JOSHUA FAHLER HISTORY

"HOLDING UP THE LIGHT OF HEAVEN": PRESBYTERIAN AND CONGREGATIONAL REFORM MOVEMENTS IN LORAIN COUNTY, OHIO, 1824-1859 (202 pp.)

Advisors: David Odell-Scott and Guy Wells

During the uneasy years predating the American Civil War, self-proclaimed prophets and messengers of God traveled the frontier proclaiming their interpretations of truth as revealed through Protestant Christianity. As they attempted to convert the nation, they conceived American utopias which, constructed within a sacred history of Christianity, played an important role in redefining the religion in North America. As part of the process of establishing these utopias, individuals interested in the conversion of society utilized and revised the "New Haven" theology of Yale College, from which would emerge a reconstructed concept of "sanctification" in Oberlin, Ohio. These individuals would use this theology to form the basis for their attempts to reform society, applying religious meaning to social action.

In Lorain County, Ohio, we can observe these changes in religious thought and practice as numerous "religious virtuosi" carried out social action which they considered to be bound to a sacred history. In tandem with social action would come ecclesiastical conflict, tearing the New England Plan of Union asunder. This thesis is interested in how reformers' attempts to create heaven on earth would result in conflict highlighted by a series of events which would ultimately change the religious landscape of the county as it contributed to and reflected the changing face of religion in America.

“HOLDING UP THE LIGHT OF HEAVEN”: PRESBYTERIAN AND CONGREGATIONAL REFORM MOVEMENTS IN LORAIN COUNTY, OHIO, 1824-1859

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into pedagogically-sound instruction practices applicable to a history classroom at any level.

Before the thesis had even entered thought, I had waited to transfer from Lorain County Community College in Elyria, Ohio. While at LCCC, two professors guided me in important ways. Cheryl Piper's Religion in America course at LCCC provided me with the foundations for this thesis as well as the first real research project for me to "dive into" during my college experience. Her comments and positive remarks at the end of the course's semester gave me new insight on how to look at my education in general. Likewise, George Vourlojianis provided me with a long-lasting mentorship consisting of strong guidance and an overall love for the discipline of American history.

Research time for this project was divided among the Oberlin College Archives, the Lorain County Historical Society, Elyria First United Congregational Church of Christ, the Wellington Spirit of '76 Museum, the Kent State University Special Collections and Archives, and the Kent State University Library. In all of these places, I experienced a helpful and energetic staff allowing me with not only the best possible resources but the gift of their insight and their respective facilities. Specifically, I would like to thank Roland Baumann of the Oberlin College Archives for reviewing my work in progress, while providing helpful insight and suggestions. Karis Lyon of the Lorain County Historical Society provided me with not only excellent resources, but a means of networking with churches in the Lorain County area. I would also like to extend my thanks to Judy Wurtz of the Wellington First Congregational United Church of Christ and Jane Coven of First Congregational, United Church of Christ, Elyria for their openness to my needs. The time Ms. Coven spent with me as I contemplated the Elyria records was

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Two archival sources were not physically available to me as they were out of state. Nonetheless, Janet Olson and her intern at the Frances Willard Historical Association, which holds archival material pertaining to the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Evanston, Illinois were gracious enough to supply me with material at no cost through e-mail communications and regular mail. Also, I am indebted to Fred Burwell of the Beloit College Archives in Beloit, Wisconsin who provided me with a physical facsimile of correspondence pertaining to Alfred H. Betts, an important figure in Lorain County's early Presbyterian history.

While I never came in contact with any of them, I must also thank countless librarians who have logged many hours digitizing primary and secondary sources through online search engines such as JSTOR and Google. Having access to so many sources with only a few keystrokes exponentially expanded the goals and scope of this project, allowing me to cover a sizable amount of material in a limited amount of time. This access to an expanded amount of material only whetted my appetite for curiosity, and acts as a testament to the recent revolution in access to information.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their support, in spite of the fact that this thesis kept me away from them at certain times during the holiday breaks when I would take the opportunity while at home to mull over the vast amount of primary sources available to me. My father's appreciation for learning and the care which he took in ensuring that I share his love for knowledge has been my fuel. My aunt took me in during the summer of 2007 to allow me to take an opportunity for an internship with the City of New York's Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services, providing food and shelter, and an ideal setting in which to write a large portion of this paper. Throughout, my family challenged me to make the best out of my college experience, and I hope that this effort is a worthy testament to their invaluable encouragement and support.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction: American "Religious Insanity" and Social Reform

> Although the desire of acquiring the good things of this world is the prevailing passion of the American people, certain momentary outbreaks occur, when their souls seem suddenly to burst the bonds of matter by which they are restrained, and to soar impetuously towards heaven.
>
> Alexis de Tocqueville[1]

In the spring of 1831, the burgeoning town of Elyria, Ohio, was swept up in a religious revival after a missionary by the name of John Shipherd assumed the pulpit of the local Presbyterian Church. One observer later claimed that in the town, "Business was to a very great extent suspended" while "Men gathered in small groups in the streets to talk of the wonderful displays of Gods [sic] power and grace in the conversion of the hithertoo [sic] hardened and impertinent sinner." Religion had brought the town, now only fifteen years old, to its knees in figurative and perhaps even literal terms.[2] John's wife, Esther, would write to her parents in-law telling of the revival's impact, claiming that replacing a complacent and spiritually dry community, "there were between 60 and 70 in the anxious room," waiting to be converted.[3]

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[1] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, tr. by Henry Reeve (New York: Bantam Classic, 2004), 656. See p. 656 for mention of a prevalent American "religious insanity."

[2] Mention of this revival is made in "Records of the Presbyterian Church in Elyria Organized November 25th AD 1824 and of the Session of Said Church," [1824-1837], February 2, 1831; May 19, 1831, EPC, hereafter referred to as "Elyria Records, 1824-1837." See also S. Guthrie to Heman Ely, Jr., Mary Hall, and E. E. Williams, Corresponding Committee of the Presbyterian Church, Elyria, O[hio], 4 January, 1875, EPC, hereafter referred to as the "Guthrie-EPC Correspondence, 1875, EPC."

[3] Esther and John Shipherd to Zebulon and Nancy Shipherd, 1 June 1831, John Shipherd Papers, Series IV, Box 3, OCA.

Not only were these gatherings ministering to the religious needs of the community's faithful, they operated as a medium with which to influence the town's social landscape. The Shipherds would utilize the assistance of local volunteers to build their house soon after, and among those coming to their assistance would be previously "worldly" men who, recently converted in the revival at Elyria, partook in a "Temperance raising," which excluded the traditional payment of workers with alcohol. By the following November, the church would pass, with Shipherd's express approval, a resolution in which church members promised to abstain from alcohol.[4]

These meetings and actions were powerful enough to raise eyebrows, and soon after, when Shipherd had claimed that a separation from the Presbytery which oversaw the church would be necessary to continue his works, the established religious hierarchy acted quickly, seeing the minister as a threat. Shortly, Shipherd was out of his pulpit and again exploring how he would fulfill his dreams of spreading Christianity in the West. Leaving the church behind him, he would set out to forge a new religious entity consisting not only of a place of worship, but a colony founded upon his constructions of reality and his interpretation of truth as expressed by religion. Thus, Oberlin Colony and Collegiate Institute would form a mere two years after his initial Elyria revivals, eventually attracting nationally-revered revivalist Charles Grandison Finney to change the county's religious landscape forever.[5]

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[4] See Elyria Records, 1824-1837, November 25, 1831 for the temperance resolution. Shipherd's approval, as we will see, is best observed in an 1832 temperance tract of which he claims authorship. See John J. Shipherd, "An Appeal to Patriots, Philanthropists, and Christians, on Behalf of Our Endangered Republic, and Its Suffering Members; by the Lorain County Temperance Society," (Elyria: Park & Burrell, Printers, 1832), OCSC.

[5] A classic history regarding Oberlin's history to which I will often refer is Robert Samuel Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College: From its Foundation through the Civil War* (Oberlin, OH: Oberlin College, 1943).

In a long line of ministers called to transform their world, Shipherd was anything but alone in his zealous actions. Though he would be integral in shaping the religious landscape of Lorain County, Ohio, his urgency to commit to social reform through religious currents has preceded him throughout the history of humanity, long before his personal conversion to Christianity. Whether seen through the lens of the medieval flagellant movement, the 16th century Anabaptist leader Jan Matthys or contemporary televangelist Pat Robertson, Christianity has had a number of persons spring forth, shaking the world and religious landscape around them, for better and for worse. At the core of each personality lies a conviction that humanity can be changed in the name of religion.[6]

Max Weber uses the term "religious virtuoso" to identify these individuals, who exercise their religious belief as they understand their existence in the context of a "sacred history."[7] Robert Abzug broadens Weber's definition, noting that it considers a relationship between the "secular" world and religious belief, with an interest, in Weber's words, in wishing "to rationalize the world ethically in accordance with God's commandments."[8] If we are to understand the ideologies at the base of humanity's actions, we must examine these virtuosi and more importantly, the perceived religious realities in which their actions were based. As we will explore throughout this thesis,

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[6] Matthys was the first leader of the ill-fated Münster Rebellion, lasting from 1534-5. See Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 260-7.

[7] An interpretative perspective borrowing Weber's term comes from Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). See 4-5; 232, notes 3 and 4. In the spirit of Protestant Christianity's recognition of "the priesthood of all believers," I loosely apply this term to subjects throughout this thesis. Instead of monopolizing the term with very influential leaders, I strive to include notable lay people and leaders who carried out reform which may have affected fewer people, but nonetheless signaled their commitment to their religious beliefs.

[8] See Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, trs. and eds., *From Max Weber: Essays on Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 267-301. Qtd. on p. 291, and by Abzug, p. 232, n. 3.

how these virtuosi are defined must be taken into consideration, as scholarship moves past Weber's original construct.

In a nation with a democratic republic such as the United States, it becomes important to understand how this relationship between religious and social institutions affects mass public action, including, but not limited to, the ballot box. During the Nineteenth Century, religiously-inspired moral, social, and political reform movements would surge through the nation, as religious virtuosi on both sides of these debates quoted the same Bible. In the process, religious and social landscapes would be shaken, from which would emerge distinctly American traditions of Protestant Christianity.

The State of the Question: Historiography of Antebellum Reform

Like any other topic which holds weight in American history, the role religion plays in public life is subject to various interpretations and for this reason a short description of major trends will be helpful. Since the publication of *The Antislavery Impulse* by Gilbert Hobbs Barnes in 1933 and the development of a body of scholarship understanding the role of religion in the reform movements which characterized the American antebellum period,[9] American religious history has been characterized in historiography by an exploration of how the formation of a number of religious sects, numerous occasions of religious dissension and division, and the development of new

[9] Gilbert Hobbs Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Incorporated, 1933). For a recent general overview of antebellum historiography, see Glenn M. Harden "Men and Women of Their Own Kind: Historians and Antebellum Reform." M.A. Thesis, George Mason University, 2000. While a definition of reform may seem necessary here, it should be mentioned that Harden notes that historians have "simply stopped trying to define reform" in spite of nearly a century's worth of historical controversy as to what reform actually entails (see Harden, 12). I hope that the reader will understand reform not in concrete historical terminology, but rather as an historical idea which was perpetuated through its proponents (or those known as "reformers") and may be observed through all periods, societies, and cultures, albeit through varying perspectives and for varying reasons. As Michael Young states, however, American reform is notable as it involves the first emergence of nationally cohesive reform movements. Michael Young, *Bearing Witness against Sin: The Evangelical Birth of the American Social Movement* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 39.

theologies would impact American society in the form of social action through religiously-inspired efforts to reform the nation.[10] Historians would consider that new religious sects and the theological changes they employed, occurring during a time collectively known as the "Second Great Awakening,"[11] played a large role in seeing that the antebellum period would be one of social reform through the channel of the individual, and, at least in terms of religiously-oriented reform, emphasized the individual's personal religious experience in their relationship to God.[12]

Just as Barnes "discovered" the role of religious belief as a prime factor in the antislavery movement, Alice Felt Tyler expanded upon Barnes' foundations to include other reform movements and the role religion played in defining them. More importantly, Tyler understood antebellum reform in light of American social history, rather than the prevailing political and economic interpretations of the period.[13] This transition marks an important move from understanding antebellum reform merely as a series of issues leading up to the Civil War, especially when considering antislavery, to realizing that the reform movements were dynamic and socially important phenomena which questioned the limits and constrictions of democracy in America.

Glenn Harden's historiography of the period focuses on two major trends in preceding the religious outlook to antebellum reform. The first, termed as "social control" was proposed as a "definable" outlook by Clifford S. Griffin, who "argued that

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[10] John Corrigan and Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America: An Historical Account of American Religious Life* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2003), 200-201.
[11] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 385. See Parts IV-VI of Ahlstrom's work (pp. 385-730) for a general narrative of the period's religious history.
[12] Charles C. Cole, Jr., *The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, 1826-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 96.
[13] Harden, 31. Also see Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History From the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944; reprint, New York: Harper & Row, 1961).

fearful conservative elites saw evangelical Protestantism as 'an excellent means of keeping the nation under control.'" Griffin saw antebellum reform as both a process of socialization, and more importantly, a process by which ruling classes could keep lower classes in place in spite of a growing economy and an ever increasing middle class.[14]

The second major trend is that of "social organization," which grew from the social control perspective, but drops pessimistic understandings of class and social stratification as laying at the root of reform while attempting to maintain an interest in the social order reformers sought to bring to America. Harden considers scholars attuned to social organization to be more sympathetic to antebellum reform, citing the social control historians' fears of McCarthyism's close associations with evangelical religion of the 1950's and the theological and symbolic ties that the contemporary religion had to antebellum religion.[15] Likewise, Harden notes the Civil Rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's, which many historians took into account as they sympathized with the antislavery aspect of reform as many personally participated in the events defining the era, or had students doing so. Because both McCarthyism and the Civil Rights movement used religious beliefs to justify their actions, Harden states that this new understanding of antebellum reform prevailed in a more positive sense than the negative underpinnings of social control as scholars changed the meaning of antebellum reform and fears of hyper-patriotic Christianity gave way to the reevaluation of the religion in terms of concerns for social justice.[16] Indeed, religion pervaded both eras, as Billy

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[14] Clifford S. Griffin, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control, 1815-1860," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 44 (December, 1957): 423-444. Note that Griffin's thesis has been criticized most notably by Lois Banner in "Religious Benevolence as Social Control: A Critique of an Interpretation," *The Journal of American History*, 60 (June, 1973): 23-41. Quoted in Harden, 64. The portion quoted from Griffin's piece is on p. 423.

[15] See Corrigan and Hudson, 387-9.

[16] Harden, 92-93.

Graham's call for loyalty under fears of the impeding "atheistic communist threat" utilized religion as much as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s appeal to the God of peace and social equality.[17]

In *Cosmos Crumbling*, Robert Abzug offered a perspective on antebellum reform which reinterpreted and revisited Gilbert Barnes's initial framework.[18] In general, Abzug's work is a response to the social control and organizational perspectives of previous historians. By responding to what he considers the "material reductionism" of the social control and organization theories, Abzug seeks to understand religious reformers for what they considered themselves to be: messengers of God who could bring change to the world through social action backed by religious belief.[19]

Specifically, Abzug's reformers see America defining the next stage of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, holding a key place in Christian eschatology, which may be seen in the tradition of the colonists' interpretation of America as a "city upon a hill."[20] Harden sees Abzug's perspective as a "vindication" of Gilbert Barnes: a revolt against "a historiography that downplayed the relevance of religion and emphasized materialist concerns."[21] Paralleling this approach, I will seek to further understand these religious interactions in greater detail, especially as they relate to reform.

Applying and emphasizing the concept of the social influence of religion in society while focusing on more concrete theological statements than cosmological shifts

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[17] Corrigan and Hudson, 387-9. See for example King's journey to nonviolence in "Crozer Seminary," in *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr*., ed. Clayborne Carson (New York: Warner Books, 1998), 17-29.
[18] Harden, 134.
[19] Abzug, viii.
[20] Abzug, In passim. See John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," [sic] in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1830). See also Matthew 5:14: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." King James Version.
[21] Harden, 137.

and "self-scrutinizing national piety,"[22] Leo Hirrel understands antebellum reform in terms of the actions of otherwise latent theological forces, which developed through the theological currents at Yale and Princeton.[23] In this thesis, I will parallel Hirrel's study in that he highlights the Presbyterian and Congregational influences upon and contributions to antebellum reform, and in how he saw that "…religion provided a structure to comprehend [the antebellum reformers'] world and to understand their role in promoting God's will"; through the intellectual and spiritual vehicle of theology as it was carried out with social reform. In order to "promote God's will," a philosophical and theological dilemma if we are to consider traditional understandings of God as all powerful and all knowing, antebellum reformers would use reworked understandings of Calvinist thought to guide their actions. Hirrel notes that until recently, historians of antebellum reform understood theological concepts but did not necessarily explore the dynamic changes in theology which influenced their interest in social action. Holding up the importance of theology in the antebellum reformer's ideology, Hirrel understands reformers as carrying out their God's mandates in the world around them – a process the contemporary historian can better understand by examining theological development and how these changes in religious belief affected antebellum communities.[24]

As this perspective which understands antebellum historiography from a combined historical and religious studies perspective has not been established for nearly as long as its social control or social organization counterparts, [25] it requires further consideration. While certain developments of Christian thought may appear new as a

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[22] Abzug, 6-7.
[23] Leo P. Hirrel, *Children of Wrath: New School Calvinism and Antebellum Reform* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998).
[24] Ibid., 3-6; quotation from p. 6.
[25] Harden, 134-144.

result of the religious tumult of the antebellum era, it is interesting to note the historical patterns seen through this perspective. Whether relating to Norman Cohn's classic study regarding millenarian Christianity[26] or the scholarship in the area of Christian "utopias",[27] these patterns have always existed along the lines of recorded Christian history; that is, like many other religious groups, Christians have always interested themselves in changing the world around them – whether it be through evangelism and conversion or through social and political action.

Therefore, this perspective is consistent with the historical study of religion as it reinterprets the impact of Christianity upon political and social institutions and the influence of "otherworldly" realities adopted by religious virtuosi and applied to the world of these individuals.[28] Further still, this perspective considers situations which may be considered in terms of cause and effect relationships between thoughts and actions, exploring the impact of religious ideas upon secular society. Ultimately, a religious perspective furthers not only an approach to Christian and American history, but an approach to the sociological study of religion in general. As is the case with the historical study of other epochs in human history, the study of the application of old ideas to new situations and emerging philosophies presents a dynamic dialogic which bends the meaning of both the entrenched and long standing idea as well as the new situation.

In Michael Young's recent work, *Bearing Witness Against Sin*, the author describes the development of the American social movement as a whole and its roots in

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[26] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium.*

[27] See Carl J. Guarneri, "The Associationists: Forging a Christian Socialism in Antebellum America," *Church History* 52 (March, 1983): 36-49 for a consideration of utopian attempts in the context of antebellum America.

[28] By noting that religion is "much more stable," I do not ignore the great shifts Christian thought made in America. However, the basic tenets of the Christian faith have remained more or less intact, acting almost as cultural ambassadors across time in relation to political and economic thought.

antebellum reform. Building upon sociological foundations which consider the patterns of collective social protest, Young notes that in America, "Religion was the primary social force that shaped the form, purpose, and identity of the first national movements in the United States."[29] The sociological insight presented by Young connects the initial religious belief to the eventual social action, as the author contributes greatly to our understanding of how and why reform emerged out of religious belief.

The "religious forces" Young describes eventually became influenced by market forces, and "[i]n the context of the social upheaval caused by rapid market expansion, evangelical Christianity proved exceptionally adaptable." In the midst of a more autonomous society tumbling away from a centralized establishment, religion became both democratized with the First Amendment's disestablishment and at the same time was a unifying force which reformers believed was capable of bringing order to the nation, and eventually, the frontier. For this reason, economics would play a large role in the influential status of American religion. However, Young notes that "economic forces cannot take credit for why these religious schemas ran deep and wide through the social institutions of early nineteenth-century America." Instead, one must understand these

[29] Young, 14. Young's major sociological insight comes from the work of Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow. Drawing upon both works, Young notes three major steps in the development of a social movement: 1.) a "shift from particular to 'modular forms' of collective action," which "transposes across different circumstances and locales and can be utilized by different actors and against an array of targets," and is better applied to a fast moving market economy; 2.) an inclusion of "special purposes" of protest, e.g. "temperance" or "antislavery"; and 3.) a development of a collective identity of reform. Young notes the major impetus for change as the formation and expansion of the free market. See also Charles Tilly, "Collective Action in England and America, 1765-1775," in *Tradition, Conflict, and Modernization: Perspectives on the American Revolution*, ed. Richard Maxwell Brown and Don Fehrenbacher (New York: Academic Press, 1977) and Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

schemas in the context of the sociological functions of religion and at least in terms of American religion, with special attention to Christian religious thought.[30]

As with Abzug and Hirrel, Young delineates from an understanding of the earlier mentioned economic and political understandings of history, realizing that the dynamic forces priming the antebellum American social movement as a whole had their power in religious belief. How this religious belief would be channeled would define how one would understand the world around them, whether they be a militant abolitionist of the likes of John Brown, a protestor with less incentive for violence such as Frederick Douglass, or a reformer seeing gradual change through political processes; or even perhaps a conservative Presbyterian who considered reform efforts a distraction from efforts to convert the masses to Christianity, a label we will later consider in relation to Daniel Lathrop of Elyria.

Major Considerations

Owing to several factors, this thesis is focused on Presbyterian and Congregationalist communities in Lorain County, Ohio. Because of a traceable lineage of religious belief beginning in New England, theological development revolves around ideas developed by and attributed to Timothy Dwight and Nathaniel William Taylor of Yale College. Commonly referred to by historians as "New Haven theology" as a result of its geographic and ideological alignment with Yale College, from this theological groundwork would emerge the basis of Lorain County's religious identity in the form of missionary plans and programs directed into the Connecticut Western Reserve. Among these include an organized process of church planting, a theological institute, and a

[30] Young, 16.

mobilization of the "Benevolent Empire," a Presbyterian-supported means by which to carry social reform to the Western frontier.

The Plan of Union, a missionary plan organized during the Presbyterian General Assembly of 1801, will appear throughout this thesis as an integral factor in Lorain County's Presbyterian and Congregational antebellum religious identity.[31] Organized as a means by which to Christianize the American West, the Plan became an organized system with which to plant and supervise new churches. With the role the Plan takes in ecclesiastical relationships and church polity,[32] we will be able to define alliances and schisms alike on the frontier in terms of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, especially with the introduction of reform movements such as temperance and, even more so, antislavery. Considered by Chris Padgett as a "monument to the enterprise of Western Calvinism,"[33] we might see it primarily as a symbol both of the established American Protestant Christianity which was both Calvinist and Trinitarian, and also in terms of the radical direction in which this theological tradition would move, as the Plan came apart at the seams.

Another important institution in this thesis will be that of Oberlin College (Oberlin Collegiate Institute until 1850), [34] a center of ferment when considering the

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[31] Charles L. Zorbaugh, "The Plan of Union in Ohio," *Church History* 6 (June, 1937):145-164 and Amy DeRogatis, *Moral Geography: Maps, Missionaries, and the American Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) both provide concise yet thorough information on the Plan of Union, specifically in Ohio and the Western Reserve. A more general approach to the Plan of Union is cited in Ahlstrom, 456-468 as well as Corrigan and Hudson, 138-140; both covering the national developments and impact of the Plan.

[32] "Church polity" refers to the political structure by which a church organized itself, be it a Presbyterian hierarchy or a Congregationalist system interesting itself in the autonomy of the church body, rather than the statements of a higher ecclesiastical structure.

[33] Chris Padgett, "Evangelicals Divided: Abolition and the Plan of Union's Demise in Ohio's Western Reserve," in *Religion and the Antebellum Debate Over Slavery*, John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay, eds. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998), 249-272, quoted on p. 260.

[34] See Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College*. Also see James H. Fairchild, *Oberlin: The Colony and the College 1833-1883* (Oberlin: E.J. Goodrich, 1883), 41. It should be noted that the Fairchild history of

many facets of the antebellum reform movements and what some historians consider as a chief player in the destruction and failure of the Plan of Union.[35] Founded in part by John J. Shipherd, a promoter of what would become characterized as a new breed of the New Haven theology, Oberlin College would have a major impact upon county religious and political thought and command the attention of national religious leaders as it attempted to create a distinctly Christian community.[36] This thesis will consider Oberlin as a religiously and politically radical community and institute worthy of consideration by any scholar of religious history; yet at the same time will not overstate or take the community out of context, especially when considering the already-existing conflict between Old and New School Presbyterians in New England.[37] While, according to Amy DeRogatis, it fulfilled the goal of the Plan of Union through its formation as a religious community from its beginnings, Oberlin would become a controversial town as a result of the opinions of the leaders of the colony and college pertaining to theology and church

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Oberlin was written by a direct participant in many of the historical developments occurring during this period; thus this source must be questioned in regards to bias, and its role as a secondary source bleeds into being primary. At the same time, it remains a monumental piece of insight to Lorain County religious history. Oberlin's name change occurred amidst changes in how the college viewed itself, and a change in how it wished to represent itself. Depending on the date, "Oberlin Collegiate Institute" and "Oberlin College" will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

[35] DeRogatis, *Moral Geography*, 174. DeRogatis' source, an 1856 history titled *The Plan of Union* by William Sloane Kennedy, will be later considered for both interpretive as well as statistical use. See William Sloane Kennedy, *The Plan of Union: Or a History of the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches of the Western Reserve; with Biographical Sketches of the Early Missionaries* (Hudson, Ohio: Pentagon Stream Press, 1856).

[36] The second major party involved in the foundation of Oberlin Colony was Philo Penfield Stewart. Because Shipherd held the former pulpit of Elyria Presbyterian Church, more attention will be given to Shipherd throughout this thesis. See Fairchild, 25-27 for insight regarding Oberlin's foundation as a distinctly Christian community. Note that in terms of "political thought" I refer to either organized or unorganized statements of political belief, discussion, and social activism rather than a theory of body politic. For Oberlin's widespread influence, see Chapters II and III.

[37] Hirrel, 52. Also see Leo P. Hirrel, "Assessing the Influence of Religious Ideas: Charles Finney's Perfectionism," written for American Religious Experience, West Virginia University. Undated. Available on-line at <http://members.aol.com/leohirrel/finney/index.html>. Retrieved January 18, 2007. It should be noted, as I will discuss in Chapters II and III, that Oberlin's role was seen by many to oil the General Assembly's path to schism.

polity, diminishing its respectability among Old and New School Presbyterians alike.[38] This controversy will be addressed and developed in Chapter III alongside the discussion of the distinct brand of theology which Oberlin would develop and promote in the tradition of and in response to the New Haven theology.

While the history of Oberlin remains a colorful and multi-faceted story, the purpose of this thesis is to move beyond the community, as multiple histories of Oberlin already exist, including the two-volume antebellum history by Robert S. Fletcher. This thesis is more interested in the diffusion of Oberlin theology and polity and, in the context of the New Haven theology, the extent of its impact upon social reform. Further, I am interested in how the religious phenomena throughout the nation affected and was affected by the existence of Oberlin College.

Though many movements came to prominence as a result of the "reform phenomena" of antebellum America, this thesis will focus on the issues of temperance and abolition due to the prominence of these movements with historians and the respective roles they had in relation to the greater society, as well as their importance in the life of the 19th century American. Because the period of antebellum reform encompasses a variety of campaigns, issues such as education reform, women's rights, prison and hospital reform, and the peace crusade will be considered somewhat secondary to abolition and temperance as a result of the limited scope of this work.[39]

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[38] Charles G. Finney illustrates the controversy surrounding Oberlin in his posthumous *Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney Written by Himself* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, 1876), 339 - 347. DeRogatis' research primarily holds up the importance of Oberlin as a "holy ground" in the eyes of its settlers, a theme which this thesis will apply to an extent. See DeRogatis, 173.

[39] This list of reform movements comes from Ahlstrom, 640-647. While it may not be comprehensive, it offers a good general look at the reform movements which accompanied the anti-slavery and temperance campaigns.

However, when considering the existence, survival, and flourishing of Oberlin College, these issues deserve further inquiry as they present interesting byproducts to this thesis.

It should also be noted that this thesis is less interested in formal political processes than in how Lorain County's religious virtuosi contributed to a construction of a new religious reality. As Michael Young notes, these virtuosi tended, unlike today's religious activists, not to align themselves with any one political party. However, polarization did increasingly occur through the outbreak of the Civil War.[40] While we may even observe this pattern in Lorain County, these Christians put much more faith in a jeremiad of Eternal proportions, with their reform efforts being seen as fuel to a fire started by belief in a sacred history. Because these individuals were, to borrow the title of an essay by John McKivigan, to "vote as you pray and pray as you vote," their beliefs would permeate any political interests they had, and would in some cases, such as "Captain" John Brown's, circumvent the system entirely.[41]

Religion and Antebellum Reform in Lorain County

If the new wave of scholarship is strong enough to stand up to scrutiny, earlier interpretive stances will apply to more than just the national reform movements because the reformers do in fact have the same religious and intellectual foundations. The primary reason for this study's emphasis upon Presbyterian and Congregational Protestants is that it attempts to parallel Hirrel's study in his focus on Presbyterians and Congregationalists within the limited geographic area of Lorain County, Ohio. The second reason for the consideration of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches is

[40] Young, 48.
[41] See John R. McKivigan, "Vote as You Pray and Pray as You Vote: Church-Oriented Abolitionism and Antislavery Politics," in *Crusaders and Compromisers: Essays on the Relationship of the Antislavery Struggle to the Antebellum Party System*, ed. Alan Kraut (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 179-204.

more practical: the influential yet ill-fated role of the Plan of Union which heavily influenced Lorain County, as is the third: Lorain County's geographic location in the Connecticut Western Reserve with the fourth reason being the ever the easy access to primary sources – a result of a highly literate and educated clergy and laity who held sway in society, and as a result, also in reform movements.[42]

In order to understand Lorain County, this research will relate to most community studies, but only inasmuch as it is contained in a set geographic area. Instead of being heavily reliant on church relations to non-church members, I will focus primarily upon the intellectual currents of these churches and towns. In doing so, I hope to combine the theoretical platforms of Abzug and Hirrel and apply them to a geographically limited area which feeds upon currents of religious ideas flowing at the level of national prominence.[43]

While it is dependent upon these religious currents which occur at the national level, Oberlin's existence would force the county to eventually become a new center of religious thought, apart from Yale College or Hudson's Western Reserve College. Because Oberlin College would become such a prominent figure on the landscape of antebellum reform, our subjects will be skewed by its influence.[44] To fully realize the

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[42] The amount to which education was stressed among Presbyterian and Congregationalist clergy may be seen in Kennedy, *The Plan of Union*, 88. An examination of the pastors of Presbyterian and Congregational origin in Lorain County will reveal links to their theological training, and where applicable, where they received an A.B. or equivalent. Note the connections with New Haven theology and its impact upon New England as a whole, with pastors hailing from Yale, Princeton, Auburn, and other centers of American theology.

[43] By "community study," I refer to a case study of a set geographic area. Traditionally, these studies tend to take a social control/social organization approach to the subject as they are less interested in tracking ideas and more interested in interpreting the relationship between religious virtuosi and the population of the community at hand. Notable examples of community studies include Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978) and John W. Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998).

[44] Thanks to Robert Abzug for pointing this out while discussing my work via e-mail correspondence.

college's impact upon its community and region, we must examine Lorain County, albeit with an understanding that the county will not be a "normal" cross-section of Ohio in terms of religious history. However, one may argue that with the dynamic nature of American religious institutions and their tendency to shape the political and social structures around them, it is hard, if not impossible to find a community to examine which might be considered "ordinary," especially considering the heterogeneity of religion brought forth by the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses of the First Amendment, an issue we will explore in the conclusion.

This thesis endeavors to understand the religious question of the period as a sort of theoretical perspective, using antebellum reform activities as they existed and can be examined in Lorain County as a case study to review and perhaps reinterpret the work of Abzug, Hirrel, and Young, who uphold the importance of religion in antebellum reform. This will help us to understand how the influence and development of theology (namely from New Haven and Oberlin) is directly applicable to antebellum reform movements in Lorain County, Ohio, in the context of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of the county, and how these theologies manifest in the temperance and anti-slavery movements which existed throughout the county. Further questions will include the role of intra-church polity, which in many cases determines how ecclesiastical relations are handled by each church body.

Further, I am interested in Oberlin College's impact as we see the community and institution as a radical group of Congregationalists existing among a more moderate and Calvinist milieu. It is my hope that in uncovering these religious inner workings of Lorain County we will be able to further our understanding of what many may consider

much more local and "low key" religious virtuosi, and the extent of the influence of their ministries in their lives and upon their worlds. By understanding the religious inner workings of Lorain County both the limitations and effectiveness of Abzug, Hirrel, and Young's respective perspectives should uncover themselves with my research. In addition, I hope to further our understanding of social movements implemented by religious virtuosi and their influence in the greater society, an important effort in a nation deemed the "righteous empire."[45]

A Framework for Understanding the Religious Roots of American Reform

As we have explored, we can establish that religious constructions of reality seek to contemplate and explore the world in which they are created. In the Christian religion, certain traditions of theology understand, much like their non-Christian counterparts, an "ideal" world in which humans should live while contemplating what exactly this world is and by what means it should come to being. At the core of this "perfect" reality lies Christian dogma, which, as illustrated in Augustine's *The City of God*, is believed to reign superior to "man-made" philosophies founded on sinful human premonition rather than theological truths. Because this construction of reality is to its proponents a *valid* reality which governs the believer's universe, there is incentive for Christians to contemplate what this reality is, and how it should come into being.

At the core of this reality lies the Christian understanding of sacred history, seen through this work as an overarching theme considering six stages which include the Creation of humanity for the pleasure of God, the Fall (and pending original sin) of the human race, the Exodus signifying the "chosen" nature of a select few, Redemption

[45] Martin E. Marty, *The Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: Dial Press, 1970).

through the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ as represented in Trinitarian Christianity, the act of Evangelism by which the religion is spread, and finally, the end of the world and return of God; culminating in the immediate and ultimate purification of God's creation with the purging of sin. It should be further noted that this narrative is best applied to Western Protestant Trinitarian Christianity, from which the theological foundations grew the religious traditions of the reformers with whom we are concerned.

Most striking among these stages is the practice of evangelism, through which Christians have sought converts to religion, and in doing so, felt the need to grow in social and political influence. This influence, and the necessity for it, has two major and corresponding objects: to assist Christians in spreading their message while bettering the very social and political institutions and structures through which they seek to channel change. In addition, an interest in the purification of what the Christian refers to as the "body of Christ" emerges, as believers seek to teach already converted members of their religion in order to create a more effective and efficient means by which to spread the tenets of Christianity. In American history, we have commonly seen the practice of evangelism through the method of revivalism, especially as individual revivals of religion shook and reshaped the social fabric of the nation. During the Second Great Awakening, revivalism fused into reform efforts as evangelism was reinterpreted for a new generation as well as a new political and social order. We can see this fusion as an indication of the need to perfect the Christian community, to spread religion, and to ease society into a state of Christian understandings of morality.

It is this connection to social and political structures which most strikingly echoes Augustine's *City of God*, and would follow Puritans onto the soil and beyond at

Massachusetts Bay Colony and beyond. Continuing these traditions, antebellum reformers understood their world as existing on a cosmic timeline, much like that of their spiritual predecessors, and in the earlier mentioned Christian understanding of history. America, as we will explore, was seen by many (though certainly not all) as an opportunity with which to forge new paths in creating a new spiritual empire. This new spiritual empire hearkens back to the Christian understanding of the meaning of creation: the ultimate glorification of God and an understanding that this worship manifests itself in the daily life of the believer; therefore, political and social reform and influence, in the eyes of a believer, would encourage worship of God by *all* in society.

In addition to providing commentary to the study of American Christianity, antebellum reform provides vital commentary regarding the nature of the two areas of reform we will consider: the temperance and antislavery movements. Because religious ideas infiltrated political and social understandings of reality, the underpinnings of Christian doctrine and its location at the bases of these movements cannot be ignored. While examining how religious ideas defined reform, we can use the route of a community study to explore how reform redefined the religious landscape of America to the extent that these new social ideas inculcated themselves into the very essence of Christian religion.

When the First Congregational Church of Wellington in 1842 voted to rid fermented wine from its use at communion, its members did so fully knowing that their actions collided with eighteen-hundred years of Christian tradition. This thesis endeavors to understand why such a great step might be taken, and how these people came to their conclusions. This question and others represent the massive theological shifts in

American religion resulting from the reform movements. Thus, we will need to explore reform not merely as an application of Christian belief upon the reformer's world, but as a process by which American Christianity saw massive shifts – to the extent of redefining the religion itself in the context of the history of a new nation.

CHAPTER II

"The Redeemer's New Empire": Christianity in America and the City of God

> We are all a little wild here with numberless projects of social reform. Not a reading man but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket.
>
> Ralph Waldo Emerson to
> Thomas Carlyle, 1840.[1]

To Jonathan Edwards and Lyman Beecher, it was not merely an opinion, but a perceived reality, that the triumphal return and commencing thousand-year reign of Christ would commence in the near future as America remained at the height of its new found economic and political power.[2] Beecher would elaborate his opinion in a sermon published in 1835 that this millennium not only required a morally cleansed nation which saw many converts to Christianity, but that the crux of these efforts lay on the expanding Western frontier. To promote efforts culminating in Christ's return, Beecher advocated a New England-based system of churches, colleges to train ministers, and communities with which to inspire moral righteousness in order to save the West from the Roman Catholic Church, the morally bankrupt, and those of religious persuasion far outside the sphere of respectable orthodoxy.[3]

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[1] Ralph W. Emerson to Thomas Carlyle, 30 October 1840 in *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1834-1872*, ed. Charles E. Norton (Boston: J.R. Osgood and Company, 1883), 308. "The Redeemer's New Empire" is adapted from Benjamin Rush to Ashbel Green, 11 August, 1787, in L.H. Butterfield, ed., *Letters of Benjamin Rush* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), I, 433-4. Quoted in Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 26.

[2] Lyman Beecher, *Plea for the West* (Cincinnati: Truman & Smith, 1835), 9-10.

[3] Ibid., In passim.

Beecher's work would come at the end of the life of a missionary plan constructed as a joint enterprise between New England Presbyterians and Congregationalists. While this plan had helped to define the landscape of frontier Presbyterianism it had not, at least in Beecher's opinion, alleviated the problem of such a large task: the mass conversion of a religiously, politically, and socially dynamic populace whose acknowledgement of Christianity could usher Christ's Second Coming. Beecher's concerns, while being neither new nor original, were indicative of several chief worries with which the American clergy would wrestle. Though the concerns – how to convert the populace – were old, perhaps ancient, the setting was new and unusual as American religion was no longer established or officially supported by a centralized state.

Replacing state-run churches and fear of organized reaction against those who might be deemed "enemies" of the Church were an assortment of religious Americans who developed, disseminated, and quarreled over religious ideas with freedom and energy rarely before seen. Perhaps as a result of this *de-facto* diversity on the national level and the religious fervor it led to – as well as the mixture of irreligion and pluralism it allowed – countless American Presbyterians and Congregationalists considered themselves as parallels to biblical counterparts, seeing themselves carrying on traditions their forefathers had brought to Plymouth forward into the New Millennium which they believed God had predestined.[4]

One of these individuals, Dr. Benjamin Rush, the well-known physician to the Continental Army during the Revolution, conceived of America in terms of the "Redeemer's new empire," with ready anticipation of being a part of God's "chosen nation." Rush considered a need to reform society which Robert Abzug notes

[4] Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 5.

"constituted a blueprint for the detailed construction of society and the ritual conduct of everyday life, [which was] all bent on creating a sacralized Christian Republican way of life."[5]

In seeing America as a harbinger of God's Millennium, Rush was not alone. Other New Englanders gave America a unique and special position in what Abzug refers to as a "cosmic history" which understands a timeline of biblical origin culminating in the destruction of sin and the unrepentant sinner.[6] Along with interpreting Massachusetts Bay Colony as a "city upon a hill," New England clergy considered their position as a special and unique one – yet at the same time just as real to the cosmic history as it was steeped in allegory and rhetoric. In carrying out daily acts of benevolence and in the effort to transform society into being one smiled upon by the Eternal, the clergy reaffirmed that the position God had formulated for the new nation in the cosmic history was that of a lofty and important one.

The conception of America as a sort of "New Jerusalem" lay at the heart of American theology and church polity, and is how many early American Christians understood their place in the cosmic theatre.[7] Antebellum reform – referring to reform movements occurring during the period before the American Civil War – would continue this theme of an omnipotent God's election of a nation in a myriad of ways to bring the Millennium forth. In order to understand the role reformers saw their work as playing in achieving the Millennium, we must first understand shifts in theology and church polity –

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[5] Abzug, 25-26.

[6] By "cosmic history," Abzug refers to an understanding that an omniscient, all knowing God would have a Divine Plan already laid out. As Abzug notes, many Americans contributed to this concept with a special place for America in this story.

[7] Ibid., 33. This thesis is not intended to interpret or promote any perspective of America as an "official" Christian nation, but to understand the varying perspectives its citizens have had and do have pertaining to religion. See Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association, 1 January, 1802, Library of Congress. Available on-line at <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>. Retrieved March 17, 2007.

both of which would have enduring influence in Lorain County and the greater Western Reserve. Before we consider these shifts, however, we must work from an even more general perspective in identifying the role of America's major religious denominations.

Just as the nation was changing politically, socially, and economically in the early and mid-nineteenth century, so too would America's religious structures. This chapter is designed to explore these structures and briefly examine how orthodox Presbyterian and Congregationalist groups shifted to include populist strands of religion in Lorain County, Ohio. An understanding of theology and church polity allows us to have a frame of reference, especially when considering subjects of Presbyterian and Congregational origin, as both parties wove together and apart in terms of theology and church polity through observable trends which historians can measure by examining church relationships.

Orthodoxy and Populism

As we know, early patterns of settlement in North America included religious groups outside of the Anglican structures which defined much of the population of England, leading to an emerging sense of pluralism for Christian denominations in the New World. With the ultimate official disestablishment of American religion came the opportunity for countless previously muffled or simply nonexistent religious sects to stabilize, grow, and influence the masses. Michael Young notes that these sects would consist of two major groups: a group of "orthodox" or more established sects generally appealing those of higher social and economic origin who tended to be more conservative in theology and practice; and a group of "populist" sects which included members from lower parts of the socioeconomic strata who are often characterized as being less

Calvinistic in theology and more expressive in their religious belief, much to the chagrin of their orthodox counterparts.[8] The former group of "orthodox" denominations would nominally include Presbyterians and Congregationalists, while the latter "populist" set constituted Methodists and Baptists. While all four of these sects are English in origin, American religious virtuosi would see to it that many more sects would come to a head through the ongoing turmoil of nineteenth century American religious history, including the creation of the Mormons, or Latter-day Saints, a distinctly American Christian religious tradition.[9]

Beginning at the end of the 18th century, a period of revivals known as the "Second Great Awakening" would sweep across the nation. While this wave of religious enthusiasm from both orthodox Presbyterians and populist Methodists would in fact create the most important basis for antebellum reform, Michael Young rightfully notes that "any summary statement [of the Second Great Awakening] risks severe misrepresentation." Initially, there was no "straightforward change" in American religion as a result of the Second Great Awakening, although the period represented what Young notes as the development of a "genuinely American" species of religious belief and practice.[10] The Second Great Awakening, as a result, represents both a conundrum to the historian seeking answers to the beginnings of antebellum reform as it is such a difficult phenomenon to understand while it gives wonderful testament to the diverse roots which historians have claimed gave birth to various American social movements.

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[8] Young, 52-3. Nathan Hatch notes the exponential gains these populist groups attained as a result of the Second Great Awakening. See Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), In passim.

[9] Hatch also notes two denominations which we might say were "invented" in America, belonging to the populist set of denominations: Millerites and Mormons.

[10] Young, 49.

Young contends that the orthodox and populist arms of American religion can be chiefly defined by their theology. Calvinists usually occupied the ranks of orthodoxy (except for many Baptists), while populism supported and maintained what Young describes as "an Arminian doctrine of free will." Proponents of orthodoxy tended to frown upon more "charismatic" revivals of populist religions, while populists were dismayed by the hierarchical structure inherent in the Presbyterian system of ecclesiastical structure.[11] Along with varying belief and practice, reform would also be carried out differently depending on which religious camp the individual subscribed their allegiance. Orthodox denominations patronized organized social programs which sought to pump funds and people into areas needing reform, ideally resulting in the purification of society. Because the fact that our subjects' lineage is traceable to New England, we will consider the "orthodox" arm of American religion as it represented the more organized, albeit declining, brand of belief and practice.[12]

Theological Shift

In 1791, Benjamin Rush declared that "Republicanism is a part of the truth of Christianity." Rush, who had already disassociated himself from the Presbyterian Church in 1787, had come to the conclusion that Calvinism as practiced by Presbyterians was anti-Republican.[13] In turn, as others had done before him, Rush questioned the Calvinist theology's grasp upon philosophical and religious problems such as election as he stood in the light of emerging political theories which had increasingly elevated the role of reason. Eventually, American theologians such as Timothy Dwight and Nathaniel Taylor would begin to elevate the role of free will in ways parallel to the greater emphasis upon

[11] Ibid., 52-3. Quoted on p. 53.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Abzug, 26.

reason in Enlightenment political philosophy, changing, for many, the appearance of American Calvinism.[14] With oncoming intellectual shifts organized by theologians like Dwight and perpetuated by adherents like Rush, the Old Calvinism of American religious thought was beginning to dissolve in the ocean of the Enlightenment ideals which preceded the American Revolution.

Barbara Cross notes the threat which European latitudinarians, deists, and atheists posed for American Trinitarian Calvinism by mentioning the fact that Lyman Beecher would later claim that during his youth "every farm lad who dressed flax in the barn had read Tom Paine, and when he [Beecher] entered Yale in 1793, students addressed each other as Voltaire, d'Alembert, [and] Diderot."[15] The new nation's foremost political theorists and philosophers who would become influential politicians paralleled this description. As Cross notes, Ezra Stiles, President of Yale College in 1783, would complain "that people took it for granted that 'deists' and agnostics were 'the most suitable persons' for office," a complaint probably taken from real observations, whether it be George Washington's refusal to kneel in communion, James Madison's lack of church membership, or perhaps most alarming, Thomas Jefferson's understanding of the doctrines of much of American Christianity as the "deliria of crazed imaginations,"[16] and his own authorship of a new version of the Bible – complete with the removal of passages suggesting the divinity of Jesus Christ.[17] In turn, American Calvinism would see the

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[14] These patterns are interpreted in Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity.* See especially 170-179.
[15] Lyman Beecher, *Autobiography*, ed. by Barbara Cross. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1961), xix.
[16] Ibid., xx. Quoted in Cross, originally from *Basic Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. by Philip Foner (New York: Willey Book Company, 1944), 775.
[17] See Corrigan, 195. See also Thomas Jefferson, *The Life and Morals of Jesus* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), available on-line at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/JefJesu.html>. Retrieved September 21, 2007.

beginning of a new epoch of religious thought born in the halls of Yale College as a response to this new intellectual threat.

Early Intellectual and Theological Shifts

The intellectual forerunner of much of the period's religious thought is Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College. Dwight's role in the Presbyterian genesis of the Second Great Awakening recalls both his famous grandfather, Jonathan Edwards, and ahead to the changing face of American religion. Sydney Ahlstrom remarks that "[Dwight's] primary crusade was against infidelity and in behalf of true doctrine and experimental religion."[18] Abzug notes Dwight as developing visions of America as "harbinger of the Millennium, [with] Manichean visions of Satan's legions at work, [and an] idealization of New England Society," all which shaped new understandings of what Orthodoxy would come to mean to Dwight's contemporaries. Dwight's dualism was cosmic in origin, as he believed that God and the Devil were engaged in spiritual warfare ultimately resulting in God's reign, and would accommodate the developing theologies permeating much of the antebellum period. To narrate this process, Dwight nodded to a sacred history rooted in a cosmic timeline, constructing his reality upon this Manicheanism.[19]

Two of Dwight's most notable disciples, Nathaniel William Taylor and Lyman Beecher, would develop a major theological strain which would influence Lorain County

[18] By "Presbyterian genesis," I refer to the fact that while the Second Great Awakening accumulated in the midst of many denominations, Dwight has, as Ahlstrom describes, an important role in perpetuating many of the first revivals by Presbyterians at Yale College. See Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 418-9.
[19] Abzug, 37.

and the rest of the Western Reserve.[20] The ripples in the ocean of theology begin with the shifting theological current proposed by Taylor, Professor of Didactic Theology at Yale College from 1822-1858. Following the experiences of revivalists in the two Great Awakenings, Taylor and his contemporaries wrestled with the problem of the role of the evangelist in a soteriological perspective which placed the Holy Spirit, rather than the evangelist or convert, as the initiator of salvation.[21] Further, with the pressing issues of Unitarianism, Deism, and the development of other intellectual currents, Taylor was forced to consider an orthodox theology in the milieu of an ever changing world which had been increasingly relying upon – rather than simply surviving alongside Enlightenment interpretations of reason and its role in the world. Ultimately, Taylor's theology would place this reason, in the form of free will, upon a level as important as God's revelation to humanity. The agency of the individual was therefore now altered: individuals, if willing, could now consider themselves able to initiate their own salvation.[22]

William Sutton notes that Taylor's contribution was "centered on three critical assumptions: the benevolence of God, his moral government, and human free agency."[23] In terms of social movements, Taylor's God plays perfectly into the mindset of several "religious virtuosi" who would roam the nation. These virtuosi, ranging in personality and belief from the likes of Joseph Smith, Jr. to Lyman Beecher to William Miller, were

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[20] While both Taylor and Beecher were important in promoting the New Haven theology, Taylor receives credit for the brunt of the intellectual development, where Beecher receives notoriety for carrying out the ideas of Dwight and Taylor through preaching. See Abzug, 39-40.
[21] George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the Rise of New School Evangelicalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 46-47.
[22] Leo P. Hirrel, *Children of Wrath*, 34-9.
[23] William R. Sutton, "Benevolent Calvinism and the Moral Government of God: The Influence of Nathaniel W. Taylor on Revivalism in the Second Great Awakening," in *Religion and American Culture* 2 (Winter, 1992): 23-47. Sutton notes the changes in Calvinism espoused by Taylor as a "democratic melioration of Calvinist revivalism."

diverse in their beliefs while they still reinforced the acknowledgment of human free will, and in turn, voluntary human conversion. Thus, Taylor's contribution would become the cornerstone of religious antebellum reform for New School Presbyterians, as well as much of the period itself.[24]

Attacked by cries of heresy and "Pelagianism," the New Haven theology of Dwight and Taylor would be an instrumental factor in the 1837 Schism of the Presbyterian Church.[25] Theologians such as Old School Calvinist Charles Hodge would accuse Taylor of breaching long held Calvinist tradition, worrying that salvation would become to be known as originating from human works – as opposed to the grace of God.[26] Divided between Old School (Old Calvinist) and New School (predominately New Haven-oriented) components, the separation would mold Lorain County's religious structure through missionary impulses originating in the East, by establishing predominately New School ministers and congregations throughout the area. Lorain County would be augmented by the Synod of the Western Reserve, whose members would constitute half of the voting strength of New School Presbyterians in the Presbyterian General Assembly, their concentration in Northeast Ohio occurring much to the chagrin of the established Old School orthodox arm of the Assembly.[27]

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[24] Hirrel, 39-40.

[25] Marsden, 67. Note, however, that Marsden points out that "The theological issue [was]… integrally bound up in several important factors contributing to the division…" including "…(1) the meaning of confessionalism, (2) Presbyterian polity, (3) the relation of the church to the 'Evangelical united front,' (4) methods of revivalism, (5) theology itself, and (6) slavery."

[26] Ibid., 44. "Pelagianism" used in this sense refers to the Pelagius mentioned by and declared heretical by Augustine of Hippo and other early theologians. Pelagianism as it is commonly referred to understands a variation of the concept of the human having influence with will as a result of a lack of original sin. See John Bowden, ed., *Encyclopedia of Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 514-515, 1302. Also see F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1248-1259, 1481. See also Hirrel, 44.

[27] Marsden, 63. In Chapter IV of *Children of Wrath* (pp. 54-73), Hirrel outlines several schisms in the Presbyterian and Congregational communities, underlining the lack of surprise many likely felt with the Schism of 1837.

Charles Grandison Finney and Theology at Oberlin

No discussion of Charles Finney and his contemporaries can be made without mentioning the phenomenon of the religious revival and the place it had in American social and religious life, as his theology and the means by which he communicated this theology would find their roots in his personal conversion to Christianity. Used as an immediate means to reach mass audiences with religious messages, revivals would continue to shape theology and polity while operating as a major form of expansion and development for frontier churches. Sydney Ahlstrom notes that early revivals such as Cane Ridge (Kentucky, 1801) poured "vitality" into existing churches, allowing each church body – even if only for a short time – to feel as if it were touched by the hand of God.

This feeling of divine intervention was likely not ill-applied, as camp meetings would become known for their exuberant outpourings of spirituality. While the religious revival in America was not a new phenomenon for the Second Great Awakening, it expanded, tested, and consumed the theology, polity, and understandings of cosmic history of those denominations which wished to utilize the method. Most notable, perhaps, was the division revivalism caused, resulting in changes pertaining to the theological and social systems of American Christianity, a pattern we can observe with Presbyterians and Congregationalists both in New England and in Lorain County, Ohio, as well as with the many reform movements our subjects carried out through their interpretations of the edicts of God.[28]

[28] Ahlstrom, 435-6. See 444-5 for a brief discussion of revivalism as pertaining to Presbyterians. As we shall explore, revivalism was often seen on the Lorain County frontier.

Born in Warren, Connecticut, in 1792 and moving with his family to Oneida County, New York, two years later, Charles Grandison Finney became a religious virtuoso from an unlikely background, at least as compared with other Presbyterian counterparts. In 1812, Finney moved back to Warren to proceed with his education, eventually entering a legal apprenticeship. By this point in his life, he had become a member of a Masonic Lodge and began to practice regular church attendance for the first time in his life. While this period allowed Finney basic instruction in subjects such as Christian theology, as he bought his first Bible for the sake of his legal profession, Finney had still not accepted much of New England's Calvinist theology. Problems such as the Calvinist interpretations of total depravity and predestination drove Finney to question much of what his new minister taught him.[29] However, in 1821, Finney's soul would be pushed over the edge, in an often cited and well known conversion, described in his *Memoirs*. Feeling the "impression [of God and salvation overcoming him] like a wave of electricity," Finney "wept aloud with joy and love," at the onset of his conversion experience.[30]

Finney's law career would end as soon as his ministry would begin. Almost immediately after his conversion experience, Finney recounts a church deacon visiting the law office to discuss a pending case. When the deacon asked if Finney was ready to attend the trial, Finney replied, that "…I have a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead His cause, and I cannot plead yours." Finney's *Memoirs* continue with his sudden change in occupation:

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[29] James E. Johnson, "Charles G. Finney and a Theology of Revivalism," in *Church History* 38 (September, 1963): 338-58.
[30] Charles G. Finney, *Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney*, 20-1. Finney's early biography and conversion experience are noted by Abzug, 65-6.

> I soon sallied forth from the office to converse with those whom I should meet about their souls. I had the impression, which has never left my mind, that God wanted me to preach the Gospel, and that I must begin immediately. I somehow seemed to know it. If you ask me how I knew it, I cannot tell how I knew it, any more than I can tell how I knew that was the love of God and the baptism of the Holy Ghost which I had received. I did somehow know it with a certainty that was past all possibility of doubt. And so I seemed to know that the Lord commissioned me to preach the Gospel.[31]

During his revival campaigns in New York, Finney was known for his "new measures," utilizing approaches previously employed by Methodist circuit riders to convert as many souls to Christianity as possible, with a heavy emphasis on personal conversion – which probably can be attributed to Finney's own rather extravagant experience. These tactics of conversion, emotionally charged to the hilt, would come to include such revival phenomena as participants physically fainting, a practice usually associated with Methodist and not more rigid Presbyterian audiences, who were concerned with the threat populist ministers brought upon established power structures.[32]

With these new measures came the same problems with the old theology which Taylor and others had encountered, including how the individual was able to convert to Christianity upon their own terms with a God who was omniscient and all powerful; as revivalists further pondered if the religious revival came upon humanity as a result of human agency rather than the will of God. Finney's answer to these questions would come through his early revivalism, as he molded the frameworks of Dwight, Taylor, and Beecher to his conceptualizations of free will. As we shall see, his answer to the second question in the affirmative created a foundation for much of his epistemological bases. Eventually, Finney would adapt new theological perspectives to cope with this problem, as his belief system evolved from an adapted version of New Haven theology into a

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[31] Finney, 24-5.
[32] Abzug, 67.

unique and much more radical answer to the question of humanity's role in God's universe.[33]

Finney's next major theological shifts epitomized the fears Old Calvinists possessed regarding the New Haven theology and would have distinct ties to Lorain County, Ohio.[34] Just as Taylor's theological system had developed in response to the First and Second Great Awakenings, revival fervor on the frontier pushed Finney to reinterpret Christian soteriology to create what might be considered a "medley" of sorts in terms of a systematic theology. While he still based his system upon the New England theology, Finney borrowed from other sources. Just as Rush claimed staunch Calvinism to be anti-Republican, Finney too claimed staunch Calvinism in a negative tone – yet alarmed his contemporaries by considering it anti-*Christian*. Finney rejected Calvinist interpretations of election as the Oberlin faculty supported his convictions regarding the importance of human ability in salvation. Leo Hirrel provides a concise overview of Finney's reaction to the problem:

> Like Taylor, Finney had argued that the Atonement of Christ had served a governmental purpose, making a pardon of repentant sinners consistent with God's moral government. He specifically denied that justification by faith could be accomplished unless accompanied by good works and personal holiness… [in response to the same problems encountered by Martin Luther,] Finney reasoned that a perfect God demands perfect obedience to His law.[35]

Finney's repudiation of Calvinism certainly holds firm in his understanding of the theology as leading to a "fatalistic conception of life." Instead of waiting to be saved,

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[33] Hirrel, "Assessing the Influence of Religious Ideas."
[34] Hirrel, *Children of Wrath*, 45.
[35] Ibid., 49-50.

Finney wanted individual converts to in effect *allow* God to save them – but not necessarily save themselves – as suggesting so would negate the role of Christ.[36]

In 1835, Finney had accepted a call to become Professor of Theology at Oberlin Collegiate Institute.[37] The Oberlin faculty was saturated with men willing to adapt alternative answers to the problems of election. With Oberlin's radical nature, these convictions would develop into what Old and New School Calvinists alike considered a heresy: an understanding of soteriology which Finney would label as "sanctification."[38] Officially adopted in the autumn of 1836 after a series of revival meetings, the concept of sanctification inspired Oberlinites to believe that they could in fact rise to the point of perfection in their life on earth. As a result of the heavy emphasis upon human ability in spiritual growth, Finney and Mahan saw the personal moral government as not only attainable but vital to the Christian's experience.[39]

When attempting to label Finney and his brand of theology, Allen Guelzo notes that historians have trouble identifying just who Finney is and what he believed. Considering Finney in the tradition of Jonathan Edwards (a parallel Finney himself

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[36] Johnson, 343.

[37] Fletcher notes Finney's role in the exodus of students from Lane Seminary, Cincinnati known as the "Lane Rebels" in realigning themselves with Oberlin College. See Fletcher, 172-5. Considerations of brevity force me to omit a more detailed explanation here. See Chapter V for more detail pertaining to the "Lane Exodus" and its impact upon Lorain County.

[38] Fletcher mentions that other terms have been attributed to Finney's belief. Terms Fletcher also mentions include "perfectionism," and "holiness." I will choose to use sanctification as it is employed by Finney in *Lectures on Systematic Theology*. See Fletcher, 223. See also Charles Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology,* ed. by James H. Fairchild (London: William Tegg and Co.: 1851; New York: G.H. Doran, Co., 1878).

[39] Fletcher, 223-31. It should be mentioned that Finney was certainly not alone at Oberlin in terms of his adoption of this new theology. In 1840, Mahan had published a book, *Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection*, which developed the case for and defended Christian perfection. Unfortunately, Finney's position as a prominent evangelist on the national scene prohibits me from exploring Mahan more, and Mahan's position seems greatly overshadowed by that of his better known contemporary. See Asa Mahan, *Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection with other Kindred Subjects, Illustrated and Confirmed in a Series of Discourses Designed to Throw Light on the Way of Holiness* (Boston: D.S. King, 1840). For more on Mahan, see Barbara Zikmund, "Asa Mahan and Oberlin Perfectionism," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1969).

contemplated and made known), Guelzo asserts that Finney's theology is not a "new" understanding of the free will question, but a continuation of New England religious thought which is difficult for historians to understand, as Finney does not easily fall into formal categories of "Calvinist" or "Arminian" understandings of soteriology.[40] In connecting Finney with Edwards, Guelzo's argument revolves around the concepts of free will and total depravity as he warns historians not to view Finney's statements in isolation.[41] Indeed, Guelzo provides evidence with selections of Finney's own systematic theology which do in fact affirm concepts such as the omniscience of God and total depravity, while pointing to mentions of free will by other New England theologians. However, as we shall see, regardless of how Finney viewed his own theology, his contemporaries feared it to the point of carrying out immediate and total ecclesiastical separation.

A second perspective takes Finney's theology as a radical strand of thought which led to the isolation of Oberlin.[42] While Finney did come from the Presbyterian strain of New England, he was not formally educated in systematic theology, taking much of his training instead from Rev. George Gale, a Presbyterian minister Finney credits with his conversion. Abzug notes that Finney developed a reputation as "a self-defined, self-made Christian itinerant whose church credentials were marginal."[43] For many, his lack of experience was justified by his leadership in the revivals taking place in Western New

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[40] Allen C. Guelzo, "An Heir or a Rebel? Charles Grandison Finney and the New England Theology," in *Journal of the Early Republic*, 17 (Spring, 1997): 61-94.
[41] Ibid., 69-70.
[42] See Hirrel, *Children of Wrath*, 47-53 and Abzug, 67-70. Abzug's consideration of Finney relates to Finney's revivalism in New York rather than Hirrel's interpretation of theological separation.
[43] Abzug, 59-60; 64-7. Note that Abzug also refers to a contemporary of Finney, Nathaniel S. S. Beman. Abzug credits Beman and Finney with developing fears that they "…could at crucial moments reformulate the sacred even in the most tradition-bound of sects…[deeply affecting] the religious life of the West, reform, and ultimately American religion in general." Quoted in pp. 59-60.

York, where Finney made his mark in the "burned-over district," an area so named as a result of the frequent revivals regularly circulating through the region.[44] Leo Hirrel notes that these revivals became a magnet to hostility, as clergy disapproved of Finney's interference.[45]

Finney's positions on these issues deepened the chasm between himself and established orthodox Presbyterian clergy, culminating in the New Lebanon Conference of 1827, a questioning of the minister's belief, practice, and impact. While the New Lebanon Conference quelled Finney's own cries of degeneracy among Presbyterians as well as his criticisms of clergy for a time, Finney's own developing views pertaining to church theology and polity would not be muffled, being highlighted and finally fully expressed during his long term at Oberlin.[46] For this thesis, I combine the perspectives of Guelzo and Hirrel in order to color my understanding of what exactly occurred at Oberlin and why historians should care. While Guelzo is correct in assuming that much of Finney's theological conviction can be seen as a continuation of New England theology, Guelzo seems to ignore issues such as conflicts in church polity (which will be discussed later) as well as the separatist views perpetuated by both pro and anti-Finney churches when considering his theological and ecclesiastical views.[47] Hirrel and Abzug are correct

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[44] See Whitney Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950).
[45] Hirrel, 48-9.
[46] Hirrel, "Assessing the Influence of Religious Ideas." It should be noted that Hirrel divides Finney's life into three phases: "(1) the beginning, which lasted until the New Lebanon Conference of 1827; (2) the respectable phase, which lasted from the New Lebanon Conference until Finney's movement to Oberlin in 1835 followed by his espousal of a perfectionist theology two years later; and (3) the perfectionist or Oberlin phase, which continued for the remainder of his life." In this thesis, I am mostly concerned with the Oberlin phase. Note that James E. Johnson supports this in "Charles G. Finney and a Theology of Revivalism," 343. See also Johnson's source, Charles C. Cole, *The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists.*
[47] Another extreme to Guelzo's thought might deem Finney as "Arminian." For an example of this, see Amy DeRogatis, *Moral Geography*, 157. While DeRogatis' understanding is secondary to her work, and in

in contemplating Finney's alienation as a result of the antebellum religious spectrum and the conflict accompanying a debate of Calvinist theology, and this is exactly where my thesis begins. However, measuring estrangement in any context is difficult, requiring us to formulate a means by which to understand how this isolation can be observed. I will attempt to understand this isolation in the context of Lorain County as a recognizable trend, with ecclesiastical relationships being a key indication of the taking of sides in theological debates.

In relation to Beecher's "cosmic theater," Finney agreed with Beecher on many major themes, albeit through the lens of his own theology. Present was the Manichean power struggle between God and the Devil. However, Finney and his followers implied an immediacy of the Millennium not present in his more conservative contemporaries. Abzug notes:

> ...those who emerged from the Finney revival to become reformers were in truth rebels against the narrowness of denomination and geography, fully ready to accept and expand upon the logic of millennial evangelical militancy. They truly posed a threat to order – not so much to the physical order of society as to the sacred order that linked more conservative religionists to the cosmos.[48]

The acceptance and expansion upon the "logic of millennial evangelical militancy" to which Abzug refers would generate questions vitally important to the antebellum reformer, and ties religious belief to the very social action in which this thesis is interested. By seeing the individual as able to better themselves based upon her or his own will, Finney and his followers continued the trend of New Haven theologians while simultaneously reinterpreting and reevaluating the cosmic theater of Beecher and other moderates. Ultimately, this expansion would indeed threaten the order of the elite

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effect, does not put her thesis into question, it only reaffirms Guelzo's indication of the general confusion surrounding Finney's theology. See Guelzo, "An Heir or a Rebel?"

[48] Abzug, 70-1. Quotation is from p. 71.

theologian, being ready to place into question the means by which reformers would encourage Christ's return.

Criticism of sanctification as understood by Finney during his tenure at Oberlin would come from not only the already entrenched Old School Calvinism, but the New School Calvinism which would be growing in prominence on the frontier. While grounds for criticism varied, critics distanced themselves from Oberlin as they refused to license Oberlin ministers, accept Oberlin members wishing to transfer to critics' churches, or officially allow their own members to transfer to Oberlin.[49] The major elevation of this criticism came with the publication of Finney's *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, published in a two volume set in 1846 and 1847. In an 1847 article reviewing the first volume in *The Princeton Review*, eminent Old School theologian Charles Hodge would say the following of Finney's work:

> …religion, as represented by him [Finney], is something exceedingly different from what good people in all ages have commonly regarded it. We should have to provide a new language, new hymns, new prayers, and especially a new Bible. It is useless however to continue these remarks. If a man can believe that every human being is either perfectly sinful or perfectly holy, he can believe anything. And a theory that leads to this conclusion, is thereby exploded, and its fragments are not worth looking after.[50]

In addition to criticism in academic and ecclesiastical circles, we can examine criticism among church bodies, such as an 1839 letter referring to a member of Fredericktown Presbyterian Church and her request for a letter of dismissal; accompanied with the church's reasoning for not sponsoring her transfer:

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[49] Fletcher, 225-7.

[50] Charles Hodge, "Finney's Lectures on Theology," first printed in *The Biblical Repository and the Princeton Review*, later printed in *Essays & Reviews* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1857), pp. 245-284. Quotation is from p. 284.

> Resd [Resolved] That we cannot consciencously [sic] recognize the so called church of Oberlin as a part of the visible church of Christ, on account of the exceedingly corrupt doctrines which we believe are taught there…[51]

Finney's *Memoirs*, published posthumously in 1876, also illuminate the problems Oberlin had. Finney notes an episode in which he was traveling to Akron and had come upon "…a woman walking with a bundle in her hand." Offering her a ride, she quickly obliged and joined him. When Finney had mentioned he was from Oberlin, he notes the following:

> This announcement startled her. She made a motion as if she would sit as far from me as she could; and turning and looking earnestly at me, she said, "From Oberlin! Why," said she, "our minister said he would just as soon send a son to state prison as to Oberlin!"[52]

Finney, noting this as a "laughable fact," was quick to explain that it was not he nor his theology at blame – but misunderstandings. Whatever the reason, Oberlin's wavering reputation created plenty of problems for the church as well as the college.

Theology was not the only problem Oberlin had in connecting with the standard milieu of Presbyterian and Congregational churches. Furthering Oberlin's separation included a radical anti-slavery stance, the College's education of women and African-Americans, and perhaps most notably in terms of Lorain County, alternative viewpoints regarding church polity. Oberlin's unorthodox interpretations of polity allow us to better understand how Oberlin estranged itself from the "presbygational" norm. We will consider these issues in later chapters which seek to examine the role of polity as an indication of political and social action.

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[51] Presbyterian Church to Oberlin First Congregational Church, 10 March, 1839, First Church General Correspondence, Box 1, Oberlin College Archives. Note that the letter does not contain the location of this church. Oberlin College Archives hereafter referred to as "OCA" Finney notes that "There seemed to be a general union of ministerial influence against us." See Finney, 343-4.

[52] Finney, 346-7.

Presbyterian and Congregational Polity in Lorain County

In 1801, the Plan of Union was constructed by the Presbyterian General Assembly and the Congregational Association of Connecticut in order to answer ministers' fears that the West could not be converted to Christianity. Underlying the Plan was its role as an expression of previous relations which had involved the two groups previous to its formation. A strong identity was felt between the two bodies, following conflict between more theologically liberal, including Unitarian, Massachusetts Congregationalists and the more moderate New School-influenced Congregationalists in Connecticut. George Marsden notes that the latter "felt far more affinity to Presbyterians than to their prodigal Massachusetts brethren who were well on the road to Unitarianism, and hence to perdition."[53] As a result, the region would be characterized by religious structures which it had adopted from New England settlers, many of whom came from Connecticut. These religious structures previously organized in New England – both ecclesiastical and theological – would be directed at performing the mission of bringing God's kingdom to earth.[54]

Inherent to the Plan is that of a missionary alliance seeking to create a frontier loyal to basic Christian principles. The Plan sought to allow a separation of powers between each party while at the same time utilizing their respective church political structures. For the Presbyterians, Synods and Presbyteries answering to the General Assembly would be organized on the frontier, just as in the East. Congregationalists would have a choice between their ideal church governments. Under the Plan, if the congregation chose to structure itself as a more autonomous body, it could do so, but only

[53] Marsden, 10.
[54] Amy DeRogatis sees these structures as indicative of the formation of a frontier "moral geography." See DeRogatis, 163-6.

under the direction of the Presbytery. This arrangement would cause the Presbyterians to gain the upper hand through the Plan, and we will see this impacting Lorain County in numerous ways.[55]

That the Plan was a New School initiative and was derided by proponents of the Calvinist Old School in the General Assembly is seen in the work of Isaac Brown. Brown, an orthodox Old School proponent suggested in his 1855 reflection upon the Plan that it was "the grand mistake of 1801," and was unconstitutional, perpetuated "disorders… in the Presbyterian Church," was born among "false and dangerous theological opinions," and worse still, was proposed by the Assembly's New School, "whose object was to demolish the whole fabric of Presbyterian Organization."[56] As Brown's work points out, the Plan was born amidst controversy, and as we will see, was attacked from multiple angles.

In Lorain County, churches would be planted according to the auspices of the Plan, with Elyria Presbyterian Church holding a predominant role in the county's Presbyterian structure.[57] In 1836, Elyria would become the focal point of the Presbytery of Lorain (also referred to as the "Lorain Presbytery"), an organization allowing Elyria to hold influence over Lorain County. In 1839, the Presbytery of Lorain would dissolve and integrate with the Presbytery of Huron until 1842, when the Presbytery of Elyria would form, lasting until 1863.[58] The Presbytery, operating under the Synod of the Western

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[55] Ibid., 11.
[56] Isaac Brown, *A Historical Vindication of the Abrogation of the Plan of Union by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: W. & A. Martien, 1855).
[57] Elyria Presbyterian Church is now known as First Congregational United Church of Christ, Elyria.
[58] Presbyteries of Elyria and Lorain Records, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., WRHS.

Reserve (one of three synods in Ohio),[59] oversaw the structure and function of churches under its watch in Lorain County.

Because this oversight which would be overlooked by the Presbytery included theology, Oberlin's place within the Presbytery of Cleveland (which included Lorain County until 1836) was short-lived. In 1836, representatives met in Hudson, Ohio, "to confer together on the expediency of a new Ecclesiastical organization of churches on the Western Reserve." One year later, an organization known as the General Association of the Western Reserve would form in Oberlin to "facilitate and promote christian [sic] intercourse and communion," taking on a role that was distinct in efforts to not control church actions.[60] Oberlin's separation from the Presbytery was neither shallow nor superfluous. Finney himself was no stranger to this controversy, having been involved in Congregationalist (and certainly anti-Presbyterian) actions during his revivals in New York, especially after Old School Presbyterians began to criticize his theology and revivalistic methods.[61] With these criticisms mounting and an ever growing Old School presence in the General Assembly, Finney was decidedly Congregationalist as a result of his personal doctrinal beliefs.[62]

As we saw earlier, the Presbyterian General Assembly institutionally and ideologically split upon fissures created as a result of Nathaniel Taylor's New Haven Theology in 1837. As a result, the Plan of Union was put to an early death, with its New School-controlled Synod of the Western Reserve being pushed aside by the Old School

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[59] William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier 1783-1850,* Vol. II, *The Presbyterians* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), 47.
[60] "Records of the General Association of the Western Reserve," August 25, 1836, OCSC. In spite of these efforts, complaints and accusations of excessive power existed. See John S. Reed to Henry Cowles, 12 May, 1853, Personal Correspondence, Henry Cowles Papers, Box 3, OCA.
[61] Samuel C. Pearson, "From Church to Denomination: American Congregationalism in the Nineteenth Century," in *Church History*, 38 (March, 1969): 67-87.
[62] Ibid., 77.

majority.[63] In spite of its lack of institutional longevity, however, the Plan of Union permeated the religious make up of the county, with both its ecclesiastical and theological structures outliving the Plan itself.

Elyria Presbyterian Church and the Plan of Union in Lorain County

In a school house east of the Black River, the congregation of Elyria Presbyterian Church met and organized on November 25th, 1824. Founded with full New School intentions in mind, Elyria's meeting was advised by Dr. Alfred H. Betts of the Presbytery of Huron as well as three ministers from the Connecticut Missionary Society in tow. Among these ministers was Rev. Daniel W. Lathrop, future permanent minister of the church and a prominent figure in Lorain County Presbyterianism.[64]

Lathrop and Betts, who shared a common Presbyterian identity and missionary impulse to Christianize the West, would come to play important roles in the county. Betts, a Connecticut native coming to the Reserve as a physician, had taken the role of leadership in public worship across the county. After studying theology with William Hanford of Hudson, he became ordained, and associated himself with the Connecticut Missionary Society, an organization formed to carry the Plan of Union into the frontier.[65] Being trained by a member of Hudson's New School religious scene, Betts carried with him a relatively conservative New School perspective which he infused into each missionary stop he made in the county.

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[63] Marsden, 62-3.

[64] *A History of Lorain County, Ohio, With Illustrations & Biographical Sketches of Some of its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Philadelphia: Williams Bros., 1879), 114. See also Pearson, "From Church to Denomination," for a description of the formation and role of the CMS and its relationship to the Plan of Union.

[65] William E. Barton, "A History of the First Congregational Church of Wellington, Ohio," (Oberlin: Press of the Oberlin News, 1892), 32. DeRogatis notes the role of the CMS in carrying out the Plan of Union. See DeRogatis, 35-40.

Lathrop, also a native of Connecticut, would head west following missionary activity in New Jersey and New York. In 1820, Lathrop created commotion in the divided Presbyterian General Assembly after, according to Isaac Brown, Lathrop "presented himself under the character of a committee man, and demanded a seat in the House."[66] Though Brown notes that "nothing peculiar" appears in the minutes, the commotion which ensued debated the role of the Plan of Union and the placement of Congregational ministers in the General Assembly. With Old School conservatives opposing Lathrop's admission on constitutional grounds, Brown notes the incident as indicative of tensions surrounding the Plan.[67] While Brown's report does not contain a deep amount of detail pertaining to Lathrop himself, based on the actions and accusations of Brown, we can understand Lathrop's appreciation of the Plan of Union as a force combining Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Thus, Lathrop fits squarely into the moderate New School Presbyterian milieu of Lorain County, Ohio.[68]

By June 29, 1825, Lathrop had accepted the church's invitation to call upon him as a settled pastor, buttressing his position in Lorain County. Lathrop would be involved in functions of the Cleveland, Lorain, Huron, and Elyria Presbyteries, keeping his connections to Yale as an agent of the American Home Missionary Society.[69] While Lathrop shared a vision of a Christian West with many of his contemporaries, he advocated doing so by focusing upon church work and missions, to the point of

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[66] By "House," Brown is referring to the Presbyterian General Assembly.
[67] Brown, 41-3.
[68] This is further evidenced in Lathrop's relationship with the Elyria Presbytery. See Chapter III for a discussion of Lathrop being sent as an agent to reunify First Congregational Church of Wellington with the presbytery after a schism. See also Asa Mahan, Daniel W. Lathrop, and James Gallaher, *A Report of the Minority in the Convention on Domestic Missions, Held in Cincinnati, November, 1831. By a Committee*. (Cincinnati: Printed at the Cincinnati Journal Office, 1831) for a response Lathrop composed along with future Oberlin president and, as we have seen and will expand upon, future theological opponent, Asa Mahan of Lane Seminary.
[69] Barton, 33.

reprimanding Elyrian John Monteith's interest in immediatist abolitionism.[70] In August of 1830, Lathrop resigned his position as a pastor, due to vocal problems,[71] calling the American Home Missionary Society to supply the region with more ministers.[72]

John Jay Shipherd at Elyria Presbyterian Church

Answering Lathrop's call was twenty-eight year old John Jay Shipherd, a young, energetic, and pious son of a former slaveholder. Finding his call to the ministry after a failing business and the death of his daughter, Shipherd felt "an increased and increasing desire to *Preach the Gospel*," leading to his entrance into the ministry.[73] After accepting a call to become Elyria's permanent minister in 1831, Shipherd attempted to form his new flock into a model representation of God's Kingdom. Shipherd's enthusiasm was voiced in a letter to his parents with a verse from the book of Isaiah, which paralleled his view of himself as an agent of the divine, as he recalls the charge which God put upon the prophet in order to do His work:

> The Lord of the harvest says, "whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The heart of your unworthy son responds: "Here am I, send me!"[74]

Early in his career, Shipherd initiated a revival reminiscent to Finney, beginning a "three-day's meeting" which lasted seven days because of the excitement generated by church members, an event which was alluded to in the opening vignette of this thesis and deserves further scholarly attention.[75] A participant would later describe the revival as a success, noting how the revival "pervaded almost the entire population." Secular

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[70] Fletcher, 146.
[71] Barton, 33.
[72] Fletcher, 73.
[73] Ibid., 59-69. Shipherd to his brother, Fayette, 24 April 1826, quoted in Fletcher, 61. Emphasis in Fletcher's quotation.
[74] John J. Shipherd to Zebulon R. Shipherd, 11 May, 1830, John Shipherd Papers, OCA. Quoted in Robert S. Fletcher, "The Government of the Oberlin Colony," in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 20 (September, 1933): 179-190. See also Isaiah 6:8.
[75] Elyria Records, 1824-1837, February 2, 1831; May 19, 1831.

business and other non-religious activities for the church members would be placed on hold as the streets of Elyria became places of public dialogue of religion, where people would personally share their experiences, awed with the recent events they interpreted as the work of God, as new members converted to join the church's fold.[76]

By November of that year, Shipherd would push a resolution pertaining to temperance, stating "…that any but a medicinal use of it [alcohol] is inconsistent with the christian [sic] character," in conjunction with a pamphlet authored by Shipherd and published under the auspices of the Lorain County Temperance Society.[77] Shipherd's reform activities were not finished. By March of the following year, a discussion occurred regarding the creation of a "Benevolent Society." While records do not indicate a clear indication of who supported this society and why, the idea was quelled for reasons still unknown.[78]

As the intensity of the revivals faded, Shipherd realized that he needed to eliminate barriers for the spread of Christianity through the countryside. To do this, he would request the church's backing in the body's dismissal from the Cleveland Presbytery, thereby disassociating the congregation from the watchful eyes of other ministers. While Shipherd received some support, Presbytery moved in quickly, refusing to lose Elyria from its orbit. Soon enough, Daniel Lathrop would side with the overtly Presbyterian minority, moving to dismiss the pastor until Shipherd's 1832 resignation of the pulpit.[79]

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[76] Guthrie-EPC Correspondence, 1875, EPC.
[77] Ibid., 25 November 1831. See John J. Shipherd, "An Appeal to Patriots." (Elyria, OH: Park & Burrell, 1831). This pamphlet's contents will be further examined in Chapter IV as it contains heavy parallels to the temperance advocacy of both Benjamin Rush and Lyman Beecher. Shipherd's authorship of this pamphlet gives us tremendous insight as to his high view of moral reform.
[78] Elyria Records, 1824-1837, March 3, 1832; June 29, 1832.
[79] Guthrie-EPC Correspondence, 1875.

By the time the discussion of the secession from Presbytery had begun, Shipherd's relationship with the church was diminishing. In a series of letters to his parents, Shipherd underlined his displeasure with the church at Elyria: "I…feel that my sphere of usefulness [at Elyria] is now much circumscribed,"[80] he lamented, wishing for a flock which was more respondent to his dream of changing the world by laboring in the West. Ultimately, the church and community would not sustain the excitement generated by his revival, driving the minister's imagination and efforts elsewhere. Already planning to move forth, Shipherd outlined his future plans in a letter dated August, 1832:

> Something *must* be done, or a millennium will never cheer our benighted world… I propose… to plant a colony somewhere in this region, whose chief aim shall be to glorify God, and do good to men, to the utmost extent of their ability. They are to simplify food, dress, etc., to be industrious and economical, and to give all over their current or annual expense for the spread of the Gospel.[81]

With dreams of a Millenarian utopia, Shipherd set out to dissolve his relations to the church via a pastoral letter in September of 1832. By the following October, Shipherd bade farewell to the church, wishing "That the God of Zion may bless his people of my late beloved flock…"[82] With Shipherd's transition, Lorain County religion would begin a new chapter. Infused into this new chapter were theological disputes reverberating from the East, which transformed into controversies of church polity set to consume the West. At only thirty years old and with its life only beginning to mature, the

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[80] John Jay Shipherd to his mother, 3 September, 1832, John Jay Shipherd Papers, Box 1, OCA. See Fletcher, 76-84. Note that Fletcher partially attributes this disconnect to Shipherd's advocacy of temperance in Lorain County. See Fletcher, 83-4. Upon review of the Guthrie letter, however, it appears that friction created by Presbyterian and Congregational church polity contributed more to Shipherd's problems with the Elyria church than temperance, though the issue was important, and will be further discussed in Chapter IV. See Guthrie-EPC Correspondence, 1875.

[81] John J. Shipherd to his parents, 6 August, 1832, in James H. Fairchild, *Oberlin: The Colony and the College*, 18. Emphases are Fairchild's. See excerpt on pp. 18-19.

[82] Elyria Records, 1824-1837, September 10, 1832; October 29, 1832.

Plan of Union would be set to crumble, beginning, according to New School Calvinists, in Lorain County, Ohio.[83]

[83] This claim is made by William Sloane Kennedy in *The Plan of Union.* See especially 196-204.

CHAPTER III

"For the Better Attainment of this Great Object": Religious Transformation in Lorain County and the Roots of Reform

> …a church that drags me down to earth, instead of lifting me toward heaven, can be of no papible [sic] utility to me.
>
> John S. Reed to Henry Cowles, 1853.[1]

In the autumn of 1854, Wellington Free Congregational Church hosted a convention responding to one of the greatest political questions of the decade: the Kansas-Nebraska Act which had recently passed as winds of compromise shifted through the nation's capitol. At the meeting, delegates lamented the "plot of those wicked men who sought to extend slavery into a territory which our fathers devoted to liberty." These "wicked men" the convention delegates spoke of consisted of the antebellum federal government, which had been struggling for its very existence.[2] To many, the events of the past two decades had teemed with apocalyptic meaning, and as the struggle began to draw even more blood, both sides radicalized further still.

The body of Wellington's Free Congregational Church would respond to the issue separate from the convention. Not only had they sent three delegates to the meeting, the Free Church would donate funds to the "Kansas Sufferers," antislavery forces who had

[1] John Reed to Henry Cowles, 12 May 1853, OCA. "For the Better Attainment of this Great Object" is located in "Covenant of Oberlin Colony," Oberlin Society Records, v. 1, First and Second Congregational Churches of Oberlin Records, 1834-1995, Subgroup I, Series 1, Box 1, OCA. See also Fletcher, 112-3.
[2] *The Oberlin Evangelist*, "The Christian Anti-Slavery Convention at Wellington," November 22, 1854, OCSC.

emigrated West in order to "tip the scales" in Kansas' statehood.[3] Formed as a congregation dedicated to antislavery from the beginning, Free Congregational Church stood as a noteworthy symbol of Oberlin's gains in spreading the antislavery message. Further, as a church which branched off of a schism of a larger body, it represents the many strands of American religious thought and practice intersecting in Lorain County, Ohio.

In his *History of Oberlin College*, Fletcher notes the Wellington antislavery convention as "pretty much of an Oberlin affair,"[4] indicating that Oberlin's influence in Wellington was heavy, and that the event itself lacked strong support outside of the two communities. Two church splits in Wellington, reform activities such as the 1854 meeting, and the story of a slave who stirred national controversy after his illegal rescue and the jailing of his liberators all trace back to the Oberlin-Wellington relationship. The relationship between Oberlin and Wellington is parallel to the care Oberlin put in creating allies in satellite towns and villages as it expanded its missionary scope into the Deep South and eventually to the Far East.[5] All of these events and influences find themselves rooted in the first utopian dreams of John Shipherd and his successful attempt in carrying them out.

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[3] "Records of the Free Church 1852-1861," hereafter referred to "Fee Church Records." See "Contributions for the year 1856."
[4] Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College*, 264.
[5] To understand Oberlin's antebellum missionary work in the South, see Fletcher, 257-65. For a description of Oberlin's missionary efforts overseas, see John Barnard, *From Evangelicalism to Progressivism at Oberlin College, 1866-1917* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1969), 30.

First Congregational Church of Wellington, Ohio[6]

Seven months before Elyria Presbyterian Church was founded, Wellington underwent a process of development much like that of its cousin to the north. On April 20, 1824, the First Congregational Church of Wellington formed, with the members voting for a "congregational mode of dicipline [sic]" according to the Plan of Union. Present at this meeting too was Alfred Betts, one of the first stated supplies to the settlement.[7] Wellington did not receive a permanent pastor until 1828, when Joel Talcott of Vernon, Connecticut, a newly minted minister and graduate of Yale and Auburn arrived.[8] Almost certainly imbued with the theology of Taylor and Dwight, Talcott soon displayed an even more radical side by connecting to the Oberlin Collegiate Institute in 1833 as a member of Oberlin's Board of Trustees, perhaps because of earlier connections to Henry Cowles, who would become ordained after the pair's time as fellow students at Yale.[9]

Whether or not Talcott took the major role in initiating it, a turn of events would push Oberlin and Wellington together in the coming years. This relationship, part

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[6] Note that this title is used for the sake of reference. As William Barton notes and the church's records indicate battle during the 1843 schism, which we will later discuss, was fought between former and current members of the First Congregational Church of Wellington to decide which group "deserved" the name, and more importantly, a certain acknowledgment of "legitimacy" as the original church body. From this battle came the title "First Congregational Church of Wellington," a move set to separate the original body from that of the Wellington Independent Congregational Church. While the earlier church was simply known as the "Congregational Church at Wellington" or by a number of other names, we may refer to the pre-schism church in this way for the sake of clarity, alluding to the original church body. See William Barton, "A History of the First Congregational Church of Wellington, Ohio," 17. It should be noted that while Wellington is chronologically the first of our congregations to have been founded in Lorain County, the importance of Elyria as a center of Presbyterianism places its narrative before our mention of Wellington.

[7] "Records of the First Congregational Church of Wellington, Ohio 1824-1846," FCCW, ed. Guy Wells, 2006. See April 20, 1824. Records will be hereafter referred to as "Wellington Records, 1824-1846."

[8] Fletcher, 73. See also Wellington Records, 1824-1846, October 29, 1828.

[9] "The First Annual Report of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute." (Elyria, OH: Atlas Office, 1834). Also see Fletcher, 665. Note that in terms of the Wellington membership, Talcott was not alone in his involvement with Oberlin, but considering his position as a settled pastor, I will focus on Talcott for the purpose of this thesis. See Fletcher, 102. n. 1. See also *The Christian Spectator Conducted by an Association of Gentlemen* (New Haven: Durrie, Peck, & Co., 1828), 504.

theology, ideology, and polity, would lead to a schism in the Wellington church which would only heal in the final years before the Civil War under the influence of pastors supplied directly from Oberlin. Further, it would weaken the grasp of the Plan of Union in Lorain County, leading to yet another lost tie in the Elyria Presbytery.[10] In short, the Oberlin-Wellington relationship is indicative of nearly every major issue impacting Lorain County's "presbygational" milieu, allowing the historian to understand key local, regional, state, and even national concepts which would influence American religion in the years to come; all within the scope of one event.

Wellington Before Oberlin's Foundation

With a pulpit predominately occupied by supplies of the American Home and Connecticut Missionary Societies until 1828, the nature of Wellington's early existence did not lend itself to heavy theological or ideological quarreling. Without the "ideological giant" which Oberlin represented coming into the scene until 1833, Wellington remained under the protective cover and influence of the Plan.[11] By the time Talcott had become pastor, no resolutions pertaining to anti-masonry, temperance, or antislavery had been made. This would change in 1833 with Talcott at the position of moderating many of these meetings.

In the shadow of the "Morgan affair" of 1826 and with the condemnations of Masonry by much of the American Presbyterian establishment, Wellington took a stance against Masonry with a resolution condemning members from participating in "secret

[10] See my unpublished manuscript titled "'Moving in Every Object of Benevolence': The Dissemination of Oberlin's Abolitionist and Temperance Perspectives in Lorain County, Ohio," submitted to and presented at the National Collegiate Honors Council Student Interdisciplinary Research Panel in Denver, Colorado, November 2, 2007. Session titled "Forces of Cultural Change and Social Reform." Available on-line at <http://www.personal.kent.edu/~jfahler/NCHCFinalThArt.pdf>. Retrieved October 25, 2007.

[11] This is seen throughout the 1824-1846 records, with mentions of Presbyterian oversight and the assignments of delegations to meetings of Presbytery. See Wellington Records, 1824-1846, especially before 1842.

societies" in April of 1833.[12] Stating that "freemasonry [sic] is based on pure selfishness, and is therefore opposed to the benevolence of the gospel and is in all respects antichristian [sic]," Wellington took important steps forward in conforming to the role, as promoted by the organizers of the Plan of Union, of a Christian community in line with a radical reinterpretation of the American nation.[13] The same day a Temperance resolution was passed, requiring "a pledge of entire abstinance [sic] in the use & traffic of this article ["distilled spirits"] for the above purpose of all members which are received in future."[14] Thus, as Oberlin was moving through the first stages of its life, Wellington had begun to form its own basis of reform, albeit with the permission and guidance of the Cleveland Presbytery.[15]

The Foundation of Oberlin Colony and Collegiate Institute

By 1833, Oberlin Collegiate Institute had formed, and would begin its rocky start.[16] With its founding based upon Shipherd's initial idea of a Christian society,

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[12] The "Morgan affair" is an event attributed to catapulting American Masonry to a controversial status. Before the publication of his 1827 exposé of Masonry, entitled *Illustrations of Masonry by One of the Fraternity Who Has Devoted Thirty Years to the Subject*, author William Morgan mysteriously disappeared. While "modern historians deem the incident trivial and some doubt that a kidnapping even occurred," Ronald Formisano and Kathleen Smith Kutolowski note that the incident transformed public attitudes of Masonry. See Ronald P. Formisano and Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, "Antimasonry and Masonry: The Genesis of Protest, 1826-1827," in *American Quarterly*, 29 (Summer, 1977): 139-165. Also see William Morgan, *Illustrations of Masonry by One of the Fraternity Who Has Devoted Thirty Years to the Subject* (Bativa, NY: Printed for the Proprietor, 1827).

[13] Wellington Records, 1824-1846, April 24, 1833. Sydney Ahlstrom notes the importance of the onset of anti-Unitarianism, anti-Mormonism, anti-Masonry, and antislavery movements in forming major political machines which would fuel the Whig, and later, the Republican parties. See Ahlstrom, 557-8.

[14] Ibid., April 24, 1833, p. 32. Note that no date is given for the meeting. It is inferred that the meeting took place on April 24 based on comments made on p. 293 of the records.

[15] Note that Elyria's resolution pertaining to temperance was only two years earlier, and by this point New School sources of power had been pushing temperance for quite some time. In "Abolition and the Plan of Union's Demise on the Western Reserve," Chris Padgett notes that antimasonry would be the first issue contended in the West. Perhaps most importantly, Padgett describes how antimasonry permeated the Reserve before the onset of the temperance and antislavery campaigns. See Padgett, 256-7. Perhaps most importantly, Padgett describes how antimasonry permeated the Reserve before the onset of the temperance and antislavery campaigns.

[16] Fears of the failure of Oberlin abounded. See Fletcher, "The Struggle for Existence," in *A History of Oberlin College*, 427-502.

members were obliged to conform to the community's strict covenant. With a preamble "Lamenting the degeneracy of the Church and the deplorable conditions of our perishing world," the covenant sought to build from Shipherd's earlier failures by creating a society consisting of pious Christians from the beginning, rather than converting the population of an existing community. Upon signing the covenant, community members promised to obey what amounted to a wide variety of moral legislation. Covering issues ranging from food and drink colonists consumed to providing care for the orphaned and widowed, the covenant became a pact with which to ensure that scripturally-based values would be bound into the hearts and minds of the colonists upon a sacred oath.[17]

With an emphasis upon such a high level of purity, Oberlin attracted faculty and students all over the nation. In time, the exodus of students and faculty coming from Cincinnati's Lane Seminary, where bitter controversy over slavery ensued, would descend upon Oberlin along with newly emerging positive attitudes toward the education of women and African-Americans. These individuals were no stranger to the antislavery debate, and would include future Oberlin president Asa Mahan and antislavery lecturer Theodore Dwight Weld.[18] With the 1835 professorship of theology being granted to Charles Finney, Oberlin was on the road to becoming an influential institution located within the moral insulation of the Ohio frontier.[19]

In relation to the Plan of Union and the competing and more conservative Presbyterian influence on the Reserve, Oberlin would highlight the widening chasm

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[17] See "Covenant of Oberlin Colony," OCA. See Fletcher, "The Government of the Oberlin Colony," for a discussion of the role of this covenant and Oberlin's position as a strictly religious community and a general "failure to discriminate between ecclesiastical and civil government" in the workings of the Oberlin Presbyterian Society (later Oberlin Society). Quoted on p. 189. See also n. 1 above.
[18] Fletcher,172-86.
[19] Ibid., 169; 172-5.

between Finney's associates and the established New and Old Schools which shadowed Finney and his contemporaries through much of their careers.[20] Forming as a separatist entity which derived from New England theology but rejected both the New and Old Schools as it forged separate and new methods and attitudes toward church polity and reworked key theological doctrines, Oberlin would have the independence to carry out policies which it viewed as integral to being a perfect apparition of a godly community on the frontier. The 1836 formation of the General Association of the Western Reserve, mentioned in Chapter II, would signal what many feared was a dangerous approach for Christianity.[21] According to the claims of Oberlin's Henry Cowles, the formation of such an organization would be necessitated by hostility to the college on the part of local Presbyteries, including the Huron Presbytery, which Cowles claims asked its candidates if they believed that "…Oberlin is a blessing or a curse to the world, and ought to be annihilated…"[22]

With this independence, Oberlin pushed for separation from proponents of slavery and those more complacent regarding its existence, stating in an 1835 resolution of the First Congregational Church that "slavery is a sin… [and]… no person shall be invited to preach or minister to this church, or any Br[other] be invited to commune who is a slave holder."[23] Of major importance to Oberlin's resolution was the barring of slaveholders from communion. In terms of relations to outside ecclesiastical bodies, Oberlin's was a major step as the main lines of the Presbyterian Church were far from such a statement.

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[20] DeRogatis, 172.
[21] Ibid., 174.
[22] Henry Cowles, *A Defence of Ohio Congregationalism and of Oberlin College in Reply to Kennedy's Plan of Union* (Oberlin: N.d.), 8. See also Barton, 15, n. 46.
[23] "Oberlin Church Records Sept. 1834," First and Second Congregational Churches, Subgroup I, Series 11, Box 2, OCA. September 1, 1835 (Hereafter referred to as "Oberlin Records").

While early statements pertaining to the immorality of slavery were pushed by the General Assembly, the Southern Presbyterian presence hindered any further progress.[24] Wellington would soon follow suit, and declare "that slavery as it exists in the United States is a henious [sic] sin against God and ought immediately to be abolished." Separation, however, would be postponed "indefinitely," signaling a complicated interaction of religious, social, and political issues coming to head in the Wellington debate.[25]

In an 1892 history of the church, Rev. William E. Barton, a contributor to the Ohio Church History Society, considered the Wellington resolution's failure to exclude slaveholders not necessarily stemming from a lack of ideological ferment, but as an attempt to uphold Wellington's relationship with the Plan of Union. Like Oberlin, a passage of an eradication of communion with slaveholders would lead to drastic effects. With an interest in retaining relations with Lorain County's Presbyterian spectrum however, the resolution failed.[26] Just as this antislavery question would bring into light questions of church polity for Wellington, further Oberlin influence pertaining to theology, polity, and reform would pull the thread which would tear the First Congregational Church of Wellington apart.

The 1843 Wellington Schism[27]

After Talcott's departure, Wellington's pulpit was filled by Oberlin faculty, providing the ultimate chance for Oberlin to infuse its controversial platforms into

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[24] Marsden, 91-3. Note Marsden's discussion of the funding and support of the American Colonization Society by both Northern and Southern parties of the General Assembly. Marsden further notes that when abolition came, it diminished the "relative harmony of the evangelical camp."
[25] Wellington Records, 1824-1846, December 15, 1836. I develop the discussion of this resolution and its impact in Chapter V, "Antislavery in Lorain County."
[26] Barton, 13.
[27] A version of this discussion of the Wellington Schism appears in "'Moving in Every Object of Benevolence.'" See n. 11.

Wellington. Unfortunately, church records only tell us about some of the supplies, and do not delve into much detail about them. However, we do know that Oberlin Professor Henry Cowles acted as a stated supply for the first time in June of 1838.[28] While Cowles' influence may not be tracked specifically through the records, his background begs us to consider his influence.

Cowles was a post-millennial perfectionist who felt quite at home at Oberlin, becoming editor in the fall of 1848 of the *The Oberlin Evangelist*, a publication seeking to disseminate Oberlin's theological and moral views.[29] Cowles' influence at Wellington is probably seen with the August 1841 request made by Hadlock Marcy and his wife, Laury. The couple had "requested a letter of dismission + recommendation to the church in Oberlin [,] which was refused."[30] This is notable as Marcy is listed as a "Yea" in the vote contained in the December, 1836 antislavery resolution – stating that he does *not* agree with barring slaveholders from communion.[31] While we do not know if Cowles influenced Marcy specifically, Marcy's intention to attend a radically abolitionist church which had always distanced itself from slaveholders is certainly notable. Marcy had not gone to Oberlin, but later left with other church members to form the Independent

[28] Ibid., June 30, 1838. Note that only "Rev Mr. Cowles" is present. Based on the entry of July 1, 1839, it can be inferred that this relates to a relationship between the church and Henry Cowles, as opposed to his brother, John. Also see April 6, 1839 and April 7, 1839. See Fletcher, 72. Also see Henry Cowles Papers, OCA for several letters from Wellington church member John Reed. It should also be noted that John Cowles was on the delegation from Oberlin in the formation of the General Association of the Western Reserve, and Henry served as a delegate to the Association on numerable occasions. See Fletcher, 220.
[29] Fletcher, 223-4 and 418-22. As Fletcher notes on 418, the *Evangelist* stated in its first issue a list of subjects to be discussed: "Christian Education, Slavery and Abolition, Revivals of Religion, and any other subject that may be seen to be of the highest importance." See also *The Oberlin Evangelist*, September 9, 1848, OCSC.
[30] Wellington Records 1824-1846, August 20, 1841.
[31] Ibid., January 1, 1836, December 15, 1836.

Congregational Church.[32] As we will see, Oberlin's influence led to disaster for Wellington's reputation in the eyes of the Presbytery.

In 1842, the seeds of the 1843 Schism at Wellington were planted when John S. Reed, clerk of the church, took issue with the removal of an addendum he had proposed affirming that "[distilled] spirits might be used as medicine." While the records do not indicate Reed's reason for the use of spirits as a medicine, it may be inferred that there was economic interest on Reed's part, as owner of a general store in Wellington.[33] Whatever the reason, Reed became angry enough that on February 25, 1842, he stated his intention to protest the fact that part of a church resolution which had been previously voted in by members of the body had been "expunged." That March, he delivered this protest and resigned from his position as church clerk, stating that "the church has no right to obliterate or expunge a record of its proceedings" while claiming that "my rights as an individual in this case were rudely + unjustly wrested from me…"[34]

Reed's beliefs pertaining to reform may be understood through an undated letter written by Lydia M. Boies, wife of Dr. Eli Boies, an Oberlin-Wellington Rescuer who arrived in Wellington sometime after the 1843 Schism.[35] Discussing the issue of reform throughout a ten page letter titled "Reminicences" [sic], Boies frequently mentions

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[32] Ibid., December 2, 1844.
[33] Ernst L. Henes. *Historic Wellington Then and Now* (Wellington, OH: The Southern Lorain County Historical Society, 1984), 9. Also see John S. Reed to Henry Cowles, 14 January 1843, Henry Cowles Papers, Personal Correspondence, Box 2, OCA. and John S. Reed to Henry Cowles, 28 July 1850, Henry Cowles Papers, Personal Correspondence, Box 3, OCA. Reed's actions are muddled by the fact that in a 6 October 1853 letter to Cowles, Reed touts his efforts "for the suppression of the sale of spirits in this town…" Based on the information we have from Reed's proposal, it might be considered that Reed understood the sale and use of alcohol as sinful as a drink. See John S. Reed to Henry Cowles, 6 October 1850, Henry Cowles Papers, Personal Correspondence, Box 3, OCA.
[34] Wellington Church Records, 1824-1846, April 12, 1842, p. 165.
[35] Nat Brandt, *The Town that Started the Civil War* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1991), 124-125. Lydia M. Boies to Laundon, Edward Wells Collection (EWC), Unknown date. Hereafter "Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC."

Reed's wife, Jerusha,[36] who emerges as a guiding spirit in the Wellington Maternal Association; a sort of support group embracing and maintained by Wellington women from multiple churches, with an interest in moral and spiritual development and dialogue. Both Boies and Reed considered moral reform to be the perfect way for them, as women, to engage themselves in the purification of the world around them. Through the Maternal Association, Wellington women actively considered the issues of the day; whether by considering physical attacks on local saloons or sewing clothing to donate to fugitive slaves in Canada. Their husbands seemed to believe the same, with or without the Elyria Presbytery and the First Congregational Church of Wellington behind them.[37]

Whatever Reed's intentions were, the issue rippled through the congregation. Questions pertaining to the political structure of the church ensued. These discussions would shift from the temperance resolution to heavier issues of Christian theology and polity to tear apart the church. On August 30, 1842, a controversial resolution occurred relating to the church's Articles of Faith. While the full text of the Articles has been lost, an 1879 history of Lorain County explains their contents. When considering these articles along the lines of Oberlin theology, interesting parallels occur: the 4th Article maintained a "doctrinal belief in God's sovereignty," the 7th Article focused on predestination, and the 13th wrestled with controversies pertaining to infant baptism.[38] What exists here is a response to Old Calvinist and even perhaps New School Calvinist thought, highlighted in the 4th and 7th articles. To further the gap between church and Presbytery, church member Philo Herrick presented a resolution to "ask leave of [the

[36] Jerusha's first name can be located in Wellington Records 1824-1846, December 4, 1844.
[37] Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.
[38] *History of Lorain County, Ohio*, 355.

Elyria] Presbytery to withdraw and unite with Lorain Association," a branch of the General Association established by Oberlin.[39]

In response, a minority backed by the Presbytery soon fought back with a protest against the resolution relating to the Articles of Faith, the attempt to withdraw from the Presbytery, noting that the "vote of the Church was called for in an irregular manner without proper Notice" and that the meeting was "not duly notified."[40] In January 1843, the Presbytery declared the church's actions as invalid, approving the records but with "exceptions."[41] Apparently, the Presbytery decided it was time to step in to the affairs of the church, and Rev. Daniel W. Lathrop, former pastor of Elyria and earlier opponent to immediate abolition, submitted a pastoral letter expressing "deep regret" of the situation at hand.[42]

Throughout the letter, Lathrop laments that the church, which he says began as a group of faithful Christians who "in the Wilderness... were indeed a light amid the surrounding darkness," was now deciding to break from the Presbytery as a result of "the evils which have come upon you [the church]."[43] Most importantly, Lathrop mentions that the church had brought it upon themselves – that "it [the problem at hand] has almost necessarily resulted from the general course you [the church] have pursued for some years past[.]" Lathrop states the first problem being the "disregard" of what the Confession of Faith stated, mentioning that the church members apparently wanted a larger membership so much that they were willing to lower their theological standards.

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[39] Wellington Records 1824-1846, August 30, 1842, December 14, 1842. Also see Fletcher, 220-221.
[40] Wellington Records 1824-1846, 181-183.
[41] Ibid., Undated, 185-186.
[42] Ibid., January 8, 1843, 192.
[43] Ibid., 194.

Lathrop's referral to Oberlin is apparent when he denounces the "employment of leaders who were not sound in the Faith and which was very fruitful in the evil already mentioned of." This "evil" refers to Oberlin perfectionism – reflected in the church's recent vote to expunge articles 4 and 7. Lathrop moves on, stating that "we would not be understood here at all to say that all the stated supplies you had from time to time were of this character [of unorthodoxy] [.]"[44] Overall, Lathrop's letter gives us the best indication of Oberlin's influence upon Wellington and the fear this generated on the level of the Presbytery. Lathrop is obviously interested in the strength of the Presbytery, as he calls on the church to repent. Likewise, the Presbytery's interest in keeping Wellington in its orbit is also seen, along with the fear of the Oberlin supplies, as Wellington received Lathrop as a settled minister through 1845.[45]

Wellington's Schism and Henry Cowles

The Congregational Church at Wellington split as a result of a majority group moving away from the established organization rather than a minority faction separating itself from the larger body's oversight.[46] Why the majority was forced out of the church is not completely clear, but based on the above evidence of the control the Presbytery actually had, it may be inferred that the Presbytery played a major role in this. We do know that this pattern can be seen elsewhere, based on controversies surfacing after the 1837 death of the Plan of Union. In 1856, a bitter William Sloane Kennedy would publish the history of the Plan of Union, fully titled *The Plan of Union; or, a History of the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches of the Western Reserve, with*

[44] Ibid., January 8, 1843, p. 197.
[45] Arndt, Ruth, Gordon Black, and Ralph Miller. "A History of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Wellington, Ohio 1824-1874." Unpublished: 1974, 16.
[46] Wellington Records, 1824-1846, January 3, 1843 through January 28, 1843.

Biographical Sketches of the Early Missionaries. While it seems to have a neutral title, Kennedy scathingly blames "ultra-Congregational" polity which he declared had no respect for the Presbyterian system, and in effect, for the Plan of Union, as the root cause of the 1837 schism of the General Assembly and dissolution of the Plan, citing Oberlin's "Congregationalism" as the chief offender, the serpent in Kennedy's Eden[47]

Charging Oberlin as the guilty party in the situation, Kennedy claims that the college's ministers regularly broke existing churches apart in the interest of extending the institution's sphere of power.[48] "The rash zeal of Oberlin brethren," Kennedy insisted, "also did much to prejudice the cause of Congregationalism, both on the Reserve and abroad."[49] Not only did Oberlin's actions have ill effects upon national ecclesiastical structures, Kennedy stated, the "ultra Congregationalism" was tearing apart small, often fragile church bodies:

> The policy of purposely dividing churches and organizing rivals where there were scarce materials for a single organization; carried, as this policy was, to the dismemberment even of Independent Congregational churches; making two or three questions of moral reform, and as many doctrinal dogmas of unquestionable truth, paramount to all other interests of Christ's kingdom, could but work disaster to all concerned.
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> …
>
> The Plan of Union tolerated minor differences yet adhered to the orthodox standards, and polity, and proposed only to construct a conglomerate, ignoring vital disagreements; clamoring for universal brotherhood, yet scattering utter discord.[50]

[47] Kennedy, 186-7 and 205-7. See p. 187 for the serpent-Eden analogy.
[48] Ibid., 202-3.
[49] Ibid., 216.
[50] Ibid., 216-7.

To Kennedy, the very existence of Oberlin was perplexing, especially considering the existence of Western Reserve College and its important role in the region.[51] Henry Cowles would author an essay which would be published as *A Defence of Ohio Congregationalism and of Oberlin College in Reply to Kennedy's Plan of Union* [sic] after appearing in the *Oberlin Evangelist*. Claiming that Finney himself warned against church schisms resulting from Oberlin's theology and polity, Cowles stated that the problems at hand resulted not from the college's ministers, but from "Aggressions upon the legitimate rights of Congregational churches and ministerial brethren," on the part of the Presbyterian system.[52]

Churches, Cowles insisted, had rights to "control their own pulpit" by employing "whom they please" as ministers, whose backing would come not from a hierarchy of Presbyterian institutions, but "The majority right;- that is, the right to do officially, by a majority vote, whatever is proper to be done by the church."[53] As Cowles continues his rebuttal, a stark parallel can be made to the situation at Wellington, as he lays blame upon the New School establishment:

> When majorities preferred Congregationalism and ministers of Oberlin sympathy, minorities were encouraged by Presbyteries to resist – sometimes to secede; or more often to claim that they were <u>the church</u>, and to oust the majority. Medina, Huron, and we know not how many other Presbyteries, avowed the doctrine that a minority, adhering to the Presbytery, <u>were the church</u>, and the majority could not carry them out of Presbytery into Congregationalism.[54]

Eventually, Cowles notes, a reunion would take place in many of the churches which split as a result of being the battleground for Oberlin's Congregationalism and New Haven's

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[51] Ibid., 248-9. The reader might want to note that Kennedy's book was published in Hudson, in order to put into context Kennedy's allegiances and interests.
[52] See Cowles, *A Defence of Ohio Congregationalism.* Quoted on p. 7.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 8.

Presbyterianism. Intriguingly, a reunion did occur in Wellington in 1851, when the separated church bodies attempted to mend wounds. And, as Cowles notes, the church bodies agreed to compromise on church polity by dropping it altogether by declaring a moratorium upon all ecclesiastical relations, Presbyterian, Congregational, or otherwise, a pattern which also occurred at Wellington.[55] However, this reunion did not last.

Wellington's church had first institutionally separated by March of 1843. By December that year, a list was provided of the names of male and female members who had gone to the new Independent Congregational Church "as Seceeders [sic] from this Church…"[56] Now separate from the Presbytery, these members would have the independence to carry out their plans to perfect society. As William Barton notes, Oberlin supplies permeated the temporary ministers sent to Wellington before the schism, and later, at the "Oberlinian" congregation which formed as a result, giving Wellington a reputation, in Barton's words, as "a calf pasture for Oberlin theologues."[57] When we consider this happening in Hudson, Ohio, what many considered a citadel of New School Calvinism with Western Reserve College, or, "The Yale of the West," being located in the town, we see that the power of church polity acts as the organizational basis from which theological ideas permeate, especially in the case of Oberlin.[58]

In 1842, Owen Brown, the father of a future famous abolitionist by the name of John Brown, would become involved in an Oberlin-inspired secession from Hudson Congregational Church to form Hudson Free Congregational, commonly referred to as

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[55] Ibid. Wellington Records, March 29, 1852.
[56] Wellington Records 1824-1846, December 4, 1844.
[57] Barton, 12.
[58] For more on Hudson's "Oberlin" church, see Grace Goulder Izant, *Hudson's Heritage: A Chronicle of the Founding and the Flowering of the Village of Hudson, Ohio* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1985), 159-161.

the "Oberlin Church." While Louis DeCaro notes that slavery, rather than as in Wellington's case, theology or polity, was the deciding factor in schism and Oberlin's orbit was weak as far east as Hudson, the split is notable.[59] Based on the story of Hudson, and the published correspondence of Brown, Kennedy, and Cowles, we know that Wellington's schism, while interesting for scholarly inquiry, was not necessarily an anomaly on a religious landscape which was redefining itself as it reinterpreted understandings of what constituted orthodox and populist religious thought and practice.

An 1853 letter from John Reed identifying a tract as influential in Reed's decision to take part in Wellington's schism puts into question the extent to which Cowles lauds efforts to keep churches together. The tract, titled "Separation from Sin and Sinners," stated that as Christ was anointed and therefore separate from the sin of man, so to should his followers separate themselves from those purporting to be Christians who do not act in accordance with Scripture. What is more interesting, however, is the fact that the pamphlet states sin in specific terms: the practice of American slavery. By asking the reader that "…if you give your influence to organizations which teach thus, [slavery as either a non-issue or as biblically sanctioned] are you not through them, teaching falsely yourself?" the pamphlet's authors shadowed Oberlin's attempts to cut slaveholders from communion. Slaveholders, it was determined, were not only unpatriotic, but unchristian.[60]

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[59] Louis DeCaro, *Fire from the Midst of You: A Religious Life of John Brown* (New York: NYU Press, 2002), 126-8.

[60] See "Separation from Sin and Sinners: Should Christians withdraw themselves from Sinners." (Cincinnati: American Reform Tract and Book Society, Date Unknown). Available on-line through Cornell University's Samuel J. May Antislavery Collection, located at <http://dlxs.library.cornell.edu/m/mayantislavery/>. Note that the pamphlet is dated as 1800 in bibliographic data, although its contents do not present themselves to such an early date. Quoted on p. 19.

For John Reed, who stated that he had read the pamphlet and does in fact "O endorse its teachings," the pamphlet's message would become an important factor in a life changing experience. With the church acting as an important social and community organization in frontier Ohio, Reed's actions did not pale in importance. Stating that "I found I must do this, [separate] or admit that my previous declaration respecting fellowshipping ... certain classes were insincere," Reed echoed the pamphlet's authors, and perhaps Cowles himself: "No one shall doubt my sincerity respecting the position I take on the moral question [slavery] of the day - not one - + many would were I to remain in the church, + have it ocupy [sic] its present position."[61] What Reed's letter provides is evidence that the church schism involved much more than theology or polity – but slavery as well. Lines of distinction, while they are not extremely clear, may be drawn in Wellington when identifying radical reformers and setting them against a backdrop of religious Presbyterians intent on holding the status quo. As Reed demonstrates, these reformers believed that the status quo is never important when it is guided by human actions and understandings of reality. However, one must realize, as we will explore in Chapter V, that the slavery issue was by nature not clear cut, and neither were Wellingtonians' positions.

In addition, the Reed-Cowles correspondence places in doubt the sincerity of Cowles' responses to Kennedy's claims regarding Oberlin's role in established churches. In response to claims by Kennedy that that Oberlin's ministers were intent upon separating churches in support of their radical beliefs pertaining to theology and congregational polity,[62] Cowles, as mentioned, sought to disassociate the college from

[61] See John S. Reed to Henry Cowles, 12 May 1853, Henry Cowles Papers, Box 3, OCA.
[62] See Cowles, 7.

accusations of its involvement in church schisms. However, Reed's letter, and his endorsement of the tract "Separation from Sin and Sinners," as well as the importance which he places upon separating himself from his own congregation, gives us an indication that both Cowles and Oberlin College, perhaps in spite of what Cowles' treatise had claimed, were interested in abiding not by the laws of humanity through Presbytery, but by those of God and through a reconsidered understanding of congregationalism. Oberlin's vision of utopia, in spite of Cowles' claims, was far from ecumenical.

Oberlin and the American Missionary Association

Meanwhile in Oberlin, the issues of theology and slavery only precipitated further splits with national organizations, resulting in the formation of the American Missionary Association in 1846. Formed as a merger of three separate anti-slavery missionary societies, the AMA sought to distance itself from benevolent societies which did not attempt to associate themselves with antislavery.[63] Of these societies, perhaps the most notable were the American Home Missionary Society (AHMS) and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), two Presbyterian groups which had national influence and strong connections to the Plan of Union.[64]

The AMA sent missionaries to various locations, including Sierra Leone and the Caribbean as well as closer fields such as Canada, Kansas, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Kentucky. Along with Oberlin's distaste for the AHMS and ABCFM, controversies surrounding the publication of anti-slavery tracts and the American Tract Society's refusal to publish them led in part to the ATS devolving into schism. When the Boston

[63] Fletcher, 257-9.
[64] Hirrel, 156. See Table I.

branch of the ATS became independent, Oberlin had another avenue with which to publish material in the national arena. Lane Rebel John W. Alvord would become senior secretary to the Bostonian group, allowing figures such as Rev. James Thome, a figure who would hold considerable influence in Wellington and throughout the region in general, to disseminate their opinions on a much broader scale than before.[65]

In terms of Lorain County's story, perhaps what the AMA symbolized is greater than its actual influence. The rigid stance which so many Oberlin ministers and professors took regarding their unique theological and antislavery perspectives seems to be a dominating factor in the separation of Congregationalists and Presbyterians not only in Lorain County, but on the entire Western Reserve, and ultimately in the Presbyterian Schism of 1837.

Wellington Independent Congregational Church, 1843-1851

On March 27, 1843, forty members convened to form the Independent Church, which would be the official Oberlin counterpart to the First Congregational Church of Wellington. Rev. Lucius Smith, a graduate of the Oneida Institute and Oberlin Seminary, soon took up the pulpit permanently, as his ideological and theological opposite, Daniel Lathrop presided at First Congregational.[66] Unfortunately, the records for this church have been lost, and what we know about the church itself comes from the records of First Congregational. The constant stream of ministers from Oberlin after Smith's resignation in 1846 and a reform orientation dating itself to this period underline the activist stance of this church, as well as the influence Oberlin had in its southern neighbor.[67]

[65] Fletcher, 263-4.
[66] Barton, 20-1.
[67] Ibid., 19-20.

By 1847, the scars of the schism four years earlier were showing on the sides of both church bodies. Feelings, however, were still running sour when in January of that year First Congregational complained after a meeting regarding the separation that "...the church [Independent] is unwilling to acknowledge that it withdrew from this church," and that those who separated still "must be regarded... as seceeders [sic]."[68] Evidently, an argument of legitimacy was under way, just as Cowles' treatise would later mention.

By this point, Lucius Smith was out of the church, and James A. Thome, an antislavery lecturer from Oberlin, would soon be ending his short stay before moving to the First Church of Cleveland in 1848.[69] Without a permanent minister, Independent Congregational would depend on First Church's new pastor, New School proponent Ansel R. Clark, by agreeing to a deal made by First Church in January of 1848.[70] Offering Independent Church use of the original meeting house and the services of Clark for half of the time (and the payment of half of his salary), First Church asked that Independent finally acknowledge their separation. Perhaps needing the support, Independent Church agreed with a unanimous decision, reported by First Church on February 13, 1848.[71]

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[68] See "Records of the First Congregational Church of Wellington, Ohio 1846-1863," FCCW, January 8, 1847. See also note 75 for MS notes which compare each record book.

[69] Barton, 19-20. Debby Applegate incorrectly notes Thome as being killed by a proslavery lynch mob while he circulated on an antislavery tour in the 1830's. While Applegate does not source her findings, reports of Thome's death do appear, as indicated by David Grimstead. Grimstead notes in his *American Mobbing, 1828-1861* that Thome's supposed death was reported in the antislavery circular *The Liberator* amid circulating rumors. While Thome found himself on the wrong end of egg-throwing (p. 57), he did survive the ordeal. See Grimstead, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 311, note 3. See Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 128.

[70] Note that Clark was the editor of the New School organ, *The Ohio Observer*, based out of Hudson. See *Seventy Fifth Anniversary of the Organization of the First Congregational Church of Wellington* (Norwalk: Frank Lamkin Printer, 1899), 53. Hereafter "*Seventy Fifth Anniversary – Wellington.*"

[71] See Wellington Records, January 14, 1848, February 11, 1848, and February 14, 1848.

While Ansel Clark remained a proponent of the New School, his interest seemed to have been vested in holding the original church together while lobbying for unification during his tenure. Though his daughter claimed him to be an abolitionist and an active member of the underground railroad, Clark believed in a separation of politics and religion – perhaps an anomaly during his time. Through his efforts to act as a mediator, the church bodies would agree to discuss reunification, though the issues lying at the heart of Wellington's first schism were anything but dead.[72]

In her correspondence, Lydia Boies provides evidence that the differences between Presbyterian and Congregational polity were strongly felt amongst church members. Perhaps the best example is the discussion of the Maternal Association, which she notes had members considering themselves Baptist, Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian. That she would use the word "Presbyterian" is interesting, as it connotes an identification of the "other" half of the schism as certainly *not* being Congregational. Further, she indicates that the women in the group heavily discussed the issue as their husbands attended committee meetings and corresponded separately. Boies notes the "...agitation about uniting the Cong.[regational] and Presbyterian churches, or rather merging ours into the Pres. Ch." Perhaps more importantly, she describes the womens' feelings:

> I remember well how decided we all were on both sides. Mrs. Reed loved the Cong[regational] Ch[urch] But felt it right for the town to <u>unite</u> in one. I loved and believed in the Cong Ch[.], and often our differenc [sic] of mind was expressed in our prayer meetings. I remember saying to Mrs. Reed after such a meeting "I am not afraid of your prayers for Union, for <u>we both want Gods will</u> to be done & He will settle it right." Her husband however was decided for the Cong. Ch. and put her name beside his, and thus she said it was <u>decided for her</u>. Being settled in our own house, there still arose questions of right and wrong that taxed the wisdom of the little church to the <u>utmost</u>, threatening division and

[72] *Seventy Fifth Anniversary – Wellington.*

> disaster. Our members were men of <u>faith</u> and <u>conscience</u>, of such religious calibre [sic] as often leads to martyrdom.[73]

As Boies indicates, calls for union between the churches would soon follow. In January 1849 in correspondence to the First Church, members of the Independent congregation would state that "we are still connected with the other body unless we have been cut off or excommunicated by them."[74] Thus, a process of union would begin, whereby the churches would come closer together on terms agreeable to both sides. William Barton notes that the churches would unite on three conditions: "(a) each church to expunge from its records all reference to the unhappy division;[75] (b) the First Church to withdraw from the Presbytery, and (c) the reunited church to remain for two years connected with neither Presbytery nor [Congregational] Association."[76]

Free Congregational Church, 1852-1861

The very existence of Wellington Free Congregational Church, which would form out of a second schism in 1852, revolves around the earlier controversies surrounding the church's relationship with the Presbytery which ultimately led to the 1843 Schism. With the union of the Independent and First Congregational Churches being initiated in February of 1851[77] and continuing through the following November,[78] the major condition of union, as noted, was the withdrawal of First Congregational Church from the

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[73] Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.
[74] Ibid., January 19, 1849.
[75] This is the major reason for the third record book existing, and overlapping the second book. Note that the second book is dated 1846-1863, and the third ranges from 1846-1873. Barton notes that he indeed used "Book II" (1846-1863) throughout his work. See Barton, p. 21, n. 68. See "Records of the First Congregational Church of Wellington, Ohio 1846-1873," FCCW, ed. Guy Wells, 2006. See also "Records of the First Congregational Church of Wellington, Ohio 1824-1846," FCCW. The efforts to expunge from the historical record the "unhappy division" of 1843-1851 (and the second division from 1852-1861) provides the historian a remarkable vantage point from which to understand and explore the role of collective memory and the importance of community identity when studying American congregations.
[76] Barton, 21.
[77] Wellington Records, 1846-1863, February 12, 1851.
[78] Ibid., November 1851.

Presbytery, and on the other hand, a withdrawal from the Congregational Association. Ultimately, this action was questioned by enough members at the First Congregational Church to call for debate, and another split in January of 1852 led to the creation of Free Congregational Church.[79] Barton rightly notes that "The [second] division was more hopeless than ever," and would define the churches through the outbreak of the Civil War.[80]

Free Church aligned itself with Oberlin's Congregational Association, just as Wellington Independent Congregational had done before, and as the united congregation's members had attempted before the schism. However, by 1853 this relationship became strained when the Association forbade member churches from excommunicating members who were aligned with secret societies. Wellington, having a member excommunicated for being involved in the Odd Fellows, in violation of the church's second Article of Faith, was forced by the Association to allow him to return. While the incident did not tear apart its relationship with Oberlin, John Reed would be moved to call the Association an "unmitigated curse." To Reed, the inclusion of the member was a symbol of alignment with those of lesser morality. For this reason, Reed had worries. How was the church supposed to bring humanity into the New Millennium when its members were openly connected to Satan? This question, unanswered, would follow Reed through his untimely 1855 death, when he drowned while swimming in the Black River.[81]

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[79] Ibid., November 14, 1851 and January 23, 1852.
[80] See Barton, 22.
[81] See Free Church Records, 1852-1861, "List of Church Members." The Boies correspondence to Laundon seems to convey that these worries were put to rest with Reed's death. Based on the context of his letter to Cowles, Reed's worries in the fact that they seemed to allow the Odd Fellows member implies that he was the prime mover in pushing for antimasonic action in both churches. See John Reed to Henry Cowles, 12 May 1853, Henry Cowles Collection, OCA. Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.

In 1852, Rev. James A. Thome would meet with the newest Wellington congregation for the creation of a new church, its members infused with Oberlin influence and willing to charge into the New Millennium as spiritual foot soldiers of God.[82] While the reasoning behind the church's name is not specifically mentioned in its records, it can be inferred that "Free" in the title refers to at least three different themes. The first, known as the "free church movement," had been influential in socially stratified parts of the nation, such as New York, where Arthur and Lewis Tappan would fund churches which disregarded pew rentals in the spirit of creating a congregation unbound by social stratification.[83] Though there is little mention of renting pews in First Congregational's Records, and polity, rather than pew rentals, was the major issue which again tore apart the church, a loose leaf found in the papers of former member Frederick Hamlin provides evidence that pew renting was practiced in the church.[84]

Interestingly, Hudson, Ohio, would also see a "Free" Congregational Church rise in opposition to the stringently New School congregation and college, the earlier mentioned body also known as the "Oberlin" Church as a result of its acceptance of leaders such as Asa Mahan to its pulpit. Hudson's title, perhaps like Wellington's, referred to slavery, connoting a second incentive for naming the new congregation, "Free Congregational."[85] Further, a third issue exists in church polity, though a real connection to church polity beyond rhetoric must be explored further: the church at Wellington was now *free* to practice its reform, separate from control of Presbytery. In 1831, John

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[82] "Records of the Free Church 1852-1861," FCCW, hereafter referred to "Fee Church Records", p. 2.
[83] For a discussion of the free church movement in New York City, see Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004; 1984), 277-8.
[84] See "Pew Rentals" in Appendix II.
[85] DeCaro, 127.

Shipherd had attempted to do the same in order to purify Elyria Presbyterian Church to a point satisfactory to his ultimate goal of converting the west. By 1843, this had been accomplished and reinforced in 1851 at Wellington.

Rev. Alonzo Sanderson, 1852-1856

On August 27, 1834, crowds gathered at the Congregational Church in Amherst, Massachusetts, for the commencement ceremony of Amherst College. Among those graduating was Alonzo Sanderson, a twenty-six year old student who would move on to study at Andover Theological Seminary following graduation, and eventually assume the pulpit of Wellington Free Congregational Church. Also present was a young Henry Ward Beecher, the son of Lyman Beecher and brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, who would become immortalized as pastor of Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York, and infamously renowned later in the century after becoming involved in a series of famous extra-marital affairs.

Given the fact that the Class of 1834 only had thirty-nine students, we can ponder what relationship Sanderson would have had with Beecher, and what thoughts they might have shared. Unlike his father, Beecher would become known for his intellectual excursions from Calvinism, as he declared Charles Finney, who was at multiple times the theological ally and enemy of Lyman and always moving away from his New School Calvinism, as "a grand preacher… a man after my own heart."[86] The younger Beecher would be more susceptible to the intellectual and theological changes of the day, and

[86] Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America*, 79-80; 95-6. Beecher quoted in a letter to Chauncey Howard. See p. 88. For Sanderson's listing with the Class of 1834, see the *Amherst College Biographical Record, Centennial Edition (1821-1921)* (Amherst, MA: Amherst College, 1927). Sanderson's record is located on-line at the website of Richard J. Yanco. See <http://www.amherst.edu/~rjyanco94/genealogy/acbiorecord/1834.html>. Sanderson is located as record 383. Henry Ward Beecher is located as record 357.

willing to integrate them into Christianity. These changes included theology, where a general shift from the focus upon the paternalistic nature of God the Father would transcend into an understanding of the Love of Christ, leading Henry even to a rejection of the concept of Hell by the end of his life.[87]

Beecher's most recent biographer, Debby Applegate notes the fact that during the time Sanderson, Beecher, and Beecher's friend and future phrenologist Orson Fowler were at Amherst, the college was being swept up in waves of religious revival, much like the rest of the nation. This probably forced religious matters to pervade every part of Sanderson's life, and perhaps we can learn something from the rest of Amherst's student body, which, as Applegate notes, was of "a different ethos than Harvard or Yale" as many of its students did not come from a more privileged stock.[88] While little is known of Sanderson's background, he certainly seems to fit the persona of a religious virtuoso coming from humble beginnings. We do know that he gained experience at the pulpits of Deerfield, Ludlow, and Tolland, Massachusetts, telling Henry Cowles that his heart had "been West" the entire time, hoping, like many in his generation, to make an impression on a molding frontier.[89]

Before long, the Free Congregational Church in Wellington would see Sanderson assuming a position as permanent minister. His appointment would be tied to a February 1851 letter to Henry Cowles in which in addition to asking for direction in his own career, Sanderson would recommend a young man to Oberlin College. Sanderson's

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[87] Applegate, 462.
[88] Applegate, 77.
[89] Alonzo Sanderson to Henry Cowles, 23 February, 1851, Henry Cowles Papers, Box 3, OCA. In the letter, "Deerfield" is illegible, and based on the notation of "can't read" above the word in different hand and ink, either Cowles himself or a secretary of his agrees. See Theophilus Packard, "A History of the Churches and Ministers and of Franklin Association, in Franklin County, Mass." (Boston: S.K. Whipple and Company, 1854), 149, for a description of Sanderson's career.

reason for recommending young John Moore to Oberlin was rooted in hopes "…that he [Moore] may be under the influence of that institution." As the letter continues, the reader learns that Sanderson is undoubtedly hoping for Moore to be influenced and instilled with the Oberlin theology to which Sanderson subscribes:

> I have but little money, + do not wish to go out under the [American] Home Misionary [sic] Society, for I believe in the doctrine of entire holiness in this life. I therefore do not know that I could have [*illegible*] from that Society. I will preach Christ as a full Savior from sin while I preach + therefore do not wish to be trammelled [sic] by any Society.

Sanderson continued by expressing that he undoubtedly felt that Oberlin's brand of theology has been suppressed for too long:

> Holiness + union are to me the too [sic] great points of interest for the present time. These two points I long to have pressed upon the minds of men, + of Christians. O, when will the time come when these things shall be viewed in a right light?[90]

Unfortunately, the Free Church records are not necessarily descriptive of Sanderson's relationship to the congregation. While he was considered a pious and "devoted" man, Lydia Boies notes him as being "neither brilliant or intellectual" and nothing more nor less. We do know that after his later arrival in Michigan, where his family and Boies would stay in contact, he would struggle with the alcoholism of his son Henry, who is mentioned as an example of the problems of intemperance by Lydia Boies, and will be discussed in detail in the fourth chapter.[91]

Free Church and Antebellum Reform

Wellington Free Church provided an outlet for radical reformers to be active in other areas of reform likely inspired by Oberlin. In 1855, the church voted to further include women, when the church passed a resolution stating that "sisters" could vote in

[90] Sanderson to Cowles, February 23, 1851.
[91] Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.

church business. While this does not seem to be occurring frequently, Lydia Boies is noted in a July 29, 1860, church vote and no evidence exists to suggest a controversy or long discussion regarding this issue.[92] With the existence of the Maternal Association in Wellington, and the prominence of Jerusha Reed and Lydia Boies, questions arise as to Oberlin's influence regarding feminism in Wellington, or at least female roles in the church. In her "Reminicences," [sic] Boies refers to her work with the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Michigan. The springboard created for Boies' movement into public life at Wellington is certainly notable, as she testifies for herself:

> I look back now as memory calls up the scenes of my life in Wellington and now realize that it was an important factor in my ripening experience and preparation for after years. It shows too how much we may be helped by associations and environment.[93]

Joining the antislavery and feminist stances of Free Church as well as the separations which led to the very existence of the congregation are indications of the primary importance placed upon purity, both in terms of the church and of the individual. In the earlier mentioned letter to Henry Cowles, John Reed contemplates his separation from the main church body as a godly act of purity – a method which occurred as a result of an impure body in the form of the First Congregational Church of Wellington. In the contemplation of this separation, Reed indicates a need for the church body to act in unison – which he laments Free Congregational is not doing. In this sense, Reed's letter gives us some of the best reasoning for the action of each schism. Interestingly, it corresponds very well with the Oberlin theology and can be viewed as a primary indication of Oberlin's influence.[94]

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[92] See Free Church Records, February 15, 1855 and July 29, 1860.
[93] Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.
[94] John S. Reed to Henry Cowles, 12 May 1853, OCA.

David A. Grosvenor and Elyria Presbyterian Church, 1843-1853

Since the beginning of the church's history and Daniel Lathrop's 1824 appointment as permanent minister, Elyria Presbyterian Church had relied heavily upon organizations such as the American Home Missionary Society for its supply of ministers. This would remain the case after Lathrop's dismissal in 1831, with John Shipherd answering the Society's call for a replacement. As earlier mentioned, Shipherd filled the Elyria pulpit until moving on to fulfill his calling by beginning, in 1832, the process to found Oberlin. Following Shipherd was the ministry of James Eells, another New School pastor who would reinforce Elyria's position at the top of Lorain County's Presbyterian structure with an interest in upholding the Lorain Presbytery, which would be formed during his tenure.[95] In addition to fixing Elyria's position as central to Presbyterianism in Lorain County, Eells, along with the Lorain County Anti-Slavery Society published a tract condemning slavery, based on an Independence Day address given in Elyria which sought to compare the "Present Struggle for the Abolition of Slavery" with the American Revolution. Like Shipherd before him, Eells would hold up the role of the nation as he explored reform movements not merely as a spiritual struggle, but as being of temporal interest. Whatever Eells had in mind for the church was cut short however, when he drowned in the Maumee River on December 7, 1836.[96] Following Eells' death and short ministry would be a Rev. Lewis Loss who would ascend to the pulpit in 1837, and leave in 1843.[97]

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[95] *Dedication Souvenir [of the] First Congregational Church Elyria, Ohio, 1900* (Cleveland: F.W. Roberts Co., 1900), 34-35.
[96] See James Henry Eells, "The American Revolution, Compared with the Present Struggle for the Abolition of Slavery in the United States." (Elyria: Board of Managers of the Lorain County Antislavery Society, 1836). See also Samuel Eells, "Poem Written in Memory of James Henry Eells, Who Was Drowned in the Maumee River, Dec. 7, 1836." (Cincinnati: R.P. Brooks, Printer, 1840).
[97] *Dedication Souvenir, Elyria, 1900*, 34-35.

Only Shipherd's 1832 temperance resolution would come to official church resolution in terms of sponsored reform activity.[98] However, with the ascendancy of Yale graduate David Adams Grosvenor in 1843 to Elyria's pulpit, change would flow through the church in the form of several notable resolutions. At Yale, Grosvenor adopted, if he did not yet possess, a New School theological outlook including leanings toward antislavery, if not immediate abolitionism. In terms of missions, his own brother, Mason Grosvenor, was involved in the idealistic drive to send missionary aid to Illinois beginning in 1829. Although he was restricted due to bad health, Mason had been working with the likes of Lyman Beecher's second son Edward in the context of a plan pushed heavily by New School forces in New Haven.[99]

In 1847, after the formation of two committees including former Wellington postmaster and future Lorain County Judge Frederick Hamlin, Grosvenor sat as the chair during the Elyria church's first major drive for official policies relating to antebellum reform since Shipherd's era. Grosvenor, likely an idealist if we were to consider his writings before the resolution occurred, had previously lectured and published upon the evils of slavery, much like many of his Yale and other New School colleagues.[100] These meetings included prominent discussions of antislavery and – something not found in

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[98] Note that an absence of anti-Masonic activity may be noted in Elyria. With Elyria's founder and the church's celebrated member Heman Ely and his son, Heman Ely Jr. being Masons, this comes as no surprise. See the community history, James B. Thomas, *Down through the Years in Elyria* (Elyria: Lorain County Historical Society, 1967), 2. Paul Johnson in *Shopkeeper's Millennium* notes how an approval or disapproval of Masonic activity was indicative of a church's interest in reform in Rochester, New York, a city hit hard by Finney's revivals. See 89-94.

[99] Sweet, *The Presbyterians*, 77. See also John Randolph Willis, *God's Frontiersmen: The Yale Band in Illinois* (Washington: University Press of America, 1979) for a narrative history of the missionaries.

[100] See David A. Grosvenor, *The Laws of Ohio Respecting Colored People, Shown to Be Unjust* (Hudson: Printed at the Office of the Ohio Observer, 1845). Unfortunately, the rarity of this text prohibits me from considering it for this thesis. See <http://proxy.ohiolink.edu/morgan/view.php?id=8412>. Retrieved March 19, 2007.

Wellington – a resolution pertaining to peace, declaring war as evil in itself, rather than in the context of an action violating the "just war" theory of Augustine and other theorists.

"...The Duty of the Ministers of the Gospel of the Prince of Peace..."[101]

The Elyria Peace Resolution, as it will be generically referred to, is interesting in both its general scope as well as when it was proposed and set forth. Stating that "war has been in all ages… the standing scurge [sic] of the human race and is diametrically opposed to the spirit and progress of Christianity," the committee formed a moral basis against the concept of war, rather than pushing the resolution due to the political implications of war with Mexico and the possibility of the spread of slavery through annexed lands. However, based on the 1847 date of the resolution, and a surge in anti-war activism at Oberlin due to the war, as well as the anti-slavery resolution being only days apart, one cannot ignore what many feared would be an excuse to extend slavery and a branding of America as an imperialist nation.[102]

The Peace Movement in Lorain County, while not necessarily central to this thesis, represents shifts in loyalty to the government which many Americans such as the *San Patricios Battalion* would have to consider through the next twenty years.[103] Beginning with Oberlin's organization of a Peace Society, the movement would hold influence in Elyria and later in Wellington.[104] While we do have evidence that the

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[101] Elyria Records, June 11th, 1847. Note that the formatting of the phrase has been modified to fit into subject heading format.
[102] Ibid.
[103] The *San Patricios Battalion*, or Saint Patrick's Battalion, a group of mostly Irish immigrants who defected to and fought for Mexico for various reasons, including fears of the war turning into a conflict between American Protestants and Mexican Catholics. See Robert R. Miller, *Shamrock and Sword: The Saint Patrick's Battalion in the U.S.-Mexican War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 161-3. See also John C. Pinheiro, "'Extending the Light and Blessings of Our Purer Faith': Anti-Catholic Sentiment Among American Soldiers in the U.S.-Mexican War," in *Journal of Popular Culture* 35 (Fall, 2001): 129-152 for an understanding of the religious sentiment of the war.
[104] Fletcher, 273.

organization of a society was at least discussed in Wellington, there is no indication that such a group ever existed.[105] However, the mere fact that it was discussed by a small farming community under the influence of notoriously radical theologians is intriguing to consider, luminating the importance of the ideas of Oberlin ministers upon the frontier. Like any other tangential evidence however, it should neither be overlooked nor overblown.

In Oberlin, the major debate among whom Fletcher refers to as "conservatives" and "radicals" questioned the role of peace and non-resistance. Those termed "radicals" by Fletcher organized the Oberlin Non-Resistance Society in 1840, believing that "all wars are anti-christian – that governments sustained by force, and acting upon the principles of retaliation, must be left to other hands than the disciples of Jesus," emphasizing the spiritual warfare of the Christian life – rather than any physical struggle.[106] However, conservatives in the faculty and community countered the student organization with the formation of the Oberlin Peace Society in 1843, which Fletcher notes sought to answer fears of students aligning themselves with the likes of religiously heterodox individuals more interested in reform than Christianity.[107] As we shall see, Oberlin students would eventually be seeing themselves reconsider war in light of a new and different conflict, which would question their stances of Non Resistance.

Lorain County's Religious Spectrum and the Reform Impulse

As we have seen, Lorain County had no shortage of frontier prophets and social reformers roaming the countryside. While many of these religious and reform oriented

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[105] See John S. Reed to Henry Cowles, 28 January, 1850, OCA. Unfortunately, only one sentence consisting of "I believe there is no particular interest on the subject of a Peace League, in Wellington" is what forms our knowledge of the concept ever being attempted in Wellington.
[106] Quoted in Fletcher, 272.
[107] Fletcher, 272.

incentives would originate in New England, the frontier was a vibrant place, where self-proclaimed prophets roamed and religious communities prospered. As Chris Padgett notes, the 1834 creation of the Independent Congregational Union of the Western Reserve in Williamsfield, Ohio illustrates the problems which Plan of Union-inspired Presbyterian polity had observed; and occurred during the aftermath of the founding of Oberlin College but perhaps even more so by the threats of the antislavery movement.[108] By the next year, Theodore Dwight Weld's lectures would conflagrate an already burning desire on the part of abolitionists to separate from slaveholders and Congregationalists. While the Plan of Union formed for the region a religious identity, it soon saw destruction through theological and political strife, much of which was at least instigated, if not caused by Oberlin. Schism in Wellington in 1843 and again in 1851 provides an excellent microcosm of this story, and deserves further attention by scholars.

Chris Padgett rightfully contends that in spite of its short life, "the Plan of Union proved more resilient than is sometimes assumed by students of church history."[109] As he notes, the alliances formed by the plan – both those for and against New School Presbyterianism – would create a religious identity by which churches would understand their place in the greater religious landscape. The plan itself would not officially be "put to rest" until 1852,[110] and through the associations and overarching religious structures which pervaded its arrival and existence, historians need to be mindful of the missionary effort as a central foundation to the character of religious life and social reform in Lorain County.

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[108] Padgett, "Abolition and the Plan of Union's Demise on the Western Reserve," In passim.
[109] Ibid., 265.
[110] Ibid.

While this thesis is primarily concerned with "Presbyterians" and Congregationalists, it should be mentioned that they shared space with growing Methodist and Baptist populations. In Wellington alone, the Presbyterians and Congregationalists of both the Maternal Association and a "Union" sewing group would consistently meet with Baptists and Methodists – where the women would discuss topics such as infant baptism, church polity, and perhaps most importantly, the piety of their children. While this also happened in Oberlin amongst a Maternal Association much like Wellington's, Oberlin's Congregationalist homogeneity was secure, at least in terms of active participants. Christ Church, an Episcopalian parish was founded in the 1850's in part to counter prevalent "heresies" and radical abolitionism, but Oberlin's religious life was dominated by Congregationalists.[111] Elyria, much like Wellington, was more heterogeneous in terms of religious landscape. Of course, the religious "feel" of the county would change dramatically over the next years with changes in immigration patterns, but as I discussed earlier, the focus upon Presbyterians and Congregationalists suits this thesis as it provides denominational links between three very different communities.

However, to believe that these denominations were somehow cordoned off in their affairs without any kind of interaction a mistake. Lydia Boies mentions a Methodist revival in Wellington occurring during the childhood of her son Eugene:

> The Methodists were then holding a protracted meeting, and were quite noisy & demonstrative in their evening meetings. I had no taste for <u>such methods of expression</u> & therefore decided not to attend; when soon I began to hear of Mr A confessing his sins with tears & Mr B talking of new hope; with other facts showing that God was present there, I at once began to inquire and was shown <u>very clearly</u>, that where the Lord graced a meeting with His blessing, I and other disciples could afford to give our presence.

[111] Brandt, 42.

> ...
> From that lesson I adopted the principle that where there was evidence of Gods Spirit and work, it was duty for Christians to give their influence & cooperation. It was this evidence that drew me into the crusade [for] reform in after years.[112]

Boies' description shows the amount to which she and her contemporaries were able to transcend their beliefs above denominational lines and be active for the cause of their God, while illuminating social prejudices she found herself encountering. One cannot ignore the denominational strife that did occur, revolving around the various social movements of the period. While reformers came from all denominational stripes, historians have noted that those rising out of the world of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism were much more likely to be organized under what has been termed the "Benevolent Empire," that ubiquitous network of reform organizations aimed at changing the world with organized resources.

Perhaps what Boies' story, that of a Congregationalist woman who was obviously influenced by Methodists, can teach us is that the individuals involved, regardless of their denomination, were not merely interested in reforming their Presbyterian or Congregationalist or Baptist or Methodist brethren. Instead, they sought to purge the sins of humanity itself – quite a large task. Lydia Boies would seek to purge the sin of intemperance throughout her life, being involved in the formation and early years of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, a crusade which we will consider in more detail in the following chapter.

This reform work, structured by and set upon a backdrop of American religion, would depend on Boies' interpretations of the world and her place in it. More importantly, this world was governed, according to Boies and others, by a judgmental

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[112] Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.

God. As we have seen and will continue to explore, this God required purity in every part of the Christian's life: physical, mental, and spiritual. This purity would find itself at the heart of two major movements: the temperance movement, which would work to slow, and eventually to cease the use of alcohol by Americans, and the antislavery movement, working to abolish slavery.

CHAPTER IV

"The Story of Thousands": Temperance Reform in Lorain County

> Go then with us to yonder dwelling, once the abode of tenderist connubial love – the dwelling place of him who viewed in his lovely wife, his dearest self – of him who identified with her happiness, his own & that of the loved little ones that linked their souls in dearest union. Hark! now, as we approach that once blest abode of domestic peace. What hear ye? The deep fetched sobs, the doleful groans, the frightened shrieks of wife and children. But why? That once fond, tender hearted husband and father, threatens, beats and murders them! O heavens! what has changed him from a wooing dove, to a malicious devil? It is alcohol.
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> John Jay Shipherd, in his temperance tract "An Appeal to Patriots."[1]

In early 1835, citing the advice of Jesus pertaining to wayfaring church members in the 18th chapter of Matthew, the Congregational Church at Wellington excommunicated a member and labeled him as a "heathen man and a publican." According to his accusers, Ithel Battle had taken part in the use of "ardent spirits," which the church had explicitly prohibited a year and a half earlier. In the interest of purifying what amounted to their local representation of the Body of Christ, the flock at Wellington saw themselves as holding to standards for the good of not only their religious body, but of society at large.[2] Just as in Wellington, congregations across Lorain County would

[1] John Jay Shipherd, "An Appeal to Patriots, Philanthropists, and Christians, on Behalf of Our Endangered Republic, and Its Suffering Members; by the Lorain County Temperance Society." (Elyria: Park & Burrell, Printers, 1832), OCSC. "The Story of Thousands" quoted in Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.
[2] See Wellington Records, 1824-1846, November 5, 1834; November 27, 1834; and January 3, 1835. See also April 24, 1833 and Matthew 18:15-17, King James Version.

react to the temperance issue. With varying degrees of radical implementation, the county would find itself swept up in the issue's core points of controversy.

The story of temperance in America revolves around what W.J. Rorabaugh would call "*The Alcoholic Republic*," and its interrelations with religious people who held piety to a puritanical level. This characterization of America as "alcoholic" is well suited according to Rorabaugh, especially when considering America before the days of a heavily industrialized economy and the following shift toward the most industrialized machine the world has ever seen. With a per capita use of these "ardent spirits" ranging from 3.5 gallons of liquor per year in 1770 to 4 gallons per year in 1830, alcohol had permeated American social history on many levels. Denouncing alcohol as what amounted to a seed of evil, religious reformers would use temperance to organize their first nationwide crusades. By 1840, consumption levels had dropped to 2 gallons and by another half gallon a decade later. While economics did play a major role in the considerable decline of the consumption of alcohol, Americans were heavily influenced by Protestant Christianity and the religious reformers permeating America.[3]

Temperance in National and Regional Perspectives

When the Presbyterian General Assembly had voted in 1812 to push ministers to preach against intoxication, Americans of all social and religious stripes had consistently been partaking in the consumption of alcohol, as it held an important role in the social and cultural structures of the nation.[4] Though it would take time, Americans fourteen years later would see the formation of the American Temperance Society, and the

[3] W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 232-3.
[4] Ibid., 207.

beginning of a general shift in how the general public understood alcohol.[5] The following year, in 1827, the Presbyterian General Assembly would too be included in this shift, voting to support the Temperance movement. By 1835, the Assembly had pushed recommendations of teetotalism – signifying the sincere hold the temperance movement had taken upon mainstream American religion.[6] Through a mixture of their own attitudes of religious piety and the growing influence of national and regional temperance societies on the frontier, national efforts to keep Americans' hands off the bottle and clenched to the Bible would deeply root themselves into the religious spectrum of the region and the county.

In Lorain County, rather than simply recommending teetotalism, prominent churches joined others across the region in requiring members to be dry. While the extent ranged from Oberlin's banning of all substances including "all strong and unnecessary drinks," such as tea and coffee to Elyria's ban of alcohol except in medicinal form, Lorain County was inundated with individuals who would fight for temperance and against alcohol on religious and social grounds.[7] Deeply rooted with New England intellectual and religious currents, these individuals would continue the American tradition of blending God and country to fit their political and social objectives. Chronologically, the organization and formation of Lorain County in the mid-1820's places it into a perfect position to be influenced by the rise of organizations such as the

[5] Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 82.
[6] Rorabaugh, 207-8.
[7] "Covenant of the Oberlin Colony," Oberlin Society, OCA. See also Elyria Records 1824-1837, November 25, 1831.

American Temperance Society and a phasing out of an overall acceptance of alcohol in American Protestantism.[8]

Shipherd's War

Just as what many would consider an "epidemic" of intemperance sweeping across the nation heavily impacted frontier settlements, Lorain County would see liquor holding a common role in the daily life of many of its inhabitants. Whether in Elyria where free whiskey would be given away by store owners to customers in order to "lubricate" trade,[9] or in townships such as Amherst which would take on the name of "Whiskyville," [sic] a mixture of frontier conditions, a growing infrastructure with which to transport goods, and easy access to grain-filled fields brought what many considered the bane of society upon the frontier.[10]

In his great plan to convert the West, Shipherd had realized the role of alcohol in lowering one's inhibitions and muddying what instead could be a pure and clean conscience. Only a matter of months after accepting his leadership position at Elyria Presbyterian Church, John Shipherd initiated temperance reforms in church and society. Shipherd's primary concern was the growing county, which had increased to a population of around 6,000 by the time he had come to Elyria.[11] As a result of his trepidations of a new scourge falling upon the county, Shipherd encouraged a temperance resolution to

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[8] See John L. Merrill, "The Bible and the American Temperance Movement: Text, Context, and Pretext," in *The Harvard Theological Review* 81 (April, 1988): 145-170.
[9] Fletcher, 82.
[10] *History of Lorain County, Ohio*, 332.
[11] John J. Shipherd to Zebulon R. Shipherd, 10-12 January, 1832, OCA. Quoted in Fletcher, 82. Shipherd, whose statistics were likely easily obtained in Elyria, was correct in his depiction of Lorain County's growing population. See census data in Appendix I.

move through the church.[12] By 1831, the Elyria church had passed a resolution stating the following:

> Believing that distilled spirit is the bane of man, + that any but a medicinal use of it is inconsistent with the christian [sic] character; we the subscribed members of the Presbyterian Church in Elyria, covenant with each other + with God, that we will totally abstain from the use of it, unless we deem it important as a medicine: And we further agree to do what we can to promote the same abstinence in others.[13]

In addition, church members would join others in the county and the town to sign a pledge in which they would agree to, "…in all suitable ways… discountenance their use throughout the community." Signatories include Abigail, the wife of abolitionist and Underground Railroad conductor John Monteith, as well as members of the influential Beebe and Hamlin families. The pledge itself, found in the papers of Lorain County Judge Frederick Hamlin, is undated but provides documented proof that such an organization existed coupled with the resolution and Shipherd's own publication.[14]

"An Appeal to Patriots"

Shipherd, never content with rhetoric unbound to action, continued his crusade. In the mid 1820's, Lyman Beecher had delivered and published his *Six Sermons on Temperance*, in which he lamented what he saw as a pervading "atmosphere of death," caused by alcohol.[15] These sermons, published in pamphlet form and read by a wide audience, were undoubtedly picked up and mulled over by Shipherd sometime before his ministry at Elyria. Along with Beecher, Shipherd may have also read the work of

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[12] Fletcher, 82.
[13] Elyria Records, November 25, 1831. See also Fletcher, 82.
[14] See "Temperance Pledge," EWC. See Appendix II for the text of this pledge.
[15] Lyman Beecher, *Six Sermons on the Nature, Occasions, Signs, Evils, and Remedy of Intemperance* (New York: American Tract Society, 1827), 7.

Benjamin Rush, the earlier mentioned physician and reformer who played an important role in the genesis of antebellum reform efforts.[16]

In 1832, Shipherd would compose his own pamphlet explaining the evils of intemperance and the importance of keeping a watchful eye on the bottle. Titled "An Appeal to Patriots, Philanthropists, and Christians, on Behalf of Our Endangered Republic, and Its Suffering Members," the pamphlet was published under the guise of the Lorain County Temperance Society, which has left us little documentation with which to work.[17] Borrowing his ideas heavily from Rush and Beecher, Shipherd's publication highlights two major aspects evident in both of the earlier authors' temperance documents. The first, an appeal to statistics, drove much of the temperance workers' case and was pioneered early by Rush and influenced by his background as a physician.[18] With Rush, and later Beecher emphasizing the physical and social effects of alcohol,[19] Shipherd followed suit, lamenting the effects of alcohol upon the body, intellect, and the "heart of our republic,"[20] speaking both literally and metaphorically.

To Shipherd, the statistics he employed formed his case in real, quantitative terms, as they signified both the social impairments brought upon by alcohol and the amount which society might accomplish with the removal of "ardent spirits." These societies indeed provided a justification for the temperance reformer, but additionally,

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[16] See John J. Shipherd, "An Appeal to Patriots," OCSC.
[17] See Shipherd, "An Appeal to Patriots." Authorship is claimed by Shipherd in correspondence to his parents. See J.J.S. to Zebulon R. Shipherd, 10-12 January, 1832, OCA. Unfortunately, a lack of further material relating to the Lorain County Temperance Society keeps me from further delving into the organization with this thesis.
[18] Abzug, 83. See also Abzug's source, Harry G. Levine, "The Discovery of Addiction: Changing Conceptions of Habitual Drunkenness in America," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 39 (1978): 143-174. Levine considers the work of Rush to be "the first clearly developed modern conception of alcohol addiction."
[19] Abzug, 86-7.
[20] Shipherd, 4-9. See pp. 4-5 for Shipherd's use of statistics to prove his case. See Fletcher, 83 for a mention of Shipherd's appeal to statistics.

they painted and gave context to the world in which those crusading against alcohol lived. That "ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS [were] ANNUALLY DESTROYED BY ALCOHOL," [sic] became a platform from which Shipherd could explore the social benefits of removing the economic cost of alcohol from the nation's growing infrastructure. A reappraisal of resources and investment of money wasted on alcohol in a positive direction, Shipherd claimed, could render taxation unnecessary, pay off the national debt, provide education to children and adults alike, and create the necessary infrastructure with which the nation would use to oil its progress. This practical understanding was also applied to the church, as Shipherd contemplated the use of these funds to place Bibles and Sabbath readers into churches, Sabbath Schools, and the hands of missionaries across the world.[21]

The second major factor was that of a focus on intemperance as an American epidemic. Beecher made this case in his *Six Sermons* by stating that intemperance was "the sin of our land, … that river of fire, which is rolling through the land, destroying the vital air, and extending around an atmosphere of death" as he warned that "A nation of drunkards would constitute a hell."[22] Like Rush, Shipherd's tone parallels biblical prophets lamenting the imminent destruction of Israel and further elevates the importance of sound reason in the operation of a republican democracy. Without this sound reason, Shipherd claims, a republic will not stand, forcing it to ruin. Indeed, in all of the strength and grandeur of the American Republic, the author saw a bleak future: "…we would spread out before you, the once fair heritages of our nation, wasted by alcohol, like lovely

[21] Ibid., 7-8.
[22] Beecher, *Six Sermons*, 7; 48-52 Quoted in Abzug, 86-7.

Greece, by the merciless Turk."[23] According to Shipherd, alcohol would be the grave undoing of such a beacon of liberty as the United States.

In a letter explaining the existence of his pamphlet and his reasoning for writing it, Shipherd touts himself and his labors, stating that "I have waged war against Alcohol in our County, with the design of fighting in person in all its towns. I hope I trust in the Arm of Omnipotence & shall wage an exterminating war."[24] If his pamphlet is any indication, Shipherd's feelings for the importance of the temperance crusade matched his feelings for the saving of souls. Like so many other notable figures, however, he would soon draw enemies upon himself as his message was not well received by at least some of the congregants, who as we have earlier discussed were also unhappy with his attempted move to separate from Presbytery.[25] The following spring saw his resignation from the ministry of Elyria Presbyterian Church, which Fletcher attributes to Shipherd's zeal for reform, and based on newly surfaced evidence, we can agree with in the context of larger issues surrounding the Plan of Union.[26] For Shipherd, circumventing traditional means toward the end of spreading his message was not only necessary, but required. Likewise, we may see this sidelining of traditional Christianity with reinterpretations of the Bible in the light of new debates pertaining to alcohol.

Temperance and the Bible

When interpreting the action of these individuals, the historian may note a sort of anomaly. Reformers used the same Bible to reinterpret how they viewed alcohol. This Bible included instances where their god, while living on earth in human form, turned

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[23] Shipherd, 16.
[24] J.J.S. to Zebulon R. Shipherd, 10-12 January, 1832.
[25] J.J.S. to Fayette Shipherd, 30 January, 1832. See Fletcher, 83. See Guthrie-EPC Correspondence, 1875.
[26] Fletcher, 83-4. See also Elyria Records, 1824-1837, September 10, 1832; October 29, 1832. See also Guthrie-EPC Correspondence, 1875.

water into wine at a wedding feast and paralleled his own blood to the drink during the his last hours with his disciples on earth.[27] John Merrill, in answering this question, notes a shift in antebellum religious thought surrounding the adoption of complete teetotalism – and perhaps more importantly, the demonization of alcohol. At its foundation, the reinterpretation of teetotalism in relation to the Bible would need to reconsider what alcohol was, and how it appears in biblical texts. This consideration would interpret the problem of Jesus' commands at the Last Supper as null and void. Because Jesus had never actually consumed alcohol which could intoxicate him, temperance reformers were able to apply their radical views to church as well as community.[28] This perspective, which probably held sway in Wellington due to its influence throughout New School Calvinism, utilized a hermeneutic of biblical text to play a key role in identifying how different ancient wines really were.

Merrill notes the "desire for a stronger and more satisfying biblical injunction to support the temperance cause," leading to the formation and development of the "two-wine theory."[29] According to the theory, popularized by Moses Stuart, there indeed existed two different types of wines in the Bible, traceable to ancient texts predating English and Latin translations. Stuart claimed that the wines consumed by his contemporaries were far stronger than the unfortified wines of his Hebrew spiritual ancestors – and more importantly: his Savior.

Merrill notes that Rev. George Duffield would go on to claim to identify these wines in the Scriptures. The Hebrew words Duffield pointed to included *yayin*, which,

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[27] See I Corinthians 11:23-29. See also John 2:1-11 as well as Paul's mention of wine outside of the sacrament of communion in I Timothy 5:23.
[28] Merrill, 149.
[29] Quoted in Ibid., 153.

based on context with surrounding passages, stood in the place of the evil fermented wines which all reformers knew were driving people to sin. On the other hand, *tirosh* paralleled wine of either a very low fermentation or none at all. Merrill notes that through "exegetical maneuvering... Duffield not only eliminated the apparent tension between biblical practice and the teaching of the temperance movement, but provided for an explicitly biblical argument in support of teetotalism..."[30] This shift would see, as Masaru Okamoto notes, a change in the understanding of "temperance" as merely a method by which to lower the amount of alcohol consumed into the understanding of the term – and the movement itself – as requiring one to be absolutely dry for themselves, their community, and the God of their universe.[31]

This reconsideration of alcohol would be a vital task for reformers. Because they were interested in reforming society for the cause of Christ, a cause which demanded unbridled attention and consistency, temperance reformers were bound to ensuring that their New Jerusalem would be a temperate one. Just as the real City of God would have nothing to do with things such as alcohol which could distract one's mind from the Eternal, the reformed City of Man must mold to the heavenly example. Though critics may decry the hermeneutical "jumping jacks" at hand, this reconsideration of Scripture almost seems predictable and natural, as new social ideas melted into new understandings of an old religion.

Grassroots and Church Temperance Efforts in Lorain County

By 1833, in the midst of heightened attention upon issues pertaining to alcohol in American politics, Wellington followed Elyria in passing a Temperance resolution:

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[30] Ibid., 154.
[31] Masaru Okamoto, "The Changing Meaning of What Was Considered 'Taboo' in the History of the Temperance Movement," in *The Japanese Journal of American Studies*, 10 (1999): 55-76.

> Whereas the use of distilled spirits as an article of drink has been the occasion of great trouble to the Church, and is destructive to vital Godliness; therefore resolved that this church will require a pledge of entire abstinance [sic] in the use & traffic of this article for the above purpose of all members which are received in future[.] And we who vote for this resolution pledge ourselves to abide by the same rule which we prescribe to others[.][32]

As earlier mentioned the congregation at Wellington was ready and willing to excommunicate any and all members not prepared to abide by the church's ruling. In June of 1842, Wellington voted to "procure the pure juice of Grape for Communion Seasons," thereby removing wine from the church's sacramental use.[33] We do know that this shift impacted how the church was previously functioning, as an entry predating the temperance resolution suggests the purchase of fermented wine for purposes of celebrating communion.[34]

Wellington's path to radical temperance, while notable, is certainly not extraordinary, as the national temperance movement had been pushing to make America dry. The "ardent spirits" of early Wellington and national temperance activists had evolved from hard alcohol into any form of alcoholic drink, including wine, cider, and beer. Likewise, Oberlin had earlier adopted a completely dry policy pertaining to communion.[35] All of these policies find themselves corresponding with the transformation of the American Temperance Society into a more militant American Temperance Union in 1835. The new organization, endorsing two-wine theory, would become symbolic of how quickly the "ultraism" of total temperance would sweep the nation.[36]

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[32] Wellington Records, April 24, 1833.
[33] Ibid., 1824-1846. June 27, 1842.
[34] Ibid., 1824-1846, May 14, 1827.
[35] Oberlin Records, September 1, 1835.
[36] Hirrel, 131.

Meanwhile on the national level, temperance activists told stories of those who had fallen to the bottle. One drop of ardent spirits, it seemed, could lead one to a drop down the gallows. Even a slight brush with drink, regardless of what it was, would result in ultimate death and on a widespread scale, social chaos. The early 1850's saw the publication of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room and What I Saw There,* a tale of the effects of alcohol and its victims. Written by Timothy Shay Arthur, it used shocking stories to sell the subject of temperance, including the beating of wives, murdering of parents, and infinite undue stress placed upon innocent young women and children.[37]

The "collateral damage" of the bottle was also known to activists in Lorain County. John Shipherd, as noted in this chapter's epigraph, blamed alcohol for tearing apart households.[38] Likewise, Lydia Boies would sketch an incident of this happening in the life of the son of a former pastor of Wellington Free Congregational Church:

> Do you remember Henry Sanderson a pretty boy when they lived in W[ellington]. [sic] Rev [Alonzo] S[anderson] and family moved to Mich[igan] and I often met him in visiting different places. Henry at 16 y[ea]rs was a very handsome young man & as his father could not send him to college, got him a clerk position in the best store in Flint, and in order to his well being got him a home in an excellent Christian family; then pursued his calling as a pastor in perfect peace. Not till years after did the father & mother learn that Henry had become a debaucher.
>
> Henry in occasional short visits home had succeeded in covering his vice, but finally a christian [sic] man wrote Mr S. and then they moved to Flint and had Henry board at home. Mr S gave up preaching & devoted himself to H. I was there several times and he told me that himself and wife usually laid awake till 12 or 1 to hear if H came home able to mount the stairs alone. By & by Mr S was stricken with paralysis & his last words were to H. "you have killed me." The shock sobered H and it seemed he reformed but disease caused by drink removed him ere long. They are all gone. <u>The</u> beginning of Henry's fall was the domestic wine made by his christian [sic] hostess, who, all ignorant of its danger, frequently gave it to H, & the mischief was done ere any one knew it, & then his

[37] See R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 29. See also Timothy S. Arthur, *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room and What I Saw There.* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, and W. Tweedie, 1855).
[38] Shipherd, "An Appeal to Patriots."

> fellow clerks with him had their sprees after business hours. This is the story of thousands.[39]

The story of *thousands*, Boies warned. This idea... of young "handsome" pastors' sons being driven into "debauchery" by the influence of alcoholic drink drove Boies and others to preventing it, first in their own lives and families, and then in their societies. Just as *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* and Boies' own correspondence would demonstrate, antebellum literature and popular thought loathed the ruined lives of so many young people.[40] Boies herself became involved in Wellington's temperance efforts, which would lead to later involvement as a founding member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union – the roots of all of these efforts being in her social and religious connections to the Wellington Maternal Assocation, which had interested itself in the purification of the self and the family. One specific event was recalled by Boies, in which Jerusha Reed asked if Boies "would join her (Reed) in leading an attack with axe and hammer on [James] De Wolfs [sic][41] and other saloons." While Boies reports to have thought better of the act, she and other women in the town earnestly kept pressing forward to meet saloon owners in person, in order to confront who Boies and others certainly believed were perpetuators of sin, and perhaps worse still, were financially gaining by ruining society.[42]

Lydia Boies and the WCTU

In 1874, the representatives of eleven states, all northern, would convene to create what would become an iconic and important temperance organization in the period

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[39] Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.
[40] Hirrel, 123.
[41] Likely refers to James DeWolf, who is on Wellington village records as owning a saloon in 1874. See J. A. Bradstreet & Dow Commercial Report, January 1, 1874, Wellington, Lorain County, Ohio, file "SS Warner," EWC.
[42] Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.

between the Civil War and national Prohibition known as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, or WCTU. One of these women was Lorain County's own Lydia Boies, who, having since moved to Michigan to follow her son Eugene after the 1863 death of Eli, took up the temperance crusade yet again.[43]

The organization can be seen as a slightly different breed than its antebellum counterparts such as the American Temperance Society, albeit with roots looking fifty years into the past. Lydia Boies is a perfect example of these roots, as a small town temperance activist who, as earlier noted, took much of her training from Wellington. At first glance, the WCTU was much more ecumenical, at least in terms of Protestants, as it had elected Annie Wittenmyer, a Methodist, as President in 1874. Boies' role in the WCTU warrants further inquiry, as it lies outside of the scope of this thesis. We do know that she was at least somewhat influential, as she is mentioned multiple times in the *Union Signal*, the organ of the WCTU which began publication on January 1, 1883.[44] The organization would attempt to do what previous reformers had failed doing: silence the influence of alcohol throughout the entire nation.

Legislating Temperance

Since the village of Wellington was not incorporated until 1855, no antebellum era records exist regarding any laws that may have gone into effect as a result of the

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[43] See Helen E. Tyler, *Where Prayer and Purpose Meet: The WCTU Story, 1874-1949* (Evanston, IL: Signal Press, 1949), 22 for mention of Boies. While "Mrs L. M. Boise" is noted, as opposed to the spelling this thesis uses, Lydia's undated letter to the wife of S. K. Laundon in Wellington provides our connection. Throughout, Boies is spelled "Boise." However, the grave of Eli Boies spells his name as we use it in this thesis. Eli's court records, including the famous photograph of the Oberlin-Wellington Rescuers, who we will discuss in further detail in Chapter V, misspell his name as "Boyce." See the photograph of Eli's grave in Appendix II. See also Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.

[44] Moore, 155-6. See *Union Signal Index, 1883-1893*. Frances E. Willard Memorial Library & Archives, Evanston, Illinois. See also *Woman's Christian Temperance Union Annual Meeting Minutes Index, 1874-1910*, p. 53, Frances E. Willard Memorial Library & Archives, Evanston, Illinois. A special thanks goes to the staff at the Frances Willard Archives for collecting this information at my request.

actions of Boies and Reed, and their influence cannot be traced because Boies does not provide us with a date, either for the letter's writing or for the incident itself. However, Wellington did begin to publish its legislation after being incorporated, and an 1882 pamphlet details laws enacted to make the village officially dry, at least in terms of the sale of alcohol in any public establishment.[45] While it is not clear if temperance reformers were successful, John Reed's correspondence mentions his efforts for the "suppression of the sale of spirits," a strong statement for a merchant to make.[46]

Boies mentions that a pragmatic approach to alcohol sales in Wellington, and much of Ohio, was that of simply refusing to allow the issuing of liquor licenses. However, this still allowed for the existence of such "evil" establishments, driving many temperance activists to see "any license to sell alcohol… [as a] …license to sin." How exactly could the government, cited by Paul in his epistles as ordained by God, allow sin to reign?[47] Thus, the next step would involve a shift to attempt to stop the sale of any type of alcohol.

From Temperance to Prohibition in Ohio

By 1851, Maine would pass legislation which must have seemed a dream come true for temperance reformers. At its core, the "Maine Law" of 1851, formally known as the "Act for the Suppression of Drinking Houses and Tippling Shops," sought to ban the sale and use of liquor, driving the state into mandatory prohibition. As one might predict, temperance advocates seized upon the opportunity to replicate the law in other states.

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[45] "Wellington Village Ordinances from Date of Incorporation 1855 to July 5, 1882." (Wellington: Village of Wellington, 1882), SLCHS, Wellington, Ohio. Available at the Spirit of '76 Museum, Wellington.
[46] John S. Reed to Henry Cowles, 6 October, 1853, OCA. See Boies to Laundon for mention of the fact that Reed was a merchant – and according to Boies, rather successful and wealthy in his business. Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.
[47] Quoted in Hirrel, 126.

New School Presbyterians would be directly interested in this, and in 1853 activists clamored for a similar law to be passed in Ohio. This activity was excited by the fact that official church bodies – including the Synod of the Western Reserve – had previously attempted to encourage and aid the state to force the cessation of the sale of alcohol, signaling a shift from a focus on personal piety and involvement in church-related issues to blowing the billows of temperance to engulf the entire nation's legal system.[48]

While attempts to expand the Maine Law to Ohio would ultimately fail, such laws were indeed passed in other states, including Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, Michigan, Connecticut, New York, Indiana, Delaware, Iowa, Nebraska, and New Hampshire, all by 1855.[49] However, a new struggle for reformers, and by now, their children, was looming, and had eclipsed the temperance movement in terms of importance, both locally and nationally. Moreover, this new struggle would not see such support among either Federal or State governments, requiring a unified front of benevolence and as a result, the reformers would need to set the temperance issue aside until after the Civil War. Like the temperance movement, this new issue, antislavery, dealt with what reformers considered a negative moral condition cleansed only by God.

Jon Clark notes temperance legislation existing in Wellington as a result of economic interests in the midst of an emerging commercial cheese industry during the 1860's. While this reason for temperance reform is not explored in depth in my own work, the melting of religious and economic understandings of reform has been explored in other scholarship, such as Paul Johnson's *A Shopkeeper's Millennium* as well as W. J.

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[48] Donald K. Gorrell, "Presbyterians in the Ohio Temperance Movement of the 1850's," in *The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 60 (July, 1951): 292-296. Quoted from *The Ohio Observer*, October 1, 1851. Masaru Okamoto considers this shift from personal piety to state and national politics in "The Changing Meaning..."

[49] Hirrel, 127.

Rorabaugh's *The Alcoholic Republic*.[50] Though we cannot speak for the rest of the country, we might notice a pattern to which Wellington and Elyria might be applied including four major steps.

The first step in this process would be the growth of the temperance movement in the church, first cited in Elyria's 1832 resolution. This would see the eventual explosion of the temperance movement and its melting into constructions of America's place in an eternal timeline, which we will further discuss in a moment. Following this first step was a general shift in interest toward abolition, amplified by the outbreak of the Civil War. Third, a resurgence, marked by the 1874 formation of the Women's Christian Temperance Union would see women taking hold of the movement, and finally at least in Wellington according to Clark, men would soon be "stealing the reins" of the reincarnated movement through their own societies, especially as economic interest placed pressure upon business owners to encourage their employees to be sober in the workplace.[51]

Ushering in the Millennium: Placing Temperance into Context

In October, 1853, John Reed penned a letter to Henry Cowles defending Philo Herrick, a prominent community and church member. Unfortunately for Herrick and Reed, an unnamed minister and member of the Presbytery was "circulating reports"

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[50] See Jon C. Clark, "King of Cheese: Growth and Modernization in Wellington, Ohio, 1850-1880," Senior Thesis, Oberlin College, 1992. See also Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic* and Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium.*

[51] Clark is rightfully interested in temperance as an aside to the development of the economy, showing how economic change pervaded social structures. While Clark reveals much about the development of the temperance movement, he wrongly places the origin of this movement in Wellington into the decade of the 1850's-1860's, failing to cite sources beyond news articles, thereby limiting his thesis' grasp of its subjects. While the new economy may have indeed seen a new flurry in temperance activity, we can hardly place this as the beginning epoch for the "first large-scale temperance campaign in Wellington," (p. 83). While more research is required to explore the crusade for the removal of "ardent spirits" from the town, we can certainly see the influence of New School Presbyterian thought and reform as holding this position for nearly thirty years preceding Clark's timeframe. See Clark, "The King of Cheese," especially p. 83.

questioning Herrick's Christianity and temperance principles. Reed states that when he had heard of "a similar report," he "took occasion to have a lengthy, private interview with him, [Herrick] on a sabbath [sic] afternoon when, I think he gave me entrance into the 'inmost-chambers of his heart.'"

In his letter's closing, Reed emphasizes his confidence in Herrick while alluding to three important themes in the reformer's life: "On temperance, anti-slavery, + a belief in Christianity I think I can safely underwrite Mr H, if this will do any good[.]"[52] Temperance, anti-slavery... and a belief in Christianity were the major areas of interest Reed mentions in his letter, giving the document status as being indicative of the three most important issues not only in Reed's personal life, but in his understanding of reality. By the date of the letter's writing, the temperance and antislavery movements had come to redefine Christianity for Reed and others, seeping into the marrow of the religion, on equal footing with Scriptural doctrines, liturgical routines, and even the very concept of salvation.

Just as one could become slave to the bottle, and as a result, unknowingly uncommitted to Christ, one could become a slave of men, not knowing of the truths of Christianity. This narrative would fit into the core understanding of Christianity, which explores at its essence, the narrative of humanity as being a slave to sin; freed only with the redeeming power of Jesus Christ.[53] These issues resonated in a familiar form in the ears of Jonathan Blanchard's audience in Oberlin when, in 1839, he declared the

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[52] John Reed to Henry Cowles, 6 October 1853, OCA.

[53] Robert Abzug explores this understanding of sin and slavery in his *Passionate Liberator*. See Abzug, *Passionate Liberator: Theodore Dwight Weld and the Dilemma of Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 84. See also a pamphlet to which Abzug refers, Heman Humphrey, *Parallel Between Intemperance and the Slave Trade. An Address Delivered at Amherst College, July 4, 1828* (Amherst: J. S. & C. Adams, Printers, 1828).

campaigns against intemperance and slavery to be "…the means… the agencies by which the Millennium is to be ushered in."[54]

With the increasing importance of the antislavery movement, however, temperance efforts, as earlier noted, would soon become eclipsed. It was slavery, and a national economy hanging in the balance, which would determine the next major issue the nation would face, and in return, push that nation in the direction of open warfare. When Lydia Boies, in 1874 became a charter member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, she was probably doing so fully believing that alcohol would be wiped clean from the earth. While it had not ceased to exist, temperance efforts paid off, with Americans statistically consuming less alcohol.[55] However, nearing the end of her life, she felt more had to be done:

> I did years ago expect to see the saloon with its brood of vices abolished, but it is so deep rooted in party and purse and appetite of its defenders, that patience as well as faith is necessary for us. The women who planted the seige [sic] [against alcohol] are one by one being called home and younger ones must take up the cause.[56]

Boies fully believed her work was not in vain, always optimistic about the possibility of alleviating the influence alcohol from America's soul and heart. For her and reformers like herself, the issue was more than physical, but also a spiritual matter. "If I do not witness the victory here," she proclaimed, referring to her earthly presence and the success she expected in destroying intemperance and its beacon, the saloon, "I shall hear of it in heaven."

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[54] Jonathan Blanchard, "A Perfect State of Society, Address Before the 'Society of Inquiry,' in Oberlin Collegiate Institute Delivered at Oberlin Lorain Co. Ohio, at the Annual Commencement, Sept. 3, 1839, by Rev. J. Blanchard, Pastor of the Sixth Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati." (Oberlin, OH: Printed by James Steele, 1839), KSU-SCA.
[55] Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic.*
[56] Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.

As earlier noted, economics would and did play an important role in changing attitudes toward temperance in the nation. However, at the root of temperance reform would lay religious understandings which we cannot ignore if we are to consider the economic interpretation of the movement. Just as Weber's *The Protestant Ethic* illustrates, social change can and has been incited by religious belief, even in the lives of those not intertwined with religious or political structures.[57] While economic interpretations are important, they cannot be separated from their religious roots as antebellum reformers incensed with an interest in Christianity would lobby for reform, ultimately remolding social structures in such a way as to shake the ground on which the economy was built upon. As Weber's text alludes to, it was more than merely economic incentive, but a reconstruction of reality, which determined and established the need for temperance in America. Lorain County, Ohio would reflect this reconstruction, though it would be superseded by another quest for freedom of the nation's soul through the elimination of slavery in America.

[57] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Talcott Parsons and Richard H. Tawney, trs. (London: G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1930).

CHAPTER V

"Cruelties that Make Angels Weep": Antislavery in Lorain County

> Dear parents, brothers and sisters, it is true that I am now in a few hours to start on a journey from which no traveler returns. Yes, long before this reaches you, I shall, as I sincerely hope, have met our brother and sister who have for years been worshiping God around his throne – singing praises to him and thanking him that he gave his Son to die that they might have eternal life. I pray daily and hourly that I may be fitted to have my home with them, and that you, one and all, may prepare your souls to meet your God, that so, in the end, though we meet no more on earth, we shall meet in heaven, where we shall not be parted by the demands of the cruel and unjust monster Slavery.
>
> John A. Copeland, an Oberlinite and African-American participant in John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, in a letter to his parents.[1]

In 1826, the landscape of Hamilton, was set afire by Charles Finney's revivals along with much of the "burned over district" of upstate New York. One observer was Theodore Dwight Weld, who skeptically reacted to Finney's presence by complaining that he "...is not a minister, and I will never acknowledge him as such."[2] Soon after, Weld's aunt who had supported Finney's coming to Hamilton would famously conspire to place Weld at the receiving end of a sermon the preacher would deliver, titled "One Sinner Destroyeth Much Good." The sermon ultimately humiliated and angered Weld,

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[1] John A. Copeland to his family, 16 December 1859, EOG. Available on-line at <http://www.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/Copeland/copeland_letters.htm>. Retrieved October 10, 2007. "Cruelties that make angels weep" is a phrase used by James A. Thome regarding the realities created by his own family's involvement in owning slaves. See "Debate at the Lane Seminary, Cincinnati. Speech of James A. Thome of Kentucky, Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, May 6, 1834. [and] Letter of the Rev. Samuel H. Cox against the American Colonization Society." (Boston: Garrison & Knapp, 1834).

[2] Abzug, *Passionate Liberator*, 47.

yet, unknown to him at the time, planted the seed from which a dramatic and unexpected series of events would prosper, leading to his own conversion which ultimately redefined him and the lives of many of his followers.

In Utica the day following the sermon, Weld and Finney met in a store, leading Weld's anger to seethe over in public condemnation of the preacher. Yet, his angry reaction led Weld to feel guilt, driving him to later meet with the preacher, where he would ask "if he might make a confession." Finney responds to Weld's apology and regret in his *Memoirs*: "I answered, yes; and he made public confession before the whole congregation. He [Weld] said it became him to remove the stumbling-block which he had cast before the whole people; and he wanted opportunity to make the most public confession he could. He did make a very humble, earnest, broken-hearted confession."[3] As Michael Young notes, Weld became a follower of Finney's methods and theology, using the preacher's revival techniques as a springboard from which to begin his own antislavery work.[4] This antislavery work became cemented into Weld's psyche after his interactions with British abolitionist Charles Stuart, culminating into an 1832 "conversion" to immediate abolitionism during a period in which antislavery rhetoric permeated the town of Hudson, Ohio, home of the New School institution Western Reserve College.[5]

Following his controversial time at Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, where he formed the nucleus of an activist antislavery student "rebellion," Theodore Dwight Weld would begin an important and influential career as an antislavery orator, or as even he considered, evangelist, detouring a lifelong goal of becoming a Presbyterian minister.

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[3] Finney, 187-188.
[4] Note that this discussion is based on Michael Young's in *Bearing Witness Against Sin*. See Young, 176.
[5] Robert Abzug, *Passionate Liberator*, 86-7.

With the enthusiasm of supporters across the state and the nation, Weld swept across Ohio and into the heart of the Western Reserve. Stops included places such as Putnam, Ohio, where he became involved in the formation of the Ohio State Antislavery Society in April, 1835. In Lorain County, Weld made stops in both Elyria and Oberlin, where he undoubtedly met with many of his own former classmates from Lane who, like Weld, were vying for a cleansed nation which could be justified in God's eyes by being unhindered by the sin of slavery. Perhaps this dual role as a social reformer and religious virtuoso was fitting, as Weld tied himself upon matrilineal lines to both Jonathan Edwards and Timothy Dwight while holding antislavery at the forefront of his personal interests. As Shipherd, Beecher, and Rush had done with temperance before him, Weld would reconsider antislavery in millennial terms, with the existence of slavery being the crux of his interpretation of America's place in the sacred history.[6]

As Robert Abzug notes, reformers traveling around the nation to preach antislavery mixed with religious conviction would be calling out in the wilderness just as John the Baptist had previously done. However, rather than proclaiming the first coming of a messiah, these reformers were hoping for the return of their savior through a growing antislavery movement which would engulf the nation, slowing down only with the end of the Civil War. For these reformers, antislavery took the place of the earlier temperance crusade as the most prominent issue of the day, and even perhaps of American – and

[6] For a thorough discussion of Weld's life, see Robert Abzug, *Passionate Liberator*, In passim. For Weld's early antislavery lectures, see 123-4. Note that Abzug is critical of the tendency of former historians, including Gilbert Barnes in his *Antislavery Impulse* of making Weld into "an unbelievable, two-dimensional Christian hero." (pp. ix-x) For Weld's relationship to Edwards and Dwight, see p. 7.

human – history. For Weld and others, this evolution meant more friction with the defenders of the peculiar institution of slavery, as well as a polarized Christianity.[7]

The Ohio Antislavery Society

Weld's arrival and work at Putnam set the foundation for the Ohio Antislavery Society, which would meet in Granville, Ohio, the following year. Present at the April, 1836 meeting was a predictably large contingent hailing from Oberlin, including twenty six men and women, in addition to two other delegates, one being from Elyria and the other from nearby Sheffield, Ohio, who with other antislavery reformers, met in a barn one half mile north of Granville dubbed by participants as "The Hall of Freedom." In addition to electing officers, who included Charles Finney as vice president of the organization as well as Asa Mahan and Elyria abolitionist John Monteith as managers, the delegates reported the membership roles of the respective chapters, many of which were likely formed in recent months.[8]

Lorain County's reported membership was 697, with a large percentage of the number predictably hailing from Oberlin.[9] Oberlin claimed three chapters at the convention, which included a society for Oberlin men consisting of 300 members, and separate societies for Oberlin women and "young ladies," which would respectively count 48 and 86 members. Both Elyria and Wellington also claimed members, with the former group claiming enough heads to have two separate organizations for men and women – much like Oberlin. Where 70 Elyria men and 45 women were claimed in the

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[7] See Abzug's opening vignette regarding Theodore Dwight Weld in *Passionate Liberator*, 3-5.
[8] Robert Price, "The Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention of 1836," in *The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 45 (April, 1936): 173-188.
[9] It should be noted that Lorain County only claimed 5,696 people in its reports for the 1830 decennial census. See The Clerk of the House of Representatives, "Abstract of the Returns of the Fifth Census, Showing the Number of Free People, the Number of Slaves, the Federal or Representative Number, and the Aggregate of Each County of Each Date of the United States." (Washington: Duff Green, 1832), 30. Available on-line at <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1830a-01.pdf>.

membership, Wellington reported a decent number for its smaller size, at 60 total members.[10]

Just as in Putnam, Weld's wanderings had evidently made their mark in Elyria following his 1835 visit to the town. The commotion caused by the speaker was reflected by *The Elyria Republican*, which was appalled when learning that Elyria's residents attended Weld's lectures and embraced his arrival by asking:

> Why, what would be said by a congregation sitting upon a powder magazine, should a mad man approach, torch in hand, to ignite the mine which could scatter them in atoms to the four winds of heaven?[11]

Worried about the agitation the issue was creating, perhaps the account was prophetic as the nation would be catapulted in the direction of war twenty five years later. While historians do not consider the abolitionist movement to be the only primer which ignited the great furnace of the war, we will see that abolitionists – including those at Oberlin – did apply special prophetic meaning to all of the events leading up to and including the American Civil War. We will consider this later, but first must understand how Lorain County residents understood slavery in their temporal and eternal realities.

The Lorain County Antislavery Society

In Elyria, Weld would not be the only visitor to promote antislavery ideology. In 1834, Weld's early mentor, a former English military officer by the name of Charles

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[10] See Price, pp. 178 and 187. It should be noted that Daniel Johns, a physician who Lydia Boies mentions worked with her husband Eli, is not listed as a member of any of the Wellington Congregational Churches in the regular membership records, nor is his name found in any of the existing records. His position in the community, however, is certainly notable as he is regularly credited with campaigning for the railroad, which would provide Wellington with welcome economic activity in the later 19th century. While Johns is not listed in the membership records, his name appears in pew rentals dating before the 1843 schism. See also "Pew Rentals," EWC. See Appendix II for a facsimile. See also Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.

[11] Quoted in Abzug, *Passionate Liberator*, p. 138. Abzug's source is *The Elyria Republican*, quoted in *The Ohio Watchman*, October 31, 1835.

Stuart had already come before him in a tour of the region, also stopping at Oberlin.[12] Earlier that year, a stalwart figure in Elyria's history by the name of John Monteith had promoted an immediate abolitionist view of antislavery, much to the chagrin of his more conservative peer, the Rev. Daniel W. Lathrop.[13] Monteith was the first president of the Lorain County Antislavery Society, which was organized in February of 1835. With sympathies to Oberlin Collegiate Institute in the form of appointments of managers and liaisons to the organization, the society declared the following:

> *Resolved* That we will not vote for any man for President or Vice President of the United States, or for Congress, who is not in favor of the immediate abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and the United States Territories, and of the abolition of the internal slave trade, and who is not opposed to the admission of new slave states into the Union.[14]

As the Civil War drew near, reformers would push for more immediate and more radical means – including a cessation of slavery in the South, which the resolution probably purposefully excludes due either to racial tensions or fears of outright rebellion along the lines of Nat Turner's Insurrection.

In Wellington, John Reed with 48 others submitted a petition decrying "...the admission of Florida or any other new slave-holding State into the Union of these States..."[15] While one must doubt the weight of such a petition, it signaled the readiness of American Protestants to stand up to the Federal government through the legal process. As we know, reformers also acted through illegal means to combat the powers they saw subservient to their God, and therefore null and void in terms of authority. We will later

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[12] See Fletcher, 146 and Abzug 33-4.
[13] Fletcher, 146.
[14] Quoted in Wilbur Greeley Burroughs, "Oberlin's Part in the Slavery Conflict," in *The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 20 (July, 1911): 269-334, see p. 278 for quotation. See also Fletcher, p. 146.
[15] "Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States Bring the Third Session of the Twenty-Fifth Congress, Begun and Held at the City of Washington, December 3, 1838, and in the Sixty-third Year of the Independence of the United States." (Washington: Printed by Thomas Allen, 1839).

explore this concept of "Higher Law" and the abolitionists' willingness to bend and break local, state, and federal laws for their religious belief.

The Lorain County Antislavery Society's organization symbolized both the already mentioned heavy influence of Oberlin in the antislavery interests of many Lorain County residents and, in the case of Lathrop versus Monteith, the divide which the antislavery issue provided for much of American religion. This division was already apparent in Cincinnati, Ohio, where a group of students from Lane Seminary would react against the institution's attempts in quelling their abolitionist activism.

Lane Seminary

While determining where to establish himself as an advocate of physiological reform and manual labor, Theodore Dwight Weld went to Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio after a fellow former classmate from Oneida reminded him of the importance of the Ohio Valley to the soul of the nation. Just as Lyman Beecher before him, Weld had realized that "the great battlefield between the powers of light and darkness" was what many considered to be the great strength and soul of the expanding nation: the Western frontier.[16]

Indeed, on the banks of the important artery known as the Ohio River, Lane Seminary's founders attempted to make the institution a beacon of light in the darkness of the wilderness, attempting, like Oberlin's founders, to hold up the light of heaven for the sake of the lost souls inhabiting the region. In the beginning of its organization, the

[16] For more on physiological reform and manual labor, both of which were influential at Oberlin but are limited due to the scope of this thesis, see Robert Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 105-124. For Weld's role at Lane, especially regarding his interest in these movements, see Abzug, *Passionate Liberator*, 52-75. Quoted from J. L. Tracey to Weld, Lexington, KY, to Oneida Institute, 24 November, 1831 in Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1934), I, 57. See Abzug, 74. For Beecher's understanding of the West as vital to the nation's cosmic drama, see Beecher, *Plea for the West*. See also Chapter II.

seminary's trustees, faculty, and students worked together in order to fight off the minions of evil all knew were overcoming the frontier.[17] This early setting aside of yet hidden differences was the first major test of how New School Calvinism would interact with what might be considered the beginnings of the radical reinterpretations of sin and human agency which led to Oberlin's understandings of sanctification and, perhaps more relevantly, individual activism in political issues.[18]

With his understanding of the Millennium coming as a result of America's important position and role in the cosmic theater, Lyman Beecher's New Calvinism formed the stalwart foundation for the New School convictions of Lane Seminary. Asked to become president of the institution, Beecher at the outset was a suitable choice, especially considering his 1835 authorship of *Plea for the West*, a published sermon highlighting the importance of the West in America's struggle for the Millennium. However, as Robert Abzug notes, Theodore Dwight Weld's adoption of the antislavery crusade, coupled with a personal theological outlook moving away from predominately New School interpretations and toward those of his mentor, Charles Finney, soon became "bad luck" for both Lane and Beecher, as the abolitionist soon gained powerful influence among his peers.[19]

Weld, unlike Beecher, believed that an end to social evils – and the purification of America for God's pleasure – hinged on action. With a foundation in a Finney-inspired understanding of the cosmic theater which considered any and all types of sin – especially slavery – as the weapons of Satan, Weld and his peers believed that they

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[17] See Abzug, *Passionate Liberator*, 78.
[18] Note that the students coming from the Oneida Institute would have been immersed in the language and theology of Finney, while the conservative New School Presbyterians would have already questioned his measures. See Chapters II and III.
[19] Abzug, *Passionate Liberator*, 82.

needed first to cleanse the self of sin, after which one would seek the purification of society by preaching their understandings of correct Christian belief and action. Weld's contingent largely hailed from the Oneida Institute, where Finney's revivals had thrived and encouraged radical responses to the theological questions of the day.[20]

The new Lane students acted upon their beliefs, to the unease of conservatives at the seminary. In addition to hearing Weld's lectures, seminary students traveled through the netherworld of Border States proclaiming the importance of immediate abolition and its place in God's plan for humanity as they ministered to African-American communities. These attempts to bring freedom – both physical and spiritual – to the masses without the consent of Lane's administration would raise eyebrows throughout the new institution. Soon enough, trustees of the seminary banned any attempt of the students in creating an unofficial organization not connected with the Seminary's missions.[21]

By late 1834, an ideological "tug-of-war" began with the trustees' ratification of official measures to restrict Lane's students, an action accompanied with the resignation of Weld and many of his disciples. Central to the series of resignations was a lengthy debate questioning the future course of action of the new antislavery movement. Should antislavery proponents merely support colonization, or should they actually advocate a cessation of slavery within the United States?[22] The debates which ensued questioned only Christianity's response to slavery, but set into place issues which would surround the antislavery movement through the Civil War's beginning. Indeed, for figures like

[20] Ibid., 78-80.
[21] Nat Brandt, *The Town that Started the Civil War*, 34-5.
[22] Fletcher, 154.

Weld, there was no other answer to the question, and the fate of humanity would rest upon the answer.

Meanwhile, Oberlin had been seeking financial support, and the new president of the college's Board of Trustees, a minister by the name of John Keep, led the board in discussing how to climb out of the rough times. John Shipherd, sent to reap funding for the new college, traveled south-west to meet with the "rebels" of Lane. After meeting former Lane professor Asa Mahan, the conditions were set: Oberlin, among other tasks, would need to place Mahan in the position of president of the college and invite Charles Grandison Finney to Oberlin as professor of theology.[23] Following Mahan and Finney was the funding of Arthur and Lewis Tappan, two well known philanthropists from New York City, who were already committed to the abolitionist cause and, more importantly, were pious Christians.[24]

In the coming years, the subsequent "exodus" of Lane students destroyed one institution and formed the foundations for another. Because of the importance of Oberlin in Lorain County in terms of antislavery reform, one must consider this exodus as the most important event in Lorain County's early antislavery history. Individuals would arrive in Oberlin from across the nation to study, debate, and, with a zealous energy, practice abolitionist ideals which they perceived were rooted in a sacred history. Perhaps the testimony of James A. Thome during the antislavery debate at Lane Seminary best captures the hatred of America's "peculiar institution" while placing it into an Eternal context, as he recounts his past life as the son of a slaveholder:

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[23] Ibid., 167-9.

[24] Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 107-111. See p. 108 for Abzug's comment that "He [Arthur Tappan] was the financial mainstay for the more radical reforms of the 1830s." Also note Lewis' movement toward Unitarianism, and subsequent return to Orthodoxy.

> And, sir, though I am at this moment the heir to a slave inheritance, and though, forsooth, I am one of those *unfortunate* beings upon whom slavery is by force ENTAILED, yet I am bold to denounce the whole system as an outrage, a complication of crimes and wrongs, and cruelties that make angels weep.[25]

Thome's career would not end at Lane. As part of the "Lane Exodus," Thome would eventually received a professorship at Oberlin and circulated through local Lorain County communities with his antislavery rhetoric. As we have seen, he would make an appearance in Wellington as a supplied minister, eventually relocating to Cleveland, where he became minister of a large abolitionist congregation.[26] For men and women like Thome, the events in which they were involved transformed their later understandings of reform, morality, and even Christianity.

Antislavery Attitude in Oberlin

With Oberlin's acceptance of the Lane Rebels and their conditions, the community became an established and well known citadel of antislavery fervor on the frontier. Just as the College's professors and students would infuse antislavery rhetoric into their daily lives, the First Congregational Church of Oberlin would pass an earlier mentioned antislavery resolution in 1835, spiritually and institutionally cutting itself off from all slaveholders.[27] Soon enough, the young institution gained a reputation of promoting antislavery to the extent that one writer would complain that "...the graduates of Oberlin are Masters of Art in abolitionism,"[28] while the town was known as a haven for African-Americans, many of whom were escaped fugitive slaves.[29] As one might

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[25] See "Debate at the Lane Seminary, Cincinnati." Quoted from p. 7.
[26] Brandt, 163-4. See also Chapter III, n. 69.
[27] See Oberlin Records, September 1, 1835. See also Chapter III.
[28] Printed by the *Pennsylvanian* of Philadelphia, reprinted by *The Oberlin Evangelist*, December 7, 1859. Quoted in Brandt, 41.
[29] Brandt, 45.

expect, the town garnered opposition, being seen as an outpost of radicals on Ohio's Western Reserve, and for many Americans, a threat to the nation's stability.[30]

Oberlinites would earn this reputation with hard work. In October of 1837, the first recorded group of runaway slaves came to Oberlin where they were protected, beginning a pattern of resistance to unjust national and state laws.[31] Roland Baumann notes that the town's "Christian reformers" placed God above the law of the nation through "unfashionable" terms of nonresistance as "grassroots church-based politics and a civil disobedience" pervaded the town's activity in the Underground Railroad.[32] In the years following the growth of antislavery agitation on the frontier and in the nation, Oberlinites and others in Lorain County put into practice the age-old questions of human, natural, civil, and theistic law, with the Law of God being the only valid answer to the political questions of the day. In the view of many at Oberlin, the antislavery question was not between states' rights and human rights, but between a man-made government and an all-powerful God. Those at Oberlin had already known the victor to be God.

With the easing of earlier tensions between African-Americans and whites in the town, Oberlin's African-American population increased, and as Nat Brandt notes, Lorain County's African-American population doubled following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 until the Civil War's beginning eleven years later.[33] This African-American population included a cross section of Black America which would be presented with unprecedented opportunities in antebellum America, but, on the average,

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[30] Ibid., 47.
[31] Ibid., 40.
[32] Baumann, 26-7.
[33] Brandt, 45.

remained much like their free or slave counterparts: uneducated and relegated to the periphery of society.[34] However, exceptions certainly existed.

One example was John Mercer Langston, a graduate of Oberlin who used intellectual might and oratorical finesse to become a lawyer, academic, and congressman, overshadowing his accomplished older brother Charles, a schoolteacher well known for participating in the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue of 1858, as being one of only two men who individually faced a court.[35] Biographers Aimee Lee and William Cheek consider the younger Langston as holding "prominence as a black leader second only to Frederick Douglass," a lofty consideration by all means when considering the national political scene.[36] Oberlin did attract the interest of Douglass himself, whose daughter Rosetta attended the college.[37] Just as blacks took advantage of Oberlin's open doors, white abolitionists sponsored black students with ready anticipation of instructing individual former slaves and free blacks in leading a strong, moral life enriched with education. An example is that of sisters Mary and Emily Edmondson, who were sponsored by Harriet Beecher Stowe.[38]

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[34] Ibid., 46.
[35] See Brandt, In passim.
[36] See William Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek, "John Mercer Langston: Principle and Politics," in *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Leon Litwack and August Meier. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 103-128. See also the Cheek's book-length biography, *John Mercer Langston and the Fight for Black Freedom, 1829-1865* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989) for an in depth study of Langston's life.
[37] Brandt, 38.
[38] See Harriet Beecher Stowe to Mrs. [Eunice] Cowles, 4 August, 1852, Henry Cowles Papers, Box 3, OCA. Available on-line, in addition to two additional letters in the series, at <http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/oberlin/doc9.htm>, <http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/oberlin/doc9b.htm>, and <http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/oberlin/doc9c.htm>. Retrieved 2 October 2007. See also the brief "Introduction" written by Carol Lasser here: <http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/oberlin/intro.htm>. The project is titled "How Did Oberlin Women Students Draw on Their College Experience to Participate in Antebellum Social Movements, 1831-1861?"

Antislavery's Transfer of Influence

For all its notoriety, Oberlin cannot be considered the birthplace of the antislavery movement on the Western Reserve, though it did assume a position of prominence as another institution lost its own reputation as an early center of abolitionist controversy. Western Reserve College professor Elizur Wright Jr. in 1832 authored five articles in Hudson's *Ohio Observer* promoting abolitionism over the more broadly accepted colonization. As Chris Padgett notes, "Wright's diatribes raised the hackles of Hudson's old guard," leading to a conflict which would foreshadow the separation of another New School institution, Lane Seminary.[39] Just as would later occur at Lane, students organized a society to promote abolition, which was placated by the College's powers that be. As a result, Padgett notes that "Western Reserve College was never again the center of abolitionist thought and agitation in the Western Reserve,"[40] a reputation which Oberlin would shortly assume. The slavery issue demonstrates, as well the following example of one John Mason, that New School Presbyterians were divided in how they considered abolitionism to fit in to their social and theological schemas.[41]

John Mason

In March, 1847, the First Congregational Church of Wellington would receive a new member, who was admitted by profession like many others in the congregation. John Mason appeared in front of the church body, where he gave a "...history of his christian [sic] experience." The records continue to tell us that after he passed a "thorough examination of the ground of his hope in Christ and of his views of truth," the

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[39] Chris Padgett, "Evangelicals Divided: Abolition and the Plan of Union's Demise on the Western Reserve," 249-272. See p. 261.
[40] Ibid., 267.
[41] This theme, of the division caused by antislavery among New School Presbyterians on the Western Reserve, permeates the thesis of Padgett's essay.

church would unanimously resolve to "propound" Mason for admission into the church's regular membership. What set Wellington's newest member apart from the rest of the congregation would be his skin color, and the risk he had taken in moving to Wellington as an escaped slave.[42]

The congregation showed visible interest in his spiritual well-being, and after his baptism in early April, Mason's education was mentioned by the church, and the issue was sent to a committee, which was tasked to seek possibilities in acquiring funding.[43] Unfortunately, the records are silent regarding any new developments, only mentioning him again in the rear of the record book in a membership directory. Whoever was entering his information decided to sidestep the usual format of the directory's table, and what is known of his last few years alive is summed up in the following two sentences: "Went into K[entuck]y to get away some of his friends. Was detected + murdered."[44] According to the records, his death had occurred in 1850, a mere three years after his arrival at Wellington, and the year of the passage of a more stringent Fugitive Slave Act.

While it is frustrating in that we cannot uncover more details about Mason's story, one wonders exactly how Wellington received him, and why he came to the town in the first place. While the church certainly had abolitionists, it seems as if he would have been more fitting at Independent Congregational, where Oberlin's ministers, including the earlier mentioned James Thome, frequented the pulpit.[45] While we do not know if or where he would have received an education, Wellington's "Presbyterian" church had a

[42] See Wellington Records, 1846-1863, March 19, 1847.
[43] Ibid., April 4, 1847, and August 27, 1847.
[44] Ibid., "List of Church Members."
[45] Barton, 19-20.

rough and tired relationship with Oberlin, the only institution in the nation which would undoubtedly accept an African-American.[46]

While Mason's story perhaps begs more questions than it provides answers, it provides testament to the complicated world in which the antebellum reformer lived. While their world was marred with racism, intolerance of other religious viewpoints, and racial and religious violence, Mason's story provides us with one example in Lorain County – a rare example outside of Oberlin – where an African-American appears to be treated on equal footing by whites. For this reason, it stands as an anomaly to this story, which understands the Presbyterian-Congregational split in Wellington as based upon lines of slavery, the former group being less likely to accept its radical implementations.[47] Further, it gives us rare primary evidence, aside from that of artifacts and architecture, that the village was deeply involved in the Underground Railroad. Why else would the town's residents be interested in accepting a fugitive slave, and further, why would they tell of his tragic death in the South, or, as Emily Edmondson would put it, the "land of Chains & Slavery?"[48]

Antislavery Patterns in Wellington

When Wellington passed its own antislavery resolution in December, 1836, its members did so fully knowing that the issue was growing in importance. Only five years earlier, a journalist by the name of William Lloyd Garrison had begun his publication of *The Liberator*, through which he advocated nonviolent resistance to slavery, claiming

[46] This is assumed through the 1843 schism, which separated the friends and enemies of the college into two churches.
[47] It should be noted that this central aspect of my thesis is still in tact, and will be discussed later in this chapter. Funding patterns show us in more reliable ways where the allegiance of Wellington's church members would land in terms of not only the Presbytery or Congregational Association, but also the abolitionist or colonization society to which they may have belonged.
[48] See Emily B. Edmondson to Mr. [Henry] Cowles and Mrs. Cowles, 3 June, 1853, Henry Cowles Papers, OCA. See on-line at <http://womhist.binghamton.edu/oberlin/doc9c.htm>. Retrieved 14 October 2007.

that the nation's own Constitution, which failed to outlaw slavery, was "dripping… with human blood."[49] Later, in 1831, a slave named Nat, later to be known by history as Nat Turner, carried out his insurrection against whites in Southampton County, Virginia.[50] The antislavery movement and the controversies surrounding it were beginning to accelerate, signified by the 1833 establishment of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia, and as it began stirring, some residents of Lorain County would hearken to join.[51]

While no mention is made in Wellington's records before the 1836 antislavery resolution of antislavery agitation, Weld's recent tour of the county combined with the role of Oberlin trustee Joel Talcott as minister of the Wellington church provides us with a clear understanding that slavery was not only known of, but likely discussed and debated in the small village. Additionally, a contingent of antislavery supporters is recorded in the membership records of the earlier mentioned Lorain County Antislavery Society, concrete evidence that Wellingtonians were pondering the issue.

When the 1836 antislavery resolution passed, it only stirred visible agitation and opposition when cutting slaveholders off from communion was discussed. As seen in the Mason incident, both sides of Wellington's schism were against slavery in the sense that they disapproved of the practice, as evidenced by the December, 16, 1836 resolution of the unified church. Further, both would have members deeply involved in the Underground Railroad.[52] However, polity and to a less observable but still very real

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[49] Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*. See especially 151-8. See also Garrison, William Lloyd, "On the Constitution and the Union." In *The Liberator*, December 29, 1832.
[50] See Stephen B. Oates, *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), In passim.
[51] Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 161-2.
[52] Brandt, 117-125.

extent, theology, would determine how radical one would be in her or his understanding of reform. Because we still have records of the Free Congregational Church on file, we can compare the church's resolutions to the more conservative First Congregational Church. Indeed, when we do, we find that just as theology and polity would create the schism, important decisions regarding what resolutions would be made, where funding would go, and what the extent of individual action required by the Christian would be what separated the church bodies.[53]

Before the 1843 schism, we find little evidence of funds being funneled toward any specific reform effort, but by the late 1840's and into the next decade, a distinct pattern of funding may be observed. In annual financial reports to the Elyria Presbytery, specific moral reform organizations, general causes, and basic church function may all be identified. The antislavery impulse can be directly identified with the mention of $50.00 procured for "Fugative [*sic*] Stores in Canada" in the Annual Statistical Summary of April 1, 1851, a reference to the communities of fugitive slaves who had escaped north.[54] This summary comes as the first major financing of the antislavery cause on Wellington's part, and appears at the time of the merger between First Congregational and Independent Congregational, as the report mentions receiving 19 members from Independent Congregational Church. We must ask what influence this core group of members had in deciding to send this money, and if their absence relates to a rough correlation to funding organizations like the American Colonization Society. These annual financial reports

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[53] It should be noted that at least one history of the church printed in the *History of Lorain County, Ohio* states that Independent Congregational Church "...took advanced ground on the subject of slavery." While the article's author is accurate, we can only point to circumstantial evidence in terms of primary sources. See *A History of Lorain County, Ohio*, 355. As discussed in Chapter III and in the case of Hadlock Marcy, circumstantial evidence does support this, though it is not safe to draw such a drastic conclusion based on a popular, rather than scholarly secondary source.

[54] Records of the First Congregational Church of Wellington, 1846-1873, FCCW, April 1, 1851, ed. Guy Wells, 2006. Hereafter referred to as "Wellington Records, 1846-1873."

begin at a time when antebellum abolitionism is only becoming more rampant, with the national scene beginning to see sparks turn to flame in terms of the antislavery issue.

The April 3, 1852 summary mentions $19.00 contributed to the American and Foreign Antislavery Society, and $90.54 to the Oberlin-controlled American Missionary Association.[55] This financing of reform continues throughout the decade with $18.00 for "Lower Canada" in 1853, and the influence of Oberlin versus the Presbytery upon Wellington is noted in the 1854 report, which contains a mention of $58.00 for the American Colonization Society.[56] This support of the American Colonization Society likely comes from the Presbyterian influence, a consequence of the still-strong connections to the Elyria Presbytery which Wellington had and fostered. During this period, the church's support of Western Reserve College, a stronghold of New School Presbyterianism, is observed in the 1856 annual report.[57]

At the Free Congregational Church, the congregation's first statement against slavery did not take place during a contested motion for a resolution, but in the church's foundational regulations, this being a symbol of the importance which the church's members placed upon abolition. Interestingly, where the 1836 resolution had taken up two full pages of the record book, and probably a long debate, the Free Church's resolution would include only ten words. Because the first part of the resolution includes a ban upon members joining secret societies, we can also gather the radical antimasonry

[55] Ibid., April 3, 1852. Also see Fletcher, 257-63.
[56] Wellington Records, 1846-1873, April 5, 1853 and April 4, 1854. Also see April 3, 1855 for a $54.00 donation to the A.C.S and April 1, 1856 for a $20.00 donation. See Fletcher, 142-149 for an explanation of Oberlin's relationship to the A.C.S.
[57] Ibid., 1846-1873, April 1, 1856.

inherent in the church's body. This antimasonic stance would later be reversed to the chagrin of John Reed after declaration by the Congressional Association:[58]

> We will not receive as members of our church, or invite to our communion, any members of secret societies, known as Free Masons, or Odd Fellows, nor any person who aprobates [sic] the system of American slavery[.][59]

Elyria Antislavery Resolution

By 1847, the Elyria Presbyterian Church passed a resolution pertaining to antislavery much different than what we have seen either at Oberlin or Wellington. Written by a committee of three church members including abolitionist David Grosvenor, a Yale graduate, and former Wellington antislavery activist Frederick Hamlin, the resolution consisted of six decisions applied under the overarching declaration that "Slavery in the United States is believed to be constantly strengthening + extending itself + its evils and dangers increasing and whereas we believe there is power in Christianity properly applied to do away with this system and its manifold evils…" Much like Wellington's original declaration, the resolution did not call for the elimination of slaveholders from communion, while it did petition the church to keep the pulpit free from ministers who owned slaves.[60] The resolution at Elyria would represent a growing schism between Northern and Southern Presbyterians, widening even after the Schism of 1837 had separated the General Assembly upon theological lines. Much like in other denominations and institutions through the nation, slavery was fast becoming a hotly contested issue.

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[58] John Reed to Henry Cowles, 12 May 1853, OCA.
[59] Free Church Records, August 19, 1852, FCCW.
[60] Elyria Records, 1837-1865, April 5, 1847, EPC.

"Compromise" and Beyond

The year 1850 had brought considerable change upon the young nation, which was in danger of being torn apart by dueling interests as regional identities redefined relationships between Northern and Southern citizens, politicians, and clergy. In an attempt to stifle the agitation, individuals would advocate compromise over the slavery issue, attempting to recognize the "right" of the Southern slaveholder to have access to personal "property," as well as the Northern fears of the expansion of the "peculiar institution." While on the lecture circuit in Maine, Henry Ward Beecher met with his soon to be famous sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, who was in the process of moving with her husband Calvin to Brunswick where he had been offered a professorship at Bowdoin College. As the Fugitive Slave Law had recently passed under the cover of compromise, Henry, who had begun the process of being swayed toward immediate abolitionism, was furious, sharing his feelings with his equally embittered favorite sibling. While talking of his battles with those more willing to compromise on the grounds of dealing business with Southern interests, Henry's sister would tell of a work of fiction she had began writing which would attempt to "set forth the sufferings and wrongs of the slaves." As his biographer Debby Applegate notes, Beecher encouraged her, telling her to "Finish it, and I will scatter it thick as the leaves of Vallobrosa [sic]."[61]

At the end of her novel, which was published in book form in 1852, Stowe would challenge readers, stating that "There is one thing that every individual can do... They can

[61] Applegate, 259-260. Quoted on p. 260. Note that Beecher was likely referring to "leaves in Vallombrosa," alluded to in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. See Milton, *Paradise Lost,* ed. by Alastair Fowler, Longman Annotated English Poets Edition (Edinburgh Gate: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998), 79. Quotation located in Book I, line 302. Note also the editor's notes.

see to it that *they feel right*" regarding their newfound sympathy for the fleeing slave.[62] Further, she hearkens to not only the morality, but the very soul of the quivering nation:

> Christians! Every time that you pray that the kingdom of Christ may come, can you forget that prophecy associates, in dread fellowship, the *day of vengeance* of his redeemed?
>
> A day of grace is yet held out to us. Both North and South have been guilty before God; and the *Christian church* has a heavy account to answer. Not by combining together, to protect injustice and cruelty, and making a common capital of sin, is this Union to be saved, - but by repentance, justice and mercy; for, not surer is the eternal law by which the millstone sinks in the ocean, than that stronger law, by which injustice and cruelty shall bring on nations the wrath of Almighty God![63]

It is hard to imagine what Stowe would have felt, when after opening a letter containing feedback regarding her best selling book, out fell the bloodied ear of a black person.[64] Perhaps she was not surprised considering the agitation the issue had been causing. The 1850's would be the decade in which Northern and Southern differences would come alive in the form of legislation, sectional violence, and claims regarding the legitimate authority as the nation, catapulted into a direction of imminent violence, would soon be on the verge of what some abolitionists considered a holy war. Many American northerners in Lorain County were ready and willing to defend their beliefs and sovereignty, no matter the cost.

The Underground Railroad in Lorain County

By the 1850's, slaves had been regularly using Lorain County as an artery for escape, as seen with both the Mason incident in Wellington, and the heavy concentration

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[62] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life among the Lowly* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Company, 1900; reprint, original 1852), 628. Quoted in Applegate, 261. I refer to the 1900 edition for the sake of page reference, as its availability through Google Books allows us to easily refer to the same text.
[63] Stowe, 634.
[64] Applegate, 262.

of Underground Railroad "conductors" dispersed through the county.[65] While the Underground Railroad has rightly captured the American imagination, the subject is notoriously mysterious as few written primary accounts or bits of evidence exist. In turn, myths have been created, stories written, and as a result, historical understandings of the period dissolved. While more scholarship is required to fully understand the role of the Underground Railroad in Lorain County,[66] evidence surfacing to tell its story has shown Wellington, Oberlin, and Elyria to be major hubs in the county where slaves would stop on their journey northward.

In her letter to Marion Laundon, Lydia Boies recalls an intriguing and mysterious example, representative of the actions of many antislavery reformers:

> These days were full of stir and I recall another experience, which shows how ready I was to plunge into every thing [sic] which I felt ought to be done. We had a Union sewing society, I believe it was mostly for missions, but do not quite recollect. It was after the Fugitive Slave Law was enacted, which awakened great indignation, and also sympathy for the fleeing slave, who found no rest or safty [sic] until safe in Canada, though destitute of every thing. I sought to have our Society divide its products sharing with the fugitive. Your[...][67]

Tragically, the rest of Boies' narrative is missing along with the ninth and tenth pages of her letter, and no mention is made of her activities in the later published *Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve*, which her letter was written to supplement. While a missing portion of her letter was referred to in the work, we do not learn of any specifics which might be of interest to the preservation of her story.[68] However, that Boies may have been involved in sending supplies to Canada to support colonies of newly emigrated

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[65] For example, see Brandt, 124.
[66] It should be noted that Nat Brandt's excellent *The Town That Started the Civil War* provides a wonderful resources in the context of the 1858 Oberlin-Wellington Slave Rescue, which I will later discuss. However, Brandt's study does not contain the depth of a wider study regarding the Underground Railroad, and this thesis is limited by other questions. See Nat Brandt, *The Town that Started the Civil War*.
[67] Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.
[68] See Gertrude V. Wickham, *Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve* (Cleveland: Centennial Commission, 1896).

slaves fits well with the character of the Congregational churches in the village, and supports documentation of funds being sent to Canada on behalf of the First Congregational Church.[69]

While his personal papers have thus far been lost to history, we do know that Boies' husband Eli would become an important advocate of antislavery as a member of the Underground Railroad.[70] Coming to Wellington after moving from Huntington, a village to the south in the mid-1840's eventually to be overshadowed as Wellington acquired a railroad station, Eli met Lydia at the commencement of Western Reserve College in Hudson, where he had recently finished studies and as a new M.D. and would soon join antislavery activist Daniel Johns as a village physician.[71] Eli, who immediately joined Independent Congregational and befriended John Reed and his wife Jerusha, seems to be overshadowed by his zealous wife, even in the records of the First Congregational Church after the pair joined the newly united and soon to be re-separated congregation. While considering her entry into the First Congregational Church during the short union, Lydia raised agitation over the issue of infant baptism, postponing her entry into the new church, it appears, until the next separation and creation of Free Congregational Church.[72]

Others involved in the Underground Railroad in Wellington included Matthew DeWolf, who appears to have been a staunch New School Presbyterian, upholding the role of Presbytery at First Congregational Church. Evidence suggests that a relative of DeWolf's named James, perhaps a brother, owned a tavern in the village which Jerusha

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[69] Wellington Records, 1843-1863, April 1, 1851, FCCW.
[70] Brandt, 124.
[71] Boies to Laundon, Unknown date, EWC.
[72] Wellington Records, 1846-1863, April 11, 1851, FCCW.

Reed and Lydia Boies, among others, contemplated physically attacking only to be persuaded in the other direction by DeWolf's guns and dogs. This fact, when considering that Matthew was a member of a "dry" church, shows the extent to which social and political issues transcended the reformer's daily life, not stopping with the possible breaking apart of family relationships. Loring Wadsworth, whose daughter Olive attended Oberlin College sometime in the 1840's, finds his name in the church's records also as a staunch supporter of the Presbytery, supporting this thesis' earlier suggestion that at least in Wellington, antislavery sentiment was simply not clear cut along denominational or theological lines although several nuances do offer insight as to which side of the line a reformer would fall when considering the degree to which how radical their beliefs may have been.

In Oberlin, where participation in the Underground Railroad seems to have been considered as routine as the weekly prayer meeting or class lecture, conflicts between slave catchers and abolitionists ensued. James Fairchild, in his 1883 history titled *Oberlin: The Colony and the College,* presents a suggestion that although Oberlin at the outset saw itself victim to pro-slavery agitation throughout the county, these incidents precipitated a feeling of sympathy for the slave, and anger towards the slave catcher as Lorain County's residents witnessed the drama and effects of slavery upon real people. Fairchild boasts that "It was not often that a slave was seized in Oberlin, and no one, during all the dark years, was ever carried back to bondage." Further, he claimed that Oberlin residents were not prone to violence, even when confronting the slave catcher:

> Violent resistance, in the form of personal assault upon the kidnapper, was not encouraged, and no instance of bloodshed or personal harm ever occurred; but the people would rally in a mass and hinder the captor from proceeding with his

> victim, and oblige him to exhibit his authority, and repair at once to the nearest court to establish the legality of his proceedings.[73]

Fairchild records a rescue in this spirit as occurring in the spring of 1841, when a public meeting at the college chapel was interrupted by news of the "man stealers." Upon inspection, the slave catchers, it was determined, had faulty documents, and a rare court victory was had in Elyria.[74]

In Elyria, abolitionist John Monteith would become the most notorious Underground Railroad participant, shuttling escapees from his home on East Avenue. Earlier mentioned as the president of the Elyria chapter of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society and as a controversial immediate abolitionist, Monteith was until a shift of change, a rare rebel in the midst of a strict New School Presbyterian community.[75] However, the antislavery movement was only heating up, and would soon grow.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

Still interested in Compromise and the preservation of the Union, the Federal government passed in 1854 an infamous act of legislation to "settle" debates over the new expanses of land won in the Mexican-American War. As the war's opponents such as Henry David Thoreau feared, politicians were eager to expand the "peculiar institution," a move which, if successful, would throw the uneasy equilibrium in Congress out of proportion. As the opening vignette of Chapter III declared, abolitionists in Lorain County would react to the issue with funding and action. In Wellington, the Free Congregational Church would be selected to host the 1854 Christian Anti-Slavery

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[73] Fairchild, 117-8.
[74] Ibid., 118.
[75] See "Monteith Hall," *OhioMemory.org*, Ohio Historical Society. Available online at <http://omp.ohiolink.edu/OMP/NewDetails?oid=622952&scrapid=368&format=yourscrap&sort=thedate&searchstatus=0&count=1&hits=1>. Retrieved November 7, 2007.

Convention, which grew out of a movement inspired by Oberlin's interest of placing antislavery efforts into line with basic concepts of Christianity, and in return, to sacralize abolitionism, an effort largely encouraged by Charles Finney, who deplored the "mainly infidel" American antislavery movement.[76]

Along with this meeting, Oberlin formed an Emigrant Aid Society, which would send supplies to the "Kansas Sufferers," who, after emigrating to the state to assist in turning the region against slavery, found themselves both participating in and under the crossfire of bloodshed instigated by both sides, but primarily monopolized by those of proslavery persuasion.[77] In Kansas, "Beecher's Bibles," Sharps rifles raised by the congregation of abolitionist preacher Henry Ward Beecher arrived to aid antislavery factions, a move which would soon put into question the legitimacy of violence in advancing the abolitionist cause. While Beecher had provided the rifles for the sake of defense, the lines between peaceful political action and bloody skirmishes would be confused, finally exploding in May of 1856 when violence broke out in Lawrence, Kansas, as well as in Washington, D. C. when Preston Brooks of South Carolina famously attacked Charles Sumner of Massachusetts with a cane in the Senate chambers.[78]

Meanwhile in Kansas, an abolitionist who had grown up in the town of Hudson, Ohio and lived in a nearby town by the name of Franklin Mills (now Kent), led a group of seven men including four of his own sons into a cabin one night in late May, 1856, to begin a series of violent raids against proslavery settlers with the intent to eventually

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[76] Fletcher, 264.
[77] See Fletcher, 391-5 for details pertaining to Oberlin's Emigrant Aid Society. Wellington Free Congregational Church would send money to the "Kansas Sufferers," as noted in their records. See also Free Church Records, "Contributions for the Year 1856."
[78] Applegate, 281-3.

make people pay with their lives for the sacking of Lawrence and the Brooks-Sumner affair, as well as their disobedience to God. John Brown and a group of men attacked proslavery settlers with swords, relenting only to fire gunshots to ensure death. When news of the raid reached many Southerners, the image of the average antislavery activist – to this point a weak coward – would transform into a bloodthirsty religious zealot. As a result of the incidents at Pottawatomie Creek that May, the situation pitting North against South, already teetering on the brink of war, became even less stable.[79]

The Oberlin-Wellington Rescue

In accordance with the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and with the help of locals near the town of Oberlin, slave catchers captured an escaped slave by the name of John Price, who had been living in the town. When Ansel Lyman, a twenty-two year old Oberlin student who had taken part in "bleeding Kansas" in John Brown's militia saw and heard Price calling out when the fugitive's captors' carriage passed by, he pretended to ignore the pleas of the slave, perhaps, as Nat Brandt notes, realistically assuming that he and his traveling companion, Seth Bartholomew, stood no chance against three armed men in a carriage. Bartholomew, as Brandt also notes, was a rare sight in the town: a Democrat who thought little of Price and wanted nothing to do with the situation anyway, suggesting that nothing should be mentioned when they arrived in Oberlin. However, with the carriage racing towards Wellington for the next train, Lyman would *certainly* mention what he had seen. The next battleground over slavery would be in Wellington, Ohio.[80]

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[79] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 171-8.

[80] For a thorough understanding of the events, see Brandt, *The Town That Started the Civil War*. See also Geoffery Blodgett, "Oberlin Starts the Civil War," in *Oberlin History: Essays and Impressions* (Kent: The

While the day had begun quite quietly in Oberlin that day, Monday, the 13th of September, Wellington was astir under the black smoke of a fire which had spread through a portion of the western downtown district and was being observed by the town's residents.[81] It seemed that every type of instance that could have gone wrong for Price's captors began to spill over into a series of obstacles keeping them from transporting the slave to his owner, keeping the master's payment from the captors' pockets. While they initially had hoped for a short episode which would easily transport Price to Wellington for a 5:13 train to Columbus, Lyman's call for help had incited Oberlin men, many of whom were armed, to load up carriages and horses to drive south to the town. Those who could not find room on either a horse or carriage simply walked the nine miles.[82]

The events that day involved crowd-driven commotion catapulting into an event which would explode into the rush of a hotel in downtown Wellington by an armed mob led by William Lincoln and John Scott, two Oberlinites whose groups managed to free Price, moving him to a waiting carriage. Simeon Bushnell, the driver of the carriage holding Price took the fugitive to a "secret room" in the Oberlin house of Underground Railroad conductor James Fitch, where he was transported to the home of James H. Fairchild, a professor and future president of the college out of fears that Fitch's

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Kent State University Press, 2006), 55-60 for a short account. See Brandt, 65-8. It should be noted that in spite of Brandt's excellent scholarship this event has been somewhat misinterpreted through recent works. For example, Louis DeCaro refers to Harpers Ferry participant John A. Copeland (who we will later consider) as being "involved in a successful effort to interrupt a slave rendition in Oberlin, Ohio." While much of the antislavery fervor that day can very well be attributed to Oberlin, as Nat Brandt notes, the event took place in Wellington. See Brandt, In passim, and Louis DeCaro, *Fire From the Midst of You: A Religious Life of John Brown*, 259. This is not meant to detract from DeCaro's excellent exploration of John Brown's religious life, but gives testament to this misinterpretation. For this reason, more attention and contextualization of the event might be considered by future scholarship. See also William Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek, *John Mercer Langston and the Fight for Black Freedom, 1829-65* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989) and Roland M. Baumann, *The 1858 Oberlin-Wellington Rescue: A Reappraisal* (Oberlin: Oberlin College, 2003) for accounts of the incident. Baumann's work, the most recent, interprets the event within the context of the religious town.

[81] Brandt, 61, 65.

[82] Ibid., 66. See 68-85 for a description of the commotion in Oberlin due to Lyman's news.

residence would be easily suspected for holding Price. Brandt notes that Fairchild was "considered conservative and law-abiding," not having taken part in the Underground Railroad's pattern of deviance to the nation's laws, a label he would at least temporarily relinquish.[83]

The aftermath of the Rescue involved the indictments of thirty-seven men, described by the *Cleveland Morning Leader* as ranging in skin complexion "From snowy white to sooty."[84] As a community, Oberlin found itself in the crosshairs of the Buchanan administration's attempt to punish the town; as the federal government finally had a platform from which to strike. Finding themselves in front of an all-Democratic white jury, the Rescuers used in their defense the very same concept of the "Higher Law" of God which had guided many of them through their endeavors as they ushered escaped slaves north.[85]

Those throwing accusations at the Rescuers would recognize that a majority were from Oberlin, as they mixed anti-Oberlin rhetoric into the prosecution's case. After Simeon Bushnell and Charles Langston were convicted, the court would be placed on extended recess, during which those involved would attempt for a writ of *habeas corpus* to the Ohio Supreme Court by declaring the Fugitive Slave Law as unconstitutional. Predictably, their efforts failed, however the prisoners, as Fletcher notes, would "exploit their martyrdom to the advantage of the cause of anti-slavery and the Republican Party." This martyrdom brought them sympathy, having the effect of Uncle Tom's Cabin and the violence against abolitionist settlers in Kansas, leading Republicans to take political advantage of the situation. After antislavery sympathizers attempted to try the slave

[83] Ibid., 98-110.
[84] Ibid., 116. *Cleveland Morning Leader*, December 12, 1858. See Brandt, 281, n. 13.
[85] Fletcher, 406-7.

catchers themselves for kidnap in the Lorain County Common Pleas Court, a "prisoner exchange" of sorts was arranged, leading to the release of all indicted in the Rescue.[86]

Oberlin, Nonresistance, and Harpers Ferry

During the early commotion after Ansel Lyman's incredible news of a captured slave reached Oberlin, Nat Brandt notes that William E. Lincoln, a twenty-seven year old student raced first to his bedside to pray, rather than to the crowds of people gathering on South Main Street ready to disembark for Wellington. Brandt notes that Lincoln faced a problem: how could a pacifist like himself take part in the trouble he saw brewing? What if the day were to erupt in violence? Could Wellington become another "bleeding Kansas?" For this reason, he asked God, and as Brandt reports, received an answer: "If it were your own brother, what would you do? The answer: Rescue him or die in the attempt. Is this poor negro your own brother? Yes, Lord."[87]

The very fact that Oberlin men had equipped themselves with weapons, many of whom had probably been present when the winds of nonresistance swept through the community, shows us the extent to which the town had changed as a result of violence in Kansas. This change would be seen with the visit of John Brown, Jr. to the office of John Mercer Langston, the former having embarked upon a mission to recruit blacks from Oberlin to take part in a raid in the early stages of planning. While Langston would receive him, both he and his brother Charles would opt out of the mission, leaving Brown with only two black men from Oberlin who would volunteer and play a role in the actual raid. Lewis Sheridan Leary and John Anthony Copeland joined former Oberlinite Shields Green, a fugitive from South Carolina who lived in Rochester, New York as the

[86] Ibid., 407-11. Quoted on p. 408.
[87] Brandt, qtd. on p. 81. See also 79-81.

servant of Frederick Douglass, in participating in the infamous raid led by the senior John Brown upon the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia.[88]

Copeland and Leary had both participated in the earlier Rescue, though Leary had not been indicted in the aftermath. One thing was certain: that as African-Americans, they were willing to end slavery with their blood. With Brown and a group of eighteen men, they severed telegraph wires and capture the armory, arsenal, and rifle works in an effort to stir up enough violence for a slave rebellion.[89] When the forces of Col. Robert E. Lee arrived, Nat Brandt notes that Copeland and Leary met separate endings. While both were held at the rifle works, their third counterpart, John Kagi, would be killed while trying to flee. Leary and Copeland would both be wounded, resulting in Leary's death and Copeland's capture.[90]

The fate of the two Oberlinites warrants further exploration in this narrative, as it is symbolic of the realities surrounding the changing world in which the antebellum reformer lived. Leary's body would be buried in a shallow grave situated on the bank of the Shenandoah River. Soon enough, dogs upturned his body and the others buried in the grave, only to be followed by local medical students who stole the remains for dissection. While they would later be reburied, exhumed, and buried again on the property of John Brown's farm in New York, this attitude toward the participants of the raid, especially the blacks involved, would perpetuate.[91]

Copeland, sentenced to hang, took to his pen to explain his participation in the raid. While sitting in a prison at Charlestown, Virginia, Copeland would write multiple

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[88] Brandt, 242. See also DeCaro, 258-9.
[89] Bradnt, 243.
[90] Ibid., 243.
[91] Ibid.

letters to his family, claiming that his deeds were in the line of God's will, and as a result, he was convinced that history would exonerate and eventually laud his name.[92] "[M]y fate so far as man can seal it, is sealed," he wrote to his parents on November 26, 1859, "but let not this fact occasion you any misery; for remember the cause in which I was engaged, remember it as a holy cause, one in which men in every way better than I am, have suffered & died."[93] That Copeland saw himself, much like his "Captain," John Brown as a messenger carrying out the will of God is easily evident in his writings. More importantly, like religious virtuosi before him, he carried this belief into his world, perhaps more drastically than any subject with whom this thesis interests itself. Comforting his family the day of his execution, Copeland only reinforced his cause:

> I fully believe that not only myself but also all three of my poor comrades who are to ascend the same scaffold- (a scaffold already made sacred to the cause of freedom, by the death of that great champion of human freedom, Capt. JOHN BROWN) are *prepared* to meet our God.[94]

Brown's death, which had occurred on the 2nd of December, was filled with religious imagery and drama. Later alluding to Brown's "martyrdom" as making the "gallows glorious, like a cross," Ralph Waldo Emerson would tap into the suggestive tones of the incident itself.[95] Just as Christ had died to make humanity free from sin, so to did John Brown die to free the nation from the shackles of slavery, a theme we have already

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[92] Ibid. See also "The Letters of John A. Copeland, a Hero of the Harpers Ferry Raid," Electronic Oberlin Group, Available on-line at <http://www.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/Copeland/copeland_letters.htm>. Retrieved 10 October 2007. See also National Public Radio program, "John Copeland: A Hero of Harpers Ferry," Aired 21 February 2001, 90.3 WCPN. Transcript and audio available on-line at <http://www.wcpn.org/news/2001/01-03/0221john_copeland.html>. Retrieved 10 October 2007.
[93] John A. Copeland, Jr. to his parents, 26 November 1859, OCA. Available on-line at < http://www.oberlin.edu/archive/exhibits/john_brown/page3.html>. Retrieved 10 October 2007.
[94] John A. Copeland to his family, 16 December 1859, EOG, Available on-line at <http://www.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/Copeland/copeland_letters.htm>. Retrieved 10 October 2007.
[95] Quoted in John J. McDonald, "Emerson and John Brown," *New England Quarterly* 44 (Sept., 1971): 377-391. See p. 387.

explored and circulating throughout our narrative, which Julia Ward Howe explored in her famous song, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Brown's funeral would also contain this imagery, as it would begin with the singing of "Blow Ye the Trumpet," a hymn written by John Wesley, and a personal favorite of the abolitionist. As Louis DeCaro notes, a Unitarian minister presiding over the funeral later recalled the blacks attending the funeral as easily being heard above the rest of the voices that day while singing the hymn.[96] The lyrics tell of the final trumpet announcing the Second Coming of Christ, alluding to the freedom from sin witnessed by the Christian. To those singing, the fourth verse and refrain must have struck chords in their minds:

> Ye slaves of sin and hell,
> Your liberty receive,
> And safe in Jesus dwell,
> And blest in Jesus live:
> …
> *The year of jubilee is come!*
> *The year of jubilee is come!*
> *Return, ye ransomed sinners, home.*[97]

Religious Belief, Abolitionism, and the Reinterpretation of Christianity

While the interest Lorain County residents had in abolition certainly ties into, rather than stops with, the entry of the nation into the American Civil War, a continuing narrative is beyond the realistic grasp of this work. Lorain County men and women would react to the war in different ways, ranging from the rabid interest of many Oberlin students in attempting to personally end slavery by volunteering for the Union army to the fearful response of many Wellingtonians and Elyrians, who occupied their draft slots

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[96] DeCaro, 280.
[97] See Robert G. McCutchan, *Hymns of the American Frontier: Compiled and Arranged for Four-Part Chorus of Mixed Voices* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1950).

with hired hands.[98] While the causes of the war itself have been debated and this debate will never, nor should it ever cease, we can certainly state that many abolitionists would see in the war the final battle of the antislavery movement, eventually culminating in the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation and the liberation of the slave. Perhaps this understanding of the cause of the war must be understood in geographic spheres. Whereas the national level saw the importance of economics as downplaying the crusade of the abolitionist, towns such as Oberlin saw only the plight of the slave in the residents' interest.

Chandra Manning reinterprets how soldiers on both sides interpreted their roles in the war. Through correspondence, we learn that many Union soldiers understood their cause in terms of an overarching narrative which would eventually see the defeat of slavery and the unification of the Union, as Julia Ward Howe alluded to in her "Battle Hymn of the Republic." As Robert Abzug points us to this hymn, we are turned to a reinterpretation of slavery's role in the war's roots, as we see a general shift from still important economic incentives to a religious and moral reappraisal of the "peculiar institution."[99]

While we do see this in Lorain County, especially in the case of Oberlin College, this fact is more important to our general narrative of antislavery in the region and the county. At its roots, the movement was first nurtured in the churches, many of which

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[98] Brandt, 246-9 and Clark.

[99] Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Solders, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007). See also Robert Abzug, "Abolition and Religion," in *History Now: American History Online*, No. 5 (Sept., 2007). Available on-line at <http://www.historynow.org/09_2005/historian5.html>. Retrieved 13 October 2007. For two recent considerations of religion and the war, both authored by top scholars in the field of American religious history, see Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006) and Harry Stout, *Upon the Altar of a Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2006).

were Presbyterian and Congregationalist, and as a result of the Plan of Union, predominately Yankee. Once the movement developed as the opponents of slavery debated both amongst each other and with slavery's proponents (or at least those of anti-abolition persuasion), the sacralized meanings of society having already lay at the foundation of the movement's supporters would mold into the antislavery movement, and as the cosmic theater became a part of the movement, so too did the movement become a part of American Christianity. As we witnessed at the end of Chapter IV through the correspondence of John Reed, Americans did not merely realign their social activism through the lens of Christianity, but realigned the religion itself through their interest in purifying the world around them.

T. Gregory Garvey's recent work interests itself in the "culture of reform" created by many of the religious virtuosi with which my own work interests itself. Just as Garvey's main argument points out that the byproduct of antebellum reform was a renewed literary, political, and philosophical culture, we can see through the cosmic meanings applied to both temperance and antislavery a reinterpretation of Christian dogmas which perpetuate, albeit in a still changing state, through present political pundits, "values voters," and contemporary social activism.[100] This theme – how reform, along with revivalism, changed Christianity – will be explored in the final chapter as an important testament to the central forces of religious belief, intellectual evolution, and "religious insanity" which refashioned an old religion to fit the needs of the populace of a new republic.

[100] T. Gregory Garvey, *Creating the Culture of Reform in Antebellum America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), In passim.

CHAPTER VI

"Harnessed to the Chariot of Christ": Religious Insanity, Social Reform, and the Redefinition of Christianity in America

> [Socrates:] …there is a model of it in heaven, for anyone who wants to look at it and to make himself its citizen on the strength of what he sees. It makes no difference whether it is or ever will be somewhere, for he would take part in the practical affairs of that city and no other.
> [Glaucon:] Probably so…[1]

Throughout human history, the notion of John Winthrop's "City upon a Hill," Augustine's *City of God*, and Plato's *Republic* echoes through religious texts, political tracts, and the common imagination; transcending cultures as in many cases it nearly destroys the social and political groups who strive to create their own utopias.[2] That Socrates accepted that the perfected republic may only exist in an ideal, rather than real, level of being did not dissuade the philosopher or others like him from imagining a perfect state of existence which exemplified human intellectual progress. For Christians, this would be represented by heaven, the "home" of God and the redeemed believer who would dwell in a place along with the rest of the "Body of Christ" where sorrow and misfortune bow to happiness and fulfillment. These meanings would be used and reinterpreted in the antebellum period as Americans lived in a newly constructed and still

[1] Plato, *The Republic IX*, tr. by G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve in John M. Cooper, ed. *Plato: The Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 1199. "Harnessed to the Chariot of Christ" is used by Lyman Beecher in his *Autobiography.* See Lyman Beecher, *The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher*, ed. by Barbara M. Cross, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), 46. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 656 for his mention of "religious insanity."

[2] Perhaps the literal translation of "utopia" as "no place" is fitting here, as in our epigraph.

forming state whose greatness they saw not in the power it could grant, but in the power placed upon it by its citizenry. America's new beginnings teemed with both apocalyptic and utopian meaning as the nation's citizens embraced visions of paradise and new beginnings.

The vignette recounting Elyria's 1831 revival which opens this thesis provides an ideal setting from which to explore this quest for the perfect society, and how American Protestants married this struggle for worldly improvement to their religious beliefs. Writing the following June, Esther Shipherd tells of a local businessman who left town days before the events at Elyria came into full swing with her husband John at the helm of a religious awakening. When he returned, the unnamed businessman found his wife and children readying themselves for conversion to Christianity, sending him into a confused and perhaps hopeless state in which he reconsidered his own mortality and salvation. While it is not revealed if the man eventually converted, the Shipherds' interest in converting the town's population, especially the most prominent citizens, speaks volumes about John Shipherd's goals preceding and following his arrival at Elyria.[3]

At the base of these goals was a strategic and systematic response to Shipherd's interpretation of Protestant Christian belief, the roots of which were implanted into a history where Shipherd played a key role. For Shipherd, as a religious virtuoso, the fundamental goal was to ensure that Christian belief would not merely be promoted on the frontier, but play a key role in purifying humanity for Christ's return. Shipherd and other religious virtuosi founded their realities in a sacred history which entailed not only social and political action, but came to redefine Christianity in America as virtuosi

[3] Esther and John Shipherd to Zebulon and Nancy Shipherd, 1 June 1831, John Shipherd Papers, OCA.

reconsidered Calvinism, utilized and pondered the religious revival, and most deliberately, attempted to remake society. These efforts which would ultimately restructure theology in America are found within traditional interpretations of Western Protestant Christianity, giving us a framework from which to understand how religious vituosi interpreted and eventually reorganized the structures in which they operated.

Sacred History and the American Religious Narrative

We have seen how many American Protestants interpreted their lives within a "sacred history," contemplating their reform efforts in the context of a shifting cosmic reality from which they understood their place in the universe. Six major stages of this theme of sacred history helped them interpret their actions in relation to the social, political, and religious structures they inhabited. The first two formed the basis of Calvinist interpretations of reality: the Creation and Fall of humanity, as told in the Book of Genesis. With these understandings of God's omniscient presence and total control in their lives, Calvinists would understand their world in terms of the original sin of humanity, which they claim is deserving of separation from God for eternity. However, just as the ancient Jews would become "chosen" with their acceptance of the "true" god, Christians too could hope for a salvation granted by the mercy and grace of their Creator.

This next major stage of Exodus presents itself not only in the biblical story of the journey of the Jews from Egypt to the "promised land," and its American parallel in the "American Zion" at Massachusetts Bay, but also in the reformers' constant acknowledgment that this promised land was real, attainable, and godly. Often seeing themselves as refugees from the bondage of established religion, their understanding of the new physical landscape could be compared to how they imagined Israel was seen by

the Jews of the Old Testament.[4] This Exodus would play out in the American settlement of the West, and in terms of this thesis, through the 1801 Plan of Union, as Protestant clergy struggled to provide the new frontier with a moral basis from which to grow.

The fourth stage, Redemption, lies at the heart of the Christian experience throughout history as it interprets how Protestants believe themselves to come to salvation only through the pure blood of Jesus Christ as an intermediary sacrifice, predetermined by the "timeline of salvation" set before humanity by God, creating a model with which to understand the world. Rooting itself in the fall of humanity at Eden, the sacrificial tone of Christ's redemption would mean great personal significance to those trying to transform the world around them. This significance is captured in Julia Ward Howe's earlier cited classic, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," which ultimately encapsulates the antebellum reformers' sacred history with the person and sacrifice of Christ, as well as a controversial engraving of John Brown which .[5]

As we have explored, this relationship would lead to controversies of predestination involving the agency of humanity in a world and reality created by an all-powerful God. Reformers would reinterpret their reality as they surged past the bonds of a strict American application of European interpretations of a Hellenistic *logos* of Calvinism which understands redemption as subservient to the sacred history of Christianity and as a result, sees souls predestined by God to one day reach heaven or hell. The modification of American Calvinism would come in tandem with the expansion

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[4] For a discussion of this within the context of the Plan of Union, see Amy DeRogatis, *Moral Geography.*

[5] See the final verse in Howe's work, which states that "As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free," in Florence Howe Hall, *The Story of the Battle Hymn of the Republic* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1916), 3. That this was paralleled with antislavery is seen in the later verses known "John Brown's Body." See Seymour Drescher, "Servile Insurrection and John Brown's Body in Europe," in *The Journal of American History* 80 (September, 1993): 499-524. See especially p. 499, which mentions an engraving of Brown hanging from the gallows inscribed with the words "*Pro Christo – Sicut Christus, John Brown*," translated as "For Christ – Like Christ, John Brown," see also n. 1.

and exploration of a redefined Christianity on the new continent; applying democratic ideals to a religion predating large-scale political democracy.

As Americans expanded West, Protestant religious revivals followed. Evangelism emerges as the fifth stage, bound into the Christian tradition as both a way with which to spread the religion as well as a means by which the thoughtful believer can change the world for the better, following what she or he believes to be the example of Jesus. Just as had happened at Pentecost, the believer considers herself or himself to be completely transformed, consumed by the Holy Spirit and ready to perform God's will.

By now, we realize that it is no secret that when religious revivals came to a town, social reform often followed closely behind. Understanding why and perhaps more intricately, how this happened becomes the point where scholarship of American religious history and the sociological study of religion intersect. Indeed, we know that the first organizations incorporated under Yale's "Benevolent Empire" were aimed to first convert the sinner, then to resocialize the new Christian into the religious community. While resocialization was important to the reformer, men and women such as Eli and Lydia Boies, James Thome, and David Grosvenor moved further, attempting to convert as they rearranged the world of the "heathen." When a community had fewer church goers than it did saloon patrons, it was believed, evangelism would be impaired for obvious reasons. Thus, it was the objective of reformers such as John Shipherd to lobby for a world convicted to observe and defend correct practice, ultimately identifying with the theological belief and spiritual conviction of Protestant Christianity.

Evangelism would be seen as a tool by which the religious Protestant Christian would be able to take part in a sacred history culminating in the Apocalypse, a series of

events foretold signifying the end of God's creation, and our sixth and final stage as represented through Christian Eschatology. Because this end involved an eternal damnation of those "rejecting" belief in Christ (or those deemed unable by God to accept Christ's mercy, depending on one's persuasion), much care was devoted to assuring the salvation of the unbeliever. This care involved an "eternal emergency" of sorts, to which the Protestant would respond by encouraging the "unsaved" to accept the redeeming power of Christ, thus escaping damnation. While the Apocalypse would mean eternal misery for non-Christians, Protestant reformers looked to the day in anticipation, believing that with it, a perfect state of existence would come. With this anticipation, however, came responsibility, especially for those convinced that one's salvation was a rational choice. As we have seen, these reformers believed themselves to be handpicked by God to convert the heathen, thus encouraging the coming millennium.

These six stages would lie at the central core of the reformer's intense desire to save the world. Close examination of the sacred history in which the reformer believed them self to have existed is as vital to the understanding of American religious history and reform as is the acknowledgment of certain social, political, and economic structures pervading the American past. Providing a philosophical construction of reality by which reformers found their daily lives to be guided, this sacred history was as real as it was ideal. While many would modify this perspective, reformers generally understood human nature as a flawed state at its best, underlined by a carnal and selfish existence unless inspired to do good by the benevolent mercy of God. Reformers would not merely suggest ways by which to improve the world, but state how the world could be saved as they underlined their words with the "emergency" of their sacred history's imminent end.

The ways in which reformers would reinterpret their religious belief provides scholars a peculiar vantage point from which to understand how social ideas may come into being and be sent into fruition in society. However, we should be careful in understanding these realities when reflecting upon them with contemporary religious thought, and must be mindful that we will inevitably historically reconstruct who these reformers exactly were.

Antebellum Reformers and Contemporary Interpretation

Some scholars and activists alike have considered antebellum reformers, especially those concerned with antislavery, to have encouraged a concept of social justice and action comparable to the likes of iconic – perhaps hagiographic – figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Mohandas Gandhi, Dorothy Day, and other agents of religiously-inspired social change, who have been as effective in their roles as symbols as they were in changing the world through their actions. For instance, Dan McKanan notes that "we seriously misunderstand antebellum social reform if we fail to recognize its roots in liberal Christian theology."[6] Claiming this "liberal Christian theology" to have existed in the antebellum reformer's belief that "each human individual is created in the image of God," or *imago dei*, McKanan claims that "radical Christian liberals," those who "took to revolutionary extremes the Christian values of the Gospels and the liberal values of the Declaration of Independence," interested themselves in laying the foundation for a utopian society which interests itself in the *imago dei* as expressed through daily life.[7]

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[6] Dan McKanan, *Identifying the Image of God: Radical Christians and Nonviolent Power in the Antebellum United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9-10.
[7] Ibid., 4-5.

At the outset, McKanan's interest in *imago dei* flows consistently with the aims of the reformer, as the religious virtuosi roaming the countryside dreamed of the day when they would live in a heavenly city ruled by the edicts of God, rather than the corrupt philosophies of humanity. However, it should be remembered that Christian theology involves an evolving philosophy of religion which was redefined as religious ideas were reinterpreted through the period's revivals and reform efforts. While theological comparisons will be drawn, scholars must be careful when considering the antebellum reformer as a symbol, as there was no monolithic movement, but rather a dynamic and still-forming conversation of theological, social, and political ideas which would be remembered by historians and activists. For many antebellum virtuosi such as Charles Finney, it was not an emphasis upon the *imago dei*, but rather what a contemporary commentator might consider a "pessimistic" understanding of total human depravity which shaped interest in reforming America's populace. Surely, one may have seen the "image of God" in the slave or victim of alcohol-induced violence, but social and personal sins at the root of both of these instances was the root of the problem, only purified by a rejection of the carnal human nature and an embrace of the edicts of heaven.

While I do not wish completely to separate this group of activists inspired to sanctify the world through reform from the broader context of a liberal Western tradition of social reform, historians need carefully to analyze antebellum religious virtuosi and their involvement in the era's reform efforts before making hasty categorizations. A reductionist analysis as monolithic "social activists" which limit them to their antislavery or feminist leanings becomes ahistorical and even uninteresting, as it ignores the dynamic

pluralism and diversity of the theological, social, and political strains which influenced these reformers.

While figures such as William Lloyd Garrison would appear much more akin to the contemporary Christian's interpretations of a liberal and radical focus upon social reform, contemporary understandings are merely constructions of past individuals seen through the lens of history. As a reviewer of McKanan notes, perhaps these labels are much more relevant to historians than they ever were to our subjects.[8] In Lorain County, we have already explored several competing strands of orthodox and populist thought, and in the case of Oberlin, a peculiar amalgam of them. In the broader scope of the religious "free market" we are about to consider below, Americans exchanged ideas contributing to a process by which the meaning of reform would be structured in various forms by reformers of diverse theological and political backgrounds. As a result, religion in America would be transformed.

Religious Disestablishment and Lorain County

Throughout this thesis, we have understood the American "religious landscape," that ubiquitous and still molding "stage" upon which countless religions, sects, and cults have prospered and failed as antebellum reformers carried out their ideas. Prospering through a pervading de-facto religious pluralism and the Constitutional "disestablishment" which engendered it, we see a dynamic and changing environment which has been as difficult to interpret as it has been to quantify. Some scholars, such as Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, have attempted to understand this landscape through the

[8] David Ericson, review of *Identifying the Image of God: Radical Christians and Nonviolent Power in the Antebellum United States*, by Dan McKanan, *The American Historical Review*, 109 (December, 2004): 1568.

metaphor of the marketplace, which rings of "American" conceptualizations of freedom and liberty in the Enlightenment tradition of the freedom of enterprise.

They attempt to "place the history of American religion within a dynamic, interpretive model and to correct some major misconceptions" which they see in the work of earlier American historians of religious history, claiming that a religious "free market" would supersede the structures of European religious establishment on the new continent.[9] However, just as we cannot oversimplify reformers in respect to their roles as "social activists," the American religious landscape cannot be reduced to a mere economic model, though this metaphor proves helpful in explaining how American religion changed during the antebellum period.

The Finke-Stark model of American religious history involves competition amongst denominations vying for control over the "market" of America's souls through individually particular practices. However, the limitations of such a model appear when we consider that virtuosi, attaching themselves to an otherworldly realm defined by the vocabulary of ancient prophets and theologians, were more interested in proclaiming truth than gaining converts, though the latter did occur much to the virtuosi's happiness as a result of evangelistic efforts. The Finke-Stark model is useful when considering the role of the established church in limiting new religious persuasions, much like a centralized economy should theoretically impede private enterprise; and to be certain, American religion was molded through disestablishment, this we cannot deny. However, an over-application of what might be considered a reapplication from an alternative viewpoint of the Weberian model of social action and political thought falls victim to

[9] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 21.

potentially ignoring the important role of the religious beliefs at the heart of this new "economy."[10]

Beginning with the tearing-down of European-modeled theocracy and centralized religion, American religious history would incorporate the aforementioned stages of a Christian sacred history. In the lives of religious virtuosi and the communities they led, this history would reverberate through Lorain County in the system of the local religious economy. In the region, the Plan of Union acted as a program by which to convert individual Christians and establish a sense of social and religious order and sanctity upon the frontier. This sacred history would reevaluate Calvinism, revival, and reform, which were all arguably linked, to reshape and redefine American Christianity. As a result, in Lorain County and elsewhere, a "conversation" between religious belief and its products (in this case social reform) would occur by which American religion would reshape itself into a myriad set of identities distinguishable from one another, yet common in the basic tenets of Protestant Christianity.

While we must acknowledge a prevalent sacred history observed by antebellum reformers as foundational to their reform efforts, it would be a disservice completely to exclude the Finke-Stark model of "market" religion when considering the larger American spectrum of religion during the period, especially in such a location as the Connecticut Western Reserve. For this reason, a reinterpretation of America's "religious economy" is necessary, in which we can see disestablishment as providing a way by which American religious virtuosi have access to a more robust and frequently changing marketplace of ideas in comparison to a more rigid and controlled environment seen by a

[10] The "Weberian model" I speak of consists of Max Weber's "Protestant work ethic," and its inverse relationship to economics in the Finke-Stark model. See Weber, *The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.*

state establishment of religion. This marketplace of ideas would provide a series of competing spheres of orthodox and populist influence, ultimately culminating in the introduction of new spheres, such as Oberlin College, which would grow out of previous religious structures but not lay claim to any specific existing school of thought. The result would be, in the case of Oberlin, a fermentation of religious ideas resulting partially from the free market of frontier revivals as well as the utopian dreams of a sacred history. At Oberlin, this fermentation came from the reactions of old ideas and new practice to create a distinct byproduct which would partially transform and perhaps even the hearts, souls, and minds of the region's inhabitants.

Theological Change and Antebellum Reform

Through a dynamic and evolving process, religious ideas would become influenced by Enlightenment philosophy, eventually evolving to reconsider attitudes toward social reform. This process, involving a dialogue between the themes of an ancient religion and theologically disruptive philosophical concepts, would be stimulated by the catalysts of religious revival and social reform to create a multi-faceted yet starkly apparent "American" contribution to Christian theology. While we have already explored, and based much of this thesis upon, the reconsideration of Calvinism as a result of the Second Great Awakening and fears of Unitarianism at Yale College, antebellum reform would join revivalism and theological development in remaking established religious orthodoxy in America during this period.

Though antebellum reform would begin as a means by which to encourage the success of the "City of God" on the American frontier, American religious virtuosi and reformers such as John Shipherd and John Reed would reconsider major issues and

reform movements, placing them into a sacred canon of Christian belief. The temperance and antislavery movements would evolve from fringe outlooks pertaining to ways by which Christians could reinterpret and restructure society into core components of a new "American" version of Christianity. While core theological dogmas like Trinitarianism would remain largely untouched (though exceptions certainly existed as in the case of the Mormon religion), sins such as American slavery and intemperance would be viewed as reprehensible as outright blasphemy. This reinterpretation would lead the reformer to reconsider religious authority, canonizing ideas which had been earlier considered merely peripheral, eventually reworking the fabric of Protestant Christianity in America. Temperance, for example, would change how the First Congregational Church of Wellington understood a communion tradition reinforced by eighteen hundred years of Christianity. Likewise, the abolitionist movement would have the effect of cutting members away from Oberlin's interpretation of what constituted the Body of Christ.

Through a metamorphosis of theological belief accompanied with a separation from previous ecclesiastical ties, Oberlin legitimized, canonized, and expanded the concept of moral reform in America through its position as a new sphere of American religious influence. Founded in 1833 in the interest of "holding up the light of Heaven before the eyes of the millions," the colony was created to foster the dreams of a religious virtuoso who would not consider social reform merely in the interest of a perfection of society, but as part of the eternal emergency of Redemption, Evangelism, and the coming Apocalypse.[11]

[11] "Holding up the light of Heaven…" quoted in the "Covenant of Oberlin Colony," Oberlin Society Records, OCA. See also Fletcher, "The Government of the Oberlin Colony," 185.

Thus, it is ironic that the very intellectual and theological traditions which would allow Christianity to stabilize, grow, and exist over eighteen hundred years would be remembered and utilized to transform how the religion is manifest in North America. The central theme linking these two millennia is that of how a religious establishment consisting of a central body of theological and ecclesiastical supremacy may exert its influence of "orthodoxy" over competing claims of truth. While Christianity as a whole has had too many influences for us to create an easily accessible model or diagram, the strand of the religion to which the reformers subscribed dates to Hellenistic Greece, where the logos and language of the Greek civilization would transform an upstart Jewish sect.[12] While each respective epoch of Christian history involves a complicated shift in theological evolution, much of what antebellum American virtuosi would encounter is rooted in the very nature of theology, that is, a logos applied to how one ponders a Judeo-Christian theos. In its travels through the words and minds of missionaries in Europe, Christian theology would be redefined, but only under the permission of an established church which perhaps remembered the problems in establishing a set Christian theology at Nicaea. Unlike Christianity's earliest days, Gnosticism, Coptic Christianity, Arianism, and other movements deemed heretical would be silenced by an established civil and ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Alexis de Tocqueville was struck during his visit in America by the enduring "religious insanity" as he had likely not personally encountered a wide variety of "Christianities" allowed to define themselves on such a large scale in his native France.

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[12] For a consideration of how this Jewish sect would be transformed, see Jay Eastman, "The Development of Early Christianity and the Effects of Hellenism," Senior Thesis, Heidelberg College, 2004. See also Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, tr. by John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1974).

In Europe, heterodox belief historically was met, in the case of individuals such as Jan Hus, with the fiery stake or other implements of sure death to the heretic. Before disestablishment redefined religion in America, we do know that evangelical churches in Britain were able to prosper among a setting of established religion, however, as Mark Noll notes, what resulted from legal separation in America was a "creative exploitation of institutionalized disestablishment," as a "significant factor in rapid evangelical growth."[13]

We might suggest that a deregulation of orthodoxy occurred in America's adaptation of disestablishment, allowing amateur prophets to become successful. Without an Inquisition to contend with, a self-proclaimed religious prophet would be comparatively free to propound new versions of an old religion. Of course, ecclesiastical bodies such as the Presbyterian General Assembly would attempt to, usually with mixed success, quell these new American virtuosi. In the case of Joseph Smith, an Inquisition and persecution would occur at the hands of ordinary American citizens, limiting the amount by which a religious idea could expand uninhibited; forcing the adherents of Mormonism to see shifts in their sacred history as they sought after an earthly representation of God's Kingdom in the American West. In the context of this thesis, the Mormon story acts as a testament to the otherworldly meaning religious virtuosi and their followers attributed to their interpretations of Christianity, as they sought to practice their revised religious beliefs.

Noll's concept of creative exploitation would be utilized by figures such as John Shipherd and Charles Finney who sought to remain within the confines of the religion's basic dogmas even as they attempted to make the religion more accessible to the nation's

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[13] Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 174.

populace, just as Timothy Dwight and Nathaniel Taylor had before attempted and in the realm of New School Presbyterianism, accomplished. For Shipherd and Finney, however, the eternal emergency of the coming millennium forbade complacency as Finney fashioned a reworked soteriology which reconsidered its relationship to Calvinism, as seen with Finney's understanding of Calvinism as "a perfect strait-jacket" to the preaching of others who took to the pulpit.[14]

In Lorain County, we have identified two strands of this creative exploitation in New Haven and Oberlin theology, passing by many others which, like the theologies we have observed, sought to grasp eternally significant sacred histories in the context of the young nation. While Finney's creative exploitation of American disestablishment in many ways creates a logical and legal medium by which the sacred history could be carried out in America, it is one of many examples by which Americans would perhaps unknowingly utilize and exploit a new freedom in a marketplace of ideas. Creative exploitation occurred in the context and interest of individual religious virtuosi, yet at the same time the phenomenon was utilized en masse by the nation's clergy in the sense that, in Jon Butler's words, America was "awash in a sea of faith."[15] Nationally, while these virtuosi may have creatively exploited disestablishment through many forms of theological and ecclesiastical reinterpretation, the sum effect of these efforts transformed the nation through both belief and practice. In Lorain County and elsewhere, Butler's sea of faith was legitimized, accelerated, and perpetuated by Noll's creative exploitation.

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[14] Finney, *Memoirs*, 59.
[15] Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

The Reformer as Symbol

The reconstruction and reinterpretation of antebellum reformers must take into account the extremely difficult nature of tracing and labeling these individuals as liberal, moderate, or conservative, especially when considering the changing meanings of these labels. Historians and social activists alike should be careful about applying or adopting antebellum reformers as symbols of contemporary constructions of what constitutes social justice. We can still be captivated by the extraordinary strength and courage of people like the Wellingtonians who sheltered and supplied fugitives like John Mason or John Price, but hasty generalizations may come with this praise which transforms the reformer into a symbol, transcending her or his historical role in a dynamic American religious landscape, as contemporary historians and social activists attempt to unwittingly construct the proverbial procrustean bed.

Perhaps in these reformers we observe our own tendencies as human beings to imagine a perfected society that makes them such powerful symbols. For this reason, a consideration of the theological constructions which guided their lives acts as a means by which to understand why reformers in the antebellum period interested themselves in their efforts to the point of martyrdom, such as in the case of John A. Copeland. With an urgent interest in saving the world, Copeland, Shipherd, Lydia Boies, and other self-proclaimed soldiers of God were encouraged by a dynamic and changing landscape of religion in America which would be nationally prominent as a social and political revolution swept the nation. As missionaries and reformers, they sought to hold up the light of Heaven and act as catalysts in adapting an ancient religion to an infant nation in crisis, transforming the social and cultural bases of America. John Copeland's final letter

to his family provides us with an appropriate closing as he contemplated his role in John Brown's raid as indicative of both his earthly existence and his heavenly rewards:

> …it is not the mere act of having to meet death, which I should regret, (if I should express regret I mean,) but that such an unjust institution should exist as the one which demands my life; and not my life only, but the lives of those to whom my life bears but the relative value of zero to the infinite. I beg of you one and all that you will not grieve about me, but that you will thank God that he spared me time to make my peace with Him.[16]

[16] John A. Copeland to his family, 16 December 1859, OCA.

APPENDIX I

Subject Overview: Primary Source Availability, Population Statistics, and the Issue of Mobility

In an effort to understand the religious character of Lorain County, I decided to narrow this thesis to three communities of varying character. Doing so allows us to understand how the communities relate to each other, while at the same time affords the time to understand intricate details inherent in each community. These communities are Elyria, Oberlin, and Wellington, Ohio and have been chosen based upon economic, religious, and cultural factors. Other factors prevalent to the thesis include settlement patterns, geographic distribution, population rates, and access to major methods of transportation. Though these varying factors qualify many other communities in Lorain County to be deserving of closer inspection, time and effort has been focused upon these communities for three major reasons: primary source availability, population information, and the issue of mobility.

Primary Source Availability

To any historian, access to primary sources remains a vital issue. Though Presbyterian and Congregational clergy and laity kept consistent records of their actions and discussions, various factors keep these records from being available to scholars. Whether a church fire, a church schism, or a matter of record storage is to blame, several factors can place severe limitations upon the historian in understanding, telling, and interpreting what occurred. In spite of this, the three communities have several factors in

common in regard to records: 1.) the entire body of church minutes is available for all three congregations;[1] 2.) prominent secondary sources have mentioned Elyria and Oberlin consistently enough to piece together their respective histories before delving into primary sources; 3.) other primary sources such as correspondence are readily available for all three communities; and 4.) the communities all interacted regularly in light of the events of their day – allowing for cross-referencing when searching for documents. In terms of primary source access, Oberlin was by far the easiest to trace as a result of Oberlin College's efforts to preserve the history of First and Second Congregational Churches of Oberlin.[2] Personal documents of church members, church records, and other important miscellany have all been preserved in a consistent, orderly fashion. While Elyria and Wellington do not have access to professional archivists such as Oberlin, correspondence between church bodies answers questions pertaining to issues that are not recorded in the regular minutes.

For example, the Reed-Cowles correspondence found in the Henry Cowles papers at Oberlin College Archives only cemented what I believed was a likely connection between the two figures. With these letters, we can observe business transactions which

[1] To an extent, as the records of Wellington's Independent Congregational Church have been lost. However, these are the only set of records which were not available at the time of research and writing. Fortunately, William E. Barton had access to these records for his history of the church, and correspondence in the First Congregational Church's records shines light into the world of Independent Congregational. See William E. Barton, "A History of the First Congregational Church of Wellington, Ohio." See also "Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Organization of the First Congregational Church of Wellington."

[2] Oberlin Second Congregational Church, formed in 1860 from the growing body of First Congregational Church, is not considered in this thesis due to chronological issues. Further, the fact that it was a peaceful outgrowth from First Congregational trumps the necessity to heavily study the church body. Most importantly, it remains a testament to the strong hold Congregationalism had upon the growing town, and its phasing out comes at a time when Oberlin's religious landscape began to diversify, with growing Methodist and Baptist groups. See *A History of Lorain County, Ohio,* 185-6.

don't only coincide with theological agreement but likely depend upon it.[3] What might be the most important consideration for the separate factions which formed as a result of this period are those of daily business, especially in such a local and contained setting, in addition to theology and church polity. This factor should be considered in future research, and has been considered in past research, especially with Paul Johnson's *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*.[4]

Another important consideration in the context of primary sources is the question of female roles in the church. Since most of the records we have examined through the course of this work have been related to official church bodies, acquiring the female voice even in places such as Oberlin was difficult. While we do have these female voices through the life work and correspondence of Lydia Boies and her insights into the Maternal Association at Wellington, the lack of access to this correspondence hindered my exploration of the voices of female reformers. It is through future research and inquiry that I hope scholars will be able to tell these women's stories, as they did not necessarily constitute the "other half," but participated regularly with their husbands in antebellum reform efforts.

Population Statistics

One major disadvantage to writing a history of the region (and perhaps a hidden advantage) is the factor of settlement patterns. As we know, the War of 1812 acted as the key to unlock the gate set in place before the American Revolution. With a minimized presence of Native Americans and much more secure foreign borders, the plans of the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance could now be set into place. As a

[3] See for example John Reed to Henry Cowles, 14-30 January, 1850, Henry Cowles Papers, Boxes 2 and 3, OCA.
[4] Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium.*

result of the delayed settlement and the capitalistic ventures set in motion to settle the Western Reserve, Lorain County was unevenly populated, much like the rest of the frontier.

According to secondary sources, Lorain County's first settlement, albeit temporary, was by Moravian Missionaries settling near present day Lorain in 1787.[5] The first settlement under the Land Ordinance of 1785 was that of Columbia Township, first settled in 1807. First settled in 1816, Elyria benefited from the investment and settlement of founder Heman Ely, taking a leadership role in county government as well as Plan of Union-influenced religion which permeates this thesis. By 1818 Wellington Township was settled, and developed to the point of forming the first Congregational Church in which this thesis interests itself in the year 1824.[6] Following Wellington was the formation of Elyria Presbyterian Church in November of that year,[7] and Oberlin Colony and Collegiate Institute in 1833.

The following chart, comparing data taken from Decennial Census data ranging from 1830-1880, shows the county's population growth:[8]

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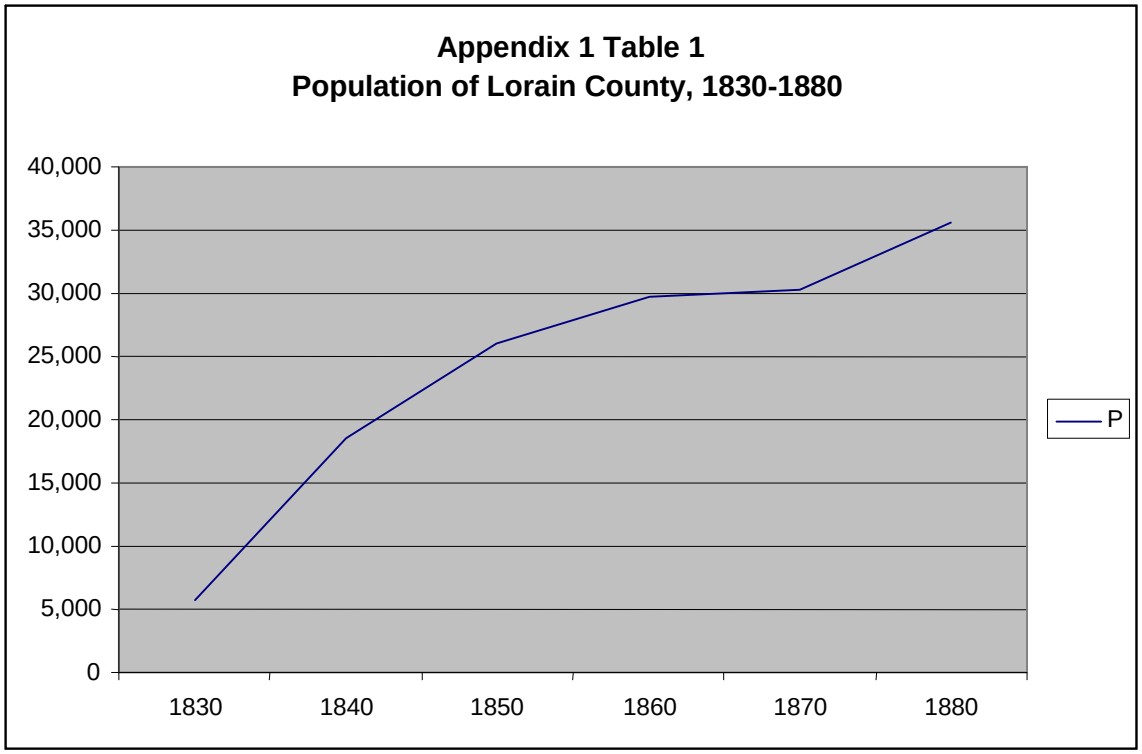
[5] *History of Lorain County, Ohio*, 39.
[6] See *A History of Lorain County, Ohio*, 39, 105, 348. See Wellington Records, 1824-1846. Wellington Church records begin April 20, 1824.
[7] Elyria Records, 1824-1837.
[8] See the Historical Census Browser available through the Geospatial and Data Resource Center, University of Virginia:
<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>. Retrieved January 20, 2007.



As the chart indicates, population growth was heavily influenced by factors such as the development of routes of transportation and economic incentives for settlement. When the railroad was able to grow in Lorain County by the middle part of the century, the population spiked as the economy began to expand, while during the Civil War years less growth predictably occurred. Elyria and Wellington, more so than Oberlin, owe their existence and survival to the innovation of the railroad. We see this as a major factor in many of the events shaping Lorain County's history, such as the 1858 Oberlin-Wellington Rescue, which found itself at the American House in Wellington as the slave catchers waited for the next day's train to Columbus.[9]

The Issue of Mobility

When I first began a study of Lorain County, I knew that the issue of mobility in transmitting everything from people to objects to ideas was going to be a vital factor. It

[9] Nat Brant, *The Town That Started The Civil War*, 66.

is this issue which played a major part in the decision to choose the three communities I would investigate. Between major roads and railroads, the three communities create an "artery" of sorts throughout the county. Railroads from Cleveland would be able to meet with Elyria, and travelers or cargo could use improved roads to Oberlin and through the southern part of the county. Wellington's connections to the outside world would be manifested with the railroad and would boom after the Civil War, with a cheese industry dependant on the rails as much as it depended upon local dairy farms.[10] In short, while the communities at hand did not have clearly established physical connections before the railroad came into the scene, these connections did become established, impacting the county in geographical, economical, and cultural ways.

As the transmission of ideas is what interests me most, and due to the fact that the best way for ideas to move is for people to move them, this thesis is interested in how ideas traveled across the landscape. It is no secret that Wellington would be very heavily influenced by the "Oberlin theologues" to the extent of the 1843 schism, and the factor of proximity between the churches must be taken into account. While, without access to his papers, we may never know if Joel Talcott would have leaned in Oberlin's direction as a minister and college trustee without the settlement only nine miles to his north, we cannot ignore the relatively easy access newly minted and soon to be minted Oberlin ministers had to the village, all of them it is supposed, ready to spread their contructions of "truth."

The role of infrastructure on an improving and growing nation might be of future interest to historians of American religion, if it has not already been explored; especially

[10] B.D. Douglas, "Wellington, Ohio: A Geographic Study," M.A. Thesis, Kent State University, 1955. See also Jon Clark, "King of Cheese." Perhaps the excitement caused by the railroad in Wellington is best summed by the words of a Wellingtonian in 1860: "When we have taken the county seat from Elyria and the college from Oberlin, we expect to be the first town in the county in every good work." Quoted in Clark, p. 18. See *The Lorain County News*, November 1860.

as the nation changed as a result of the expanding frontier. Where we know through this thesis that the influence of Elyria and Oberlin's founders gave the county a very "Presbygational" ethos, I did not explore as fully as possible the "populist" Methodist and Baptist sects, or for that matter, the small Mormon influence in Amherst.[11] Because Methodists and Baptists might be stereotyped as being lower class, "backwoods" sects, it would be helpful to explore how much truth can be placed into this understanding of the respective groups. Were these groups "populist" because they employed uneducated circuit riders out of necessity rather than preference? Or, just as importantly, were the Presbyterian and Congregational groups "orthodox" because of a sophisticated and all-encompassing missionary plan for the West? And most importantly, would settlement patterns, access to transportation, and involvement in a certain sector of the economy predict if an individual belonged to a "populist" or "orthodox" sect? These questions are best answered outside of this thesis, which is much more interested in Presbyterian and Congregational theology and polity. At the same time, however, it is difficult to ignore groups that, as Nathan Hatch points out, grew exponentially compared to their "orthodox" counterparts.[12]

[11] *A History of Lorain County, Ohio*, 332.
[12] See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, In passim.

APPENDIX II

Selected Primary Source Material

Due to the fact that many of the sources this thesis is concerned have never been published, I have decided to include some documents in this appendix for the convenience of the reader. In cooperation with and respect to fair use, selected extracts are included in order for the reader to better understand the rhetoric and theology inherent in many of the most important documents found in Lorain County religious history. Included below are antislavery resolutions, temperance resolutions, and other miscellany. Much thanks goes to the respective church bodies which not only provided me with this material, but graciously allowed me to make it available. Also, Guy Wells deserves added recognition for his transcription of the Wellington records, as well as allowing me to access the papers of Frederick Hamlin.

Temperance Documents

In 1831, Elyria passed the first major temperance resolution in Lorain County.[1] *Below is a temperance resolution promoted and approved by Rev. John Jay Shipherd*:

Nov. 25. 1831

The church met according to adjournment for the further consideration of the temperance question. After discussing the subject at some length all present but three signed the following resolution ["resolution" *is crossed out with an annotation underneath, with* "covenant" *added*]: vis:

"Believing that distilled spirit is the bane of man, + that any but a medicinal use of it is inconsistent with the christian [sic] character; we the subscribed members of the Presbyterian Church in Elyria, covenant with each other + with God, that we will totally abstain from the use of it, unless we deem it important as a medicine: And we further agree to do what we can to promote the same abstinence in others."

[*The following is crossed out*]: The persons subscribing this covenant at this time or afterwards, [sic] are on the chch. [sic] Catalogue pp 196 xc, marked.

Resolved that in view of communion + our low state of piety we observe Friday next as a day of Fasting + Prayer.

J. J. Shipherd, Pastor.

The following is an undated "Temperance Pledge" probably attributed to a Lorain County Temperance Society. While this document was found with papers pertaining to Wellington's first postmaster, Frederick Hamlin, the document seems to be of Elyria origin. Signatories include Abigail Monteith (wife of abolitionist John Monteith), and surnames such as Beebe, Betts, and Ingersoll.[2]

Temperance Pledge

We the undersigned, do agree, that we will not use intoxicating Liquors as a beverage, nor traffick [sic] in them. That we will not provide them as an article of entertainment or for persons in our employment. And that in all suitable ways we will discountenance their use throughout the community.

---

[1] Elyria Records, 1824-1837, November 25, 1831, EPC.

[2] Unknown authorship, "Temperance Pledge," found in the papers of Frederick Hamilton. Currently under the custody of Guy E. Wells. For the significance of these families, whose members appear as founders, deacons, and in other influential church positions, see Elyria Records, In passim, EPC, and James Thomas, *Down Through the Years in Elyria*, In passim.

Wellington followed Elyria's example with an April, 1833 temperance resolution:[3]

After a full consideration of the Subject the Church adopted the following preamble and resolution --- viz.
Whereas the use of distilled spirits as an article of drink has been the occasion of great trouble to the Church, and is destructive to vital Godliness; therefore resolved that this church will require a pledge of entire abstinance [sic] in the use & traffic of this article for the above purpose of all members which are received in future --- And we who vote for this resolution pledge ourselves to [*crossed out:* to] abide by the same rule which we prescribe to others ----Closed with prayer

Names of those who voted for the above

David Webster
Benj Wad'wr'th [*Benjamin Wadsworth*]
Oliver Webster
Daniel Smith
Judson Wadsworth
F.[?] William Foot
Russell Smith
Albert Adams

[3] Wellington Records, 1824-1846, April 24, 1833, p. 32, FCCW. Thanks to Guy Wells for transcribing these records.

Antislavery Documents

The following is a slightly abridged version of a document located on pp. 76-7 of Wellington's Records. Note the short amount of time which had passed between the founding of Oberlin, the Ohio antislavery campaigns of Theodore Dwight Weld, and the passing of this resolution:[4]

[*Page 76, verso*]

Wellington 15th Dec 1836

The church met agreeable to the previous [*inserted in pencil*: notice] & was opened with prayer. – Mrs. Sarah B. Tyler was examined in the usual manner for admission into the church, which was sustained & she was propounded.

The following resolutions were presented to the church on the subject of slavery Viz; [sic]
1st Resolved; that slavery as it exists in the United States is a henious [sic] sin against God and ought immediately to be abolished --- --- ---

2nd Resolved: that in as much as the church is deeply involved in the sin and guilt of slavery it becomes the duty of all who love the christian [sic] name publicly to bear testimony against this henious [sic] sin and to use all scriptural means to eradicate it from the church --- --- ---

3rd Resolved; that this church deem it inconsistent with their duty as christians [sic] to receive to their communion or to hold fellowship with those who hold their fellow men in bondage or justify the practice in others

[4] See Wellington Records, December 15, 1836, FCCW. This version is slightly abridged for space requirements.

[*Page 77, recto*]

The two first resolutions were adopted and a motion made to postpone the last indeffinitely [sic] when the yeas & nays were called on the motion.

Yeas	Nays
Harvy Grant	David Webster
Philo Herrick	H K Austin
Sanford Humphrey	Judson Wadsworth
Asa Wadsworth	Benjn. Wadsworth
Russell Smith	James DWolf
Hadlock Marcy	Oliver Webster
Dea. Chas Foot	Spelman Pelton
Worthington West	Whitman DeWolf
Amos Adams	Matthew De Wolf
Wm. Foot	R B Webster
Milton Adams	John S. Reed
Hardin Hickson	
John S. Case	
Calvin Adams	

Below is a document located on pp. 161-3 of the Elyria Presbyterian Church Records.[5]

Monday, April 5th 1847. The church met and was opened with devotional exercises.

The committee on the subject of American Slavery made the following report which was unanimously adopted.

Whereas Slavery in the United States is believed to be constantly strengthening + extending itself + its evils and dangers increasing and whereas we believe there is power in Christianity properly applied to do away with this system and its manifold evils – therefore –

Resolved 1. That while we deplore the fact of our own participation in the sin of Slavery and endeavor to free ourselves from all connection with it, we will not cease to pray for the slave holder + to entreat and persuade him by all suitable [?] to cease from his oppression and let the oppressed go free.

Resolved, 2. That no advocate of slavery, or slaveholder who does not give full proof that his slave holding is involuntary should be admitted to membership in a christian church, or invited to a participation in its ordinances.

Resolved, 3. That no voluntary slaveholder or advocate of slavery should be admitted to our pulpits to officiate as a Gospel minister

Resolved, 4. That in our view it is the duty of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, to make a declaration of their sentiments on of

[5] See Elyria Records, 1831-1849, EPC. See also Ely, Heman, ed., Elyria Records, 1824-1880, 161-3.

American Slavery, and immediately adopt themselves and recommend to the lower bodies which they represent, respectively, to take such measures as shall in their opinion tend most effectually to free them from all participation in, or fellowship with the same.

Resolved 5. That it is the duty of the churches to make earnest and persevering efforts to give the bible, the living preacher, and the institutions and privileges of the Gospel in all their fullness to the colored and slave population of the country.

Resolved 6. That Missionary Boards should manifest their decided and ungratified disapprobation of the admission of slaveholders to the mission churches.

D. A. Grosvenor
Frederick Hamlin
Norman Crandall (bracketed: Committee)

Voted that the above report be published in the New York Evangelist – The Ohio Observer – The Oberlin Evangelist and the Elyria Courier.

The following appears in the "Articles adopted" of Free Congregational Church of Wellington, Ohio:[6]

Art. 2 We will not receive as members of our church, or invite to our communion, any members of secret societies, known as Free Masons, or odd Fellows, [sic] nor any person who aprobates [sic] the system of American Slavery.

[*Note that the Free Mason/Odd Fellows statement is bracketed in pencil and "resinded"* [sic] *is written in the left-hand margin. According to John Reed, this is due to the "unmitigated curse" of the influence of the Congregational Assembly.*[7]]

[6] Free Congregational Church Records, August 19, 1852, FCCW.
[7] See John S. Reed to Henry Cowles, 12 May 1853, OCA.

Miscellaneous Documents

After the antislavery resolution of April 5th, 1847, Elyria Presbyterian Church convened to propose a statement likely pertaining to the Mexican-American War following the criticisms of the concept of warfare by those in Oberlin.[8] *The following is located on pp. 163-4 of the records*:[9]

Friday, June 11th 1847. The Annual meeting of the Church for business was held at 2 o'clock P.M. The meeting was opened as usual with devotional exercises.

The unfinished business of the last meeting was taken up. A committee on the subject of war presented their report which was accepted and adopted without dissent and which is as follows.

Whereas war has been in all ages [empathetically] the standing scurge [sic] of the human race and is diametrically opposed to the spirit and progress of Christianity and

Whereas it implies in all cases moral wrong and is reality a great civil, physical and political evil, and

Whereas we make a distinction between war in the common acceptation of the term and the employment of physical force for the necessary purpose of maintaining the divinely appointed ordinance of civil government righteously administered, therefore

Resolved – That we abjure war in its spirit and operations as a distinct profession, as tending to foster cupidity, national pride, ambition, cruelty, oppression and or love of false glory as hateful to God + ruinous to man.

Resolved – That it is the duty of the ministers of the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, to bring out distinctly the great principles of the christian [sic] religion and apply them faithfully to the subject of war, and to fill up their voice in the pulpit and through the press, and utter its condemnation.

Resolved – That it is the duty of all man and of the followers of Christ especially to investigate the subject of war candidly and thoroughly and to understand it fully, in its nature, and tendencies, and results, and exert a combined influence of their opinions, example and efforts in all laudible [sic], pracitable [sic] ways to banish from the face of the whole earth, this barbarous, loathsome custom as a pre-requisite to the reign of Christ over the nations.

Frederick Hamlin
Norman Crandall
E. C. Bradford
D. A. Grosvenor [bracketed: Committee]

[8] See Fletcher, 271-289.
[9] See Elyria Records, 1831-1849, EPC. See also Ely, Heman, ed., Elyria Records, 1824-1880, 163-4, EPC.

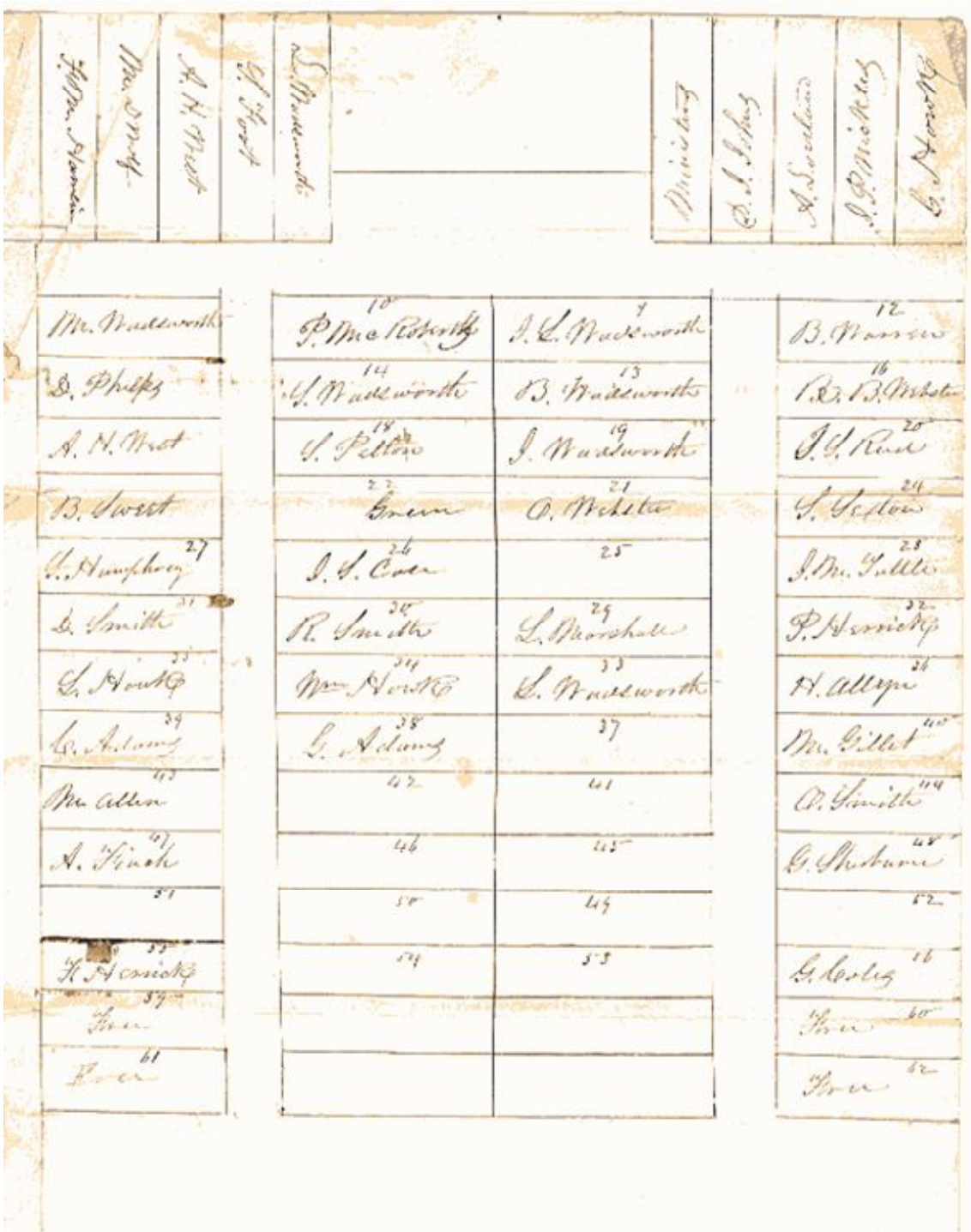
Images

In 1857, a young painter by the name of Archibald Willard painted an image of the village of Wellington as it appeared to him. While this painting would be overshadowed by his later "Spirit of '76," which would be nationally renowned, especially during the nation's centennial, the artist's depiction of the town gives us a glimpse into the world in which Wellingtonians lived. In the painting, we can see two prominent white church buildings, one being the First Congregational Church of Wellington (on the right side of the road, also known as the "Old White Church") and the other being the Wellington Free Congregational Church. The current building housing the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Wellington sits where the Free Church once stood, perhaps signaling a symbolic nod toward the importance of the schism in the church's identity and history.[10]

1 Archibald Willard, "The Village of Wellington," 1857.

[10] See *Seventy Fifth Anniversary of the Organization of the First Congregational Church of Wellington.* See p. 12 for a drawing of the "Old White Church" and p. 43 for a drawing of Free Congregational. See also "Statistics" by Charles Phelps, pp. 58-61 for a description of the transitions between buildings.

The following diagram was found in the papers of Frederick Hamlin, collected by Edward Wells, and is in the custody of Guy Wells. While the role of pew rentals seem to take much less important status than one would think in the Wellington Records, this document provides evidence that they did in fact occur. Based on names present, this document has been dated to a possible span of three years, 1840-1843.[11]



2 Pew Rental Diagram, Hamlin Papers

[11] "Pew Rentals," First Congregational Church Miscellany, EWC.

This image of the grave of Eli Boies is provided to establish a uniform spelling for the sake of future scholarship which refers to the family. In her letter cited throughout the bulk of this work, Eli's wife Lydia spells her name "Boise," and the family name is also seen spelled in Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Court Records as "Boyce."[12]

3 Grave of Eli Boies

[12] Grave of Eli Boies, Wellington "Pioneer Cemetery." Photograph by the author.

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Commonly Used Abbreviations:

EPC: Elyria Presbyterian Church/First United Congregational Church of Christ, Elyria.
EOG: Electronic Oberlin Group, Oberlin.
FCCW: First Congregational Church, Wellington/First United Congregational Church of Christ, Wellington.
KSU-SCA: Kent State University Special Collections and Archives, Kent.
OCA: Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin.
OCSC: Oberlin College Special Collections, Oberlin.
SLCHS: Southern Lorain County Historical Society, Wellington.
WRHS: Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland.

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