiastical legislation. The inclination of most northern churchmen as of northern politicians was to treat slavery as a problem better trusted to southern Whites' consciences to solve. This reluctance to condemn slaveowners led abolitionists to accuse the northern churches of condoning slavery.
Despite the religious community's conservatism on the slavery question, early abolitionists nevertheless envisioned the churches as playing a major role in spreading ethical antislavery arguments. In the 1830s, the abolitionists' moral suasion campaign concentrated upon converting the churches and reaching an evangelically-oriented audience. Abolitionists lobbied individual churchmen and denominational assemblies for endorsements of antislavery principles. Abolitionist propaganda endeavored to educate the religious institutions about the ways that their practices sanctioned slavery. Except for a few small traditionally antislavery denominations, however, most churches resisted any commitment to abolitionism.

The frustration produced by the churches' failure to support abolitionism led abolitionists to reassess their tactics. William Lloyd Garrison and many of his followers abandoned the nation's religious bodies as hopelessly corrupt. Other abolitionists, as nearly dissatisfied with the churches but not prepared to take the unpopular step of repudiating them, switched their energies from religious to political antislavery action in the late 1830s. A third group of abolitionists preferred neither course but retained faith in eventually winning over the religious institutions. Disagreements over the churches' proper role in subsequent abolitionist campaigns played a greater part in that movement's division in 1840 than historians usually acknowledge.
Even after the American Anti-Slavery Society's schism, however, all abolitionist factions continued to contribute to antislavery advances in the churches.

Although harsh critics of the churches, Garrisonian abolitionists retained interest in ending the religious institutions' complicity with slavery. A great deal of Garrisonian propaganda efforts were devoted to exposing and denouncing pro-slavery church practices. In the mid-1840s, the Garrisonian-dominated AASS officially endorsed "coming-out," or the severance of ties with churches that refused to take an uncompromising antislavery position. A small number of the most radical Garrisonians even adopted a tactic of "praying-in," or disrupting services in congregations that barred abolitionist speakers from their pulpits. Despite the publicity these dramatic tactics attracted, large numbers of Garrisonians, particularly Unitarians and Hicsite Quakers, remained inside their old denominations to work for antislavery reforms. The public's identification of Garrisonianism with comeouterism, anticlericalism, and a variety of heterodox views, however, handicapped Garrisonian effectiveness in developing antislavery opinion in the northern churches. Nevertheless, the Garrisonians' contribution to the spread of morally-based antislavery principles helped to force many religious institutions into taking a more outspoken antislavery stand.
Political antislavery activities had important influence on the abolitionist campaign in the churches. The men who founded the first abolitionist political vehicle, the Liberty party, believed antislavery efforts in the political and religious arenas to be linked inseparably. The earliest antislavery politicians condemned slaveholding as a sin and endorsed nonfellowship with slaveowners. In addition, the Liberty party advanced heavily moralistic arguments in favor of antislavery political action. When the Liberty party disintegrated in the late 1840s, the Liberty League-Radical Abolitionist faction continued to advocate abolitionist programs for both the state and the church. Most abolitionist churchmen, however, supported the more moderate antislavery political parties, the Free Soilers and the Republicans. In turn, many leading Free Soilers and Republicans participated in the abolitionist campaign to expel slaveholders from the churches. Even the moderate antislavery politicians' arguments for antiextensionism encouraged northerners to view slavery as a morally unacceptable institution. As a result of their close connection, the political and ecclesiastical antislavery movements reinforced each other's growth in the 1840s and 1850s.

Of greatest significance in developing religious antislavery sentiment were those abolitionists who had broken with the AASS in 1840 and regrouped in a new organization, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Although
many anti-Garrisonian abolitionists concentrated on political antislavery activity, the AFASS attempted to keep up traditional church-oriented tactics. In their lecturing and writing, AFASS abolitionists primarily concentrated upon inducing the churches to take stronger antislavery stands. The AFASS frequently attested to its unabating conviction that the churches were the proper agencies to save the nation from the sin of slavery.

The AFASS gained valuable allies in the early 1840s in the form of well-organized denominational antislavery movements. Presbyterian abolitionists had laid down the precedent for such activity by launching their own antislavery newspapers, conventions, and societies in the 1830s. Unfortunately for Presbyterian abolitionists' hopes, the slavery question became entangled in other controversies that divided the denomination along theological lines in 1837. Neither of the new Presbyterian churches adopted abolitionist practices. Similar Methodist and Baptist campaigns had only slightly greater success despite sectional schisms in those denominations in the mid-1840s. Even after those divisions, abolitionists complained that the northern church branches still tolerated slavery. As evidence, abolitionists noted that none of these churches condemned slaveholding as sinful and that all retained thousands of slaveowners in their fellowship. The unsatisfactory outcome of these intradenominational efforts, however, did not destroy
church-oriented abolitionists' desire to enlist the support of the religious institutions. To increase their influence on northern denominations, church-oriented abolitionists developed several new tactics in the 1840s and 1850s.

One of the new tactics adopted by church-oriented abolitionists was to secede from their old denominations and found new ones. While the various new antislavery sects maintained the distinctive theologies and polities of their old denominations, they shared a belief in the inherent sinfulness of slaveowning and a refusal to enter into religious fellowship with slaveholders. The most important of the "comeouter" sects created in the 1840s and 1850s were the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, the Free Presbyterian Church, the American Baptist Free Mission Society, the Franckean Lutheran Synod, the Progressive Friends, the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Antislavery Friends, and large numbers of independent antislavery congregations. In addition, the defection of thousands of New School Presbyterians to the Congregationalists was motivated, to an important degree, by antislavery sentiments. Although the comeouter sects remained much smaller than their parent denominations, the threat of additional secessions helped force the larger bodies to reassess their cautious attitude toward slavery. The antislavery comeouter sects were rare examples in church history of denominations founded to promote social rather than theological reform.
Another new church-oriented abolitionist tactic was the utilization of interdenominational antislavery conventions and societies. In the 1840s and 1850s, "Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions" were held across the North to encourage church participation in the abolitionist movement. In the late 1850s, the Church Anti-Slavery Society was founded to institutionalize this effort. By restricting themselves to active church members, these new antislavery projects attempted to dispel doubts about abolitionism's religious orthodoxy. As the AFASS's propaganda resources declined, these interdenominational councils became the leading forums for educating moderate antislavery religious leaders about undiluted abolitionist principles. The abolitionist conventions and Church Anti-Slavery Society promoted antislavery reforms in both the churches and the benevolent societies. These new abolitionist vehicles also encouraged churchmen to demand a more ethical approach to the slavery question from northern politicians. Although only rarely cooperating with Garrisonians, the Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions and the Church Anti-Slavery Society provided valuable coordination to the various forms of church-oriented abolitionist activities.

A third new method abolitionists utilized to spread religious antislavery principles in the northern churches was their agitation of the nation's missionary and religious publication societies. The societies' defenders contended
that benevolent institutions should remain neutral on any question not directly related to their evangelizing mission. The abolitionists, however, argued that these societies helped to sustain slavery by accepting slaveholders as contributors, missionaries, and officers. Sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of antislavery moderates, church-oriented abolitionists seceded and created their own benevolent organizations. Among the most significant of these were the American Missionary Association, the American Reform Tract and Book Society, and the American Tract Society, Boston. These comeouter societies not only helped to pressure the established benevolent institutions to adopt abolitionist practices but helped to propagate religious antislavery principles. Due to the broad interdenominational support of the benevolent societies, the abolitionist agitation of those bodies encouraged similar activism inside many denominations.

There was evidence of growing antislavery sentiment in the northern churches during the 1840s and 1850s, but most northern denominations still stopped short of adopting abolitionist principles and practices. Only the traditionally antislavery denominations and the new comeouter sects condemned all slaveholders as sinners and refused to share religious fellowship with them before the beginning of the Civil War. The secession of southern members from the New School Presbyterian, the Methodist Episcopalian, and
Methodist Protestant denominations in the immediate pre-war years effectively ended the fellowship of slaveholders, but these major churches still refrained from making any formal endorsement of abolitionism. Although many Unitarians, Baptists, and Congregationalists strengthened their testimony against the evils of slavery, none of these denominations came up to abolitionist standards by severing all ties with slaveholders. The ritualist and old-line Calvinist denominations remained firm in their long-standing position that slavery was a morally neutral and exclusively secular question. Despite considerable antislavery progress in many denominations, abolitionism remained a minority viewpoint among northern churchmen in 1860.

The coming of the Civil War broke down much of the northern churches' resistance to taking aggressive antislavery actions. The secession of the southern states led many denominations to acknowledge the moral corruption inherent in a slaveholding society. Wartime anti-southern sentiment even led the Methodist Episcopal Church to adopt a discipline barring slaveowners from membership. After initial hesitation, most denominations responded to abolitionist entreaties to endorse emancipation. With the exception of ritualist and heavily Border state denominations, northern churches lobbied the president and Congress during the war to put an end to slavery. Before the war's end, many northern churchmen also enlisted in abolitionist efforts
to reinforce emancipation with freedmen's aid and anti-racial discrimination programs.

Shortcomings in the churches' belated concern for the Blacks became apparent within a decade of the Civil War's end. Many denominations had launched freedmen's aid efforts during the war. The strong desire for reunion with southern White church members, however, led these sectarian education and missionary projects to acquiesce in local segregation practices by the mid-1870s. Northern denominations similarly failed to follow up on wartime attempts to abolish their own racially discriminatory practices. Although the northern churches had contributed significantly to encouraging the federal government to emancipate the slaves, they proved greatly remiss in helping the Blacks obtain the fullest measure of freedom.

The northern churches' willingness to stand by the freedmen exposes the abolitionists' failure to convert the religious bodies into antislavery vehicles. Despite more than three decades of abolitionist lobbying, few denominations ever accepted the principles of the inherent sinfulness of slaveholding and the equality of all races. While antislavery moderates gained control of many denominations, initiative for the strongest actions against slavery came from other sources. Several northern church groups ceased fellowship with slaveholders not by erecting strong antislavery disciplines but through the secession of southern
pro-slavery militants. The northern churches' delay in endorsing emancipation until the Civil War revealed more acceptance of wartime anti-southern passions than of moral arguments for immediate abolition. Expediency rather than antislavery principles produced decisive action against slavery by the church leaders, just as it did by the politicians. Due to these fragile origins, the churches' commitment to the welfare of Blacks proved no better able to weather the storms of Reconstruction than that of other northern institutions.

Although the northern churches never became the preeminent advocates of emancipation and racial equality that the early abolitionists had hoped, church-oriented antislavery efforts were not a complete failure. Abolitionists maintained an active and innovative campaign to spread morally-based antislavery principles in the northern denominations. Through their wide variety of moral suasion tactics, abolitionists helped to prod many churches into taking at least a moderate antislavery stand. The churches, in turn, contributed to making antislavery expressions more respectable in northern circles. That the abolitionists obtained even this limited assistance for their radical programs from such established and conservative institutions as the churches was testimony to the labor's performed by antislavery militants. If not for the intervention of the war, the abolitionists eventually might have created enough
antislavery sentiment among churchmen to have brought about a more peaceful and more decisive end to slavery. Although the antislavery movement failed to make the northern churches into firm friends of the Blacks, the ultimate responsibility for this failure rested with the churches and the northern public and not with the abolitionists.
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